

**EMERGENT LITERACY SKILLS AND PRACTICES AMONG TWO TO SIX YEAR  
OLD CHILDREN: A CASE OF SELECTED HOUSEHOLDS IN MWENSE  
DISTRICT OF ZAMBIA.**

**BY**

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Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Education in Literacy and  
Learning**

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**DECLARATION**

I, KAUNDA LEWIS RONALD, declare that this dissertation:

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- (c) and does not incorporate any published work or materials from another dissertation which is not acknowledged.

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**APPROVAL**

This dissertation of KAUNDA LEWIS RONALD is approved as fulfilling the requirement for the award of the Degree of Master of Education in Literacy and Learning by the University of Zambia.

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**ACRONYMS/ ABBREVIATIONS**

EL Emergent Literacy

ELS Emergent Literacy Skills

ELP Emergent Literacy Practices

ZPD Zone of Proximal Development

- LP Literacy Practices
- LE Literacy Events
- RR Reading Readiness

## **ABSTRACT**

This study sought to establish the Emergent Literacy Skills and Practices among children of 2 to 6 years in Mwense district of Zambia. The purpose of the study was to establish the presence or absence of literacy skills and practices among children who had not begun formal schooling in selected villages of Mwense district.

A case study of two villages was used and the study had a sample size of 20 children drawn from two villages. The population from which this sample was drawn was all the children

between the ages of 2 and 6 and all care-givers in the two villages of Chisheta and Chipongoma.

The researcher used convenient and purposive sampling to select the district and the two villages. Households were randomly selected. Purposive sampling was used to select the respondents as it starts with a purpose in mind and the sample was thus selected to include people of interest and those referred to here, included households where there were non-school going children aged 2-6 years. All the households used Bemba, so it was convenient for both the researcher and the participants. The study also employed a qualitative approach that included semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation. The data collected were grouped into both major and minor themes which were then analyzed further to come up with findings.

This study established that children generally exhibited a number of literacy skills before starting formal schooling such as drawing, holding a pencil, scribbling, narrative and listening comprehension skills, singing, reciting memory verses and pretended reading. They were also able to engage in literacy-related games and play and other practices which them develop certain skills required for literacy development.

The study further revealed that most households organized literacy practices and activities which helped their children to develop full emergent literacy skills and that the children's elder siblings were instrumental in supporting the literacy development of their young siblings. Moreover, the study also revealed that at community level, there were a number of activities and practices which the community did not intend for literacy but which actually contributed to the children's literacy development. It was seen that there was some home and environmental print to support emergent literacy.

The study recommended that the government, NGOs and other stakeholders should design programmes that would educate or sensitise parents and care-givers to take interest in supporting the enhancement of emergent literacy in their children. It was also recommended that a TV or community radio station be opened for the villagers and their children from which literacy related programs would be broadcast. The study also recommended that more research be done especially to establish the link between the practices which people in Mwense rural engaged in and emergent literacy among their children.

## **DEDICATION**

To my late mother, Mrs Albina Chibale Kaunda.

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Lastly, I wish to take responsibility for the views expressed in this paper. Any deficiencies herein remain my own despite the input from my supervisor and friends.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background**

Before the 1900s, most scholars paid more attention to the study of literacy as the basis of educational development. In their quest for understanding literacy, most scholars studied literacy in connection with what reading and writing skills children achieved during and after formal learning. This can be observed from the way they defined literacy. For instance, over the years, different scholars and educationists defined literacy differently, giving a common understanding that literacy was the ability to read and write. This has also been observed by Cummins (2007) who states that literacy has traditionally been thought of, and taught as, reading and writing skills. We can then conclude that this view of literacy limited it to only those activities which occurred when educators or any concerned stakeholders formally began to teach reading and writing skills in basic schools. This meant that anything that occurred outside this formal arrangement before the age when a child could go to school to learn reading and writing was not part of literacy, and as such any literacy-related skills displayed by the child that pointed to reading and writing were then referred to as pre-reading skills and were not treated with much importance (Ferreiro, 2002). This traditional conception is still reflected in today's formal assessments of academic achievement and in both public and private life where one is only considered to be literate if he or she can read and write. It is increasingly evident through research, however, that traditional notions of literacy have been abandoned to encompass other forms of literacy among which there is cultural literacy, media literacy and emergent literacy (Stratton and Wright, 1991).

Beginning in the 1950s, there have been substantial studies relating to emergent literacy and most of these studies have been done outside Zambia (Musonda, 2011). Since then, studies about emergent literacy practices and skills have been done to establish those practices which can bring about and help enhance emergent literacy. By definition, Emergent Literacy (EL) is a term first used by Clay (1966) to describe how young children interact with books when reading and writing, even though they cannot read or write in the conventional sense. Other scholars (Gibson, 1989) have added that the term emergent literacy goes beyond children's interaction with books and encompasses all literacy practices that are within the environment where the child is born and nurtured as displayed by the child and this begins with the learning of language by the child. Roth et al (2006) argue that children start to learn language from the day they are born. As they grow and develop, their speech and language skills become increasingly more complex. They learn to understand and use language to express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings, and to communicate with others. During early speech and language development, children learn skills that are important for the development of literacy (reading and writing). This stage, known as emergent literacy, begins at birth and continues through the preschool years and occurs in the environment (and the cultural context) where the child is nurtured.

