Indigenously Promoting Acquisition of Basic Reading Skills in Preprimary Grades in Zambezi Region, Namibia

Сприяння набуттю базових навичок читання в початкових класах у регіоні Замбезі, Намібія

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ABSTRACT

Objective. Through the lens of Lev Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory of how children develop literacy skills, this paper explores how indigenous knowledge (IK) promotes the acquisition of basic reading skills in preprimary grades in Zambezi Region, Namibia. We consider this to be critical as children’s background knowledge plays a pivotal role in the acquisition of new skills, and children’s basic reading skill is not an exception. Therefore, learning contents and children’s potential learning abilities are based on and are informed by their (children’s) environmental knowledge herein understood as societal and environmental motivating learning factors.

Materials and Methods. The data were generated by interviewing three preprimary teachers face-to-face, observing their lessons to see how they incorporated elements of IK in their reading lessons, as well as analyzing the preprimary syllabus for segments of IK as an illustration of its (IK) significance in promoting acquisition of reading among learners in preprimary grades in Zambezi region of Namibia.

Results. The key question was: How does indigenous knowledge promote the acquisition of reading in preprimary grades in Zambezi region in Namibia? This key question was explored and answered through the following subquestions: How does IK help to promote the acquisition of basic reading skills of preprimary learners in Zambezi Region of Namibia? What is the importance of IK inclusion in the preprimary literacy curriculum?

Conclusions. The study found that teachers understood the concept of IK and how it promotes the acquisition of preprimary learners’ reading skills though this could not be figured out in their lessons, resulting in a huge inconsistency between interview data, lesson observation data and data from preprimary syllabus analysis.

Key words: preschool children, primary school children, reading, reading skills.

Introduction

Indigenous knowledge (IK) is “local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society” (The World Bank, 1998: 5). Similarly, Nyota and Mapara (2007) claim that IK “is knowledge that is communally shared and owned among the inhabitants of a particular community and differs substantially from knowledge generated by universities, research institutions and private firms” (ibid.: p. 4). In other words, this type of knowledge is contextual and situated. Despite all of these, research directs that IK has been abandoned and continues to suffer neglect as a result of modernization and dominance of Eurocentric knowledge system. The understanding by the World is that IK is not impactful as scientific knowledge (SK). In this paper, we (the researchers) refer to the ‘Western World’ and its ‘Eurocentric views’ pertaining African IK as constituting ‘The World.’ Nomlomo and Sosibo (2016) claim that
IK was perceived by the Western World as insignificant compared to Western knowledge, and as a result not fit for the school curriculum thus further broadening and perpetuating marginalization of African Indigenous knowledge and others. Furthermore, it was still felt that IK was unscientific, anti-development and illogical, and that it did not have any social and cognitive benefits (Munyaradzi, 2015). However, the conferences of 1989, 1997 and 1998 on IK set a different tone to the argument.

The 1989 United Nations Adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the child took a significant conclusion of integrating IK in the school curriculum (Soudée, 2009). Similarly, the 1997 Global Knowledge Conference in Toronto further endorsed that there was an “urgent need to learn, preserve and exchange indigenous knowledge” (Munyaradzi, 2015: 57). It was during this same conference that political leaders and Civil Society Organizations (CSO) endorsed the World Bank’s vision to integrate IK into the curriculum so as to become ‘Knowledge Bank’. The World Bank (2004) insists that:

“We recognize that knowledge is not the exclusive domain of technologically advanced societies. We need to give a new meaning to empowering poor people and helping to give them voice—not as recipients of knowledge, but as contributors and protagonists of their own development” (p. viii).

The rationale of the proposal to integrate indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in the curriculum was basically to first engage and capitalize on learners’ social and cultural realms as these facilitate and inform critical thinking during lessons, and second to reclaim Africa’s cultural and traditional norms and values which form the context of indigenous children’s classroom learning. The proposal to integrate IK culminated, in 1998, into the launch of Indigenous Knowledge for Development Program (IKDP) to help learn from community based knowledge systems and development practices, which were then incorporated into Bank supported programs. In this paper the ‘basic literacy skills of reading’ are exclusive of formal reading and strictly denote informal reading skills development.

