

MAKERERE



UNIVERSITY

**DIFFICULTIES IN COMPREHENSION AMONG LEARNERS LEARNING ENGLISH
AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN UGANDA: A SCHEMA THEORETIC
APPROACH**

BY

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the work in this dissertation is my own, except for the quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged. The dissertation has not been accepted for any or has it been submitted anywhere for publication.

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Approval

This is to certify that **Nakaayi Amina**, Registration Number **2016/HD03/1790U** has completed this research study under my guidance and supervision and is ready for submission to the Directorate of Research and Graduate training, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Masters in Linguistics of Makerere University.

Dr. Bayiga Florence

Signature: 

Date: 

Dedication

I dedicate this book to my mother who chose and started this journey for me. Thank you HajjatNabunya Sarah Wavamuno for my first lessons, where you taught me how to write my name and the English Alphabet which rendered me a very intelligent girl when I started school.

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to investigate the difficulties which affect comprehension of texts by learners of English as a foreign language in Uganda. It also reflects on the analysis of how their past language experiences are related to the difficulties they face in comprehension and how these past language experiences generally aid the comprehension process. In addition, it established the learners' competence in reading, writing speaking, listening and understanding of English language and analyzed how these competences relate to their past language experiences.

Twenty learners of English as a foreign language at Makerere University in the intermediate level provided data which was collected in three different categories. Competences in reading were tested by a written text which is named Text A while competences in listening were tested by an oral text which was read to them and they responded orally, it was named Text B. The past language experiences were collected using a language portrait which they shaded and after orally described the choice of their colors, the size of the shading and the parts chosen to shade. A transcription of the oral data was done which was used in the analysis. Data was analyzed using the triangulation method where the language experiences were related to the competences of the learners in the different skills including understanding or comprehension and the difficulties, they face in the comprehension process.

The study established that past language experiences play a key role in the comprehension process of learners of English as a foreign language as stated by MC Vee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005:556).

“We build our (schematic) understandings of the world on the basis of our embodied and socially mediated transactions with the world. These transactions with others are critical in the formation and continued development of mind. Our individual schematic understandings thus emerge from, but are not reducible to, our sociocultural transactions with others.”

Therefore instructors of learners of English as a foreign language should pay close attention to the experiences learners bring to the classroom, so that, as stated in the above quotation, comprehension is achieved from the interaction between knowledge in the memory or background knowledge of the learner and the information in the text. This will render the comprehension process during learning of English as a foreign language easier and quicker as is

the aim of reading or listening to a text. One who comprehends texts in a language is the one who has learnt that language.

Comprehension of English as a foreign language cannot easily be arrived at by only knowing how to read and hear various words. It goes beyond to include having a deep and regular attachment with English. It involves studying intensively where attention is given to every detail including vocabulary, grammar and contextual usage of language which will allow learners to relate to the various experiences in the world. In juxtaposition with schema theory, this will enrich the learners' memory store with experiences that will aid smooth comprehension.

Chapter One

1.0 Introduction

This study focused on comprehension of English as a foreign language. It investigated the difficulties that hinder a successful comprehension process among learners of English as a foreign language in Uganda. Learners of English as a foreign language at Makerere University provided their past language experiences with the view that they are the ground cause of the difficulties. In addition, learners' competencies in five skills, that is; reading, writing, speaking, listening and understanding were established. The experiences and the competencies in the five language skills were analyzed through the schema theory lenses, to provide in depth conclusions about their contribution to the difficulties learners of English as a foreign language face in the comprehension process.

1.1 Background

In Uganda, English is the main medium of instruction at all levels of education and it is taught as a subject in schools and universities (*NCDC & Kasozi ABK 2017: 14*). English is also the official medium of communication (*The Constitution of The Republic of Uganda 1995/2005*). It is important to note that in Uganda, English is largely used as a second language.

Ellis and Tomlinson (1992:1-2) say that a speaker of English as a second language usually lives in a country where English is not the native language of the indigenous inhabitants, however it is frequently used as a medium of communication between speakers of different native languages, used as the language of particular activities such as education, commerce and politics and they can learn it when they are not at school. The speaker of English as a foreign language on the other hand, is usually taught English as a subject at school, and lives in a country where English is not normally used. He/she does not usually learn English from his/her parents and does not use it as a means of communication with his/her parents or in the community where he/she lives, this clearly describes the participants in this study. For this reason, he/she finds learning English challenging compared to those who learn it as a second language.

On 26th May 2004 Sudan signed the Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement (article 2:8:3) making Arabic its national language and English the official language. This was officially passed

in 2008 by the National Assembly. South Sudanese who were speaking a form of Arabic and Dinka up to 2011 when they got independence chose English as their official language (BBC News Magazine, 8th. 10. 2011 & Sudan Watch 9th.10.2011). Somalia uses Arabic and Somali. Rwanda used Kinyarwanda and French up to 2008 when English was introduced as an official language (20th.11. 2008, 12:00 pm et n p r heard on tell me more). Burundi used only Kirundi and French up to 28thAugust, 2014 when English was introduced (IWACU English News, 17th/9/2014). Congo uses French and Lingala (The Independent, 29th/ 04/ 2017) and English is taught as a foreign language (World Englishes, 22rd/. 02/ 2012), in China, they basically used standard mandarin as the national language alongside three hundred indigenous languages belonging to five families (**Maria, 2017:15**) until an official policy was passed in 2001(Bolton &Graddol, 2012:5) in which English was introduced in the education system. This policy stated that English was to be taught to children of eight or nine years up to grade three of the national education system (Bolton *et el*, 2012:5). Japanese is the language that is predominantly used in Japan but in 2003 they needed to contribute in the global economic activities so they promoted the teaching of English as an international language (Hatori, 2005:55-56). Arabic is the official language in Yemen and English is taught as a foreign language (Mondar& Pawar, 2020:28, Liar, 2017:6).

Eritrea has a bilingual official language policy (Berceteab& Sweeten 2009:36) where Arabic and Tigrigna are used as official languages alongside nine other local languages with English as a foreign language (Hailemariam, Kroon & Walters, 1999:487). Due to the desire to interact internationally, in 2010 a policy was passed where local languages were to be used as a medium of instruction in lower primary, and English in post primary hence the increasing need to learn English language (UNICEF:2017). Chad has 120 indigenous languages with two official languages; that is; French which is the language of education and administration and Arabic as the language of commerce (Safotso, 2018:1). English is learnt as a foreign language in secondary, however in 2003 it became a prerequisite of getting employment and this prompted many to start learning it (Safotso, 2018:1).

Uganda has one of the highly rated universities in Africa, Makerere University (*Daily monitor*12/10/2016). It is therefore expected that Makerere University offers a credible education curriculum, has qualified lecturers/teachers and a commendable practice of imparting knowledge and skills to the learners. This expectation attracts learners from neighboring countries to come to Uganda, for their education including the learning of English language. The people that come to learn English in Uganda are from African countries such as, South Sudan, Congo, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Chad, Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Egypt; and outside Africa from countries like Oman, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, China, and Japan where languages other than English are used.

English being an official language in Uganda (Tembe& Norton, 2016:6, Wagaba, 2014:98), it is a prerequisite to getting a professional employment; this is why it is taught at all levels of education in Uganda (Tembe& Norton 2016:16). English as a foreign language is also offered as a short course at Makerere University under the Institute of languages especially to foreign learners (Foreign languages conference, 2014:49). The minimum qualification for one to teach English at a higher level is a bachelor's degree although a Masters and PhD are most preferred. Qualifications of a teacher affect learners' proficiency in a language that is why a qualified teacher must be proficient in English language, where proficiency entails having a perfect mastery of the content (Nabudde, 2007: 24-26) in addition to pedagogical knowledge and discourse skills (Nalinya, 2018: 22, Richards, 2017:5).

Comprehension has been defined in different ways by various people. It is defined by RRS&G & Snow (2002:11) as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. Joseph and Torgersen (2006) define comprehension as, the construction of meaning of a written text through a reciprocal interchange of ideas between the reader and the message in a particular text. They add that comprehension entails three elements, that is; the reader (the capacities, abilities, knowledge, and experiences that a person brings to the act of reading) who is doing the comprehension, the text that is to be comprehended, and the activity in which comprehension is a part (include the purposes, processes, and consequences associated with the act of reading). According to Chandran and Shah (2019:1), comprehension is about the understanding of what the communicator is communicating and to Santi *et al* (2021:3) comprehension refers to a process of obtaining and carrying the meaning of something. Therefore, this study defines comprehension as the process

of constructing meaning from the text through interaction of the reader's experience with the experience in the text.

Comprehension requires the reader (Gough, Hoover & Peterson 1996:10) to derive the intended meaning, through disambiguating words and sentences in a text (Gough *et al* 1996:1). However, studies on comprehending English indicate that, this is achieved when the reader activates his background knowledge to allow assimilation and relating information, so that they can infer and derive meaning (Cornoldi&Oakhil 1996:7& Warren 2016). With the above processes successful, the learner's goal when reading or listening to any material which is to grasp ideas quickly and easily is achieved. Santi *et al* (2021:3) argues that learners' comprehension facilitates the acquisition and learning of new information which makes it vital in learning foreign languages. By connecting information in the text to the background information in the memory, comprehension takes place. Where this connection fails comprehension may not be attained (Thuraisingam, 2017:2)

Background knowledge is a construct that is got from the transaction between the individual and the society (Mcvee, Dunsmore &Gavelek, 2005:555). This transaction is mediated by culturally and socially enacted practices carried out through material and ideal artifacts (Mcvee, *et al*, 2005:556), therefore it is a social cultural construct (Mcvee, *et al*, 2005:550). It is formed from the relationships among and across experiences, actions, talk, people and all sorts of culturally situated knowledge got from more knowledgeable others (Mcvee, *et al*, 2005:541). This means that as an individual interacts with the society, he learns new knowledge which constitutes the background knowledge. As he continues to interact with the world, he uses this knowledge to explain his society, thus the saying, background knowledge is shaped by and shapes the society (Mcvee, *et al*, 2005:533). Thus, background knowledge changes with the changing society as it changes the society.

Background knowledge is the structure that facilitates retrieval of text information from memory and permits reconstruction of elements that were not learned or have been forgotten (Mcvee *et al*, 2005:534). If this process is not successful, comprehension does not take place (Mcvee *et al* 2005: 554).

This study takes interest in investigating the difficulties that hinder the activation of the background knowledge and all the other processes like assimilation, etc, during the comprehension of English language among learners of English as a foreign language who have diverse linguistic backgrounds.

1.2 Statement of the Problem.

The main purpose of reading and listening is to comprehend the text. Comprehension is about understanding what the communicator is communicating (Chandran and Shah, 2019:1), without comprehension, reading and listening would be empty and meaningless. When learners read and listen to texts in any language they expect to understand them easily and clearly (Doty & Ross 1981: 2). However, learners learning English as a foreign language, face notable difficulties in comprehension (Clarke, Snowling, Truelove & Hulme, 2010: 1106, Namugenyi, 2019:1, Rwamwenge et al., 2020:2 and Slocum, Street & Gilberts, 1995: 378)

As a teacher of English, I have interacted with foreign learners in Uganda who can read and hear English but have difficulties comprehending it. Sometimes they comprehend one word in a sentence or a sentence in a story but fail to relate ideas and infer additional meaning from what is stated in the text.

Therefore, there was need to investigate the difficulties pertaining to comprehension among learners of English as a foreign language in Uganda, in particular learners learning English as a foreign language at the Centre for Language and Communication Services, Makerere University. This study investigated these learners' past language experiences and explained how the relationship between these experiences and the difficulties they face in a text affect comprehension.

1.3. General Objective

The main objective of this study was to investigate the difficulties which affect comprehension of texts by learners of English as a foreign language in Uganda.

1.4. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study were:

1. To identify the difficulties learners learning English as a foreign language face during comprehension.
2. To establish the past language experiences of learners learning English as a foreign language.
3. To analyze the ways in which past language experiences affect comprehension of learners learning English as a foreign language

1.5. Research Questions

1. What difficulties do learners learning English as a foreign language face during comprehension?
2. What are the past language-experiences of learners learning English as a foreign language?
3. How do past language experiences of learners affect their comprehension of English language?

1.6. Significance of the Study

It will unveil the difficulties learners learning English as a foreign language go through in the comprehension process.

Secondly, the study was expected to extend awareness towards English teachers about the barriers that hinder learners from comprehending English, some which could be within their power to solve, and thus motivate them to adjust their instruction skills to deal with the differences in cognitive abilities.

Thirdly, as an English language teacher, the researcher believed that conducting this study would improve her English instruction skills and thus increase her competence in teaching the English language to both nationals and internationals in Uganda.

1.7. Justification of the Study

Uganda is a hub for teaching English to people from different countries and with different language backgrounds. Basing on their varying backgrounds both social and linguistic, they exhibit a number of difficulties during their learning of English - especially in comprehension.

Comprehension is a basic skill a person who knows a language should possess. This study aimed at; investigating and unveil the difficulties learners of English as a foreign language face in comprehension. This will help to improve on the learning and teaching of English to foreign learners in Uganda.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This covers the content, geographical and time scopes as shown below:

1.8.1 Content Scope

The content scope of the study was limited to the research objectives. This implied that the content covered was limited to: the difficulties learners learning English as a foreign language in Uganda faced during comprehension; the past language experiences of learners learning English as a foreign language in Uganda; the ways in which past language experiences affected comprehension of learners learning English as a foreign language in Uganda; and other factors that posed a challenge to the comprehension of English among foreign learners in Uganda.

1.8.2 Geographical Scope

The study was conducted at the Centre for Language and Communication Services at Makerere University, which instructs learners in both local and foreign languages. Its interaction with learners learning English as a foreign language is the reason why it was selected as the geographical scope for the study.

1.8.3 Time Scope

The study was conducted between April and August 2018. The researcher purposively selected 20 respondents from the intermediate level of English language class at the Centre. Each participant painted a language portrait and attended to two texts written in English language; one of the texts was orally responded to and the other was responded to in writing.

1.9 Definition of Key Operational Terms

Comprehension: Comprehension is the process of constructing meaning from the text through interaction of the reader's experience with the experience in the text.

A Foreign language is a language of another country which is not spoken in the native country of a person; it is usually learnt as a subject in school and not used in communication in one's community.

Background knowledge is a construct that is got from the transaction between the individual and the society

Culture is the total set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behavior and social habits of members of a given society. A culture of a particular group is what distinguishes it from another.

Intermediate learner is one who can talk about self, demonstrate understanding of short simple stories and is able to locate meaning of words using a dictionary (description provided by the leader of instructors at Centre for Language and Communication Services)

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

Researchers are expected to demonstrate their understanding of existing research about the topics of their interest (Young, 2017:1). This is usually done with the aid of a literature review. Young (2017:2) defines a literature review as: "a description of what others have published presented in the form of summary (ies)". Snyder (2019:1) adds on to this by noting that a literature review contains existing knowledge about a research topic. In line with this, this section presents the arguments and views of different researchers and scholars about language comprehension and the concepts of foreign and second language. It also analyses some of the reasons that have been advanced for the comprehension difficulties among learners of English as a foreign language, the influence of prior knowledge of English on learning English, strategies to increase comprehension and the theoretical framework for the study. The section ends by providing a research gap.

2.1 Comprehension as a Language Skill

Numerous studies categorize comprehension as a language skill which is widely evaluated because it is the only proof that someone understands a language or a text (Cornoldi&oaklil 1996: 7). A learner's goal when reading any material written in any language is to be able to grasp ideas quickly and easily. It is not enough for a reader to understand each sentence in isolation (Ellis *et al*, 1992:141). According to Santi *et al* (2021:3), "comprehension is a process of obtaining and carrying the meaning of something". Santi *et al* (2021:3) argues that learners' comprehension facilitates the acquisition and learning of new information which makes it vital in learning foreign languages. By connecting and deriving meaning from oral and written texts, learners of English as a foreign language are able to comprehend them. Another study points out that comprehension is only successful if it results in an accurate mental representation of what is being communicated (Zhao *et al.*, 2021:1). To achieve this, learners are expected to possess good language and cognitive skills to be able to recognize the information. Zhao *et al* (2021:1) add that, language skills could fail in resulting in comprehension if the cognitive skills are poor. The

study reports that there is a direct relationship between the two skills which equally influence comprehension. Similarly, Mancilla-Martinez (2020:2) reported that in instances where students can understand oral language but cannot read written texts, then their comprehension of English language is insufficient since their comprehension does not extend to reading comprehension. The study further argued that even if the learners can read the written texts but do not understand them, then they lack comprehension abilities (Mancilla-Martinez, 2020:2). This implied that comprehension is when learners understand what they see, read or listen to and can understand the meaning being portrayed. This is what Stevens, Hall and Vaughn (2022:2) termed as "Recognition". Comprehension as a language skill starts from being able to recognize words and sentences and connecting what is being communicated in meaningful ways which results in understanding the message. Stevens *et al* (2022:2) add on that, the comprehension process; informs the learners and builds their language skill which improves their ability to recognize languages. This increases their familiarity with English language thereby improving their comprehension ability. From the discussion above comprehension is an interactive process through which meaning is constructed. As a language skill it should be achieved through the interactive process of the cognitive and the text or the language in the text. This study seeks to find out what gets in the way of this interactive process.

2.1.1 Strategies to Comprehension

It is argued by RRSg and Snow, (2002: 32-33) that to enhance comprehension, readers use strategies which enable them retain, organize, and evaluate the information they are reading. Thompson, Vaughn, Hickman-Davis and Kouzekanani (2003:223), add that, given its complexity, comprehension can only be enhanced through the use of strategies before, during, and after reading a text. Numerous strategies which can be implemented to increase the comprehension ability among learners learning English as a foreign language have been advanced and discussed by various scholars as presented below:

2.1.1.2 Background Knowledge Activation

The study of Thuraisingam (2017:2) points out that English language comprehension can be enhanced by activating background knowledge. The same study illustrates this by sharing that if students are able to associate words to things they already know, for example, baking reminding

them of how their mothers bake bread or cakes, then it becomes easier to make associations or connections to words or sentences (Thuraisingam, 2017:2). This improves their comprehension ability of the English language. This therefore implies that English language learners should find ways of introducing background knowledge activation to increase their comprehension abilities. This study seeks to find out the role of background knowledge in the comprehension process

2.1.1.3 Exposure to New Vocabulary or Information

As a way of enhancing comprehension, it is recommended that new vocabulary or information should be learnt before engaging in reading or listening activities to minimize the time required to comprehend new words (Thuraisingam, 2017:2). The study argues that comprehension is difficult when learners have to struggle to figure out new vocabulary or information since it is about connecting words and sentences logically to derive meaning from them. Christison (1998:4) also asserts that successful reading comprehension depends heavily on the readers' knowledge of meanings of individual words that appear in a text. Thus, learners learning English as a foreign language cannot comprehend texts without understanding a wide range of vocabulary and their contextual usage (Thuraisingam, 2017:2). This shows how learning of new vocabulary or information is important in enhancing comprehension. This strategy may pose difficulties as words learnt in isolation are hard to contextualize especially by learners of English as a foreign language.

2.1.1.4 Reading Techniques

Bernal and Bernal (2020:5) point out that reading techniques can also improve the comprehension abilities for learners learning English as a foreign language. The study recommends four reading practices, that is: skimming, scanning and mining. Skimming is recommended as way of understanding the general picture of a text; scanning is recommended as a way of finding ideas or necessary details about a text; and mining is recommended as a way of understanding the text structure through an in-depth analysis (Bernal and Benard, 2020:5). These reading techniques/practices coupled with others such as activation of background knowledge can improve the comprehension abilities of learners learning English as a foreign language. However, these are techniques may be effectively use by readers who are already grounded in the language and not those just learning it and as a foreign language.