Thus, developmental abilities may differ for children in different societies, and development cannot be separated from its cultural context (Thompson, 2008). Barton (1994:135) also adds that "the roots of reasoning, identity and awareness lie in early social interaction...the participants, the situation, the mechanism and ways of participation make the requirements for learning." From the above arguments, it can firstly be concluded that each child constructs the concepts of and about literacy internally and much can be done to support his or her learning of reading and writing. Secondly, the home, community and pre-school environments, including adult-child interactions can provide the primary opportunities for exploration and play that promote the emergence of literacy (Morrow and Rand, 1991; Teale and Sulzby, 1989).

The above arguments lead to the understanding that different cultural situations give different literacy events and practices. Research has been done in other parts of the world to establish what emergent literacy practices and skills children exhibit before they begin formal or conventional schooling. However, little has been done to research on emergent literacy in Zambia as it is a fairly new phenomenon. Musonda (2011) researched into literate behaviour

of preschoolers in Lusaka urban households. However, at the time this research was proposed, no research had been done to establish what emergent literacy practices and skills existed in Zambian rural areas. This study, therefore, attempted to find out what exact literacy practices and skills children found in rural areas possessed before starting formal schooling, with special reference to two villages in Mwense district.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In some societies, especially Western societies, extensive research has been done to show emergent literacy skills and practices among children before they begin conventional (formal) schooling. However, there has been no much investigation into the Zambian societies to establish what emergent literacy practices and skills exist among children living in rural areas. Therefore, the problem being investigated is what emergent literacy practices, if any, are exhibited by children aged 2-6 in rural areas before they begin formal schooling, with special reference to Chisheta and Chipongoma villages in Mwense district of Zambia.

## **1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to establish what emergent literacy skills and practices children aged between the age of 2 and 6 who had not begun formal schooling in selected villages of Mwense district possessed.

## **1.4 OBJECTIVES**

### **Main research objective**

To establish emergent literacy skills and practices children aged between 2 and 6 years in selected villages of Mwense district engaged into and possessed before they began formal schooling.

### **Specific objectives**

The specific objectives of this study were as follows:

- i. To establish emergent literacy skills children in Mwense District possessed before they entered formal schooling.
- ii. To establish what emergent literacy practices children in Mwense District were exposed to before they entered formal schooling.
- iii. To ascertain whether there were any rural community-based organised activities offered in order to help and support emergent literacy practices and skills development in children.
- iv. To establish the literacy environments that existed in various households that would support emergent literacy development in children.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **Main research question**

What emergent literacy practices and skills do children between 2-6 years of age in selected villages of Mwense district engage into and possess before they begin formal schooling?

### **Specific questions**

- i. What emergent literacy skills children in Mwense district possess before they entered formal schooling?
- ii. What emergent literacy practices children in Mwense district are exposed to before they entered formal schooling?
- iii. What rural community-based interventions are offered in order to help and enhance emergent literacy in children?
- iv. What literacy environments existed in various households which would support emergent literacy in children in children?

## **1.6 RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The rationale of this study is premised on the assertion that early child education is the backbone of later education in the life of the child. With this understanding, this study focused on this type of education which propagates early childhood education which is rooted in early reading and writing. While there was research on early reading and writing in Zambia, there were rare studies on emergent literacy skills and practices in the Zambian rural

set up. Hence, there was need to undertake this study as it was firmly established that much of the learning that followed in later years of formal learning was dependent on early reading. The significance of this study is that it is hoped that the findings from this study may be used by teachers to tap the emergent literacy skills in children and build on them to enhance their acquisition of literacy in school. It is further hoped that this study might provide data for future curriculum design which would embrace the emergent literacy practices in which children participate while at home and in their communities for the benefit of learners. It is further hoped that establishing rural emergent literacy practices and skills would be helpful in the training of early childhood educators who handle children in grade one. Moreover, this study may prompt and stimulate further studies into emergent literacy practices in Zambian rural areas especially in the area of the relationship between the emergent literacy skills and emergent literacy practices.

### **1.7 LIMITATIONS**

One of the challenges was that some participants were sceptical about the researcher being a student. They instead thought that the researcher was a Satanist who disguised himself as student researcher. This could have affected the responses they gave. However, the researcher overcame this problem through methodological triangulating of the data. The researcher also assured them that the research was purely academic and had nothing to do with the identification of children who would be used in satanic rituals as they thought. The researcher observed that some parents expected to gain something after the research, even though they were told in advance that they were not going to be given anything since that research was purely academic. This might have affected the information which parents gave as they were not given any motivation in form of money as they expected.