We should note that IK empowers children to learn with understanding and to interact (Vygotsky, 1978) not only among themselves but also the teachers during educational processes.
Empowerment and learning with understanding make more meaning if there is a strong link between home and school (Reese & Gallimore, 2000), which in our view is only possible by delivering lessons relevant to learners’ cultures, consequently making such lessons contextualized, thus improving learning. In their observation, Nomlomo and Sosibo (2016) advance that “there is limited use of folktales and traditional songs both at home and at school due to a number of factors such as urbanization and the influence of television” (p. 109). This is challenging as learners who lack cultural knowledge on a curriculum topic are weak as they lack the basis, in the form of IK, grounded in their cultures to perform. Children need such knowledge as it facilitates the link between old (traditional) and new knowledge (scientific). It is difficult to achieve the reading skills without a strong cultural reading base in the form of stories, songs and folktales, etc. As a result, today’s classrooms are overwhelmed by learners who cannot read up to Grade 4 (Makuwa, 2004) due to lack of reading base informed by their traditional or cultural practices.

Despite learner-centred learning being the norm during lessons in Namibia, the learning content still expresses a Eurocentric tone and thus not relevant to children’s socio cultural knowledge base. As a result, the IK of the children, which is their impetus to meaningful learning and the genesis of literacy skills (Vygotsky, 1978) in general and the reading skills in particular, are sidelined thus creating slow learners out of them. Additionally, the art of disseminating cultural knowledge to children through poems, folklore and songs, as cultural artefacts, is a subject of extinction in our schooling communities posing a serious threat to children’s development of grassroots reading skills, the basis of acquiring the formal reading skills. This knowledge gap is concerning as it has negative implications for both meaningful teaching and learning in the classrooms. For example, learners will first be unaware of the different traditional literacy transmission tools and their significance, and second, there will be absence of interactive learning among learners and teachers due to a lack of basis on which to argue and make meaningful contributions in the classroom (Namibia MoE, 2015). Therefore, given the understanding that IK is a key to promote children’s reading skills, this paper sought to answer the following research questions:

**RQ 1.** How does IK help to promote the basic reading skills of preprimary learners in Zambezi Region of Namibia?
RQ 2. What is the importance of IK inclusion in the preprimary literacy curriculum in Namibia?

Drawing on conceptual understanding of IK and the fact that it is culturally and environmentally based, this article engages literature that is responsive to the above targeted research questions.

**Literature Review**

Literature confirms that reading is contextual and situated in learners’ cultures (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, the cultural situatedness of concepts serves as a drive that enables learners to read and internalize words much easier (Mukwambo, Mhakure & Sitwala, 2020). Any concept children are not aware in their sociocultural environments unfortunately delays acquisition and internalization of the reading skills (Vygotsky, 1978) and this clearly manifests in learners’ performances during teaching and learning processes. Therefore, a child as a sociocultural being, who should be using all possible sociocultural tools and avenues to read, may find it difficult to read a concept alien to his/her cultural environment (UNESCO, 1968: cited in Mukwambo, et al., 2020). Introducing alien concepts during reading lessons, concepts absent from learners’ memories for imitation purposes, also creates a gap or misfit between home and school (Reeves & Gallimore, 2000), and may culminate in learners advancing to senior grades (in this case from preprimary to grade 1 and beyond) with poor reading competences (Makuwa, 2004). In their argument, McKeough, Bird, Tourigny, Romaine, Graham, Ottman and Jeary (2008) claim that for the curriculum to be culturally appropriate, it should endeavor to incorporate practices of the tribe worth imitating (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, “children’s home and social practices should be reflected in all literacy instructional programmes” (McKeough et. al., 2008: 149) in an effort to make literacy instruction culturally relevant. What it implies therefore is that a culturally sensitive curriculum should have programmes that encourage learners’ weaving of cultural experiences into their learning. The fact that (1) central to this paper is IK which is socially and culturally situated, and that (2) this article is critical to this era of educational transformation where IK is hoped to be used as a tool to strengthen meaningful teaching and learning, the paper uses
the Sociocultural Theory to unearth the fit between home and school in relation to the promotion of preprimary learners’ reading skills.