2.1.1.5 Collaborative Strategic Reading

Iobidze (2019:3) proposes collaborative strategic reading as a way of enhancing comprehension since it encourages collaborative learning. According to Iobidze (2019:3), collaborative strategic reading is where learners read and comprehend as a group through social interaction. This strategy improves their interest in learning and can receive help from learners with good comprehension abilities which also enhances their comprehension skills. This strategy may be helpful as a word forgotten by one may be identified by another and at the end comprehension is achieved, but this study aimed at looking at individual difficulties since it was a qualitative study with a few participants.

2.1.1.6 Cognitive, Metacognitive and Support Strategies

Aminiet *al* (2020:4) points out that, learners can also improve their comprehension abilities through cognitive, metacognitive and support strategies. The study defines cognitive strategies as definite actions applied by learners learning English as a foreign language when working with written text (Aminiet *al.*, 2020:4). Learners can apply cognitive strategies through summarizing and paraphrasing which enables them to make correlations and derive meaning out of sentences. On the other hand, metacognitive strategies are defined as conscious or planned actions applied by learners learning English as a foreign language to facilitate their reading abilities (Aminiet *al.*, 2020:4). In this case, learners plan how they are going to read a text, monitor their reading and evaluate themselves to ensure that their comprehension is good. Lastly, support strategies are defined as guides or tools used by learners to support their comprehension ability (Aminiet *al.*, 2020:4). Learners can apply support strategies by using guides such as dictionaries or adopting strategies such as highlighting key words or underlining important sentences which they can identify by using reading strategies such as skimming or scanning. According to the above arguments, comprehension being an interactive skill requires the reader or listener to activate his/her knowledge of the English language and the content in his/her memory which then guide the processes of inferring the meaning of the text through the comprehension strategies. The strategies discussed above if applied can aid the comprehension process however if we consider

dictionaries used by learners of English as a foreign language, they may fail to make meaning out of the explanations of the vocabulary given in the dictionary to describe a word from the text

2.2 Foreign Language vs. Second Language

English as an international language is sometimes used as a cover term for English as a foreign language (Smith 1983:5). But scholars in the later years came up with the distinction between the two terms. Garcia (2013:115) argues that, an international language is a language learnt at any time by groups of people with diverse linguistic backgrounds so as to communicate and for international mobility. English as an international language is English as it is used as a contact language among speakers from different first languages (Garcia 2013:119). Due to British expansion, English was used in many countries, its ideologies and histories stuck among people leading to learning it in many nations which facilitated its position as an international language (Garcia 2013:117 and Moulin & Campos 2017: 32). It therefore aids international communication and provides a basis for cultural identification to some communities (Moulin *et al* 2017: 32).

English is an international lingua franca (Roux 2014:45) because it dominates international business, science, finance, technology, entertainment, academic and political fields, this is the reason why it is exported to many countries in and outside Europe (Moulin & Campos 2017: 32 & Roux 2014:45). English as an international Language is not based on perfection related to native proficiency (Garcia 2013:115) it is learnt to ensure mutual intelligibility among the speakers in a given social group (Moulin & Campos 2017: 39-40). Therefore, no nation has custody of English thus it belongs to no nation and to every nation at the same time. This means that speakers of English as an international language own the language and use local methods to teach and use it, (Moulin & Campos 2017: 39) the culture of a given group also determines how an international language is learnt (Moulin & Campos 2017: 40). Non native speakers are regarded as legitimate speakers of the language (Garcia 2013:117). Therefore, it can be spoken and used in any accessible way to any group of speakers or by people of diverse linguistic backgrounds as long as communication takes place (Garcia 2013:115). This has raised the number of non native speakers of English to three times the number of native speakers (Dewi 2013:3). The above discussion explains why there is an increase in the number of learners of

English language in Uganda, although they not only want to learn the language for communication but also to understand it fully.

English as an international language provides learners with tools to cope with the communication demands of the rapidly changing character of English in international settings, it has no universal rules. EIL classroom is influenced by, political and social context, that is the education institution, teachers backgrounds (their experience in the past as learners, teaching experience, exposure to one or more teaching methods), students' backgrounds which make the class unique depending on the dynamics of the students (Moulin & Campos 2017: 39).

In contrast, in EFL and ESL, learner proficiency is based on the standards of the native speakers (Garcia 2013:115) which require the learner to acquire the native like proficiency (Garcia 2013:119). While there are various categories of English speakers, it is important to note that English is a second language in Uganda but the foreign learners study it as a foreign language. This means, the learning and teaching process is guided by the native speakers' standards.

A second language on the other hand, is not indigenous but is widely spoken in a community, and is used in activities like communication among natives of different languages, education, commerce and politics. Second language learning is learning a language that is spoken in the surrounding community where it is not a native language (Yule 2006:162). In such countries, English is often used in mass media and thus, young children are often exposed to it outside school. English is learned as a second language in Uganda, Ghana, Zaire, Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi, Hong Kong, Singapore, Fiji and many more (Ellis and Tomlinson 1992:1-2).

Therefore, English is still learnt as a foreign language in a number of countries because people need to clearly communicate to all the three category of people that is native speakers, second language speakers and foreign language speakers. The desire to achieve political economic and social wellbeing internationally explains the increase in the number of foreign English language learners in Uganda.

A foreign language is a language which is not generally spoken in the surrounding community. It is not a language of the indigenous people of a country where it is used (Yule 2006: 162). A foreign language is taught in schools and colleges to people who live in a country where that particular language is not normally used. Describing English as a foreign language means that it

is not learned and is not used as a means of communication with parents or in the community in which one lives. English is learned as a foreign language in such countries as Norway, France Italy, Spain, Germany, Brazil, Zaire, Senegal and China (see Ellis and Tomlinson 1992:1-2). A learner of English as a foreign language will probably hardly know any English at all before, he receives his first English lesson at school. This means that learners of English as a foreign language are already grounded in another language at the time of learning; this study will establish the role this language plays in the learning of English language.

2.3 Comprehension among Learners of English as a Foreign Language.

2.3.1 Linguistic and Cognitive Considerations

The other factors that affect the comprehension process are the cognitive and the Linguistic factors (Alowalid, Mujiyanto&Bharati 2018:231 Zhang, 2012:559 – 560). It is important for the learner to identify and understand a word, text type, syntax as well as employ cognitive processes like summarizing, paraphrasing and others for comprehension to take place as discussed below.

2.3.1.1 Linguistic Considerations

The ability to know and recognize words has a close relationship with the development of reading comprehension ability (Alowalid, *et al* 2018:231),yet among the common comprehension difficulty faced is that to do with vocabulary (Shehu, 2015:2). Learners learning English as a foreign language often have a limited vocabulary, which makes it hard for them to understand texts with more vocabulary than what they have (Shehu, 2015:2; Nadhira&Warni, 2021:3; Hassan &Dweik, 2021:2). It is also argued that learners struggle to understand homonyms, homophones and homographs (Gilkajani&Sabouri, 2016:2; Nadhira&Warni, 2021:3). These words mayeither, have similar pronunciation or spellings, but have a completely different meaningwhich may bring about confusion to the learner (Nadhira&Warni, 2021:3) there by hindering the comprehension process. There is need to find out whether learners of English as a foreign language can draw the distinction between these kinds of words and how this affects the comprehension process.

Learners who receive intense explicit instruction relating to vocabulary, with depth of word meaning as a focal component, perform significantly better than those who don't receive this instruction in reading comprehension. If children don't know the meaning of the words they are

reading, they will miss the meaning of the story or chapter (Barr, Pearson, Kamil & Mosenthal, 2002:225, Lynette, 2013 and Zhang, 2012:559 – 560). Many won't bother trying to decode the unknown words especially if they find many words that they do not know (Barr, *et al*, 2002:225, Lynette, 2013 and Zhang, 2012:559 – 560).

Thompson *et al*(2003:223) assert that, the goal of vocabulary instruction is to assist learners to develop and apply vocabulary knowledge, connect new vocabulary to existing knowledge, understand text, and increase their use of strategies for figuring out new vocabulary independently. Effective vocabulary instruction includes both definitional and contextual information about each word's meaning. It involves learners' active word learning and provides multiple exposures to meaningful information about words including the relations among words. In addition, Stenius (2009:578) says that vocabulary size is the basic dimension of a learner's lexical competence and emphasizes that learners with large vocabularies are more proficient language users than learners with smaller vocabulary. Therefore, learners' vocabulary size and depth affect their comprehension. It is paramount to find out if it is possible to measure one's amount and depth of vocabulary and to investigate whether vocabulary connects to the ease in comprehension despite the context.

Reading comprehension is further affected by the state or level of understanding of syntax (Hassan & Dweik, 2021:2, Toste, Compton, Fuchs, Fuchs, Gilbert, Cho, Barquero & Bouton (2014:193) or the explicit grammatical knowledge as Zhang (2012:560) puts it. Zhang (2012:560) argues that where the learner knows all the parts of a sentence, that is; what they are, for example a "noun" and its function; "a subject", then they are able to correctly comprehend, since the ability to parse sentences into their correct syntactic structure is an important element in understanding. Learners will comprehend a text which has simplified syntactic structure more easily than those with a complex syntactic structure. According to Zhang (2012:560), there is implicit and explicit grammatical knowledge. Implicit knowledge refers to the type of knowledge that is typically involved in adult's first language speech or the use of one's native language for which no conscious efforts seem to be required. Explicit knowledge, by contrast, is declarative, and often learned as a set of linguistic rules. The role of grammatical relations in comprehension is also supported by Barr, *et al* (2002:225) and Nadhira & Warni, (2021:5) who say that, learners must arrive at the grammatical relations among the words in order to arrive at the meaning of the

sentence. Grammatical roles are the functions of each constituent or item in a sentence. A sentence will have a subject, a verb, an object and other constituents, therefore as proposed by the above scholars, a learner of English as a foreign language should be able to understand the relationship between the different words or constituents in a sentence for comprehension to take place. This is something to find out, whether the grammatical relations play a recognizable role in foreign learners' comprehension of English language.

Lack of Phonological and phonetic awareness is a significant contributor to comprehension difficulties (Toste, *et al*2014:193). Poor phonetic analysis skills affect comprehension (Shapiro, 2011:14,). This is what Nathan,Lauren, Lee, Nathan, (2002) call decoding. They define decoding as the process by which a word is broken into individual phonemes on which it is recognized. Learners who experience decoding difficulties have to learn the process of word recognition. If the learner reads slowly and must stop frequently to sound out words, he or she loses track of the thoughts leading to poor or no comprehension (Joseph 2002:1168-1172, Linan-Thompson, *et al*& 2003:223). Linan-Thompson *et al* (2003:224) argue that, teachers can use learners' knowledge of a phoneme in their first language to help them learn a similar phoneme in English. According to behavioral evidence, deficits in rapid auditory processing are related more strongly to phonological ability (McCallum, Bell, Wood, Below, Choate, &McCane, 2006:256) that is the ability to recognize and work with sounds in spoken language so as to make meaning out of words. There is need to investigate what exactly hinders understanding of speech among learners learning English as a foreign language, because just the lack of phonetic analysis does not satisfactorily explain comprehension failure.

Some learners face difficulties which arise from lack of discourse level cues that help to signal the organization of any presentation (Jung, 2003:562-563). This could mean that the text may lack the cues or the text organization or cues may not connect to the organization in the learner's background knowledge (Jung, 2003:564). These cues include; previews, summarizers, emphasis marker and logical connectives which help learners to know the organization of the discourse. Discourse cues show the relationship between ideas, indicate the relative importance of ideas and evaluate the named idea (Jung, 2003:564). Learners of English as a foreign language may not pay attention to the cues specifically because they don't know them and are not aware of the role they play. Despite this argument, discourse cues either in the text or committed to the learner's

memory aid the comprehension process. It is therefore imperative to establish whether learners of English as a foreign language in Uganda know the discourse cues and their role in comprehension and whether presence of discourse cues that don't connect with one in the text or absence of discourse cues are a difficulty they face during comprehension.

Beginning readers first concentrate on word reading and gradually shift attention to understand what they read. Repeated practice makes word recognition automatic and frees attention for comprehension (Shehu, 2015:6; and Walczyk & Griffith-Ross, 2007:560). According to this argument, ability to understand comes with repeated practice in comprehension. This study will establish whether these factors, that is; concentration and repeated practice help to improve comprehension process among learners of English as a foreign language.

Speech is hard to comprehend where the speaker speaks at a very high rate, (Rubin, 2011:201). This is because of phonological modifications of the grammatical forms. They include; assimilation, mutation, contraction, liaison (association), and elision. Therefore, language learners with only a limited knowledge of the linguistic code are not able to fully make sense of the utterances there of. Rubin (2011:201) however adds that, the effect of speech rate on comprehension may relate to a number of variables such as type of text used, and amount of background knowledge required. Therefore, there is need for more research to find out whether the speed of the speaker affects listener's comprehension.

Text type too affects comprehension as it has been noted by Li, Wu & Wang (2007:21), Shuying (2013: 130) and Rumelhart & Clelland (1999:18). RRSg and Snow (2002:14) add that, style and genre also interact with the reader's knowledge during the comprehension process. Most written texts are assumed to be complex, less redundant, denser, and use fewer pauses than spoken texts, which makes them difficult to understand. On the other hand, conversational texts are the opposite, therefore easily comprehended (Rubin 2011:204). The failure of the reader to understand how a text is organized or its form may pose a comprehension challenge. The two outstanding text types pointed out in the above discussion are those that are conversational and others that are written, the scholars above argue that a text that is in the conversational format is easily comprehended as compared to those that are not. Thus, there is need to find out whether text types, hinder comprehension.

Ellis (2010:96-97) says, that difficulties faced by learners of English as a foreign language stem from the differences between English and their languages. There are differences at the levels of pronunciation, lexical meaning, syntax, pragmatics and cultural norms. For example the English phonology is compared to their languages which have more or fewer sounds (Worlds Worth 2016). There is a challenge of having the alphabet with greater or lesser correspondence of their sounds to orthography, and where stress and tone are used differently. Some of the languages are; French, Mandarin, Czech, Spanish, Somali and many others. French for example has one present tense as compared to English which has two; Mandarin expresses time reference lexically rather than via morphological changes to verbs like in English (Ellis, 2010:104). This discussion suggests that the distinction in languages hinder the understanding of another. However, it leaves gaps to ask whether there are no people that learn another language and proficiently use it despite the numerous distinctions between them. This contention need finding out

2.3.1.2. Cognitive Considerations

Wang and Gafurov (2003:1) define cognition in comprehension as simply the way information is processed and represented by the human brain. Whereas, Houwer, Dermot and Yvonne (2016:3) say that cognition refers to all the processes by which the sensory input is transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered and used. Therefore, cognition is the process by which the brain takes in information and comprehends it. In relation to the above, Johnson (2014) claims that low logic and reasoning among learners, can cause trouble in understanding texts. Silbert (2014) adds that sometimes learners fail to comprehend because their brains cannot concentrate when listening or reading. Their minds keep wandering from one thing to another which affects comprehension in the long run. This discussion points to the relevance of the mind in the comprehension process as the whole process will be successful or fail here. That is if the mind is concentrated, then comprehension will be easier as compared to when the mind is not concentrated. Therefore, mind concentration is major in the comprehension process. There is need to find out the significance of concentration to the comprehension process, and the factors that contribution to the lack of it.

Learners' ability to understand some texts can also be affected by brain injury, tumor or trauma that even the common strategies such as; activation of prior knowledge, summarizing, making

inferences, questioning and more, proposed for reading comprehension will not help. Learners with a brain problem may understand only texts about one subject as argued by Christison (1998:4-5), Smola (2016) and Silbert (2014). Propose to delete this

Children with reading comprehension problems have poor inference skills (Smola, 2016). To infer what's happening in a story is a vital cognitive skill. It enables the reader to go beyond surface meaning of a text to discover the author's concealed meaning. Poor inference skills could result from poor background knowledge, weak vocabulary, poor semantic knowledge and incomplete knowledge of story grammar and prediction (Smola, 2016). This scholar contends that inference is a skill that if one has, all the other difficulties one may meet in comprehension are solved. This study will establish whether this contention is true and whether language learners can infer during the comprehension process or cannot and why.

Poor retention ability causes comprehension difficulties or failure (Nathan, *et al*, 2002). This is also referred to as working memory by Al-Jarrah & Nur-salina (2018:32) which is said to play a role of storing information in the short-term memory while engaging in cognitive tasks like comprehension. Retention relies on high level cognitive skills, including memory, the ability to group and retrieve related ideas or activate previous information on a subject and determine the meaning of a word from context. (Al-Jarrah & Nur-salina, 2018:32). Signs of poor retention ability or working memory are; trouble remembering or summarizing what is read, difficulty connecting what is read to prior knowledge, difficulty applying content of a text to personal experiences (Nathan, Lauren, Lee and Nathan, 2002). This happens when learners do not pay enough attention during the comprehension process (Al-Jarrah & Nur-Salina, 2018:32) leading to poor or no comprehension. There is therefore need to find out the role and connection between concentration and cognitive skills like relating ideas in the memory to those in the text and others as stated in the above discussion in the comprehension process.

2.4. Back Ground Knowledge

Background knowledge is a construct that is got from the transaction between the individual and the society (Mcvee, Dunsmore & Gavelek, 2005:555). This transaction is mediated by culturally and socially enacted practices carried out through material and ideal artifacts (Mcvee, *et al*, 2005:556), therefore it is a social cultural construct (Mcvee, *et al*, 2005:550). It is formed from

the relationships among and across experiences, actions, talk, people and all sorts of culturally situated knowledge got from more knowledgeable others (Mcvee, *et al*, 2005:541). This means that as an individual interacts with the society, he learns new knowledge which constitutes the background knowledge. As he continues to interact with the world he uses this knowledge to explain his society, thus the saying, background knowledge is shaped by and shapes the society (Mcvee, *et al*, 2005:533). Thus, background knowledge changes with the changing society as it changes the society.

Background knowledge is the structure that facilitates retrieval of text information from memory and permits reconstruction of elements that were not learned or have been forgotten (Mcvee, *et al*, 2005:534). If this process is not successful, comprehension does not take place (Mcvee, *et al* 2005: 554).

Diao, Chandler and Sweller, (2007: 238) discuss background knowledge in line with the cognitive load theory. According to them, this theory governs all the cognitive actions including comprehension. Cognitive load theory is concerned with the relationship between working and long-term memory and the effects of this relationship on learning and problem solving. It treats human cognition as a natural information processing system that duplicates other natural information processing systems. Most human cognitive actions are driven by the contents of a huge long-term memory that acts as an information store which is the background knowledge. According to them, recognition of objects and sounds, or determining familiar problem-solving moves, depends heavily on the contents of long-term memory.

The long-term memory or background knowledge according to Diao, *et al*, (2007: 238) is created through many processes. One of these processes is borrowing. The borrowing principle explains that information is borrowed through imitating what other people do listening to what they say or reading what they write this is the same as interacting with the society as Mcvee, *et al* above contend. The knowledge that one borrows is stored in a schematic form in the borrower's long-term memory. The schema being a cognitive construct which allows people to categorize numerous elements of knowledge in the framework based on the way it will be used categorizes and stores it according to need (Diao, *et al*, 2007: 238) or in different schemas as Li, Wu and Wang (2007) contend.

The above presentation suggests that borrowing does not lead to the creation of new information. (Diao, *et al*, (2007: 239), say that, new information is got or formed when someone is faced with new difficulties and has to find means of solving them randomly. When the solution got is effective, then, new knowledge is created. This new knowledge is gradually processed by the working memory and stored in memory as background knowledge, (Diao, *et al*, 2007: 239).