### **1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is anchored on the social-constructivist theory which posits that children construct new knowledge by applying their current knowledge structures to new experiences and modifying them accordingly. This theory was initiated by scholars like Piaget and was picked up by Vygotsky who emphasised the role of interaction in a sociocultural context. This

theory, social-constructivism emphasized the active role children play in their own mental growth as inquisitive thinkers and the role of the environment in shaping this development. This theory was popularized by Vygotsky who emphasised the role of interaction in a sociocultural context. Child (2007:1040) states that Vygotsky postulated that “human mental activity was the result of cultural learning using social signs.” Vygotsky emphasized activity as the basis for learning and development of thinking. Activity entailed a far greater emphasis on communication, social interaction and instruction in determining the path of development. Vygotsky argued that child development was guided by culture and interpersonal communication and that the culture from which the child was born was the source of concepts which the child internalized. He considered tools such as language, numbers, and art as the means through which culture would conceptualize, organize and transmit thinking and so believed that our thinking was as a result of the culture from which we were born (Tudge and Scrimsher, 2003, in Schunk, 2009).

Slavin (2009) writes that in his theory, Vygotsky postulated that transmission of culture was through the construction of cultural tools. He later defined cultural tools as a means of achieving things in the world. These tools could be physical, for example, a hammer, or mental, for example, language, social, for example, storytelling sessions. Slavin (2009) further explains that Vygotsky’s work is based on two key major ideas. Firstly, he proposed that intellectual development can only be understood in terms of historical and cultural contexts children experience; secondly, he believed that development depends on the sign system that individuals grow up with; the symbols such as a culture’s language, writing system or counting system that cultures create to help people think, communicate and solve problems (Slavin 2009).

Central to his theory was the belief that culture is transmitted through the interiorisation of social signs, the major one being language, and that human cognitive development takes place through mediation by psychological and other tools (Wertsch, 1991). Social-constructivism highlights how children incorporate culture into their reasoning, social interaction, and self-understanding. It also explains why children growing up in different societies are likely to have significantly different skills. From this theory emanates the idea that even children’s emergent literacy begins long before conventional schooling and is nourished by social interactions with caring adults and exposure to literacy-rich environments, culture and literacy practices both at home and in the community. In this way,

literacy skills which children will possess will be different, and this difference will be as a result of the difference in the environments in which children will be nurtured. Therefore, it is believed that children do not go to school as empty slates; they have some knowledge and skills about literacy which they pick up from their interaction in their homes and environments. Hall (1987) argues that the children we know are learners who actively try to understand the world around them, to answer the questions the world poses. It is absurd to imagine that four or five year old children growing up in an environment that displays print everywhere do not develop any ideas about this cultural object until they find themselves sitting in front of a teacher. Having understood this, this study sought to establish the emergent literacy practices which children in Mwense district participated in and the skills they possessed during and after this interaction before they entered conventional or formal schooling in Mwense rural.

## **1.9 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS**

**Children** – Boys and girls who are six years old and below and are not in school.

**Conventional education** – This is formal education starting from grade one onwards

**Emergent literacy** – Refers to early literacy behaviour of children before starting formal schooling and in this study it includes reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, thinking, playing and any other literacy behaviour.

**Environmental print** – prints in the surroundings, such as billboards, road-signs, writings on packets of sugar and writings on clothes.

**Environment**- includes factors such as culture which is that part of the environment made by human beings and the physical environment including the objects and people. It is also includes the patterns of behaviour and thinking that people living in social groups learn, create, and share.

**Literacy**- ability to read and write, interpret pictures, signs and symbols knowledge of dances, songs, games within the environment.

**Literacy practices** – Any activities (cultural, mental or social) that children engage into, which lead to or support the learning of reading and writing.

**Pretend-reading**– children’s literacy behaviour whereby they imitate conventional reading such as holding a book, as if they are able to read, read signs, symbols, gestures and many more.

**Pretend writing** - children’s literacy behaviour whereby they imitate conventional writing, for example scribbling or writing in the air and on walls of the house.

**Reading readiness** – the point at which a child acquires the requisite knowledge and behaviour to support the learning of conventional reading.

**Rural area**- this is an area in the countryside at least 50 kilometres away from urban areas.

**Community-based emergent literacy practices**- these are literacy-related practices which are specifically organised at a community level to teach or enhance literacy among children or adults. These may include such programmes as *shibukeni*, ( lessons for adults meant to teach them literacy) clubs helping people to learn how to read and write, and under-tree lessons.

**Village** - this is a group of households headed by a village head.

**Written Language Awareness** - refers to young children’s implicit and explicit knowledge concerning the nature of written language.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews related literature, and it does so by starting with a discussion on some concepts which directly and indirectly relate to this study. The chapter also cites studies which relate to this study as reported outside Africa. Then, it will narrow down to those studies which have been done in Africa. Finally, those studies which have been done in Zambia will be reviewed and then, a conclusion will be drawn.