Nomlomo and Sosibo (2016: 112) claim that “concerning literacy teaching, social constructivism values the variety of literacies acquired by children from the surrounding environment through informal interactions such as talks, play, folklore, etc., which occur mainly through the children’s first languages”. Bodrova and Leong (2007), and Vygotsky (1978) perceive talks, play, and folklore as external mediators that assist to advance and develop children’s reading skills. Thus, when children contribute to their own learning on the basis of their cultural knowledge, it simply shows that they come to class with knowledge from their homes and are thus not ‘blank minded’ or ‘tabula rasa’. It is this knowledge that should accompany efforts to developing children’s reading skills. In his argument, Vygotsky (1978) advances that children should be accorded the opportunity to make a contribution to their own learning as this facilitates understanding and internalization of learned content. Here we want to argue first that since schools are social institutions co-founded by the communities in socio-cultural setups, and second, that curriculum development is done in consultation with communities as stakeholders in education, any engagement by a school should take cognizance of home as an institution where learning starts from. This implies that the development of children’s reading skills and related concepts should be congruent with and augmented by children’s home and cultural practices as appropriate literacy events cannot be culture or context free (Hammer & Miccio, 2004: 2). To this end and in support of the above view, Curry, Reeves and McIntyre (2016) urge schools and homes to work together to strengthen the promotion of children’s acquisition of basic reading skills.

**The Benefit of Interacting Through Stories**

Telling children traditional stories could also make up for this as through stories children are unconsciously introduced to letter symbols and their sounds, word pronunciation as well as language development thus generating skills essential for reading (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2011). Learners should be given the opportunity to imitate parts of the story in an effort to unintentionally reinforce their mastery of letter sounds and word pronunciation skills. According to Vygotsky (1978),
children find it easier to learn and internalize new things when they *imitate* what adults say and do.

Strengthening this view, Learning Without Tears (2021: 1) contend that “literacy development is about sounds and language” necessary for reading. A teacher may tell children a story about how people used ‘lukuku’, a cultural artefact, used to catch fish and when brought to class acts as a mediating tool to facilitate the promotion of basic reading skills acquisition in a preprimary class. This benefits children in terms of vocabulary from the story; and in the process learners are allowed to touch the tool to strengthen their cultural experience of the artefact. Thus, as Bartlett (2004: 5) puts it, “cultural artefacts play an important role in the formation of all literacies.” This translates into stories providing a “sociocultural and historical account of the community knowledge from elders to youth, ensuring its survival with new generations” (McKeough et al., 2008: 151). Furthermore, McKeough et al. (2008) in their observation expressed great interest in oral storytelling by both teachers and learners as it is a precursor to reading in all cultures and traditions.

Moreover, the teacher can use picture books where images in the picture books are based on cultural topics like family and community stories that are shared across children’s different cultures. Peterson and Robinson (2020: 14) state that “through reading these picture books with children, teachers can awaken cultural consciousness leading to respectful relationships amongst all peoples”. The images should have well defined cultural knowledge and principles which can help to grow the reading skills of children. It can be a picture of ‘My family’, as an external mediator of reading, where learners are asked to use their indigenous languages for concepts such as mother, father, etc. In Zambezi Region, Namibia for example, the word ‘mother’, etc., generates many different words in other regional dialects as in Table 1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subiya Dialect</th>
<th>Sifwe Dialect</th>
<th>Mbalangwe Dialect</th>
<th>Siyeyi Dialect</th>
<th>Totela Dialect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bamayo</td>
<td>Bama/ma</td>
<td>Ima</td>
<td>Mango</td>
<td>Mayo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1*  
*The Word Mother in Different Zambezi Language Dialects*
Table 1 demonstrates an all-encompassing and inclusive classroom where all the learners feel accommodated as it is cross pollination of concepts culminating in hybridizing learning. Table 1 further illuminates that children own lots of cultural knowledge worth sharing in academic setups. The teacher should thus understand that it is learners’ background knowledge, which is grounded in their cultures as cultural practices that facilitates their classroom learning and capturing of basic reading skills. This also informs learners that a concept in one’s culture comes in a different form in another language dialect. On this basis Mukwambo et al. (2020:15) reason that:

A sociocultural approach to learning emphasizes the socially negotiated and embedded nature of meaning making and how children use the cognitive mediating tools of their cultural community, namely, their mother tongue, model reflecting how they learn the idea.