After processing information, the information in the working memory and the long-term memory and the environment connect. Working memory load is reduced through schema construction/ background knowledge formation and their unlimited interaction allows us to function in our environment, (Diao, *et al*, 2007: 239). They also note that the working memory plays a critical role when one is learning a foreign language (Diao, *et al*, 2007: 240).

All the scholars in the above discussion suggest that background knowledge is formed when people interact with the society to solve day today challenges. Therefore, there must be carefulness in the choice of the instructional methods and materials used in the classroom, as this helps in the creation of background knowledge stores to be used in carrying out activities in society, - like comprehending a text (Diao, *et al*, 2007: 238).

The above argument proposes that, the working memory receives new information from the environment which may be a text and processes it then it interacts with the long-term memory or background memory, for comprehension to take place. Thus, where any of these processes fails, comprehension may not take place. This needs further investigation before concrete conclusions are made which this study seeks to undertake

2.4.1 Social and Language Experiences

This section focuses on the social interactions of the learner of English as a foreign language and the way they affect the learning of English. Social interactions are meaningful dialogues among learners (Hurst, Wallace & Nixon 2013:366). Social interactions start from home and extend to the societies where learners live. These affect the learners' language before and during school. Anang, (1982:6) argues that knowledge is gained with in an interactional and social setting rather than being internally organized, this is why cognitive processes such as learning to read which have been treated as private and internal to the learner, are now treated as interactive. Anang, (1982:8-9) goes ahead to emphasize that a child's social experience or initial conceptions of reading and literacy and some generalized forms of reading instruction begin in the homes where

children spend their earliest years. Children are indirectly exposed to reading by the adults they live with when they pay attention to what adults read and write at home.

In addition, Dehqan and Ghafar, (2014:405) argue that learning does not occur in isolation. Instead it is strongly influenced by social interactions which take place in meaningful contexts. In other words, the social interaction of the learner with more knowledgeable and capable others, and the environment, impact the learners' ways of thinking and interpreting situations. Dehqan and Ghafar, (2014:405) conclude that human cognition and its development cannot be separated from the society and therefore social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition and learning occurs through participation in the social context, which influences the way learners interpret the world. Mohamed, (2016:97) also explains that reading is viewed as a social skill that requires an active participation, interaction and involvement of learners. Socially interactive learners learn more when they actively talk to one another (Hurst, Wallace & Nixon 2013:366),

Social influence is further explained in the social constructivist theory by Hurst, Wallace & Nixon (2013:377). This theory is based on the belief that individuals actively construct knowledge and understanding and that constructing understandings of one's world is an active, mind-engaging process. Therefore, all the language skills should be treated as a whole and incorporated into everything students do, because they are part of everyday life in the real world. In addition, the social constructivists argue that, the socially constructed experiences help the comprehension process, and any differences in the social environments found, no matter how elusive they are, they can be corrected so that related experiences can be formed for all learners in the classroom (Anang, 1982:15).

The arguments above portray social interactions as one of the factors that influence the learning of a language. They claim that as learners interact with others who are more knowledgeable and carry out different activities as well as paying attention to what others do, they learn more. The contribution of society to the comprehension process needs studying about, and this study will achieve this through the use of language portrait and establish the past language experience and relate them to the difficulties in comprehension faced by the participants in this study.

Darnel and Michelle, (2002:19-20), talk about the social interaction in the learner's family, and say, these build multidimensional relationships. These relationships that develop between each

member of the family create an understanding of the student as a whole person. In such relationships, the child is motivated by his own needs and interests to acquire knowledge; it is not imposed upon him and this knowledge is termed as ‘‘funds of knowledge’’. According to Darnel and Michelle (2002:19), the term "funds of knowledge" refers to the accumulated knowledge and skills that are necessary for the household or individual to function well. They may include a wide variety of areas from household repair, to herbal medicine, to religious moral and ethical codes. This argument points at the various kinds of knowledge a learner gets from his environment which includes besides family, places like hospitals, places of worship and the community at large.

Darnel and Michelle (2002:20), go further to explain that during the comprehension process, funds of knowledge are explored. Exploring funds of knowledge calls on the teacher to step outside the classroom environment and look for the knowledge students bring from their homes and other aspects of their lives. Taking the teacher back into the learners' community changes the instruction process from teacher to learner centered which draws on prior experience and knowledge of the learner

Content learnt from social interactions is stored in the learner’s memory. According Dehqan and Ghafar (2014:405), knowledge learnt shapes the way learners interpret the world. This means that during comprehension, learners apply this knowledge they learnt from the society or social interactions to derive the message in the text. Content from social interactions is key in the comprehension process and its miss match with the text content may hinder reading and comprehension.

The discussion above shows that it is important to activate knowledge created through social interaction in the memory during the comprehension process and to help learners connect it to content in the text for the comprehension process to be successful. Teachers are also encouraged to explore this knowledge by presenting tasks that push learners to employ the knowledge funds got from their community.

While Taguchi (2008:425 – 426), focuses on the social interactions during language learning not before language learning. Taguchi argues that learning a language and interacting with a community that speaks it helps learners to acquire meaning easily as compared to those who learn it where it is not spoken. For Learners of English as a foreign language in Uganda, they

have just one alternative that is; speaking English to communicate because their other languages are not used in the community. There is need to find out whether this enhances their understanding or comprehending of English

Lack of cultural familiarity with the subject matter has a greater impact on reading comprehension of a text. Culture constitutes everything that takes place in one's community. Laura and Carol (2001:101) say that, activation of the learner's background knowledge which includes culture, during the process of reading helps in comprehension of the message in the text. The learner's ability to recall information and make inferences is enhanced when he/she is familiar with the subject matter in the text, (Li, *et al*2007:21, McVee, *et al*2005:544 and Shuying 2013:130) that subject matter in the text connects with content in the memory. There is need to investigate the extent of the contribution of the society to the understanding of texts by learners of English as a foreign language which is study will undertake

2.5 Dual Presentation and Language Learning

Dual presentation refers to presentation of a text both in audio and visual. In dual presentation, learners can listen and watch the text as well as read it; this visual support eases the comprehension process (Rubin 2011:204). When a story is accompanied with something learners can touch and feel; they are able to understand it even if the content is not connected to the content in memory, this is what Christison (1998:10-11) calls 'spatial intelligence'. Rubin (2011) calls this bottom up processing in comprehension or the employment of the schema-based approach in comprehension.

Akbulut, (2007:513) also advocates for the presentation of the text in two forms that is- audio and visual to improve on comprehension. This is explained in the Dual Coding Theory where it is assumed that images and words exist in two different subsystems which complement each other in the storage of information. That is, the image system sees and stores images of different happenings, while the verbal one stores only linguistic inputs both from the environment that one interacts with. Therefore, comprehension is well supported by visuals or videos and explanations. According to Akbulut (2007), presenting a text in one form makes comprehension difficult while if presented in both audio and visual comprehension will be easier as the two will complement each other and lead to understanding of any text. Joan Rubin (1994:203) too

supported this when she said that, providing learners with explanatory information helps them to understand what they read and listen to.

While studies above support the presentation of the texts in two ways (both written and audiovisual), Diao, *et al*, (2007: 239) do not support this. They claim that the learner will be having two different forms of the same document and will have to first translate one into another before they can draw the meaning from it, which the working memory may not handle thereby breeding confusion and comprehension failure. According to them listening is a skill that demands much processing since learners have to store knowledge in short term memory at the same time as they are working on its comprehension. So, mixing it with writing hinders understanding.

In addition, Hu, Hwang and Chan, (2014:271) also argue that the level of the language of the texts that learners read affect their comprehension even if it is presented in different forms. They say (Hu, *et al*, 2014:271), that if the language in the video or audio presented is of a higher level than that in the learners' memory store, difficulties to comprehension will rise but if videos connect to the level of the learners' back ground knowledge then language comprehension is easier. The arguments in the above discussion leaves gaps in a way that not every content someone reads can be presented in two different forms, quite a number of what is talked about is abstract, therefore, it is only research which can help know which approach works well for learners of English as a foreign language.

2.6 Culture

Culture is understood by a number of scholars in various ways. It is described as a memory and control device of society which provides the distinction between the correct and the incorrect behavior of a given community (Baecker, 1997:2). Orlando (2014:1) defines culture as a dynamically stable process of collectively made, reproduced, and unevenly shared knowledge structures that are informational and meaningful internally embodied, and externally represented and that provide predictability, coordination, equilibrium, continuity, and meaning in human actions and interactions. Culture is also often seen as the sum total of the peculiarities shared by a people, a people's values can be seen as part of their culture. The culture of a people is what marks them out distinctively from other human societies in the family of humanity (Gabriel, 2015: 97). Culture is thus everything that defines a given community of people, ranging from

words activities and all that is acceptable to take place in that community which distinguishes it from another.

As argued above culture creates a land mark in the life of an individual as all that is done in ones' culture becomes part of them. Bayiga(2016:244) emphasizes this further when she says that learners have a deep attachment with their culture that they cannot free themselves from. This is why the following scholars argue that culture plays an important role in the way one comprehends texts in English language. To start with, the schema theory which was proposed by McVee, *et al* (2005) says that culture is part of the body of knowledge in the learners' memory which interacts with the text to guide comprehension. Yousef, Karimi and Janfeshan (2014:711-712) add that with culturally relevant information, learners of English as a foreign language, can comprehend various texts. Furthermore, Erten and Razi (2009:62) argue that, in cases of unfamiliar cultural norms, learners tend to refer to their own cultural properties, which results in poor interpretations, and proposes that texts should be reduced to the level of the native/learners' culture like including names of people or places in their community so that they can make better inferences than when they read the original but culturally-remote story if comprehension should take place. In addition, Razavi, and Gilakjani(2020:302-304) say that, one of the main reasons behind foreign language teaching is to increase learners' intercultural communicative competence, which is the ability to interact effectively with the native speakers of another language and culture. This communicative ability is incomplete without cultural awareness, which is explained as the knowledge gained not only about the other culture, but also about one's own culture. This awareness includes the ability to find out one's own cultural viewpoints (the ability to indicate one's own cultural identity, beliefs, and values) and make a comparison between one's own culture and that of the interlocutors. Cultural content provides exposure to a living language that a foreign language learner lack. Therefore, culture is not something involving facts to be learnt, but a useful tool to make learners feel the need to speak and use the target language effectively.

The assertions of the above discussion suggest that culture plays an important role in the comprehension of any text. This study intends to find out how culture of a reader and that which is presented in the text impact on comprehension.

2.7 Language Biographies

Nekvapil (2003:63) defines language biography as a biographical account in which the narrator makes the language, or rather languages, the topic of his or her narrative, in particular, how the language was acquired and how it was used. According to Schüpbach (2008: 61) language biographies have been productively utilized in the following ways; as an approach to data collection, as data and as a means of analyzing and presenting findings. Bush (2006:6) says that a biographic approach allows one to draw attention to questions of language attitudes and of the link between language and identity.

A biographic approach focuses on the social dimensions of language practices and has an inter-textual dimension for they relate to other discourses present in society. Language biographies are increasingly being used as a preparation for language teaching (Bush, 2006: 9, 15 & 16).

Bush (2006:5) adds that Language biographies enhance language awareness. The process of writing language biographies helps the learner to rediscover and valorize their linguistic resources, to enhance language awareness and to develop meta-linguistic skills useful for personal development towards multilingualism. Therefore, from the European Language Portfolio (2018) it is stated that, language biography also encourages the learner to state what he/she can do in each language and to include information on linguistic, cultural and learning experiences gained in and outside formal educational contexts, for example the language(s) of the family and the neighborhood.

Bush (2006:15) adds that the autobiographical memory organizes past experiences in a way that corresponds to the narrator's present situation; it makes individual experiences available for communication and links individual experience to a particular historical configuration. It seems that emotional experiences attached to particular moments play a more important role than is generally assumed. In particular, retrieving and transforming stored memory takes place when memories are being communicated; when they are being talked about. It is the autobiographical memory that integrates different layers of memory responsible for storing lived episodes, semantic knowledge, automatic behavior, and so on. Memory work is based on the assumption that individual language practices stand in a complex relationship to collective memory and history. It further assumes that in the individual's memory, historic events and processes of

social change play a role as subject positions are developed in relation to such events and processes, and that individual language practices are socially shaped and contribute in turn to shaping them (Bush, 2006:13 – 14).

In terms of this concept, individual memory is part of a collective memory and generally constitutes itself with reference to the actual social conditions and discourses in society. The cultural studies perspective contends that individual memory is socially constituted. Memory in this understanding is not the depiction of events and experiences ‘as they were in reality’; instead, memory is understood as a continuum of change, an ongoing process that filters less relevant perceptions from more relevant ones, stores autobiographically important experiences, deepens, reconfigures, re-evaluates and transforms them according to new experiences and social situations (Bush, 2006:15)

In Schüpbach’s (2008: 61) discussion, people make sense of their experiences by telling stories about these experiences and these stories therefore provide more than purely factual information. How people make sense of their lives and of significant events such as migration becomes apparent in their life stories. Personal stories are not only expressions of the individual but are informed by a larger social, cultural and historical context. Thus narratives and life stories in particular are social constructs as well as sites of identity construction. For these reasons, biographies are very well suited for investigating how people make sense of migratory experiences of building a new life in a new environment and in a new language.

Ellis, (2010:92) Says that there exists a long tradition of experiential learning which is characterized as an integrated approach combining experience, perception, cognition and behavior. She adds that knowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in the experiences of the learner ‘and therefore learners are encouraged to reflect on their structured learning experience. Language being part of the knowledge learners experience, it is also well understood if the learners’ language experiences are analyzed in relation to their comprehension ability. Understanding language biographies of learners of English as a foreign language in Uganda is therefore expected to reveal more insights about how learners’ prior experiences and the telling of such experiences relate with creation of new meaning. Language biographies can be expressed or described using the language portraits.

According to Kasap, (2021:784) Language portrait is a body silhouette which is filled, colored and interpreted by the individual language users. They have emerged as one of the methods used by language educators and researchers to collect data. Using this method, participants in the study paint a body silhouette using different colors for different language skills. Through the scope, location, choice of color and the written or verbal comments that participants give at the end of the shading, the researcher is able to know the level of the learner's proficiency in different language skills. Language portraits also help to portray feeling and subjective impressions which are important pieces of information (Bush 2006:13) in language learning. This study will employ them to help collect data on learners' language experience so as to establish how they relate with the difficulties the learners face in comprehension.

2.9 Orthography and Comprehension

Orthographic knowledge refers to the information that is stored in memory which tells us how to represent spoken language in written form (Web of science 2011:592). McCallum, *et al* (2006:244- 245) define it as the correct written representation of a language. They claim that mastery of the orthography of a given language directly relates to the development of the reading skill for that language. In a comparison of faster and slower responders to early reading interventions, poorly developed orthographic skills such as letter cluster coding and rapid naming contributed to difficulty in acquiring early reading skills, (McCallum, *et al*, 2006:244-245). While presence of skills of orthography and sensitivity to rules of orthography were directly related to achievement of a high level of reading. In their work, they also quote Hammill (2004), who reviewed three meta-analyses and examined the relationships between specific abilities and reading. The meta-analyses indicated orthographic skills such as spelling and punctuation to be among the best predictors of reading.

Schane, (1970:137) contends that it is a well-known fact of life that English orthography is far from perfect, that it is full of inconsistencies and irregularities. What this means is that spellings are often not phonetic, that the relation between letter and sound is much less direct in English than it is in languages such as Spanish or Italian. One of the classic examples of irregular English spelling is 'OUGH', which can be variously pronounced as [aw], [of], [ow], [of], or [uw] as in the words bough, cough, dough, rough, and through. In spite of certain irregularities much of

English spelling is still phonetic. After all, English used alphabet writing system the very notion of which implies that there are correspondences between letters and sounds.

McCallum, *et al*, (2006:256) also argue that, deficits in rapid visual processing in reading, is related more strongly to orthographic ability. Orthographic ability is the ability to identify and spell words (Burt, 2006:401) Ziegler, Stone and Jacobs (1997:600) argue that language learning and reading skill crucially depend on the acquisition of the functional relation between orthography and phonology. In alphabetic writing system, this functional relation is given. Inconsistency arises when a spelling pattern co-varies sometimes with one phonological pattern and sometimes with a different phonological pattern for example; “int” as in “pint” and “hint”, which vary in only the first letter or phoneme that is in “p” in pint and “h” in hint and therefore give different meanings.

Recent evidence supports the common assumption that the orthographic representations acquired primarily during reading are used for both reading and spelling (Burt, 2006:401). Phonological coding may contribute to word identification via a role in establishing orthographic representations, that is phonological coding may promote full decoding of a letter string, link it with experience with a word from speech and provide a structure to letter sequences that facilitates their learning. The ability to form, store and access orthographic representations, can most directly be measured by assessing a learner’s success in learning unfamiliar word-like letter strings. More critically, because, the ability to form, store and access orthographic representations that rely on existing orthographic knowledge is heavily contaminated by reading achievement, it is unsurprising that they are good predictors of visual word identification (Burt, 2006:401). Burt (2006:402), concludes that oral problems in reading fluency result from individual differences in the learner’s ability to induce orthographic knowledge from the kind of exposure to print that usually is sufficient for it.

Burt, (2006:402) still argues however that, this ability is dependent on skills like; understanding of the alphabetic principles and familiarity with letters of the alphabet, oral language skills and phonological coding skill. The discussion above shows the relevancy of orthography in comprehension. it is presented that fluency in reading is achieved with the mastery of the orthography of a language in this case English. This study seeks to discover how similarity or

difference between orthographies of the first languages of the learners and English language affect the comprehension of texts by learners of English as a foreign language.

2.8. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in the schema theory advanced by McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005). McVee, *et al*(2005: 554) argue that, according to the schema theory, the knowledge in store must include the knowledge from one's environment, that is, knowledge one acquires and commits to memory from cultural materials, cultural activities and through interpersonal interactions. They expound that culture is constituted by relationships among people, experiences, action, talk, people and all that happens in our surroundings.

Schema theory dates back in the late 1970s. It was first applied to discussions on reading and comprehending in 1975 (Anderson and Pearson. 2002:259). Rumelhart and Norman (1980) and Anderson and Pearson (1984) are some of the authors who developed this theory in the later years. It has also been discussed in recent publications by Li, Wu and Wang (2007) and Shuying (2013).

According to Rumelhart and Norman (1980:1) 'schema' is knowledge which is stored in procedures. They argue that during the process of comprehension the information in the text triggers particular information which is part of the stored procedural knowledge of an individual and relates it to the information in the text to enable understanding. Anderson and Pearson (1984: 10), on the other hand, say that schema' is the mental knowledge that is summarized in the way it relates with each other- mental knowledge is an abstract structured body of knowledge which is grouped according to similarities. Li, Wu and Wang (2007:18) refer to schema as an abstract structure of knowledge which is gained through experiences stored in one's mind.

According to the above discussion, schema theory is the body of knowledge one acquires from the various experiences through his life and stored according to the different sections of linguistic experience for retrieval at the time of need, like; reading and comprehension. According to the Schema theory a body of knowledge is stored in someone's memory and it interacts with the content in the text during the process of comprehension

Scholars in language learning like; Wehmeier and Michael, (2004) and Christison, (1998) have related language comprehension to intelligence. According to Wehmeier and Michael (2004:

706) intelligence refers to the ability to learn, understand and think in a logical way about different things in the world. To Christison (1998:3), intelligence is not a single construct nor is it considered static, but an ability that develops over a life time either in one or more disciplines. In this study therefore, intelligence will be anchored in experiences that individuals attain during their lifetime as addressed by the schema theory.