#### **2.2 Concepts relating to Emergent Literacy**

It should be mentioned from the outset that important changes took place around 1965 to 1985 in the way researchers approached young children's attempts at reading and writing (Ferreiro, 2007). These changes were influenced by previous language acquisition studies of children's active engagement in oral language learning. Therefore, many scholars started looking at literacy as something that begins when the child begins to learn oral language. Because of this turn of things, a lot of terms relating to literacy emerged. It was during those same years that emergent literacy as a course of study arose. Moreover, studies have shown that two major strands of research provide information about the components of emergent literacy. According to Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) one research perspective, which consists of mainly quantitative studies, examines the relation between emergent literacy and the acquisition of conventional literacy. The other research perspective, which tends to consist of qualitative studies, examines literacy practices and events in which these children

are involved. It should be mentioned that this study fell in the latter perspective which examines literacy practices and events in which these children are involved as it shall be seen from chapters four and five. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that most of the studies which have been done on emergent literacy have paid attention to urban or Peri-urban areas as opposed to rural areas. Below are some of the terms which relate to the studies done on literacy:

### **Emergent literacy skills (ELS)**

It is documented in literature that William Teale and Elizabeth Sulzby coined the term Emergent Literacy in 1986 from Clay's (1966) dissertation entitled, "Emergent Reading Behaviour." It is for this reason that some scholars such as Musonda (2011) refer to her as the one who introduced the term emergent literacy. William and Elizabeth's term designated new conceptions about the relationship between a growing child and literacy information from the environment and home literacy practices. The process of becoming literate starts long before school intervention (Ferreiro, 2007). Since then, several definitions of Emergent Literacy (EL) have emerged. Here are some of them;

Clay (1966) used the term Emergent Literacy Skills (ELS) to describe how young children interact with books when reading and writing, even though they could not read or write in the conventional sense (Clay, 1966). Emergent literacy refers to the acquisition of reading and writing abilities (knowledge, skills and attitudes) that children develop, without formal instruction, before they begin to read in the conventional way. Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) state that the term "emergent literacy" is used to denote the idea that the acquisition of literacy is best conceptualized as a developmental continuum, with its origins early in the life of a child, rather than an all-or-none phenomenon that begins when children start school. This conceptualization departs from other perspectives on reading acquisition in suggesting that there is no clear demarcation between reading and pre-reading. For instance, the "reading readiness" approach, which preceded the emergent literacy perspective, has as its focus on the question of what skills children need to have mastered before they can profit from formal reading instruction. Such perspectives create a boundary between the "pre-reading" behaviours of children, and the "real" reading that children are taught in educational settings.

In contrast, an emergent literacy perspective views literacy-related behaviours occurring in the pre-school period as legitimate and important aspects of literacy (Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998).

ELS are the precursory knowledge about reading and writing that children acquire prior to conventional literacy instruction and that they bring to the task of learning to read. For most children, the bulk of this knowledge is acquired within the preschool years, prior to formal schooling (Dickinson and McCabe, 2001; Watkins and Bunce, 1996). Emergent literacy is also represented as a sociocultural process whereby emergent literacy development is highly influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which children are reared. This definition marries well with the theory of social-constructivism under which this study was conducted. Emergent literacy encompasses a broad array of skills representing early reading and writing behaviors, knowledge, and interests.

ELS consist of the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that are developmental precursors to more established forms of literate behaviour (Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998). These skills include the knowledge of oral language. It is argued that most two-year-olds should have vocabularies of 300–500 words and that children should enter school knowing between 3,000 and 5,000 words. It is so because learning to read and write the language they (children) do not know would be impossible. Another example of emergent literacy skills is print motivation which is a child's interest in and enjoyment of books. Print awareness includes learning basic rules of the written language such as writing flows from top to bottom and left to right, print on the page is what is being read by someone who reads, knowing that printed words are associated with sounds. The other emergent literacy skill is recognizing some familiar words in print. Narrative skills include being able to understand and tell stories and being able to describe things. Most of the children in this research had this skill as they were able to handle around-fire stories more ably than any other skill (to be discussed in chapter five). Letter knowledge includes learning that letters are different from each other and that each letter has a name and a sound. Phonological sensitivity is the ability to hear and manipulate the smaller sounds in words. Examples include: recognizing whether a series of words rhyme, being able to put two words chunks together to make a word and being able to say words with sounds or word chunks left out.

## **Reading Readiness**

“Reading readiness” has been defined by Ontario Government (2003) as the point at which a person is ready to learn to read and the time during which a person transitions from being a non-reader into a reader. “Reading readiness” suggests that there is a point in time when a child is ready to begin to learn to read and write. This is contrasted with emergent literacy which suggests that the development of literacy takes place within the child. It also suggests that it is a gradual process and will take place over time. This study also suggests that it is difficult to see a child graduate from a non-reader to a conventional reader. For something to emerge it needs to be there at the beginning (the child’s own natural learning ability), and things usually only emerge under the right conditions (Hall, 1987). Literacy, therefore, should be understood to refer to the interrelatedness of language-speaking, listening, reading, writing, and viewing.