We use Mukwambo et al.’s (2020) citation to argue that children are taught to read concepts congruent with their home practices, as already cited in this article, read such concepts with minimal challenges as they use their cultures as the basis to learn to read. Thus, language as a component of culture embedded with knowledge as Spencer-Oatey (2012) suggests plays a critical role in conveying cultural practices like concepts as well as models reflecting how learners learn to read such concepts. Therefore, “through investigating what parents believe about how children learn to read at home, the knowledge of home literacy practices can be understood while designing literacy activities” (Henock, 2014: 32). Reese and Gallimore (2000) also argue that home and school not working together account for a serious discontinuation and mismatch of relationship between the two institutions and thus not health for literacy development. These views are further consolidated by Curry, Reeves and McIntyre (2016: 70) whose understanding is that “in order to understand the influence of family literacy, it is critical that we gain a broader perspective regarding the specific literacy practices that impact achievement”.

This is true drawing on an informal chat we had with an 83-year-old man regarding how they used to know in the olden days whether all their livestock were present or not on a daily basis. He indicated that they relied on the colour, and size of the animals. They mastered the colour concepts of white, black, etc. as well as the
size concepts of big, small, medium, old, etc. These concepts are read unconsciously without realizing they are constituted by letter symbols. When a child formally meets these concepts in school, it may be easier to recall them based on both their cultural encounter and physical engagement with the concepts at home. Furthermore, the 83-year-old man stated that culturally, reading was also through signs or marks. For example, when a hunter killed an animal and could not carry the carcass home alone, they would go to a nearby village to seek assistance, but before doing so, would mark the place to avoid confusion when they return. The mark represented a particular concept in language which only he was able to read suggesting that each culture has its own unique way of reading words and texts (The World Bank, 1998). Given the understanding that IK is a key to learn reading, Namibia’s preprimary curriculum supports the integration of IK with the hope and purpose to assist with the promotion of preprimary learners’ basic reading skills.

**Theoretical Background**

Founded on the principle of participatory teaching and learning, the Namibian preprimary curriculum is premised in Lev Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory and is thus culturally oriented. The curriculum’s cultural coherence is defined by key phrases like learner-centred education, relevance and meaningfulness for children, mother tongue, cooperative and collaborative learning (Namibia MoE, 2015), all of which locate learning in the child’s context and culture as the basis and starting points for effective literacy learning. Namibia MoE (2015) argues that locating the “child’s learning within the child’s context help children understand why they are doing what they are doing” (Sic) (p. 4). In Namibia, locating learning within the child’s cultural context is highly supported, and this is done through some of the preprimary teaching themes as in Table 2 below:

**Table 2**
* Culturally Compliant Themes (Adapted from the Namibian Preprimary Teachers’ Manual, Namibia MoE, 2015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My Family (Theme 3) Term 1</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The overarching purpose of these themes in Table 2 above is to show the chemistry between home and school and how the two institutions complement each other in the classroom setup. An asterisk in the table signifies the curriculum’s consciousness of the link between ‘Home’ (through the themes: My Family, My Home & My Community) and ‘School’ (through the theme: My School) and the value it attaches to IK through community participation in the learning process in general and in basic reading skills development in particular. Across all of the themes, the curriculum puts emphasis on stories, and songs that are contextual to children. In their case study on how IK helped to develop reading skills of children through family literacy participation, Morrow and Young’s study (1997: cited in Willis, 2000: 741) established that:

“When developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive literacy activities are used in schools and homes; when parents are included and involved in the planning; when homework assigned requires parental involvement, the literacy achievement of participants is highly likely to increase. It seems as if this collaboration of home and school doing similar processes could have been the reason for its (the program’s) success. Teachers admitted that they had not realized how important such a program was in bringing parents, students, and teachers together in working toward the literacy development of children”.

Therefore, “for children to understand fully and remember what they have learned, whether it is related to promoting reading or numeracy, the information must be meaningful to the child’s context and to the child’s experiences and development” (Namibia MoE, 2015: 10).