Contrary to the earlier scholars who understood schema as an organizational feature that the mind imposes on the text, McVee, *et al*(2005:550) contend that, schema is an embodiment of social and cultural constructs that mediate student's learning. They insist that, a student may understand a text when its content culturally rhymes with what he already knows but will fail to comprehend it because the culture of the content in the text and that in memory do not rhyme (see also Shuying 2013:130).

Comprehension therefore is a function of the interaction between knowledge stored in someone's memory and the information in the text. Comprehension is a multidimensional interactive process where an individual either modifies or assimilates information (Anderson & Pearson 1984:2, Li, Wu & Wang 2007:20, McVee, *et al*2005:547, Rumelhart& Norman 1980:31, and Shuying, 2013:130).This is also referred to by Anderson and Pearson (1984: 67) as finding a mental home, where one relates or accommodates new information. Modifying of the information in one's memory takes place when knowledge in the memory is transformed, supplemented or refined to suit the information in the text.

In the process of comprehension, background knowledge (schema) which is a conglomeration of previous experiences acquaints individuals with content which they use in text interpretation and guides them as they make sense of new experiences presented by the text at hand (Li, Wu & Wang 2007:20 and Shiuying 2013:132-134).

Types of the Schema Theory

According to Li, *et al*(2007:20) and Shuying (2013), components of background knowledge include vocabulary, grammar and idioms of a given language. These are referred to as the linguistic schema (Li, Wu & Wang 2007:20 and Shuying 2013). It plays an essential part in comprehension where the words stored in the memory and the grammatical structures stored in the learner's memory connect with words in the text so that meaning is derived. This means that

the better the linguistic schema, the faster the reading and comprehension (Li, Wu & Wang (2007:18-19) and Shuying, (2013:131). It is important to investigate whether knowing the meaning of a variety of words idioms and having knowledge of grammatical structure aids successful comprehension of any text, whether it is written or spoken.

Background knowledge also constitutes, according to Shuying (2013: 130) and Li, Wu and Wang (2007:21) organizational forms and rhetorical structures of different text types which is the formal schema - knowledge of how different text types (genres) are organized or written. Text types could include descriptions, letters, reports, poems, stories and more. Learners use their formal schematic representations of the text to comprehend the information in the text. Type of text facilitates reading comprehension for readers because the type of the text will offer detailed evidence of the content of the text.

McVee, *et al*(2005:544) say that even with the text format that is familiar, if the content in the text is not connected to what the reader or listener has experienced, comprehension and retention of information in the text will be challenging. However, Li, Wu and Wang (2007) and Shuying (2013), suggest that, a text written in a format that is already stored in memory will be easy to comprehend. This contention is worth investigation.

For instance, descriptions, letters and stories are compatible with the conversational experiences individuals engage in every day (Sally and Michael, 2004:1333). On the contrary, poems are distant. They are compact in nature and they communicate more than what they say (Sally and Michael 2004:1013). In this proposed study, stories are used as tools of data collection. This will provide insight on how text format and text content impact comprehension.

The other type is the content schema. This type refers to the knowledge that one acquires from his community (Li, Wu and Wang (2007:21) and Shuying (2013:132). This content may be acquired from the market, church and all the other places where learners stay. Part of the content that learners acquire is cultural, Shuying, (2013:130), refers to this as the cultural schema. Culture is the total set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behavior, social habits, etc., of the members of a particular society. Thus, content schema is constituted by all content including cultural that a learner acquires from his surroundings.

McVee, *et al*(2005) and Shuying (2013) stress that cultural experience also aids comprehension of a text. Culture is the nucleus of language and is therefore important in production and interpretation of language. It suffices to note that individuals who come to Uganda to learn English have a diversity of cultures from different countries and families. Uganda too has its own culture(s), the teacher and texts portray culture. It is in the interest of this study to investigate how already stored cultural experiences and the diversity of such experiences interact with, shape or affect the interpretation of a new text.

The study will investigate the applicability of McVee, *et al*(2005:544) suggestion that if learners got a way of connecting new and existing information in their memory their comprehension will be easy.

In a nutshell, schema theory emphasizes that, the experiences one goes through are turning points in their lives as they determine how one makes meaning out of discourse.

This theory guided this study in various ways like; the choice of tools which were used in data collection, data collection, data analysis and data discussion.

Chapter Three

3.0. Methodology

This section explains the methodology that was used for this study. It includes; the research design and approach, the study population and sampling strategy, scope of the study, methods and tools of data collection, research procedure, data processing and analysis, the ethical issues as well as difficulties encountered in data collection.

3.1. Introduction

This study aimed at investigating the difficulties which affect comprehension of texts by learners of English as a foreign language in Uganda. These difficulties were to be investigated through the analysis of the learners' language skills in relation to their past language experiences. Understanding or comprehension was investigated through the use of three tools; that is the oral text which was also Text B, the written text which was Text A and shading and description of the language portrait where the participant was free to choose their best colors and shaded the skills depending on how best they employed it. These will further be discussed in the section of tools below. These tools report on the participants past language experiences their level of proficiency in different skills and the relationship between the two deriving the difficulties they face in comprehension.

3.2. Research Design and Approach.

The study employed a qualitative research strategy to collect information from the participants. Qualitative research design aided the study in obtaining a holistic understanding of experiences of the participants who learn English as a foreign language, particularly focusing on their comprehension (see Rahman, 2016:104).

3.3. Study Population and Sampling Strategy.

The study population comprised of 20 learners purposively selected from the learners who learn English as a foreign language at the Centre for Language and Communication Services, Makerere University. Only twenty (20) participants were selected because the study involved one on one interaction with the participants, to gather detailed accounts of their experiences, which took much time. These learners were selected from the intermediate level because this group is expected to have had reasonable instruction in English language.

The group selected comprised of learners from different countries. These were; Japan, China, South Sudan, Yemen, Chad, Rwanda, Congo, Burundi, Eritrea and Somalia. From Burundi there was one participant, from Rwanda two, from China two, from Congo five, from South Sudan two, from Somalia three, from Eritrea one from Chad one, from Yemen one, and from Japan two which made a total of twenty. By the time these learners came to study English at Makerere University, they were already grounded in the languages of their countries. Some of these had more than one language like the Congolese. This rendered them the best participants for this study as to them English was purely a foreign language.

3.4 Geographical Area.

The study was carried out in Makerere University. Makerere university being one of the best universities in Africa, it attracts many foreign learners who study English as a foreign language. These learners come from Africa and some from other continents all over the world like the Japanese, Chinese etc. It is this that made it the most suitable place where data would be collected.

3.5. Methods of Data Collection

The study employed three different methods. Language portrait (Busch 2006:9 & Irons 2014:3) is one of the methods that were used in data collection. Participants also answered questions from two texts which were selected depending on the interest of the learners, lexical knowledge and background knowledge (Day, 1989:117-118); this was determined after attending their English language comprehension class. Day (1989: 123) adds that for intermediate readers, the sources of reading passages are more numerous and added that literary texts are excellent sources of material. This too guided the choice of texts that were used in data collection

One text was read to them and they answered orally, that was text B and the other they read on their own and answered in writing. All these were done by a participant at once. Later the results from the three tools were analyzed and compared through triangulation.

Data on learners' past language experience was collected using the language portrait and data on the difficulties in comprehension was collected using two texts. One was from Practical English by Ogudipe and Tregidgo (1971:5). "Why Babies Can't Talk", this text had familiar content as it was about babies who are found in almost every home. Basing on the schema theory, it is

argued that familiar texts are easily comprehended as compared to unfamiliar ones. The second text was basically cultural and assumed very alien to the participants. It was extracted from a novel entitled ‘‘Alien woman’’ by Ocen Laury Lawrence (2012:54-56), it talks about a purification process among the Acholi people in northern Uganda. This was chosen over ‘‘the seven proud sisters’’ which was suggested in the proposal, because it was cultural enough to serve the purpose of the study. So comparison in comprehension was done in the texts on one hand and compared to the descriptions from the language portrait. A detailed discussion of the tools follows below.

3.5.1 Language Portrait

As already mentioned above, the learners’ past language experience were collected using the language portrait. The participants were given a human like object drawn on a paper and presented with a variety of colors. They were asked to shade it indicating their proficiency in the five skills namely; reading, speaking, writing, listening and understanding, using different colors of their choice. They decided which body part they shaded and the portion or size of the shading.

Participants shaded the skills each in a different color across the language portrait in a way that portrayed how often they use the skill, how good they are at each skill, when they use it, why they use it and a lot more other information. They were free to choose any color that would bring out the pattern and proficiency they intended to communicate or describe.

Following the shading of the portrait was a key in which they also shaded the different colors they had used in the shading on which they indicated the different skills that each represented.

With the above done, they orally described their shading and answered questions about it. This was recorded and later transcribed. In this description and interview, they explained why they chose a particular color for a particular body part and in a particular size/portion. They discussed issues like; when they started learning English, why they decide to learn English, the difficulties they encounter when learning English, the differences between English and their languages, why they chose to learn English in Uganda, their cultural experience at home, in school, as well as in the community and so many other things as will be illustrated in chapter four.

The advantage of using a language portrait is that it provides a lot of information including what was not anticipated, as it allows a participant to freely talk about their experience without

limitation (Bayiga, 2016:89). That is why it was chosen to give the past language experience of the participants.

Some information given by the participants was similar while some was particularly unique to just a participant. So, information was grouped under specific themes and the analysis made as presented in the next chapter.

3.5.2 Written Text

The other method of data collection which was employed was the written text in form of a passage which is referred to as Text A in the study. This text was extracted from a novel entitled *Alien woman* by Ocen Laury Lawrence (2012:54-56) which described a purification process among the Acholi people. In the text, a boy was possessed by a spirit and needed cleansing. This cleansing was done in the Acholi way of purification.

The text was presented to participants. Participants read silently highlighting the new or difficult words or phrases as well as the incomprehensible sections. They then answered the questions in writing. In these questions, they stated what the text was about and expressed the meaning of some phrases and words. They also were required to explain why some words are difficult for them to understand as indicated in appendixes B.

Although the number of participants was minimal, there were those who said they could not read most of the words in the text and therefore answered just questions that were picked from the parts they were able to read.

Some participants wanted to take the texts home to read it over and over again so as to make meaning out of it. However, this was not granted for fear of losing the material. These participants only attempted questions whose answers they were able to identify from the text.

3.5.3 Oral Text

The third tool that was used was a text that was read out to the participants by the researcher (Text B appendix C). This text was about babies and it was believed to be familiar to all participants. It was therefore expected that it would be comprehended easily.

In the administering of this tool, a text was read to one participant at a time and questions about it asked at the end. The participant provided answers orally. The questions they were asked

included what the text was about, meaning of words and sentences, reasons as to why some questions were correctly answered and why others were failed, among others. These provided information on their ability to hear, recognize and interpret words and sentences in oral communication. Their responses were recorded and later transcribed after the data collection process.

3.6. Research Procedure.

Before taking any step-in data collection, I studied the tools to see if they would serve the objective of the study.

Formal permission was got from the Centre for Language and Communication Services, Makerere University to allow me involve their learners as participants in the study and to use their premises. The coordinator for the center introduced me to the instructors of these learners.

I consulted the instructors of English as a foreign language on when and how to access the learners. The instructors provided information on the time when the learners are in class. I attended the class of the intermediate level to decide if they would be the suitable group to take part in the study. The area which was taught in the lesson I attended was comprehension where they read and responded to questions orally in class. Therefore, after an hours' observation, I was sure of the group and I was introduced to the class by their teacher.

After the introduction, I presented the topic and the objective of the study. Interesting to note, they picked interest in the study as they saw a route to solving many of the difficulties they face in learning English language. A number of them volunteered to take part in the study and with the guidance of their teacher; I presented consent forms to twenty participants. This helped to include participants from different countries. The forms were signed and I collected them.

These learners hardly keep around the university after their lessons; therefore, I asked them to join me in the room where data was to be collected immediately after their class. However, there were some who were very excited about the study that they followed me immediately after signing the consent forms. They were five in number. This was good enough since it involved one on one discussion, so I started the data collection process right away.

In the room, I described to the participants that they were going to respond to three different tools, but I presented the language portrait first. I drew a human like object on the whiteboard and explained to them what they had to do with it.

They shaded and each one who finished was asked to orally explain their shading as it was recorded. Then, they were presented with text A and told to read and answer as already discussed in the previous section. Later they responded to text B which was also recorded and later transcribed. This was repeated for the rest of the participants. Data was collected in two days. Participants came in groups of five, four and three.

I transcribed the recorded data both from the description of the language portrait and the oral responses to text B.

The relationship between data from the three data collection tools was triangulated. For the purpose of analysis, themes were derived under which data was categorized.

3.7. Data Processing and Analysis.

Since the study employed three tools to collect data, it required proper organization, comparison and analysis. After data collection, I listened to all the recordings of different participants and transcribed them. I filled in the answers to the questions of text B and noted down the description of the language portraits and the participants' past language experience at the back of the language portraits.

I then organized the data according to participant; that is; I put together each participant's work. I assessed and compared the performance of each participant from the oral Text B and written Text A. I noted the responses from the participants about their experience with the texts.

I marked the texts and derived information about comprehension using the guidance of the explanation by Wolf, Kao, Herman, Bachman, Bailey, Bachman, Farnsworth and Chang (2008:29). They allude that low language proficiency deters learners from being able to present content requires to answer questions. Therefore, I related low scores to limited ability to understand the texts and vice versa for high scores.

I studied the way they had shaded the language portraits, that is, their choice of color, the body part chosen, the size of the portion shaded and analyzed their descriptions. I related the

description which also included their past language experience to the information derived from the shading and noted down. The entire data from the three tools was analyzed through discourse analysis (Phillips and Hardy 2002:3-5).

At this stage I had studied and coded all the data on the texts and the portrait. Next, I derived themes from the data of each participant. In some cases data of one participant related well while in others it didn't (a little contradictory).

I then developed general themes for data analysis based on the objectives of this study. These guided data presentation and analysis as presented in the next chapter.

3.8. Ethical Considerations.

My study involved direct interaction with human subjects. Therefore, before I went to the field, I had to seek ethical clearance from National Council for Science and Technology, and permission from the Center for Language and Communication Services at Makerere University to include the learners of English as a foreign language in my research. I got an introductory letter from the head of department at the institute of languages at Makerere University which introduced me to the different offices where I had to request clearance from. I requested and got permission from the National Council for Science and technology through the head of department at institute of languages at Makerere University. After this I also requested and secured authorization from the office of the Center for Language and Communication Services at Makerere University where I was permitted to involve learners from the intermediate level learning English as a foreign language at Makerere University in my study.

The learners who volunteered to take part in the study were given consent forms which explained key issues such as; the topic and the purpose of the study, the risks that the participants would be exposed to if there were any, issues of confidentiality, their rights and obligations as participants in the study.

To keep the participant's identity anonymous, I referred to them by number and their nationality since the study was interested in the fact that English is not their first or second language. For example I would say; participant one from Japan.

3.9. Challenges Faced During Data Collection.

Although not much, there were some difficulties that I encountered in the process of data collection and they are presented below.

First was that, the voice recorder I had uses tapes which are not common in use now because radios that use them are phasing out. Looking for the tapes took me time since some were faulty as they had over stayed in the shops due to the low demand.

The other challenge was that, some of the participants who signed the consent forms did not turn up for the process of data collection. I had to go back to the intermediate class to replace them so as to maintain the number of participants I had proposed for the study.

The issue of language was also a challenge as some participants were still poor at English that they just shaded and failed to say or write anything about their language portraits and the texts.

Lastly, some participants who after shading the portrait and answering text B, they only answered a question or two from text A and said they didn't have time which affected the depth of information about their language abilities. However, this may partly have been due to the low proficiency in reading and comprehension

Chapter Four

Data Presentation and Analysis

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the data and a detailed analysis of findings about the difficulties in comprehension among learners of English as a foreign language in relation to objective one, two and three of the study. The findings are discussed under five sections including; comprehension difficulties related to vocabulary, interference of past language experience, failure to comprehend cultural content which is unfamiliar, pronunciation of words as well as inconsistency and low attendance. These were divided into sub sections to aid a detailed analysis of every theme derived from the participants' presentations. As mentioned in chapter three, data was collected using three tools that is; the language portrait, text A – written text and text B - the oral text. Each text had 20(twenty) questions each carrying 1(one) mark. A participant who scored 10 and above in either of the texts, scored above average and below that was below average. The description from the language portrait was related to the scores and some responses from and about the text. This was the basis on which the themes or sections presented below were derived.

4.1 Data presentation.

This section presents the scores of each participant from the texts, that is; text A and text B. Each text had twenty questions each carrying one mark, giving a total of twenty. The details of the scores and other information from the texts will be related to the learners' past language experiences from the language portrait. Data of the language portrait has not been present since it is multidimensional and not numerical in nature that is; it includes the five language skills, the choice of color, size as well as the body part shaded these are relate to the experiences described by the participants to derive information. However, the details of why the color choice, the skills, choice of the body part shaded and the size of the portion shaded on the language portrait will be presented as and when required in the various sections of data analysis.

Performance of the Participants from the Texts

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANT	NATIONALITY OF THE PARTICIPANTS	TEXT A WRITTEN TEXT X/20	TEXT B ORAL TEXT X/20
1	BRUNDIAN	7	13
2	RWANDAN	6	10
3	CHINESE	7	10
4	CONGOLESE	13	7
5	CONGOLESE	9	8
6	SUDANESE	6	6
7	SOMALI	1	6
8	CONGOLESE	5	13
9	ELITREA	5	9
10	CHAD	12	6
11	CONGOLESE	9	10
12	SOMALI	4	8
13	SUDANESE	0	0
14	YEMEN	0	10
15	SOMALI	4	15
16	CONCOLESE	6	7
17	CHINESE	3	5
18	JAPANESE	4	3
19	JAPANESE	2	9
20	RWANDANESE	7	12

4.2 Data Analysis

4.2.1 Comprehension Difficulties Related to Vocabulary

It was discovered that learners of English as a foreign language may find it difficult to comprehend oral and written texts (oral or written) because of the vocabulary used. When the vocabulary is alien to them, they fail to connect the meanings of individual words in order to derive meaning of longer constructions. Some words have a variety of meanings which makes them ambiguous in certain constructions. Learners could also have limited vocabulary, and they may lack experience with the contextual usage of words. For these reasons, comprehending English language texts becomes challenging to them. Below are the findings related to comprehension difficulties related to vocabulary.

4.2.1.1 Failure to Connect Meanings of Words

Participants in this study exhibited a practice of comprehending texts by concentrating on identifying individual words before linking them to each other so as to understand the text. This posed difficulties for their comprehension, especially of the oral text (text B).

A case in point is participant 20 from Rwanda who is a speaker of French. After attempting text B, she said,

“When I read I concentrate on reading and doesn’t have time to think about the meaning”

She later explains that in concentrating on reading she means that she concentrates on what the person is reading finding out which word is read without thinking of the meaning.

From Text B which I read to her; she answered 7 questions correctly out of 20, which is below average, whereas she answered 12 questions correctly out of 20 in the written text that she read herself. Some proponents of the schema theory that is Li, Wu and Wang (2007:19), describe this style of comprehension as bottom-up processing. In this style of comprehension, learners start with retrieving the independent letters from memory, and then connect them to comprehend words, and then connect words to comprehend sentences then the whole story. However, this participant may have failed to cope with the pace at which a text was read and ended up getting just a small portion of the information she required from the text thereby, not comprehending and

so the poor performance in text B, Diao, *et al* (2007:241) and Stevens *et al* (2022:2) explain this, that listeners cannot exercise any control over the amount or rate at which they process the text.

In addition, these scores are in line with Cummins' (2009:6) and Mancilla-Martinez's (2020:2) arguments in which they say that printed texts provide much more exposure to words than oral ones. In the task with Text A, the participant had a chance of looking back at the text every time she needed to do so, to identify the words and connect them to each other and she didn't have to cope with any reader's pace.