Children begin to learn pre-reading skills at birth while they listen to the speech around them. In order to learn to read, a child must first have knowledge of the oral language. According to the Ontario Government (2003), the acquisition of language is natural, but the process of learning to read is not - reading must be taught. This belief contradicts basic language philosophy, which states that children learn to read while they learn to speak. The Ontario Government (2003) also believes that reading is the foundation for success, and that those children who struggle with reading in grades 1-3 are at a disadvantage in terms of academic success, compared to those children who are not struggling.

Because a child’s early experience with literacy-related activities is highly correlated to the child’s success with reading, it is important to consider the child’s developmental level when choosing appropriate activities and goals. Early and enjoyable pre-reading experiences set the stage for the child’s desire to learn. By participating in developmentally-appropriate activities (activities that are fun and challenging, but not frustrating), the child gains knowledge that will serve as the foundation for further learning as he or she enters the school system.

Reading readiness is highly individualistic. There is no “one size fits all” solution to teaching the child to read. A parent or educator may need to employ several techniques before finding the most appropriate method for an individual child. According to Vygotsky’s Zone of

Proximal Development (ZPD) a child can, through the help of an adult or a more capable child, perform at a higher level than he or she can independently. The process of learning to read should thus be supported by a caring and supportive individual.

Other terms for reading readiness include “early literacy.” In contrast, emergent literacy suggests that the development of literacy is taking place within the child. It also suggests that it is a gradual process and will take place over time. For something to emerge it needs to be there at the beginning (the child’s own natural learning ability), and things usually only emerge under the right conditions (Hall, 1987). It has been pointed out that children begin to learn pre-reading skills at birth while they listen to the speech around them. In order to learn to read, the child must first have knowledge of the oral language.

The reading readiness approach was mostly influenced by some perspectives of thought. The two most influential perspectives were the growth-readiness view and the environmentalist view. The growth-readiness view focused on the internal workings of the child in order to determine readiness, while environmentalists focused on the external environment. Both internal factors such as genetics and environmental aspects such as home environment could influence the child’s readiness for reading.

### **Literacy**

It should be noted that literacy has been defined differently from emergent literacy. The Ontario Ministry of Education Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 (2004:5) defined literacy as “the ability to use language and images in rich and varied forms to read, write, listen, speak, view, represent, and think critically about ideas.” This definition gives equal weight to language and images as a means of representing ideas. From a careful observation of spontaneous writing and reading activities as well as from data obtained through some elicitation techniques, it becomes possible to infer how children conceive the writing system and the social meaning of the activities related to it. Literacy has traditionally been described as the ability to read for knowledge, write coherently and think critically about printed material. Literacy represents the lifelong, intellectual process of gaining meaning from print. Key to all literacy is reading development, which involves a progression of skills that begins with the ability to understand spoken words and decode written words, and culminates in the deep understanding of text. Reading development involves a range of complex language underpinnings including awareness of speech sounds (phonology), spelling patterns

(orthography), word meaning (semantics), grammar (syntax) and patterns of word formation (morphology), all of which provide a necessary platform for reading fluency and comprehension (Street, 1984).

### **Literacy events and practices**

Literacy events and literacy practices are a key to understanding literacy as a social phenomenon and also to understanding the purpose of this study. Literacy events (LE) serve as concrete evidence of literacy practices (LP). Heath (1982:93) developed the notion of LE as a tool for examining the forms and functions of oral and written language. She describes a literacy event as “any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants’ interactions and their interpretive processes.” Any activity in which literacy has a role is a literacy event. As Barton and Hamilton (2000:8) describe, “Events are observable episodes which arise from practices and are shaped by them. The notion of events stresses the situated nature of literacy, that, it always exists in a social context.” Writing in a shelter register, talking to someone about such writing, reading a map, telling a story, and reading weather patterns are examples of literacy events.

Barton and Hamilton (2000:8) describe literacy practices (LP) as “the general cultural ways of utilizing written language which people draw upon in their lives. In the simplest sense literacy practices are what people do with literacy.” Literacy practices involve values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships. They have to do with how people in a particular culture construct literacy, how they talk about literacy and make sense of it. These processes are at the same time individual and social. They are abstract values and rules about literacy that are shaped by and help shape the ways that people within cultures use literacy. Street (1993:12-13) described literacy practices, which are inclusive of literacy events, as ‘folk models’ of those events and the ideological preconceptions that underpin them.”

### **Early literacy behaviours**

The term ‘early literacy behaviour’ is related to that of emergent literacy. It should be noted that just like emergent literacy, literacy behaviours exhibited by young children are very diverse, and it is extremely difficult to establish at what point pre-conventional literacy behaviours become conventional (particularly as children exhibit both at the same time).