**Procedure and Methods**

**Research Design**

This paper used a qualitative research design and took the form of an interpretive case study. There are key reasons for our choice of this design. The first reason was to develop a deeper understanding of how
IK can help to promote the basic reading skills of preprimary learners, and second, to come to terms with basic classroom realities regarding IK integration during preprimary learners’ promotional and preparatory reading activities. We found this understanding to be very critical to teachers as it redeems them (teachers) from the burden of teaching children who do not seem to establish the meaning of what they learn, thus making the attainment of targeted objectives unrealizable.

Participants

The sample consisted of three female preprimary teachers from three different preprimary schools in Zambezi region of Namibia. All the teachers were purposively sampled from urban schools in Katima Mulilo Urban Constituency of the Zambezi region of Namibia, with ages ranging from 25–33 years old. This sampling technique was critical to this research as it enabled us to bring on board “persons that had specific characteristics” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012: 215) to partake in this study.

Data Collection

We used 3 data collection methods, for example, interview, lesson observation, and document analysis. Then we developed data collection tools (to enable us to collect data in the field) per data collection method as follows: an Interview Schedule to collect interview data; an Observation Checklist to collect lesson observation data, and a Document Analysis tool to collect document analysis data. These instruments, which created three different perspectives, gave rise to three data sets that assisted us to triangulate, validate and to understand ‘how IK helps to promote preprimary learners’ reading skills in Zambezi region, Namibia.’

Results

Here we presented results of the study as per the following trajectory/data perspectives/based on three data sets as follows:

(I). Data From Interviews

We interviewed three participants to establish their position on ‘How IK promotes the basic reading skills of preprimary learners in Zambezi Region, Namibia, as well as why it is important to include
elements of IK in the preprimary curriculum.’ The researchers called upon research participants to exercise objectivity as much as possible when sharing their views on the questions for unprejudiced or unbiased conclusions. Their answers to the two questions are presented as Perspectives 1–3, starting with the first research question and then second one, with use of pseudonyms, such as T1 for Teacher 1, T2 for Teacher 2 and T3 for Teacher 3 respectively as follows:

Question 1: How does IK help to develop the basic reading skills of preprimary learners in Zambezi region, Namibia?

The three participants answered the above question as follows:

Perspective 1 [T1]

“That is a very important question, for example, lets’ take language. We bring in stories; we bring them as case studies. The stories that we bring in have the context of the concept which you want to teach. So when we bring these case study stories, metaphors, similes and even analogues which are in the community, we select them purposefully to enable a learner to have his reading or numeracy skills to be developed thoroughly”. These help answer Research Question 1 as this will be shown further in the data analysis section. This is also supported by Mukwambo, Mhakure and Sitwala (2020) who also brought the same theme of seeing case study stories, metaphors, similes and even analogues as mediating tools but in their case it was in scientific literacy and numeracy.

Perspective 2 [T2]

“The text should be related to the society’s indigenous knowledge. We look for texts that communicate indigenous knowledge and that is where reading activities come from”. There is similarity with Perspective 1 and this still enables answering how IK helps to develop the basic reading skills of children.

Perspective 3 [T3]

‘Through imitating; they imitate another person; they start with sounds before identifying letters.’ It is clear when children imitate certain parts of a story they attain certain skills which develop their basic reading skills. Vygotsky (1978) believes that children internalize learning content easily when they imitate what others say and do.

Question 2: What is the importance of IK inclusion in the preprimary literacy curriculum?’

Regarding the above question, participants had the following to say:
Perspective 1 \([T^1]\): You decolonize the curriculum by using contextualized cultural artefacts; there are cultural artefacts which you bring into the curriculum.

Perspective 2 \([T^2]\): Indigenous knowledge of every community must be preserved by including it in the curriculum so that it is passed on from one generation to the next generation.

Perspective 3 \([T^3]\): It helps learners to develop their skills as all language skills are integrated.

The above responses all address and embrace contextualized and situated learning content in an effort to answer Research Question 2 on the importance of including IK in the preprimary curriculum. Namibia MoE (2015) argues that contextual teaching and learning facilitates understanding of learned content.