4.2.1.2 Failure to Remember the Meaning of Words

Some participants got difficulties comprehending because they failed to remember the meaning of the words in the text. Mason and Just (2007:115) and Chandran and Shah (2019:3) refer to this situation as the failure of the working memory where its capacity affects the ability of a reader to maintain various representations.

Participant 10 who is a speaker of French from Chad mentioned that,

*“I read text but don't understand because
I do not remember the meaning of words.”*

From text A that he read on his own, he scored 6 out of 20 which score is below average, and from text B that was read to him he scored 12 out of 20. Grew, Moen and Thurlow's (2010:7 & 10) and Chandran and Shah (2019:3) argue that texts that are read aloud are easy to comprehend as compared to the texts a learner has to read on his own, since texts read to them by others don't demand the learner to do much decoding of the text so the learner concentrates on only finding the meaning of the text. Therefore, although this participant said that the content from both texts was not new to him, he found it easier to understand the text which was read to him. Besides forgetting the meaning of vocabulary; in the description of the language portrait he said,

“I use it outside class in the community and I understand it better..... Now I understand when I listen to News....”

The above statement explains that the oral text being similar to the communication he does in the community and the News he listens to every day, understanding it was relatively easy and so, he scored above average. This relates to the formal schema as explained by Li Wu and Wang (2007:19), that once readers have got the style of presentation of any text saved in their memory, it facilitates comprehending that text, while a new format may get in the way of understanding it. Furthermore, although comprehension may not require knowing the meaning of all the words in a text, where one fails to remember the meaning of most of the words, the comprehension process is likely to be hard (see Christison, 1998:4 and Nadhira&Warni, 2021:3). This implies that, the linguistic schema (Shuying, 2013:131) is faint and therefore failed to retrieve all the information to include the meaning of words as well.

However, Grew, Moen and Thurlow (2010:10) and Nadhira and Warni (2021:3) say that there is need for more research to prove that listening comprehension is easier than when one reads on their own. Speech is not easily referred to for clarity as compared to the written texts where one refers back as much as they require to understand a text.

4.2.1.2 Limited and New Vocabulary

It is notable that a learner of a language will face difficulties of comprehension when new words constitute most of the text (Barr, Pearson, *et al* 2002:225, Chandran & Shah, 2019:3 and Zhang, 2012:559 – 560). During the sessions where I read the text to the participants in this study, when some of them heard the words, they repeated them in order to recognize them. Others failed to read the text on their own, to the end, claiming that the words were difficult. There were other participants who expressed that their comprehension was hindered by new vocabulary and because they had limited vocabulary in English.

Participant 18 from Japan answered 4 questions correctly out of 20 from Text A that she read on her own, while from Text B which was read to her, she answered 3 questions correctly out of 20. When she answered number 19 and 20 of text A which asked for mentioning the difficult phrases and words and the reasons why they are difficult respectively, she said,

‘all... and I don’t know the vocabulary and I can’t understand almost’
respectively.

The above corresponds with the description of her language portrait. In which she said,

“ I don’t understand English well, I only understand it when I have seen the vocabulary before”

Shading the skill of understanding in the head shows that it is a cognitive skill, acquired from school and in her description, she said,

“I started learning English when I was a junior high school learner in Japan.”

She adds’

“teacher would make us write grammar but we did not read much. And back home I speak Japanese”

Participant 18 indicates that she only learnt the grammar of English in school and she never used it at home, thus limited practice of the language. Friedberg, Mitchell and Brooke, (2017:1) and Shehu (2015:6) explain that learners who are not exposed to language that has advanced words and phrases or advanced English language skills outside school or at home struggle with language learning. Therefore, having more practice with writing grammar and less with reading, limited her experience of recognizing words and their meanings.

More participants expressed that new vocabulary presented a challenge for comprehension as illustrated below:

Participant 17 from Japan commented about text A which she read on her own and answered 3 questions correctly out of 20 as follows,

‘ words difficult, little understand because words and the nature of the story’

About text B which was read to her and scored 5 out of 20 she said,

“don’t understand the word title... new word”

She shaded the skill of understanding in the right hand in black it is the smallest portion. And in her description of the language portrait she said,

“I read to my babies, baby books are easy..... I speak to house maid, driver and in the market in English so I improve.”

Cummin (2009:4) and Nadhira and Warni (2021:5) explain the above scenario where they say that conversational ability develops relatively quickly among immigrants English language learners since these forms of communication are supported by interpersonal and contextual cues and make relatively few cognitive demands on the individual. Cummin (2009:6) adds that language learners must engage in extensive reading of the written text to attain the required proficiency.

Participant 14 from Yemen presented a peculiar case when he did not answer any questions from text A. During my interaction with him, he said that the words in the text were new and didn't understand what was being talked about but answered ten questions correctly from text B which was read to him. This shows that he lacked concentration to read text A which halted the process to comprehension from the beginning. He preferred to have someone read for him while he listens, such that, he does not combine the tasks of reading and comprehending.

This is evident in his description of the language portrait. He shades understanding in light pink and it covers the biggest part, he said,

“I can understand English so much, I can read, but when I read I don't understand very well.... Reading is sometimes hard because of words which do not sound like the way they are written like write has /r/ sound yet starts with ‘w’”

The above description shows that he has difficulties reading texts and comprehend them, but he speaks to many people after class in English, so he understands the oral text and so the average performance in Text B.

Participant 5 from Congo affirms that having more time to practice, and making deliberate effort to use English helps him attain good understanding as illustrated below:

“I speak English and understand English more because I have more time to practice. I want to learn English to use it in business and because of this I put in more effort.”

This supports the view that for a learner of English as a foreign language to understand English, she/he needs to give it time and attention. He expressed that he has better skills of speaking and listening and makes deliberate effort to improve these skills since he has time.

Although the schema theory suggests that familiar cultural content aids comprehension of any text (McVee, *et al*, (2005), Anderson and Pearson (2002:255), there were a number of participants to whom the general content in both texts was familiar yet their comprehension was challenged by the unfamiliar vocabulary.

Participant 11 from Congo said that the cultural content in Text A was familiar to his culture, but he failed to comprehend the text because of the number of new words.

‘very many words don’t understand, new. I have heard this activity in my culture and so have understood. Some men have been purified in my culture even with babies. Words are hard because they are not similar to those in French.’

Participant 16 also from Congo said that she understood Text A because she had watched movies where people are purified in that style. She said,

‘understand because I watch movies and see some one exosize / purify. Difficult it because is news words.’

In relation to inadequate comprehension due to unfamiliar vocabulary, Cicerchia (2016:1) discusses that when a beginner reader encounters vocabulary, they do not recognize due to inaccurate decoding, they are likely to skip ahead. The more blanks in a line, the harder it is to make meaning and the more cognitively challenging and frustrating the reading task becomes.

According to the schema theory, one’s back ground knowledge aids the understanding of texts written or spoken if it connects with the information in the text. Among the components of background knowledge are vocabulary and grammar of a given language, which are referred to as the linguistic schema (Liet *al*2007:20 and Shuying 2013:130). The data above shows that lack of a linguistic schema can pose difficulties in comprehension even with culturally familiar content.

4.2.1.3 Lack of Experience in the Contextual Usage of Words

Some learners who participated in this study reported that from their earlier experiences with English, they were only exposed to words in isolation. They were not exposed to words from linkages in a sentence or in paragraphs. However, we are aware that context (linguistic or otherwise) attributes to the meaning of words (Thompson, *et al*, 2003:223 and Xue, 2019:5). For example; participant 14 from Yemen didn't answer any question from Text A which he had to read and answer in writing. This was explained when he said,

‘Understanding English is difficult because one word can mean many things...’

Participant 10 from Chad got a low score of 6 out of 20, for Text A which he read and answered questions on his own. The explanation for this performance can be traced in his statement here below:

‘I started learning English in Chad in high school but I was only given vocabulary like woman, man a few so this was not enough, I needed to know verbs and all the grammar, dialogue. I was poor in English then’.

According to Friedberg, Mitchell and Brooke, (2017:2), one should be able to denote the breadth of knowledge of the word definition, depth of understanding of the word parts, knowledge of the word's multiple meanings and figurative language for comprehension to take place. Brooke *et al* (2017:6) also acknowledge that, learners may fail to comprehend the texts, if the vocabulary they were taught was not learnt alongside the structures in which it appears. Brooke *et al* (2017) further emphasize that exposure of a learner to reading, writing, speaking and hearing language that varies in form and function across various contexts, can help learners internalize and interpret what they read or hear. The experience of the above participants ‘show that their past exposure to English language was not concrete enough to create a proper grounding in the linguistic schema, so they failed to connect words to the different sentence structures where they appear. Therefore, if learners of English as a foreign language are not exposed to the range of contexts in which words are used and interpreted, their comprehension of texts may stall.

4.2. 2 Interference of Past Language Experience

The findings of this study showed that some learners fail to understand orthographies of other languages while others face difficulties comprehending because of the cognates in English and in

their languages. Sometimes some learners learn elementary content in such a way that when they meet advance usage, they get difficulties to comprehend it. These factors are explained and illustrated below.

4.2.2.1 Language(s) Acquired Earlier

Participants in this study were grounded in other languages which they freely interact with in different environments. These languages influence the way they learn and speak other languages. Some scholars like Jung (2003:563) argue that, comprehending English is easier to those who are grounded in another language as they relate to their past language experience in the process, sometimes it is different. However, although the difference between French and English is minimal (Adam, 2005:1) a Rwandan participant who was already grounded in French found difficulties comprehending English because of the slight differences. For example,

Participant 20 in her description of the language portrait, she shared that;

“Grammar in English is different from French for example, using adjectives, in French they come before nouns, in English they come after nouns. To build a sentence in French using verb is different from that in English.”

Shahi (2016:135) explains that unfamiliar grammatical constructions challenge learners’ reading comprehension. Looking at English and French grammar, in English the adjective normally goes before the noun; while in French the normal place of the adjectives is generally after the noun. www.french-linguistics.co.uk/grammar/adjectives_position.shtml

The above challenge may have been due to the distinction between the linguistic in put in the text and that in the memory store of the participant grounded in French language (or the linguistic schema in this case referred to as the French language schema(Shuying2013:130). Therefore, connecting the description to the nouns may have posed a challenge to the above participant because she is used to reading it after the noun in French. Generally like she said, the differences in the application of the parts of speech in the two languages may pose a difficult to comprehension.

4.2.2.2 Alphabet and Writing Systems

4.2.2.2.1 Alphabet

The characters or letters or symbols in a given language are significant as they accurately interact with each other to convey unique ideas or language (Kaadan&Kaadan 2014:2 and Al-Yousef, 2020:21). Some of the languages which the participants knew earlier such as Arabic, Japanese and Chinese have an alphabet that is distinct from that of English. This was mentioned as a factor that presented a challenge to the comprehension process of participants as illustrated below:

Participant 17, a speaker of Chinese, when describing the language portrait, said;

“ English is different from Chinese everywhere. Speaking is different. English A b c... in china different use symbols. Write different. English very difficult because very different..... Understanding very poor”

On the language portrait where she shaded the skill of understanding on the right hand in black and the speaking skill was shaded in light pink on the stomach in a small portion. About speaking she said;

“I speak to house maid, driver and in the market in English so I improve.”

Her performance was poor in both texts. She scored 3 and 5 out of 20 from Text A and Text B, respectively. Comprehension may have been minimal because of the difference between the English alphabet and the Chinese symbols. That is why the above Chinese participant shaded the skill of understanding in a dull color in a small portion and scored below average in both texts.

Participant 12 from Somalia was also affected by the difference in the symbols that represent the Arabic alphabet and that of English. She scored 4 and 8 out of 20 from Text A and B respectively. In her description of the skill of speaking which she shaded in a very small portion around the waist in black on the language portrait, she said,

“speaking very poor..... I cannot talk well because the letters are different.”

When she was answering number 20 in Text A which asked for the reasons why the words listed in 19 were difficult she said,

“it happen sometimes I know the meaning of the word but I can't to explain in English.”

From the above expression, it may be that the differences in letters lead to low vocabulary that this participant even fails to express herself even if she has the idea. On her language portrait, the skill of understanding was shaded in a big portion covering the head and one hand in green, but when asked to describe it, she said that it is little, but since she started learning English in Uganda, it is improving and so the big portion.

Researchers like Kaadan and Kaadan (2014:3) explain that this inefficiency is because learners don't understand the English alphabet and how alphabet letters are combined to create meaningful words and sentences. Kaadan and Kaadan (2014:3) also acknowledge that discovering what each letter means and the principles behind combining letters into languages enables learners to understand any original word or expression in a given language. Therefore, it may be that the linguistic representation or the letter schema (Shuying 2013:130) of the participants discussed above does not connect with the letter or alphabetic system in the texts. Therefore, comprehending texts in any language requires understanding its alphabet.

4.2.2.2.2 Writing Systems

A language's writing system defines the linguistic unit that is represented by the graphemes of a language (Miller, 2019:1). This can also be referred to as the orthography of a language. Participants in this study have languages with writing systems or orthographies different from that of English language. For learners of English to develop their reading competence, they need to understand its orthography (Aro, 2004:9, McCallum, 2006:244-245 and Miller, 2019:1). In this study, Participants with languages having different orthographies were from Somalia, Yemen, China and Japan speaking Arabic, Chinese and Japanese respectively. These languages have shallow regular orthographies as compared to English which has a deep irregular orthography (Miller, 2019:2); its written script does not fully represent the phonetic structure of spoken language thus a beginning reader is faced with a complex task of reading. (Aro, 2004:13).

This is what participants had to say;

Participant 17 from China, who after shading her language portrait said;

'Write different. English very difficult because very different.... Words sound different, written different so different.

She scored 3 out of 20 from the text that she read on her own and 5 out of 20 from the text that was read to her. On her language portrait she shaded the skill of understanding on one hand and in black. This is a small portion shaded in a dark color which may indicate poor or no understanding of the English language.

Participant 19 from Japan shaded understanding in red on the top part of the head in the smallest portion, she said,

“Japanese is different from English in pronunciation ... speaking and writing is bad..... I don’t know how to construct meaning”

She scored 9 and 2 out of 20 from Texts B and A respectively.

This scenario is discussed in Miller’s (2019:2) argument who said that Chinese and Japanese learners find reading English a challenge because they have a morphographic orthography which rely more on visual cues to identify word meanings. While English with an alphabetic orthography, relies more on phonological information. In addition, Kaadan and Kaadan (2014: 5) and Xue (2019: 1) say that, in order to convey language we need predefined elements, therefore where the predefined elements in the memory store (schema) of the participants is very distant from those in the text, comprehension may not be possible, as illustrated in the participants’ scores above.

The other is Participant 15 an Arabic speaker who said;

“writing Arabic is different from English, the writing is the same as pronunciation but English writing is different from speaking” for example, Honest begins with /h/ but it is read with /o/ but in Arabic it would be read as /h/

This may be due to the lack of connection between the system followed to read words in the memory and that the letters in the text presuppose. This is explained by the schema theory by Mc Vee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005:535) that a schema can either mediate or stand between you and the world in this case the text.

Additionally, the description given in the example above indicates that participant 15 finds difficulties in reading and writing English because of its writing system/ orthography and it may

be the reason she scored 4 out of 20 in Text A which she read on her own and answered in writing, but scored 11 out of 20 from Text B that was read to her and answered orally.

On her language portrait she shaded speaking in the stomach in lemon green and said that

“Speaking is little but I can speak in the market”

Since she mostly speaks in the market where she gets food, the speaking skill was shaded on the stomach where the food goes. She used lemon green, a bright color which may indicate that she is either good or is improving at the skill. Since this participant repeatedly buys food stuffs from the market, her memory has grasped the vocabulary used at the market, so she can easily communicate while there. Therefore, she may have got a score above average in Text B because its style of presentation is similar to the conversation at the market or the formal schema (Li *et al*: 2007) and scored below average in Text A because she had to deal with the foreign writing system of English at three levels that is; reading, comprehending and writing answers to the questions about the Text.

Participant 7 also a Somali scored only 1 and 6 out of 20 from Texts, A (written) and B (oral) respectively. He shaded understanding in the head in green in the smallest portion. In his description he said,

“ understanding very small..... writing of English and Somali is different so understanding difficult too.”

These participants would like to understand English that is why they shade it first and in green their favorite color, but their proficiency is still poor and the difference in the writing system may be the reason that explains their poor performance in the texts.

The above participants shaded understanding in the head and in green. These are Muslims who believe that green is the color in paradise (Janna) so they chose it first and shaded it in the head. They too said that, they learnt English from school, this explains why they shaded understanding in the head, because it is a skill they acquired through instruction, it is a cognitive skill so it goes to the head. Therefore, it is not a familiar language; they are not used to it from their surrounding but in class. It doesn't connect easily with the language in their memory which

is Arabic or Somali and poses difficulties to comprehension as it is stated in the schema theory (Mc Vee et al 2007).

According to the schema theory in particular the linguistic schema (Li, *et al*, 2007:20 and Shuying, 2013:130), connection between vocabulary stored in the memory with that in the text aids the understanding of the content. Vocabulary or words are written and read depending on the writing system of a language. Therefore, English, being a language with an irregular, opaque and inconsistent orthography (Aro, 2004:18), learners who speak Arabic, Chinese and Japanese faced difficulties reading its vocabulary. Thus the distinction between the writing system of words stored in the memory of the learners and that in the text may have been the reason for their poor performance in the texts.

4.2.2.3 Dealing with the Direction of Flow of the Text

There is a difference between the direction of flow of content written in English and that written in Arabic. That is, English is written from the left while Arabic is written from the right. For participants who are used to reading texts in Arabic, reading texts in English presented difficulties in comprehension.

Participant (12) said that her understanding of English was hindered by the way texts are written. Having an Arabic language background where everything starts from the right side, she finds difficulties reading and understanding the texts in English where content starts on the left. She said;

‘‘Arabic is different from English. Writing it we start from right yet English we start left. Writing a letter in Arabic everything is on the right yet in English mix or only left. It is hard to understand English.’’

She scored 8 and 4 out of 20 in Texts B and A respectively. She shaded the skill of understanding in green, in the head and hand. It is relatively a big portion but it does not correspond with the scores. This may mean that she is improving but not yet good enough. It is noted in the formal schema that (Li, *et al*, 2007:21, Shuying 2013: 130 and Rumelhar&Clelland, 1999:18) that the arrangement of content on paper can affect learners comprehension. Thus, the difference in the direction of flow of content in a text or the formal schema may pose difficulties

to learners when reading and writing as they may confuse the direction where they should start from this may also hinder their speed in the application of both skills.

4.2.2.4. Standard of English Exposed to Earlier

In the process of learning, the learner is first exposed to simple English and the level of complexity increases as they leave one level to another. Learners, who may have had instruction in the elementary level of English, may face difficulties comprehending texts with advanced language structures. For example;

Participant 19 from Japan mentioned that;

“ I started learning English when I was in kindergarten, when I was six years old but it was very easy, like this is a pen. I speak a little because we don’t speak.”

Participant 17 from China also mentioned that;

“I studied English in china but small and could not use it but now I use....”

Participant 17 scored 3 and 5 and 19 scored 2 and 9 out of 20 from Text A and B respectively. All these scores are below average. Friedberg, Mitchell and Brooke (2017:1) explain that it is particularly challenging for learners who have an impoverished experience or limited exposure to English to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words, understand nuances in word meanings and multiple meaning words and utilize sophisticated words and phrases including transitions and precise word choice. This may be called the insufficiency of the content schema(Li *et al*2007:19). Hence, the standard of English language a learner is exposed to may be a difficult to comprehending texts.