Furthermore, it is extremely difficult (perhaps impossible) to verify that certain behaviours predict others, since they are inextricably connected (Yaden, Rowe and MacGillivray, 1999). For the purpose of this discussion, the two terms will be used interchangeably, but implicit in their use is recognition of the continuity of the process of literacy acquisition; recognition that literacy includes both linguistic and non-linguistic forms of communication (i.e. is multimodal), involving different semiotic systems. Much of the early emergent literacy research investigated a broad array of skills representing early reading and writing behaviours, skills and attitudes (a focus still frequently evident today). Generally speaking, this foundation is considered to comprise two distinct but highly interrelated areas of development: written language awareness and phonological awareness (van Kleeck, 1998). These domains refer, respectively, to children's acquisition of knowledge about the orthography and the phonology of language.

## **2.3 STUDIES ON EMERGENT LITERACY**

Studies have shown that two major strands of research provide information about the components of emergent literacy. According to Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) one research perspective, which consists of mainly quantitative studies, examines the relation between emergent literacy and the acquisition of conventional literacy. The other research perspective, which tends to consist of qualitative studies, examines literacy practices and events in which these children are involved. Furthermore, it has been observed through literature review that most of the studies which have been done on emergent literacy have paid attention to urban areas as opposed to rustic areas.

### **2.3.1 STUDIES OUTSIDE AFRICA**

#### **Emergent practices and skills in New York**

##### **A study by Lynch (1986)**

Literature review shows that there are studies which have been conducted around the world to examine and establish literacy practices and skills. One such study to show literacy practices

in which children are involved, and to show the literacy skills and knowledge they possess before entering formal schooling was done by Jacqueline Lynch whose topic of study was *Learning about literacy: Social factors and reading acquisition*. Lynch (1986) focused on social factors and found out that there were many social factors that related to children's reading acquisition. She picked up interaction as a literacy practice which promotes emergent literacy. In this kind of socialisation, parents who read with and encourage children to play with books play a key role in children's acquisition of literacy (Jacqueline, 1986). Because some family practices and interactions are more developmentally linked with school practices than others, families' engagement in specific activities may enhance the development of aspects of conventional literacy. She noted that parents who interact with print materials such as shopping lists, newspapers and diaries with their children are likely to promote emergent literacy for their children. Such children develop a growing awareness of literacy and how it is used. Engaging in early literacy activities and practices through positive interaction was seen to be a positive experience for parents and children. These children developed an understanding that print plays a role. They also exhibited knowledge that reading moves from one direction to the other, that is from left to right. Jacqueline also added that older siblings of young children sometimes assume responsibility for reading to children, which exposes young children to a function of print, new vocabulary, as well as question-answer patterns children will often experience in early schooling (Gregory, 2001). This study was well linked to my study as one of my questions was what role older siblings played in the development of emergent literacy of the children under study.

### **Emergent literacy practices and skills in Australia**

#### **A study by Hill (2009)**

In South Australia, a study conducted by Hill, an associate Professor in Early Childhood Education, at the University of South Australia, reveals that oral language was the foundation for emergent reading development as it provides the semantic, syntactic and phonological bases for successfully moving from oral to written language. She pointed that in the years before school the development of children's oral language in the home environment is viewed as an important factor for early reading success. The findings revealed disconnections between children's receptive oral language vocabulary and early reading. This was because some children used English as their second language. Children with English as the Second

Language scored low on oral language vocabulary but high on reading leveled texts. Children with high scores on oral vocabulary scored low on reading leveled texts and a small group of Aboriginal children scored low on both oral and written measures. This study raised questions about the view that oral language neatly underpins reading development and suggests that learning to read is akin to learning a second language for all children. The study suggested that if children were to learn to read in a second language, they needed to learn a second language. The importance of oral language as a predictor of future literacy achievement is supported by research across a number of oral language domains. Young children need to have control over several aspects of oral language prior to starting the reading process (Snow, Burns and Griffin 1998). However, other research data have shown that the size of children's vocabulary at age 3 is strongly associated with learning to read and reading comprehension at the end of third grade (Hart and Risley 2003). For instance, Dickinson and Tabors (2002) found the scores that kindergarteners achieved on measures (receptive vocabulary, narrative production, and emergent literacy) were highly predictive of their scores on reading comprehension and receptive vocabulary in fourth and seventh grade. There are several characteristics of oral language: word meanings (semantics), sentence structure (syntax), the architecture of words and word parts (morphology) and sounds (phonology) (Richgels 2004). The particular characteristics of oral language phonology, vocabulary and syntax are explored and compared to written language. Therefore, it was established that engaging children in rich oral language contexts is important, as literacy practice; in as far as acquisition of literacy skills is concerned. This study seems to suggest that children should be taught reading and writing in a language very familiar to them.