(2). Data From Document Analysis

The idea was to look out for segments of IK like traditional stories, folktales, and poems, etc. as cultural artefacts in the curriculum. The preprimary curriculum supports learners’ cultures and backgrounds as back-ups for effective learning in the modern literacy learning classroom (Vygotsky, 1978; Namibia MoE, 2015). Analysis of the preprimary curriculum revealed that Namibia’s preprimary curriculum is based on Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory just like the theory that shapes this article. Therefore, data from the preprimary curriculum shows cultural segments in the form of stories, folktales, rhymes and songs addressed under different themes. The curriculum also emphasizes language as an element of culture, learner centered learning as a product of societal experiences and learning through play, where learners share various sociocultural practices (Namibia MoE, 2015). This implies that teachers will have to critically think about and introduce songs and stories that are relevant to learners’ cultural practices. According to McKeough et al. (2008), children’s home and “social practices should be reflected in all literacy instructional programmes” (p. 149) in an effort to make literacy instruction culturally relevant.

For a story like Gingerbread Boy, also featuring prominently in the curriculum (Namibia MoE, 2015), but is not Afrocentric, teachers will have to adapt to counter a misfit between home and school (Reese & Gallimore, 2000), and to bring in something that communicates learners’ cultural realities in the classroom to hybridize the development of learners’ basic reading skills.
(3). Data From Lesson Observation

The researchers’ anticipation was to observe congruence between interview data and classroom practice. In other words, the researchers wished to observe to see if views expressed and shared during interviews, possibly extending into classroom practice, were implemented and how this was done. Teachers subjected to observation were urged to be calm and to teach naturally and honestly as possible without being superficial. This observation took place in Term 1 when all of the teachers in this study were on Theme 1 which addressed the Story of Gingerbread Boy. The teachers, pseudonym T¹ for Teacher 1, T² for Teacher 2 and T³ for Teacher 3, all taught their topics differently, but in a similar style. They all told their learners the story of Gingerbread boy verbatim without any adaptation and later resorted to asking them questions like, “What did Gingerbread boy do? Who chased Gingerbread boy and why?”. Learners were simply asked questions based on the story without asking them (learners) to tell their own stories, which would have helped them to develop their phonological awareness skills, one of the precursors of literacy development, through speaking (McKeough et al., 2008).

Discussion

This study revealed that though teachers during interviews supported IK as a catalyst in developing preprimary learners’ basic reading skills (for example, “So when we bring these stories, metaphors, similes and even analogues which are in the community, we select them purposefully to enable a learner to have his literacy or numeracy skills to be developed”. Perspective (1); “The text should be related to the society’s indigenous knowledge”, Perspective (2), such views were not complementary as they were contrary to lesson observation data. This was despite the mentioned mediating tools of stories, etc. revealing how IK helps to promote the basic reading skills of preprimary learners in Zambezi region, Namibia. This implies however that teacher’ interview claims, as expressed in the three Perspectives above as well as document analysis claims of using stories, rhymes and songs, were not reflected in teachers’ classroom practices and pedagogy. Practice was overwhelmed by general pedagogy that did not engage children in culturally relevant stories and songs. In other words, teaching was generic and in some
cases of a Eurocentric nature, featuring Eurocentric stories (like the Gingerbread boy, for example) which did not mean anything to children as such stories were abstract and out of learners’ contexts hence the theme ‘inconsistency of what teachers said versus both classroom practice and curriculum stipulation’ strongly emerging from all collected data as a cross cutting theme. This is in opposition to Hammer and Miccio’s (2004) claim that inclusion of case studies, similes, analogies or metaphors connoting knowledge in IK enhances reading literacy acquisition. Teachers’ use of Eurocentric material was despite their call, during interview, to decolonize the curriculum and to preserve IK saying, “You decolonize the curriculum by using contextualized cultural artefacts (Perspective 1); “Indigenous knowledge of every community must be preserved by including it in the curriculum so that it is passed on from one generation to the next generation” (Perspective 2), etc. This lack of data consistency gave rise to gaps between home and school. It is on this basis that Reese and Gallimore (2000) advise that home and school should work together to avoid a serious discontinuation and mismatch of relationship between the two institutions which may jeopardize some fertile ground for children’s basic literacy development. This stance is also supported by Namibia MoE (2015) through themes, (see Table 2 above) expressing the inseparability between the institutions of home and school and that gaping them may have serious consequences for learning with absolute understanding as it has grave implications for learners’ developing basic reading skills on the basis of their cultural knowledge. It has further been established that teachers’ use of stories, as per their interview claim, was unconscious as no indicator in their teaching pointed to basic reading skills development.