4.2.2.5 Premature Drawing of Conclusions

Learners realized that text B was about babies they have at home, instead of comprehending the text, they switched off and remembered what they know about babies. Therefore, the social aspect that they interact with every day, which was expected to help them comprehend easily as argued by the proponents of the schema theory like MC Vee, *et al*(2005, P.550), affected their comprehension. The participants did not comprehend the whole text, but they used content in their memory store to answer, especially question one (1), while some questions that required getting answers from the text, were not correctly answered.

The Participants who portrayed this were; participant 18 and 19 from Japan, 17 from China, 16, 4, 5 and 8 from Congo, 15 and 7 from Somalia and participant 9 from Eritrea.

Number one required participants to give the reason why babies can't talk according to the text and the answer was, "Babies don't talk because Orisa maker of all things stopped them since they would not know what to say and what not to say", but this is what the participants answered,

Participant 7;

'because they have not reached the time to talk''

Participant 8;

'Not yet old to talk''

Participant 9;

'young''

Participant 15;

'because it is young... not have a lot of words and sentences''

Participant 16;

'they need to grow up before like normal human being''

Participant 17;

'too young''

Participant 18;

'still young''

Participant 19;

'when young don't know everything so can't speak''

Although ironical to note, the familiar content, posed a challenge to comprehension to the participants above. This may have been because learners found Text B too easy to comprehend,

and got excited thus, drawing away from the text (Hopkins, 2009:88, Rubin, 2011:204- 205 and Spencer & Wagner, 2016:2). They did not notice that it wasn't wholly similar since the main subject was connected to the content in their memory.

This challenge was discussed by the proponents of the schema theory (McVee, *et al*2005:538) were they said that, sometimes when the content in the text is familiar the reader may not comprehend, but instead go ahead to insert the knowledge in the memory into the text and come up with wrong interpretations. This is what might have happened to the above participants when comprehending Text B.

4.2.2.6 Dealing with Accidental Cognates

Despite the argument of positive transfer where if learners are trained to use the similarities between their first language and the target language comprehension becomes easy, in this study, it proved a source of difficulties. In Alonso's (2017:1) argument, he encourages the use of cognates although these can become a stabling block in learners' comprehension if they are accidental. From the interviews with some of the French participants, difficulties rose from words that are similar in spelling with those in French but pronounced differently in English. This occurred with participant 10 and 16. This is what they said,

Participant 10 from Chad said;

‘I understand English because it is similar to French but I don't speak well because pronunciation is different’.

Participant 16 a Congolese said;

‘I can read little, I find it hard to read because some words are similar to those in French but read differently’.

Both participants have French as their second language. Participant 10 scored 6 and 12 while 16 scored 6 and 7 out of 20 from Texts A and B respectively. They both scored below average from Text A which they read on their own. Participant 10 scored above average in Text B while participant 16 still scored below average. Alonso (2017:1) explains that learners struggle with accidental cognates because they lack experience in a language and are likely to interpret words wrongly due to linguistic interference and strong reliance on their first language. Therefore the

difference in participant 10's performance may have been due to the fact that he did not have to deal with accidental cognates in Text B since it was read to him.

There were cases of learners who failed to deal with heteronyms. Heteronyms are words in English that have the same spelling but are read or pronounced differently (Huang, 2019:1 and Martin, Jones, Nelson & Nelson, 1981:299). When a learner fails to identify the distinction between the words they may end up reading and comprehending a word differently from what it is meant to be. This challenge was mentioned by participant 2 from Burundi. He said,

“English is different from French. Some words are written the same way but pronunciation is different. Affects my understanding”

He scored 6 and 10 from texts A and B respectively. He scored averagely in the text where he didn't have to deal with words in their written form and where he dealt with words in written form, the mark was below average. Zipke, Ehri and Cairns (2009:301) explain that for some learners the skill of refocusing attention from the word to meaning in written form does not come easily because they lack syntactic awareness. Their argument implies that if one has the syntactic awareness, they would not have problems with words of the above nature. Therefore, it may not only have been the words but also the lack of exposure to words in context that explain his poor performance in Text A.

As presented in the previous sub section that is; section 4.2.2.5, that it is expected that in the schema theory perspective clues in the above discussion would aid comprehension, to the above participants it failed. This is discussed by (McVee et al 2005:538) where they say that sometimes similar content may cause a reader to draw conclusions before they have analyzed the actual text leading to wrong comprehension. It may be that the knowledge in the memory store should be exact as a little resemblance may cause a difficult to the comprehension process as conclusions are quickly drawn in comprehension. Therefore, cognates may only work for people who have a higher proficiency in the target language.

4.2.2.7. Motivation

The degree of the desire of learners to learn English determines how fast their proficiency improves. This desire determines the effort one puts in and the direction followed when learning (Alizadeh, 2016:11). Motivation is thus a major factor in enhancing comprehension of English

language (Al-Yousef, 2020:23 and RRS&G & Snow, 2002:13). The motivation of learners of English is partly dependent on the reasons for their learning, the rewards to be attained after learning the language or the environment where they study from.

4.2.2.7.1. Lack of or Limited Social Motivation to Learning

According to the participants' language background as stated in the description of their language portraits, a number of them were exposed to English earlier on in their countries. However their proficiency remained low because back then, they were not motivated to learn. They just went to class because it was a school program not that they had the desire to learn English. This is what they said;

Participant 20

“in school I had some hours of English which was difficult and the language not interesting so I always use French no opportunity to use English.”

Since she found the language boring, she perhaps did not give it enough attention to understand. She lacked the intrinsic motivation (Alizadeh, 2016:14), thus she lost interest and remained poor in understanding English.

Participant 16 a Congolese said,

“I speak French, Swahili and other small languages in Congo like Lingala and Kiruba Sometimes (in Congo) learners didn't study English as they would always use it as free time to do other things... ”

She scored 6 and 7 out of 20 from Texts A and B respectively. This participant also lacked the motivation to learn English, so they dodged the class to do other things and therefore would not gain the proficiency required to comprehend (Alizadeh, 2016:14).

There was also a Sudanese participant 13 who shaded writing in brown in the stomach and chest. The reading skill was shaded in half of both legs in pink. After the shading he refused to answer any question saying, *“I don't understand, and speaking difficult”* so he didn't say anything about his language portrait. Alizadeh, (2016:14) explains that when learners have a negative attitude towards learning a language, they are not motivated to put in the required effort to learn, this may explain the case of the above participant.

Learners with a strong desire to learn can obtain a high level of competence in the target language (Alizadeh, 2016:12). However, when learners already have languages to interact with, they may lose the motivation to learn English yet this kind of motivation is a requirement in learning and comprehending a foreign language like English in their case.

4.2.2.7.2 Learning Environment

Learning a foreign language entail learning a language which is not generally spoken in the surrounding community (Rashid & Jabbar, 2017:185). This means that Learners who learn English as a foreign language do not use it as a means of communication in their homes or communities (Namyaloet *al*: 2016:2 and Yule, 2006: 162). According to Johnkenny1 (2017) learners learn the meaning of vocabulary from the environment where they live. This may imply that improving one's proficiency in a foreign language may be a challenge in an environment which does not supplement their learning.

During this study, there were participants who would probably have been better because they started learning English from their countries but could not improve because the environment pulled them back to their local languages every after the English lesson. This was mentioned by participants; 1, 11, 17, 15, 16, and 19. Below is what they put across when narrating their past language experiences after shading the portrait;

Participant 1 from Burundi,

“education system is different. Little time for English I study English for one hour per a week. I don't have any opportunity to speak English ...in Burundi I speak only FrenchI speak French at home and in office every time which affects my understanding of English. I studied English for long but since I don't use it at all I don't understand at all”.

Participant 11 from Congo said,

“I started studying English in my high school for only two hours every week. But I never used to practice speaking it. only vocabulary like color.....started speaking English in January 2018, because when I arrived in Uganda, I began to learn in English and I must speak because I have to buy food from the market.”

Participant 15 from Somalia said,

“started learning English in Somalia in high school because there are many schools there that teach English. The problem is after school I speak Somali and Arabic, but in Uganda we speak English everywhere; on the road, market, shop, everywhere.”

Participant 16 from Congo,

“I started learning English in Congo in high school. We study for one hour a week. It was difficult for me to practice it there because the teacher didn’t want to teach it. The teacher didn’t know how to translate for learners in class..... in Uganda I have learnt English for two months and I am very different, I read books at home, I speak to people in Uganda. I listen to English very much especially in movies.”

Participant 17 from China said,

“ Last year I came to Uganda and started learning English I have now learnt English for seven months. I studied English in China but small and could not use it but now I use every where.... I am better now because I can speak and understand better than when I had just come from china. ...I read to my babies, baby books are easy”

Participant 19 from Japan said;

“ I started learning English when I was in kindergarten, when I was six years old but it was very easy, like this is a pen. I speak a little because we don’t speak. I have learnt for two months in Uganda.”

The above situation is explained by various scholars like Piper (2016:134) who says that comprehension is affected by the linguistic and socioeconomic features of the learners’ environment while Krishna (2014:8) explained it further that when learners do not use English when interacting with the environment outside class it affects their proficiency. For learners to learn a foreign language, they should actively practice speaking English in school, at home and

in the community for them to learn the language like the situation with the above participants in Uganda.

The environment where one studies is very important in the learning of a language as it motivates them to learn more. If what is studied in class connects with what happens at home and in the society, what is learnt is committed to memory (schema creation) there by complementing language learning. Therefore, where connection is lacking, there may be low motivation which affects the learners' understanding of English.

4.2.3 Failure to Comprehend Cultural Content which is Unfamiliar

The Participants in this study came from different societies which have different social cultural beliefs and values. Besides the way culture is discussed by different scholars, in this study it will constitute all what a learner interacts with in their daily life (McVee, *et al*2005:544 & 549). In the comprehension process learners tend to comprehend social cultural activities that are familiar to activities in their communities easily, while those that are new/alien give them a challenge (Liet *al*,2007:21, McVee, *et al*, 2005:544 and Shuying 2013:130). Cultural disconnection presented a challenge to a number of participants especially during the comprehension of Text A, which they read and comprehended on their own. This is what participants commented;

Participant 3 from china said about Text A;

‘I do not understand the culture of the English people... didn't get the meaning in the story.’

He only scored 7 out of 20 from Text A, where as in Text B which is about babies that are common in every culture, he scored 12 out of 20. On his language portrait, understanding is the smallest portion, shaded in red on the left hand. In his description he said,

‘I speak and understand English more in Uganda because I talk to workers and all Ugandans in English...Chinese is different from English but it does not affect my understanding of English since English is easier than Chinese’

Apart from the alien culture in Text A as compared to Text B, it may be that, his better performance in Text B was due to the fact that, Text B was delivered in a style relatively similar to the one he interacts with at work and in his surrounding- rhyming formal schemas as

compared to Text A where he had to concentrate and read an alien culture then comprehend on his own.

Participant 7 also faced difficulties comprehending because of the alien culture. He said,

‘culture not similar not seen this type of purification...’

He scored 1 out of 20 from Text A and that was number 3 which was asking to name the people in the text. He later mentions this in the description of his language portrait, where he said,

‘Stories in English are different from stories in Somali and Arabic, this makes it difficult to understand them’

Therefore, purification talked about in Text A which involved covering someone with a goat’s skin soaked in blood, with beer and eggs on the side, was very alien to him thus hindering understanding of the text during comprehension.

Although participant 7 said that he knew about babies who were talked about in Text B he scored only 6 out of twenty. Hopkins (2009:881) and Rubin (2011:204- 205) explain this when they say that apart from learners meeting difficulties from texts they have never heard of, some difficulties may rise from the context in which a text is written. This may have been the challenge for this participant in Text B.

Similar to the above was participant 8 from Congo, who also said,

‘Purification seen/heard but not the same way’

He only answered 2 questions correctly from Text A. So, the procedure of carrying out this cultural activity which is different from what is in the memory of the above participants, might have affected their comprehension process.

Culture was also a challenge to participant 9 from Eritrea. She scored 5 out of 20 from Text A and 9 out of 20 from Text B. She commented this about text A

‘didn’t understand what they were talking about. Purification in this way is not common, culture I don’t know, don’t understand.’

And about Text B,

‘I have never heard of a thing like that before’

On her language portrait she shaded understanding on one hand and a small part of the chest. She described this in the following way;

‘I can listen but I can’t understand sometimes so my understanding poor...English is not our culture and talks about things I can’t know. But Tigrinya they talk about the history of Eritrea so I understand because I know.’

Therefore the content in the texts that she read in English may have affected her comprehension since it did not connect with the content in the memory hence failure of the content schema(Shuying, 2013:130)

Participant 12 from Somali was also affected by the culture in Text A since she scored 4 out of 20, she said,

‘ things they are talking about I have never seen ... never heard of the activity’

When describing her language portrait, she said,

‘culture (Somali) is different from English and some stories are difficult....’

The schema theorists Mc Veeet al (2005) and Shuying (2013) contend that where the culture in the text does not connect with what the reader knows or has seen or heard of, comprehension may not take place. All the above participants perhaps failed to score above average in either text A or B or both because, for instance in Text A, they read a purification activity among the Acholi people in Uganda, a cultural activity done in a foreign way which did not in any way connect with what was in their memory store.

Culture facilitates the comprehension process in a way that if culture in the text does not connect with culture in the memory, comprehension may be hindered. Other factors like, the way of presentation of a text, context of presentation, attitude as well as level of proficiency in English worsen the difficulties presented by culture to comprehension.

4.2.4 Pronunciation of Words

The way words are said or read is important to the reading and meaning derivation process. Some words in English are not pronounced by their first letters. For learners who are not familiar with these words reading and comprehending them is not easy.

4.2.4.1. Spelling - Pronunciation Disconnect

English spellings are often not phonetic, that is; the relation between letter and sound is much less direct in English than it is in other languages like Arabic. Participants in this study with an origin in either of these languages found reading hard because they may have failed to recognize some words, like Participant 14 from Yemen talked about ‘‘write’’ which begins with /w/ but sounded as /r/ and the Somali participant 15 who mentioned a word ‘‘honest’’ which is read with /o/ instead of /h/.

Participant 14 from Yemen shaded the reading skill only in the feet in orange and said,

‘‘reading is sometimes hard because of words which do not sound like the way they are written’’

Participant 15 from Somalia adds that;

‘‘English writing is different from speaking... This does not happen in Somali and Arabic this makes writing English difficult’’

The above two participants are Arabic speakers. Participant 15 scored 4 out of 20 from Text A, the text she read on her own while from the one that was read to her, she scored 11 out of 20. For participant 14, he didn’t answer any question from Text A (written) but scored 10 out of 20 from Text B (oral). This performance indicates that they comprehend better when they listen since they don’t have to deal with the spelling and pronunciation of words and the reverse is true.

Participant 17 from China said;

‘‘words sound different, written different so different’’

She scored 3 and 5 out of 20 from Texts A and B respectively. Both marks are below average, and this may be attributed to failure to distinguish between words and failure to read some words because they seem new due to the difference between writing and pronunciation. She shaded the

listening skill in half of the left leg in lemon green and the statement above helps to explain this too.

Miller (2019:3) explains that in English many letters can correspond to one sound and many sounds correspond to one letter and these one to many or many to one relationship makes decoding words difficult for learners of English as a foreign language. Since the pronunciation of words in English is not purely phonetic, reading and comprehending texts may be difficult for learners as they may be reading and comprehending completely different words from what they actually are.

4.2.4.2. Variations in Pronunciation and Wrong Perception

English is globally spoken, for this; there are a variety of dialects influenced by the various mother tongues in the countries where it is spoken (Karimova, 2016:2 and Worlds Worth English language lab, June 1, 2016). Some regions affect English so much that it sounds like a different language. These varieties influence the way learners comprehend oral communication. Since participants in this study came from different countries, some of them stated that they found difficulties listening to people from other countries. For example,

Participant 1 from Burundi said;

“Understanding easy when I read but when others do read it difficult to understand because of pronunciation which is different from what I know”

Participant 4 from Congo;

“listening is poor because of the pronunciation but can pick something after long listening”

Participant 14 from Yemen;

“understanding speech is hard because of pronunciation”

This difficult may not easily be corrected because Adank, Hagoort and Bekkering, (2010:1907), assert that the accent of the speaker affects someone’s oral comprehension yet these accents are influenced by the various mother tongues of the speakers. Therefore, it will always be a challenge listening to someone from a different region. So, if the pronunciation of words stored in the memory or schema (MC Vee et al 2005:535) does not connect with the pronunciation in

their surroundings, comprehending speech or oral texts from people coming from different regions, may fail.

However, apart from participant 4 who scored 13 out of 20 from Text A, the text he read on his own and 7 from Text B the one that was read to him, the other two participants performed better in the text that was read to them as compared to the other text (A). That is; Participant 1 scored 13 from Text B and 7 from Text A, while 14 scored 10 from Text B and failed to answer any question from Text A. Therefore, besides pronunciation there may also be some other factors like vocabulary, culture, or it may be that their level of proficiency in English is still low and that is why their performance was below average.

4.2.5 Inconsistence and Low Attendance

Comprehension occurs when one concentrates on what one reads or listens to. One participant who differed from the other's experience in line with concentration is participant 6 from Sudan who said;

‘I started learning English in Uganda for some time. Then I stopped and studied Arabic. Then I came back to English and back to Arabic. This makes it difficult for me to understand English because I am on and off not concentrated. I use Arabic at home.’

He scored 6 and 13 out of 20 from Texts A and B. Learning a language in the way of the above participant, may yield lack of connection of the content presented to the learner which may affect the formation of the schema's or content schema as shuying (2013:130) puts it, necessary for the understanding of the language.

Participant 7 said that he needed more time to understand the text because of the many new words which made it hard for her to understand, especially Text A. She added that her concentration when listening to any text is affected by the speed of the reader

Participant 3 from China said that his problem is that he cannot concentrate when listening to texts so he knows he is poor. Though he says that he listens to his workers at his business and he correctly responded to ten questions from the oral text that is Text B.

In line with the above comments by the participants, Jones (2006:8) says that inconsistency in attendance has a negative impact on the academic achievement of the learners. Piper (2016:138) adds that sufficient time must be given to learning for learners to attain the comprehension of both oral and written language. Conclusively we may say that learning a language requires dedicating time, devotion and consistent attendance, otherwise a beginner may not comprehend a text easily since there will not be connection in the schemas created in the memory which are needed for comprehension to take place.

4.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has presented the data and a detailed analysis of the findings, portraying the difficulties learners of English as a foreign language face in the process of comprehension in five sections. From the findings it may be concluded that the difficulties mainly stem from the past experiences of the learner. These past experiences or back ground knowledge include; social, cultural and language experiences. Comprehension is achieved when these experiences connect with the experience in the text and where the connection fails comprehension may also fail which is what the schema theory says.

Chapter Five

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion of findings of the study in relation to the objectives laid out in chapter one; that is; objective one, two and three. It discusses findings on learners comprehension difficulties, presented in chapter four above. Difficulties to comprehension are discussed through the schema theory lenses. According to the schema theory, for comprehension to take place the content stored in the learner's memory should interact with the content in the text. This chapter also gives a conclusion to the study, the contribution of the study to the scholarly world and suggests recommendations for further studies.

5.1. Difficulty in Comprehending English as a Foreign Language

Participants who took part in this study came from a range of countries to study English as a foreign language in Uganda. Some of the participants came from African countries which predominately use French, namely; Chad where French is used with other local languages, Congo speaks French, Kiruba, Lingala and other local languages, Burundi speaks French and Kirundi, Rwanda with French and Kinyarwanda. While others came from countries that speak Arabic, these include Sudan where they use Arabic and other languages like Dinka and others, Somalia speaking Arabic and Somali and others from Yemen with Arabic. There were other participants who came from Japan and China where they predominately speak Japanese and Chinese respectively.