#### **Study by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2006)**

The other study considered in this Dissertation was also done in Australia. This was when the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Aspects of Literacy Survey found that approximately 46% of Australians aged 15 to 74 years had very poor to poor 'prose literacy' (ability to read documents), and 47% had very poor to poor 'document literacy' (ability to understand and use information from a variety of text sources) (ABS, 2006). It was found that the reason was a poor foundation in literacy prior to school (emergent literacy) entry which not only reduces the likelihood of later success in literacy, but also increases the risk of children 'dropping out' of formal education. Poor reading and writing skills were associated with lower self esteem,

poorer educational and social outcomes. Therefore, a research was conducted to establish factors that promoted literacy in early childhood and the following were some of the findings of literacy practices and skills;

**a. Shared reading**

Regular shared reading from a young age was consistently shown to correlate positively with language development (Brown, (1991). A study of children 18 months and older found significantly higher receptive and expressive vocabulary in children who were read to more often. Shared reading was also found to have a significant impact on vocabulary development, listening comprehension and understanding of print concepts (Dyson, (1985). In shared reading, there are specific books which promote literacy. There is growing research to demonstrate that the types of books selected to read with children impact on their emergent literacy (Stahl et al, 1994). Predictable or patterned books and alphabet books are the types of books most likely to engage young children in the activity of shared reading. They also assist in the development of word identification and help children develop an awareness of how letters map onto sounds (Lonigan et al, 2000; Stahl, 2003).

**b. Language games and songs.**

The use of interactive language games and song singing as part of a daily routine also provided opportunities for children to enhance their repertoire of developing emergent literacy skills. Games such as ‘I spy’, card games and the reciting of rhymes provide opportunities to develop listening and speaking skills which in turn are key to the development of vocabulary, letter identification and knowledge, and phonological awareness. The singing of ‘learning’ songs, such as alphabet songs, provides children with examples of rhyme, rhythm and repetition which may act as an effective memory aid (Whitehurst, Grover, and Lonigan, Christopher. 1998).

**c. Exposure to print.**

While deliberate exposure to print in the home or community is important, there are also other more incidental exposures to print that can be effectively utilised to assist children’s early literacy development. Examples include: reading and interacting with environmental print such as road signs, logos/slogans, billboards and television advertisements; reading newspapers, manuals, maps, telephone directories, shop signs, labels and packaging; spelling

and defining words; colouring and tracing letters; and making use of the computer for spelling and writing activities (Strickland and Morrow, 1988).

### **Emergent literacy practices and skills in Canada**

McEachern, and Luther (in press) conducted a study entitled *Supporting Emergent Literacy among Young American Indian Students*. McEachern and Luther (in press) discovered that teachers generally acknowledge the close links among the four strands of the language arts—reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Listening comprehension is, in fact, one route to help improve reading comprehension among Indian students. The study (McEachern and Luther, in press) examined the effect of culturally relevant materials on listening comprehension among a group of seven-year and eight-year-old Indian children in Northern Alberta. English was a second language among these children. The culturally relevant materials yielded higher listening comprehension scores when two stories, one story from a commercially published language arts program, and the other a culturally relevant story written expressly for Indian children were read to the students. This finding is meaningful, considering the importance of background knowledge and the links between listening and reading comprehension.

A further illustration was used to clarify this point. In a kindergarten class in the same community, the children were listening to “Old Macdonald Had a Farm.” In addition to their comparatively limited English language proficiency, these children had great difficulty understanding the basic vocabulary. Farms and farm animals were simply unknown to them. If it had been “a moose in the woods” rather than “a cow on the farm,” the students would have understood better (McEachern and Luther, in press).

Such findings strongly suggested that continuing efforts to produce instructional materials locally are warranted. They also suggest that efforts to include the local community in storytelling make a great deal of sense. In most Indian communities storytellers would be glad to visit classrooms. Their stories hold the children's interest more than some of the stories that appear in commercially produced English language books. Such efforts inevitably helped improve listening comprehension.

At the same time, successful experiences in listening comprehension were linked with improved reading comprehension. Provisions were made to record, in writing, the

presentations of culturally relevant stories delivered orally. This step was crucial for accumulating a reservoir of locally produced reading material. It was observed that the development of literacy competence begins with children and their parents, carers and families talking together, singing, reading, playing, and observing the world around them. Literacy during this period is as much about relationships as knowledge and understandings. Early literacy interactions combine social interaction and a growth in empathy with development in thinking and learning about the world. Children's first literacy experiences are primarily in the home, the community and early childhood education services. This study by the ABS is important in as much as understanding Susan Hill's (2009) study (discussed above) is concerned as it provides evidence to show that culturally related materials are important in enhancing children's emergent literacy. The study also marries well with the social-constructivist theories (under which this study is framed) which emphasize the role of the social-cultural environment in enhancing literacy among children.

#### **Emergent literacy in India (1986)**

Literacy starts to emerge long before children begin school. Young children, including Indian students, learn from those around them who read and write, by having stories read to them, and by having access to writing materials for experimenting with print. McCormick and Mason (1986) studied emergent literacy (the development of literacy in young children) in low-income homes in India. These children wrote less and entered school with less experience in reading and writing than middle-class children. Such findings were significant for Indian children entering school, since poverty was an enduring feature of many Indian communities. In addition to their comparatively limited English language proficiency, these children had great difficulty understanding the basic vocabulary. Children's literacy was introduced in a language that was familiar and had difficulties in their acquisition of literacy. Another point to consider here is that as more studies are reviewed, one point is standing out. Look at the study by McEachern, and Luther (in press). The two researchers review that if children are taught literacy skills in an unfamiliar language, they find difficulties in the acquisition of literacy. So it was established that story reading in a familiar language to children play an important role in all this fact rather than using a language that children did not know. This study looked at Indian children living in Peri-urban areas in low-income homes.