According to McKeough et al. (2008), there is a need not only to overstep children’s home and social practices in literacy instructional programmes in an effort to make literacy instruction culturally relevant but also easier to achieve. The study further revealed that learners were not challenged to tell own stories, but kept listening to the teacher which in the view of the researchers limited learners’ development of their phonological awareness skills, which comes through oracy. Research claims that oral storytelling by both teachers and learners is a precursor to literacy skills development in all cultures and traditions (McKeough et al., 2008; Vygotsky, 1978). Overall, the lessons did not in any effort aim to awaken the cultural consciousness of children through
use of any means like pictures, for example. According to Bodrova and Leong (2007: 56), children’s use of pictures helps them to “model real life relationships”. Vygotsky (1978) supports the idea of modelling but he however prefers to refer to this as imitating. The view of introducing a story through pictures is further supported by Peterson and Robinson (2020) that it is through reading pictures with children that their cultural consciousness is awakened. The study concluded that there was a lack of alignment between theory and practice resulting in preprimary learners’ basic reading skills development literally compromised due to absence of proper use of stories, etc. as literacy development cultural artefacts.

**Conclusions**

IK inspires the internalization of different language skills of listening, speaking and writing in general as well as reading in particular. This implies that the development of children’s basic reading skills is situated in the cultural realms and practices of different learner communities. Stories as buds from where children’s knowledge of letter sounds grow (Vygotsky, 1978), which are the precursors of reading, are the genesis of and aide preprimary learners’ development of their basic reading skills. Therefore, the relationship between home and school should not at all be ignored not only during teaching, but during curriculum design as well. It should be ensured that home as a key role player is not divorced from school activities in an effort to have an IK-laden preprimary curriculum that facilitates meaningful promotion of acquisition of the reading skills by preprimary learners. To sum up, more and more research in the area of IK versus reading development should be conducted to bridge this existing gap between home and school.

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АНОТАЦІЯ
Мета. Крізь призму соціокультурної теорії Льва Виготського про те, як діти розвивають навички грамотності, ця стаття досліджує, як знання корінних народів (КН) сприяють набуттю базових навичок читання в початкових класах у регіоні Замбезі, Намібія. Ми вважаємо це дуже важливим, оскільки базові знання дітей відіграють ключову роль у набутті нових навичок, і базові навички читання не є винятком. Таким чином, зміст навчання і потенційні навчальні здібності дітей ґрунтуються на їхніх знаннях про навколишнє середовище, під якими ми розуміємо соціальні та екологічні фактори, що мотивують до навчання, і на які вони спираються.

Матеріали та методи. Дані для цієї статті були отримані шляхом проведення особистих інтерв’ю з трьома вчителями початкових класів, спостереження за занятями, щоб побачити, як вони включають елементи ІК у свої заняття з навчання дітей читання, а також шляхом аналізу навчальної програми початкової школи, що включає сегменти ІК як ілюстрацію її (ІК) значення у сприянні оволодінню читанням учнями початкових класів у регіоні Замбезі в Намібії.

Результати. Ключове питання, на яке намагалося дати відповідь це дослідження, було таким: “Як знання корінних народів сприяють оволодінню читанням у початкових класах у регіоні Замбезі в Намібії?”. Це ключове питання було досліджено та отримано відповіді на наступні підпитання: “Як ІК допомагає розвивати базові навички читання в учнів початкових класів у регіоні Замбезі в Намібії?”, “Яке значення має включення ІК у програму навчання дошкільної грамотності?”.

Висновки. Дослідження показало, що педагоги розуміють концепцію ІК і те, як вона сприяє розвитку навичок читання у дітей дошкільного віку, хоча це не може бути застосовано на їхніх заняттях, що призводить до значних розбіжностей між даними інтерв’ю, спостереженнями за занятями та даними аналізу програми для дітей дошкільного віку.

Ключові слова: діти дошкільного віку, учні початкових класів, читання, навички читання.