As earlier on presented in the previous chapter, these learners face a number of difficulties when comprehending English language. Some of the major difficulties stemmed from; Vocabulary, mode of presentation of texts, cultural variations and past language experiences.

5.1.1. Vocabulary and Comprehension

Vocabulary is one of the major difficult that learners in this study faced during comprehension. Vocabulary poses various difficulties, however, alphabet, writing system as well as spelling pronunciation disconnect standout as the discussion below illustrates.

5.1.1.1 Alphabet, Writing Systems and Comprehension.

Alphabet is one of the major difficulties noted from the findings. The alphabet of any language constitutes its vocabulary. Learners that come from China and Japan where logographic characters are used and those from Yemen where Arabic is used face difficulties understanding the English alphabet. These characters are different in a way that, the Chinese and Japanese characters are predominately pictorial while English is alphabetic (Treiman, 2015:22). This distinction is mentioned as a difficult by four participants in section 4.2.2.2 page 48-49 in different ways. One clearly mentioned that because “AbC” is different from the Chinese characters then it is difficult to read and understand, while another just mentioned that the letters are different that is why she cannot speak, and another from an Arabic speaking country says she cannot speak even when she knows the answer whereas the last one said English is difficult because it is very different. Li et al (2007:21) explain this further when they say that without basic language knowledge, no reading strategy or skill can function effectively. Therefore, the more language schemata readers have in their mind, the more information readers may acquire from the text, and the more effective readers they may become.

In addition to the above, the Chinese and Japanese writing systems require combining multiple components to have one character, lexical demarcation and meaning is derived at the level of a morpheme, whereas for the English writing system, the characters are simple, and in words, they represent phonemes. English is inconsistent and contextual (Treiman, 2015:21-22). In section 4.2.2.2 page 48 in the previous chapter, a participant mentions that, Japanese is different from English in pronunciation and writing, so she finds difficulties speaking and writing it and later fails to construct meaning from the texts.

Reading and understanding of English language by learners whose languages use different characters like the Chinese and Japanese is a challenge as they are tasked to understand a whole new system of Alphabet (Miller 2019:4). It is worsened by the fact that in English individual letters point to sound rather than meaning as it is in their languages. Kaadan and Kaadan (2014) as mentioned in the previous chapter, add that it does not stop at the different symbols it also extends to the distinct way of pronunciation which leaves the learners in a challenging situation during comprehension

According to the above arguments, understanding of a text in English language requires a connection between the symbols or characters that represent a language in the learner's memory store and the English language characters which is part of the linguistic schema (Li, Wu and Wang, 2007:18). This explains why learners from the francophone countries did not have difficulties with the English alphabet because these two alphabets are close in other words the alphabet system in their schema or background knowledge connects with that in texts written in English language.

Thus, conceptualization of the alphabet is a key factor in learning a language and most importantly in the process of understanding any message. This is because the alphabets or letters or symbols of a language, interact with each other to form words which carry the content. Thus understanding of the alphabet of English language means understanding any form of communication or easy comprehension of any text.

5.1.1.2 Pronunciation, Spelling Disconnect of English Words and Comprehension

English words which require application of omission or elision of some letters in pronunciation are difficult to comprehend by learners of English as a foreign language. English is different from other languages because some of its letters at the beginning of some words are omitted and instead the second letter is mentioned in speech, therefore, learners coming from countries where each letter in a word is mentioned in speech, find it difficult to read and comprehend English language. This difficult was manifested among four participants as illustrated below.

In chapter four section 4.2.2.2Page: 48, a participant mentioned that writing Arabic is different from English, in Arabic the writing is the same as pronunciation, but in English, writing is different from speaking and gives an example of a word, 'honest' which begins with /h/ but it is read with /o/ omitting the /h/ sound yet in Arabic it would be read as /h/. Another in section 4.2.4.1 page 63-64 points out, 'write' which begins with /w/ but sounded as /r/ this participant in particular even fails to read and answer any question from the written text. There is another on page 63 section 4.2.4.1.who said that, English writing is different from speaking, this does not happen in Somali and Arabic which makes writing English difficult, and the last one from the same section said that words sound different, written different so different.

This disconnection between the letters in words and the pronunciation of words renders English a difficult language to read to learners of English as a foreign language (Aro, 2004:7-13) because these omissions are not explained in the rules of grammar (Hameed and Qaduri, 2013:8)

As already mentioned in chapter four Miller (2019:3) explains that in English many letters can correspond to one sound and many sounds correspond to one letter and this one to many or many to one relationship makes understanding words difficult for learners learning English as a foreign language. Miller, (2019:2) and Aro (2004:13) go ahead to say that, the written form of English does not fully represent the phonetic structure of spoken language. Yet, Chinese and Japanese associate meaning to morphemes and rely more on visual cues to identify word meanings (Miller, 2019:3).

The above participants got difficulties understanding English words that are not pronounced with letters that they are written especially at the beginning, because this is absent in their languages. It should be noted that all the participants who have the above challenge are either from Arabic, Chinese or Japanese speaking countries. In contrast those who come from French speaking countries where the system of spelling and pronunciation works in the same way as that of English, such a difficult does not arise. This confirms the contention of the schema theory as discussed by Mc Veeet *al*(2005).

It is therefore important to note that, when learning a language whose system of spelling and pronunciation are distant, one requires relatively much time to interact with the language so as to be able to read and understand it with ease.

5.1.2 Mode of Presentation

Mode of presentation of a text poses difficulties to learners of English as a foreign language. In the study, participants were presented with two texts to comprehend. One was oral and the other written. Interesting to note, each mode of presentation presents a challenge to a particular group of learners. The learners from Chinese, Japanese and Arabic speaking countries, did not find as much difficulties comprehending the oral text as compared to comprehending the written text. This was evident in their performance which was better in the oral text but poor in the written text. This was because in the oral text, they only had to understand the message in the text, yet in the written text, they had to identify the word, pronounce or read it then find out its meaning and relate it to the other words in the text. In fact one of the participants an Arabic speaker on page

41 section 4.2.1.4, said that he did not have time to read yet the words are difficult in the written text. He had an average score in the oral text but got no mark from the written text. This was the same case with the participant on page 48 section 4.2.2.2. She explained that she speaks in the market. This better performance in the oral text is because, through interaction in the community, these learners speak, so this was similar to what they do every day in conversation where they are free to ask for information to be repeated for them to understand clearly (Cummins' 2009:4).

However, to some of the participants who have a francophone language background, they have no difficulty comprehending the written text as compared to the oral text. On page 41, section 4.1.1; a participant said that when comprehending an oral text, she concentrates on identifying the words and does not have time to find the meaning whereas when she reads she understands more as compared to when others read to her, because of the different pronunciation. She scored above average from the written text but below average from the oral text. This scenario is due to the fact that, even if French and English are close languages, the way words are pronounced is different. This was mentioned by two participants on page 55-57, section 4.2.2.6; who said that the words in English are similar to those in French but they are pronounced differently. These words, to the learners may be perceived as new words which is not the case with the written words as they deal with pronunciation and understand on their own.

Considering the oral text, the learners whose language background is not connected to English, have just one experience, which is that, which they receive from their teachers and from the community which is in the same country Uganda. It is also argued by proponents of the schema theory Li et al (2005:556) that transactions with others are critical in the formation and continued development of the mind. Therefore, what they learn in class and store in memory, connects with what they interact with in the community. So, they have no difficulty understanding it in the spoken form because it is what they receive most as they interact with the community. Whereas, for the written text they have to deal with pronunciation and then deriving meaning which makes it difficult for comprehension to take place.

To learners who have a language background that connects with that of English, they face a difficulty understanding the oral English of a Ugandan, because, although the words are similar to those in French, they are pronounced differently. Therefore, they have no difficulty

understanding the written text where they deal with the words on their own and connect with their linguistic schema for comprehension to take place.

From the above discussion two arguments are presented, one is that a familiar mode of content presentation aids comprehension as the case among the Arabic, Japanese and Chinese participants above. Two is that, similarity between languages which is not exact yields confusion and is a stabling block in the comprehension process like the case of the French speakers in this study as discussed above (Schema theory, McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek 2005).

Mode of presentation of texts content affects the comprehension of learners in different ways. Where the mode is familiar to what the learner is used to, there are no comprehension difficulties. The oral mode of presentation is close to the conversation that learners are exposed to on a daily basis but it has difficulties of pronunciation. For most of the French speakers in this study, the pronunciation made words new and different from those that they know, because I am a Ugandan who speaks English in the Ugandan accent making comprehension difficult. While for the written text, where words were not pronounced for them, they did not find difficulties comprehending them.

5.1.3. Culture and Comprehension

Unfamiliar culture is a difficult to comprehension. Participants in this study come from different cultural back grounds, the teachers come from different cultural back grounds and the texts also presented a different culture. The findings of this study show that culture comes with many aspects which are a challenge to the learners namely; cultural names, cultural activities, cultural vocabulary and a lot more other things since culture is a way of life of a given community. Learners had the following to say about the cultural activity in the written text. On page 60- 62, section, 4.2.3; a participant said that he did not get the meaning of the story because he doesn't understand the culture of the English people. Another said that the culture is not similar, the type of purification strange and stories in English are different from stories in Somali and Arabic, therefore, difficult to understand. There was another who said that she had seen/heard about purification but was not done in the same way. There was another participant who said that she did not understand what they were talking about as that kind of purification is not common, but in Tigrinya, they talk about the history of Eritrea so she understands because she knows about

the history. There was also a participant from Somalia who said that all that was talked about in Text A was new and didn't understand what was taking place.

Since learners cannot detach themselves from their cultures (Bayiga, 2016:244), any culture that does not connect with the one in their memory is a difficult to comprehension because one will completely be put off (schema theory by McVee, *et al*, 2005). One participant when asked to name new words she mentioned a name "odukany" which was the name of the herbalist, but, she was not able to identify this because it is cultural name from the Acholi culture which she does not understand.

Since culture is learnt through activities done in the community through daily interactions, it becomes a way of defining someone as they create a strong attachment that one cannot do away with. Hence, learners easily infer messages in the text with that in their memory and comprehend. This is why texts with alien cultural experiences are either poorly or not comprehended at all.

5.1.4. Past language Experiences and Comprehension of English as a Foreign Language

It is clearly illustrated in the previous chapter that, the learners who took part in this study, had received some instruction in English language before they joined their current class at Makerere University. Despite this, and the instruction they had so far got at Makerere University, they still had difficulties comprehending English language. The discussion in the previous chapter shows that this was due to three reasons namely; Lack of or limited social motivation to learning, unfavorable learning environment and Low or poor concentration.

5.1.4.1. Lack of or Limited Social Motivation to Learning and Poor Learning Environment

The learners in this study lacked the social motivation to learn English at the time when English was introduced to them before they joined their current class at Makerere University which posed difficulties to comprehending English language. For one to learn a language there must be a motivating factor for learning to effectively take place. Participants on page 57-60, section 4.2.7.1, and section 4.2.7.2, mention that they studied for few hours and the language was difficult and not interesting so they did not speak it after. Another participant said that English was used as free time for them to do their other businesses, meaning they did not accord it the attention it needed for learning to take place.

Motivation is not a language factor but it connects to language in a way that the desire to interact is one of the motivating factors to learning a language (Bayiga, 2016:237). This is why, when learners have a negative attitude towards learning a language, they are not motivated to put in the required effort to learn, and their competence is left lacking (Alizadeh, 2016:14). This explains why when they got the motivation to learn they gave it more time, attention and looked for a better place to study hence coming to Uganda at Makerere university.

Thus, lacking motivation translates into low proficiency or poor schema formation in the target language and this is what happened with the participants in this study especially those who were from Congo, Rwanda Japan and China. This introduces another challenge which is the learning environment.

5.1.4.2. The Learning Environment and Comprehension of English

The environment where the participants in this study learnt English in the past did not facilitate them to learn. This was so because after learning they would go back to the society and speak French, Chinese, Congolese and many other languages depending on the community. There are six participants who were affected by their learning environment. On page 58, section 4.2.2.7.2, one of the participants said, English was given little time in Burundi and every time he left class he would speak French at home and in office, which affected his understanding of English. Another said that she studied English for only two hours learning only vocabulary and after class that was all but in Uganda, she speak it a lot because she has to buy food from the market. The other participant said that she studied English in Somalia but after class she would speak Somali and Arabic but in Uganda she speaks it on the road, shop and market, there was one from Congo who said that he studied for one hour and didn't speak it again until the next lesson yet the teacher too didn't seem competent enough. There were other two participants one from China and another from Japan, both the case is the same, that is; in their country there was no practice. This is why they left their countries and came to Uganda to study English since in Uganda, English is a Lingua Franca (Bayiga, 2016:249) and joined Makerere University where English is predominately spoken so as to practice after class and improve their proficiency.

Therefore, when learners do not use English when interacting with their environment outside class, it affects their proficiency which affects the content schema formation (Shuying,

2013:130) leaving them poor at comprehension since comprehension is affected by the linguistic and social economic features of the learners' environment (Krishna, 2014:8 & Piper, 2016:134)

Understanding English language by learners comes easily when the factors in the environment facilitate them to learn, because in class, the hours spent are few to aid quick and steady learning. Even in Uganda where they study English on a daily basis, a learner still said that, they needed more time with the teachers. It is usually a hard situation for one not to interact with the community because of not understanding a language. Therefore, although they were poor, if they stay longer in Uganda, where the desire to communicate forces them to speak English, they will become better.

5.1.4.3. Low or Poor Concentration

Poor concentration when learning English leads to low proficiency in the language, which affects comprehension. Comprehension occurs when one reads or listens to a text with at most levels of concentration. One participant on page 65 in section 4.5 said that he started learning English in Uganda for some time, then he stopped and studied Arabic, then he came back to English and back to Arabic, and at the time of data collection he was studying Arabic and English at the same time. This participant even failed to read the written text because he did not have the concentration to read. Another participant on page 58 section, 4.2.7.2, said that she was not attentive during the time of English because it was treated as free time to do other things which left her poor at comprehending English language.

Language learning requires enough time and attention, inconsistency or lack of attention yields poor schema formation leading to low proficiency in both the oral and written forms of English, which makes comprehension difficult (Jones, 2006:8 and Piper, 2016:138)

Therefore, learning a language requires dedicating time, devotion and consistent attendance. Otherwise, a beginner may not comprehend a text easily without giving in the required attention to learn.

5.1.5. Conclusion

Conclusively, schema theory as advanced by McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005) states that, for comprehension to take place, there must be an interaction of the body of knowledge stored in someone's memory with the content in the text. In situations where this body of knowledge does

not connect with the content in the text then comprehension fails. The findings in this study confirm this assertion. Every challenge that participants showed connect to insufficiency of the body of knowledge in their memory which hindered the interaction of content in text with content in memory. For example, all participants had hardships comprehending any alien culture. Culture includes all activities that take place in one's community and the language used to carry them out. It was evident from the findings that a culture which does not connect with the culture in the body of knowledge of the reader's or listener's memory store is not easily comprehended. Culture is a key aspect yet broad, as one cannot learn the culture of every community in the world yet they cannot know which region a text will be sourced for comprehension.

However, since the texts are written in English language, learners must be trained to have a good command of the vocabulary of English, then, with close reading they can comprehend the texts even those with alien cultural content.

5.2. Conclusions

Comprehension is an interactive and specific process. It is interactive in the way that the reader's abilities, knowledge and past experiences interact with the experiences in the text. It is specific since after the interactive process the reader is expected to zero down to the exact information or intended information in the text. This can be done through assimilation, relating and inferring information so as to arrive at the message in any text that is written or oral. This implies that if the interactive process is not successful, then the specific information is not got leading to wrong, poor or no comprehension.

Learning English as a foreign language implies a situation of fusion of the first language and the new or foreign language. The difficulties to comprehension of English language by foreign learners are majorly because the learners have not interacted with this language deep enough for them to use it as freely as they do with their first languages. Hearing and reading words in a language is not enough. The learner needs concrete knowledge of the vocabulary which knowledge includes knowing how it is spelt, pronounced, its meaning including the connotations and associations for them to freely comprehend English. This calls for extensive reading of various texts in different fields.

The language a person meets in the community he first interacts with forms a land mark in his life that he carries it on to all the languages that he interacts with because they are saved deep in his memory. When learning a new language, these experiences keep popping up. This language that is already rooted in the learner's memory shapes his competence in the foreign language, in a way that the reader bases on these experiences to assimilate, relate or infer new information so that meaning is got from a text. Where the reader fails in these processes, it implies low competence and hence poor comprehension ability.

In a nutshell, comprehension of English as a foreign language cannot easily be arrived at by only knowing how to read and hear various words. It goes beyond to include having a deep and regular attachment with English. It has to be deep in a way that it is studied intensively where attention is given to every detail starting from vocabulary, grammar to contextual usage of language which will allow learners to the various experiences in the world. These experiences

must range from day-to-day activities to deep culturally rooted experiences. In so doing, comprehension will become a smooth and less stressing exercise, since the learner's memory store will be rich with experiences which can easily interact with the experiences in the text which is the contention of schema theory.

5.3 Contribution of this Study to scholarship

The study contributes knowledge in the area of methodology; that is; the use of a Language Portrait which is a multidimensional tool, to generate knowledge about the schema theory.

This study presents insights about a multicultural in nature of experience in the journey of the learners of a foreign language and how this multiculturalism impacts their learning of English language in a foreign country.

5.4. Recommendations for Further Studies

Further studies should be carried out on the oral and written text comprehension, and establish which of the two is easily comprehended and explain why.

Research should be done on how to activate back ground knowledge of learners during the process of comprehension.

There is need to conduct research on the best methods of instruction to learners of English as a foreign language in Uganda.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Text A

Read the following passages and under line all the words you cannot read, words you do not understand and sentences that you find incomprehensible.

Opito and the herbalist came forth. They stood for a while and surveyed the arena of this rite of purification. Odukany slaughtered the black goat and collected the blood in a big calabash. He was an expert in skinning and with Opito's help, the skinning took a very short time. Soak the skin with the blood in the calabash, ' ' Odukany instructed Opito. Opito did it.

"Now remove all your clothes, "Opito did as he was told. "Right. Now lie on your back and fold your legs such that the skin can cover the whole body."Opito followed the instructions. Odukany took the blood-soaked heavy skin and covered Opito's body.

" Now you are a man. You must not fear anything especially the noise..."Odukany opened his bag, took the twenty eggs and arranged them in three columns, four eggs row. He then placed the calabash of beer they had brought with them beside the eggs. He went and hid himself behind a big fallen tree trunk and lit a small piece of wooden candle which only glowed. He poured some white powdery substance and the glow flickered into flames which seemed to be swayed by the wind. The powder and the flame produced a sweet fragrance which for a brief moment made Opito oblivious of his plight. Odukany then began to utter certain incantations.

From the eastern horizon a distant rumbling noise could be heard. The noise at first seemed very far, but as time passed it came rumbling like mighty thunder. The thatched roofs squeaked and shrieked. Trees and glasses all trembled in submission to the approaching danger. Every being was awe-struck. Babies and frightened mothers wailed in their beds. Even the once brave husbands were now as impotent as ash. They could not cause any challenge to this particular un known invader. But many rightly suspected that the ensuing pandemonium was associated with

spirits. Opito began to convulse where he was lying. Odukany remained firm where he was hiding. He was still continuing with his incantations. His witch fire still flickering. The noise could now be heard in the form of strong waves violently dashing against each other with violent antagonistic tides. Because of excessive trembling the skin covering Opito's head had slipped off. He did not have the power to pull the skin back over his head. He was too frightened to help himself.

And in that dismal state, he saw an extremely huge bird, about twenty times the size of a vulture. It was flying heavily and slowly. Its beak the size of a fat man's thigh was pointed and curved like that of a carrion bird. Although it was dark, Opito could see the huge bird because as it flew a bright demonic light surrounded it. Shaking violently, Opito craned his neck to where Odukany's light burnt and saw him lying flat on his belly, looking steadily at the huge bird, still uttering the incantations.

The huge bird perched on one of the great strong branches at the top of the big tree. The whole tree shook heavily with the bird's gigantic weight. The huge bird started jumping down, step by step, from branch to branch. It would jump on one lower branch, stay there for a minute or two while surveying around, raising its beak sometimes to look at the top of the tree. This sequence was rather slow and took the bird about forty minutes to reach the ground, for the tree was very high indeed.

When it finally jumped down just in front of Opito to eat the eggs, it was no longer a huge bird, but a beautiful lady just like Gladys. She was smiling attractively. Opito stopped trembling and became as still as a corpse. It devoured the eggs very hungrily and also turned to the beer in the calabash. As the beer went down its throat, Odukany stood up and flashed his traditional torch which gave a blinding, dazzling light. Odukany uttered a prayer of exorcism and hit the demon with special black marble charm.

In the twinkling of an eye the spirit had assumed its former shape of the huge bird and it flew this time with an unimaginable noise. The goats broke away from the veranda where they were tied and frightened cows leaped out of the kraals because of the deafening thunder. The huge bird

flew very fast this time and that was the last Opito saw of it. it went and never reappeared. The purification had been accomplished, and Opito was now going to be a free man.

Referring to the text above answer the following questions

1. Suggest a suitable title for this story.
2. Where did the events in the text take place?
3. Identify the two-people mentioned in the text.
4. Mention the roles the two people mentioned in three plays in the text
5. What were the eggs and the beer for?
6. What phrase in the passage means that the candle gave more light?
7. In which place did the herbalist hide?
8. Why did the goats and cows leave their resting places?
9. What is the difference between the bird in space and on the ground?
10. How is the movement of the spirit in paragraph seven different from that in the last paragraph?
11. What message do you get from paragraph two? (talk about Opito and the whole activity)

Which word or statements in the text mean the following?

12. Cry
13. Shaking uncontrollably
14. Fearless
15. Very big
16. Dead body
17. Heavy
18. Short time
19. Mention the words or phrases which were difficult for you to understand.
20. Give the reasons as to why the words and phrases mentioned above were difficult for you.

END

Appendix 2: Text B

Listen to the following text and mention all the words you cannot read, words you do not understand, sentences that you find incomprehensible and answer the questions that follow.

Text B

Why Babies Can't Talk: A how and why Story

Long ago, babies were able to speak as soon as they were born. They did not cry when they wanted food, or when they were too hot or too cold or uncomfortable in any way. They just opened their mouths and told their mothers what they wanted. This made it very easy for their mothers to look after them, easier than nowadays when babies just cry and their mothers have to guess what the babies want.

Unfortunately, the babies were not very wise. Wise people do not talk about everything they see. But the foolish babies did not know this. If a man with only one eye came to the house, a baby would say, "go away one-eyed man!" the man would get angry and the baby's mother would be ashamed. She would have to apologize to the visitor, and she would begin that babies did not know how to speak after all. They caused a lot of trouble with their foolish talk.

One day, a newly married woman wanted to make a fire. She went to the next house to take some burning wood from their fire. She would use this to light her own fire. The owner of the next house was not in, but her little baby was lying on a mat in a room. The woman saw some meat which was roasting over fire. She said to herself, " how nice this meat smells! Let me look at it and see if it is a rabbit or not." She went nearer and touched the meat. " yes, it is a rabbit. It smells just like the rabbit my father brings home from our farm. Let me taste it and see if it is as nice as my father's meat. There is only this little baby here. No one will know that I took the meat." She took a fore leg of the meat and ate it. then she quickly went back to her house.

When the baby's mother returned, she shouted, "who has stolen some of my meat?" the baby at once told her. He said, "mother I know the thief. She is the woman in the next house." He described how the woman took a fore-leg and ate it, and then hid a hind-leg under her clothes and took it away.

Everybody came and heard the baby's story. They capped their hands and shouted, "Thief! Thief!" at the woman who had stolen the meat. She was very ashamed.

Orisa, maker of all things, heard the story. He also heard that babies often said rude and foolish things because they were not old enough to be wise. He knew that he must do something to stop very little babies from talking. So, he took some water-yam, cut it in two, and scraped some of the raw yam with a sharp knife. He put this scraped raw yam into the baby's throat. Since that time, little babies have been unable to talk. Whenever they try to say something, a little white stuff like scraped raw yam comes out of their mouths instead. As they grow older and wiser, and the white stuff becomes less in their throats, they begin to talk little by little. Finally, when they are old and wise enough, they can talk as well as their parents.

Using the passage above, answer the following questions.

1. Mention four reasons why babies can't talk.

.....

2. Why is it hard for mothers to look after babies that can't talk?

.....

Give the meaning of each of the following words;

3. Scraped

.....

4. Sharp

.....

5. Uncomfortable

.....

6. Parents.

.....

7. Roasting

.....

8. Which important rule about talking did the babies of long ago not know about?

.....

9. Give a reason as to why the mothers were always sorry for what their babies did to the visitors
.....
10. For what reason does the neighbor go to the house where the baby was?
.....
11. What did the neighbor do with the two pieces of meat which she took?
.....
12. How did the baby's mother find out the truth?
.....
13. Who got to know about the incident?
.....
14. Why did the person named in 13 do what he did?
.....
15. What was the results of what he did?
.....
16. Why do you think the above text is called a how and why story?
.....
17. Did you understand the story?
.....
18. Which words were difficult for you to understand?
.....
19. Is the title new to you?
.....
20. Give the reason for your answer in 19 above.
.....

END

Appendix 3: Language Portrait

The Language Portrait which was shaded by my Participants about their language experiences



Key

Appendix 4:Letter requesting for clearance from the Centre for Language and Communication Services

Makerere University,
P. O. BOX 7062,
Kampala, Uganda,
14th June, 2018.

To the coordinator
The Center for Language and Communication Services
Makerere University.

Dear Madam,

Re: Permission to involve learners learning English as a foreign language at your institution as participants in my study

I write to ask for permission to involve learners learning English as a foreign Language at your institution as participants in my study. I am a learner of masters in Linguistics in my second-year registration number 2016/HD03/1790Uat Makerere university. I intend to carry out a study entitled “Difficulties in comprehension among learners learning English as a foreign language in Uganda: A schema theoretic approach.” Learners learning English as a foreign language at your institution are the best participants who will give me the relevant data for my study. I request you to permit me to involve them in my study as participants.

I shall be grateful if I am granted this permission. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

.....

NAKAAYI AMINA.

Appendix 5: Tools: Consent Form

DIFFICULTIES IN COMPREHENSION AMONG LEARNERS LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN UGANDA: A SCHEMA THEORETIC APPROACH

Introduction

- You are being asked to be in a research study of investigating the difficulties pertaining to comprehension among students learning English as a foreign language
- You were selected as a possible participant because you are currently a student of English as a foreign language.
- We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study

- The purpose of the study is to investigate the difficulties that students taking English as a foreign language face during comprehension
- Ultimately, this research is carried out as a requirement for the completion of my master's degree in linguistics at Makerere university.

Description of the Study Procedures

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:
 - You will shade a language portrait for 20 minutes where you will shade different skills in four different colors showing the different skills, that is; understanding, speaking, writing and listening. Each skill will be represented by a color showing the level of proficiency in each skill. After you will explain the shading giving reasons as to why you shaded a particular skill in a given part and given it a specific size.
 - You will read a text and then answer questions about it for thirty minutes
 - You will listen to a text which I will read to you and answer questions orally for thirty

minutes.

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study

- There are no fore seen risks in the study

Benefits of Being in the Study

- The participants shall not benefit from the study

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. I will not include any information in any report I may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

Payments

- You will not receive any payment/reimbursement.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* without affecting your relationship with me or Makerere university. Your decision will not result in any loss or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely from the study at any point during the process; additionally, you have the right to request that the researcher does not use any of your information.

Right to ask Questions and Report Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, at aminanakaayi@gmail.com or by telephone at

0702250590. If you like, a summary of the results of the study will be sent to you. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered contact me and I will answer them through the contact earlier given.

Consent

- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary.

Participant's name..... signature.....date.....

Researcher's name..... signature date

Appendix 6: Samples of Shaded Language Portraits

Appendix 6.1: Language Portraits of Participants with Language which have the same Symbols of the Alphabet with that of English

Rwanda. 2

- * Doesn't understand because even the words that are similar to french have a different pronunciation
- * English is different from her first language french;
- * The environment (uganda) is helping her understand English.

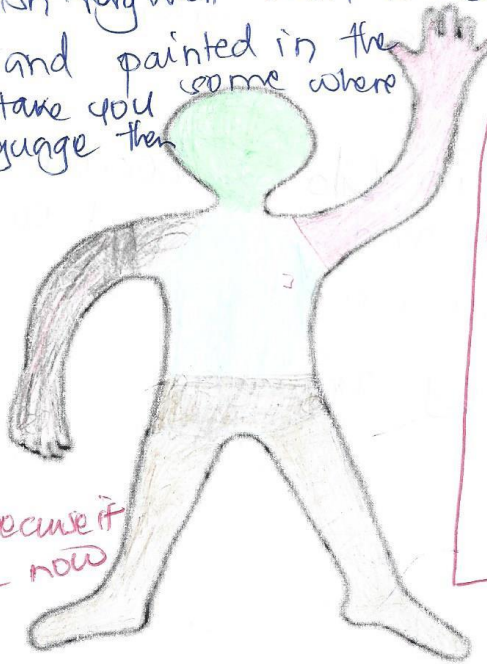
The Language Portrait to be Shaded by my Participants about their language experiences.

Shaded green first because it is my favorite colour and I want to speak English very well even though it is poor now

* Understands little and painted in the legs because they take you ^{come where} and learn the language then you understand.






* Shaded with green his favorite colour because it is the skill most desired.

* learns English because it is used ^{now} in schools.



Affected by culture and language exposure

Key

	Understanding : chocolate
	listening : real blue
	balancing : blue. red
	Speaking : Green
	Reading : black

- Started learning English 2 1/2 months.
- Had never learnt English before
- ~~He~~ studied in a french system
- * English is different from french. Some ~~ones~~^{words} are *
Written the same way but the pronunciation is different
affects her understanding
- Now better with the 2 1/2 month training
- * Does not understand because of the words but not
the story *
- * I am learning English because ~~because~~ the system
back home has changed now they study in
English
- * learns faster in ~~Uganda~~ because many people
speak English and so I so it so much and
therefore improve everyday
More than my language.

16 Congo






- * Pronunciation of words difficult (spelling diff are honest from pronunciation)
- * Past language experience, time, attitude and environment (spelling same to french pronunciation differe)
- * Difficult to understand because

The Language Portrait to be Shaded by my Participants about their language experiences.

- I can read little, I find it hard to read because some words are similar to those in french but read differently.
 - I can listen to English more



Key

	Understanding
	Reading
	Speaking
	Writing
	Listening

- I speak french, swahili & other small languages in Congo like lingala, kiruba.
- I started learning English in Congo in high school. We study for one hour a week.
- It was difficult for me to practice it there because the teacher didn't want to teach it.
- Didn't know how to translate - for students (new)
 - In class
- Sometimes students didn't study ^{English} it as they would always use it as free time to do other things.
- In Uganda I have learnt English for two months and am very different.
- I read books at home
- I speak English to people in Uganda.
- I listen to English very much especially in movies
- I understand a little more now
- I still need to practice more in speaking.
- Stories we read in English is same to french
- Better to watch movies in English than in french because I have learnt it so much.
- I can read but words are difficult because I don't understand they are new.

20 Rwanda

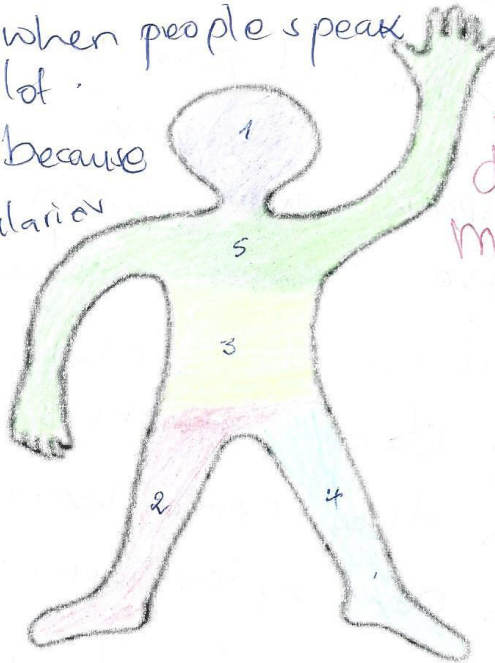
Poor language experience affect how Understanding
 is used to speak french which is different from English
 Grammar in french is different

21. Order of constituents in a sentence is
 adjectives and Verbs

The Language Portrait to be Shaded by my Participants about their language experiences.

- Understanding is little very difficult - Small part
- listening is better, when people speak to me I grasp a lot.
- poor in writing because have few vocabularies

in listening
 only pay a
 attention to
 the words but
 does not derive
 meaning



Key

1	Understanding	little / very difficult
2	Reading	Good
3	Speaking	little
4	Writing	Poor / a lot of mistakes
5	listening	better

Pay attention to what I am reading & not the meaning.

→ I have learnt English now for five months
→ In Rwanda only we French though now they teach English. Where I come from we only speak French

→ In school I had some hours of English which was difficult and the language not interesting so I always would use French no opportunity to use English.

→ When at school we had hours of English few hours difficult → made it poor in understanding even now

→ I usually speak French when up by speaking English I use French vocabulary

- Grammar in ^{English} French is different from French. eg Using Adjectives

- In French they come before nouns

- In English come after nouns.

- Build a sentence in French using verb is different from that in English

- I am better now

→ My neighbours speak Luganda. I learn at school but when I go home I ^{listen} speak Luganda

→ so I don't have time to practice. Two hours are few for me to learn and practice. But if you give me more time we will even ^{get better} attract others to come when we ^{go better} then I go home kids disturb me so I don't learn better

Appendix 6.2 Language Portraits of Participants with Language which have Different Symbols of the Alphabet with that of English

17

China

Lu Yu Lan

21.

The Language Portrait to be Shaded by my Participants about their language experiences.

鲁玉兰
the past

Due to fact that language experience is Chinese, understanding English is difficult, since it is different from Chinese like

ABC English story | symbols Chinese story



Key

Grey	Understanding	v. little
Light Blue	Reading	Good
Pink	Speaking	Poor
Yellow	Writing	Small
Green	Listening	Good.

- I read to my babies, baby books are easy
- Understanding & Speaking little because in China we only use Chinese
- Last year I came to Uganda and started learning English. I have now learnt it for seven months
- I began learning English then though I am better now because I can speak and understand better than when I had just come from China.
- English is different from Chinese everywhere.
- Speaking is different.
- English ABC... in China different use symbols
- Write different
- English very difficult because very different.
- Stories in English difficult because what they talk about I don't know.
- Reading is good
- I speak to house maid, driver and in the market in English so I improve
- I only write in class and home work ~~with~~ the teacher gives me
- I studied English in China but small and could not use it but now I use everywhere and I am better.
- Words sound different, written different so different

15 Somalia

- * Past language experience being Arabic, understanding is difficult because of pronunciation, spelling!
- * Entertainment has helped her improve.

The Language Portrait to be Shaded by my Participants about their language experiences.

- I understand more when
- Read many words in English
- Speaking is little but I can speak in the market
- writing little
- I can listen a lot



Key

	Understanding
	Speaking Reading
	Speaking
	Writing
	Good
	Listening
	but listen to people

I use somalia and Arabic.

- Writing is different from English

- The writing is the same as pronunciation but

- English writing is different from speaking
eg honest → /onost/

- This does not happen in Somalia & Arabic
this makes writing English ~~difficult~~ ^{difficult}.

- stories are the same

- speaking is very hard for me

- started learning English in Somalia, because
there are many schools there that teach Eng.

- The problem is after school I speak Somalia
& Arabic but in Uganda we speak English
every where, on the road, market shop
every where

- Some of what happens out we find in class

so understanding is easy

- for me understanding English is difficult
because the words sound different from the
way it ~~was~~ ^{is} written.

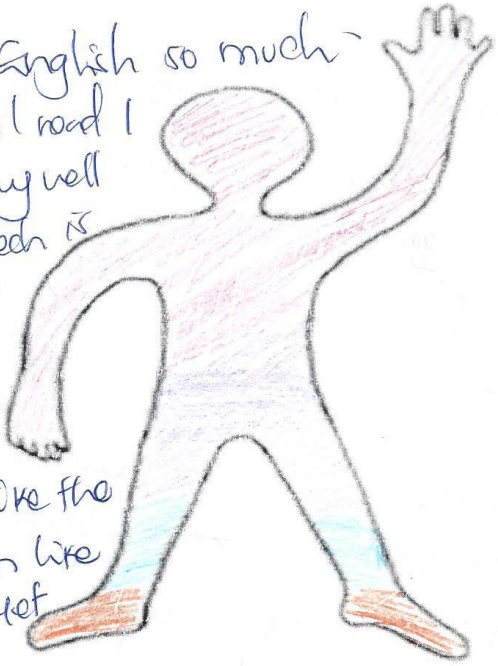
- The pronunciation of words like in the news
is difficult and so I find it hard to understand.

14 Yemen





- Language experience affects their understanding
- * pronunciation affects listening
 - * spelling of words
 - * ambiguity in meaning of English word
 - * Only understand if the words used are familiar.

The Language Portrait to be Shaded by my Participants about their language experiences.

- I can understand English so much
- I can read but when I read I don't understand very well
- Understanding speech is hard because of pronunciation
- Reading is sometimes hard because of words which do not sound like the way they are written like write, has /r/ sound yet starts with 'w'



Key

	Understanding
	Reading
	Speaking
	Writing

- I have been studying Arabic & Swahili. These are different from English because in Arabic & Swahili what you write is what you pronounce.
- Understanding English is difficult because one word can ~~mean~~ ^{mean} many things. (Ambiguity) in Arabic one word means one thing
- English is ^{Now} similar to Kiswahili as some words are the same
- letters used are different i.e. Arabic & ~~Swahili~~ English
- I started learning English last year, ⁽²⁰¹⁷⁾ I started from ~~begin~~ ^{beginner} one because when I came I would just greet, how are you, fine.
- Now it is a year since I started learning English.
- I am better now in using English as compared to when I ~~was~~ had just come now I understand. Because people in Uganda speak English so what I learn in class I use out of class so I get better.
- Stories from English are different from those in Arabic but I will understand if they use words that I know in English.
- The problem is using words that I have never seen, the difficult words.

- language experience ~~often~~ makes it hard
- format of writing - Eng left - Arabic right
- culture different
- Environment in Somalia hindered understanding
- hard to understand.

The Language Portrait to be Shaded by my Participants about their language experiences.

Read alot.
 hear I can hear very well
 Understanding little
 Speaking v. poor.
 Writing I can do better.



Key

Green	Understanding
orange	Reading
Black	Speaking
yellow	Writing

→ Arabic is different from English
writing if we start from right for English we start
left.

→ Writing a letter in Arabic everything is on the right
of in English mix or only left. It is hard to
understand English
→ The way the letters are written, Arabic is.

→ Culture ^(Arabic & Somalia) is different from English and some stories
are difficult, I can not talk well because the letters
are different.

→ When I came to Uganda I learnt how to read
but I can't speak.

→ I hear English can listen, I try writing but
I can't speak a.

- I started understanding when I learnt it here
because I also speak it with my neighbour.