## **Emergent literacy practices and skills in the United Kingdom (UK)**

Early childhood literacy is acknowledged as becoming increasingly complex as the modern world embraces new communication tools, media and new technologies and as young children are involved in using these which have the potential for positively impacting on emergent literacy understandings (Gillen and Hall, 2003). In a study conducted in the United Kingdom, Marsh et al (2005) found from a survey of 1,852 parents and care-givers of young children that many are immersed in practices relating to popular culture, media and new technologies from birth. It was also found that there was a positive effect on language and literacy when aspects of popular culture, media and new technologies were utilized in early childhood settings (Marsh et al, 2005). From a sociocultural and constructivist view of learning the perspective that literacy learning begins with formal schooling is being challenged and family and home contexts are being recognized as playing an important role in supporting the child as an active participant in literacy learning (Razfar and Gutierrez, 2003). Family members were acknowledged as the child's first teachers and engaging with families in relation to language and literacy development is an important role for early childhood educators (Morrow, 2005). This study recognized the role of families in helping children develop their emergent literacy.

### **2.5.0 STUDIES IN AFRICA**

#### **Emergent literacy practice and skills in South Africa**

In South Africa, it was a known factor by most literacy scholars that language is “a personal social invention” and thus oral and written languages are learnt in the same way (Goodman and Goodman 1979/2003:354). The same dynamics that promote oral language development promote writing development, for they are the dynamics that promote learning. Babies learn oral language (speaking and listening) ‘naturally’ in social situations because they are exposed to and interact with significant people who role model the use of the language (or languages, in case of bilingual situations) as they go about their daily activities (Holdaway 1979:20). Motivation is high because they use language to get things done at the same time as they are learning it and emotional satisfaction is tied intimately into the experience. For some children, their awareness of written language and its uses led so naturally to participation that

they were reading and writing, even inventing their own spelling rules, before they and their parents were aware that they were becoming literate. For such children the process of developing written language paralleled that of developing oral language. As children experience various regular, personally meaningful ways of reading and writing, they came to discover for themselves the differences between oral and written language. Below are some of the literacy practices and skills shown from a research conducted in South Africa:

**a. The special language of stories**

As human beings, we organize our thoughts and make sense of our lives through the stories we tell ourselves and others (Bruner 1994:28). Using stories starts as soon as young children begin to be able to communicate their thoughts and experiences in relationships with their significant loved ones (Stern 1985 cited in Haas Dyson and Genishi 1994:2). Storytelling and reading exposed children to a special form of language (Bloch 1999: 46), which was holistic, rich and complex. This allowed them to tune into the rhythms and structures of language and broadened their conceptual worlds and their vocabulary to express themselves.

**b. Child's play:**

Play, a universal feature of early childhood, appeared early as a critical aspect of language development. Scientists studying young babies had observed how, just as they play with their arms and legs, babies also seemed to play with their mouths and listen to the sounds they produced. Babies would lie in their cribs all by themselves and play with sounds, squealing with delight and producing *ee*'s and *aa*'s and even just raspberries for long stretches. By playing in this way, they learned how to make the sounds they hear adults produce (Gopnik, Meltzoff and Kuhl 1999:124).

Children's emergent writing development showed that when children are given the tools, opportunities and space to play with language in literate ways, they explore and practice their meaning-making, communication and self expression at the same time as they are gaining control over and knowledge of the phonics and mechanical skills (Bloch 1997, Bissex 1980, Hall 1989).

Below are the scores on some of the skills tested:

**i. Concepts about Print.**

More than 75% of the children were aware that the left side of a page should be read before the right one and were able to identify the front and back of a book as well as the top and bottom of a page. 63% of the children were aware that the print rather than the pictures expressed the message of the story. An understanding of the concepts 'letter' and 'word' were demonstrated by 38% and 54% of the children, respectively. By contrast, a study conducted in a grade one classroom in a remote rural African village in South Africa (Kriegler, Ramaruno, van der Ryst, van Niekerk and Winer, 1994) found that 38% of a sample of 33 African first-graders was aware that the print carried the message of the story and only 6% were able to orient a book correctly.

**ii. Environmental Print.**

On the test of environmental print recognition, more than 70% of the children were able to recognize the logos of a supermarket chain, a popular family restaurant chain, the local cable network and a fast food chain. There were four stimulus items that National Reading Conference Yearbook, 51 were recognized by fewer than 30% of the children, and it seemed that these items were not familiar to children from this community. The observation by Smith and Dixon (1995) that recognition of environmental print is a function of specific experiences with rather than general exposure to logos offers a plausible account of this finding. In general the children's ability to identify several logos indicates that they were attending to print in their environment.

**iii. Letter Recognition.**

54% of the children could not recognize or name any letters and 17% were able to name more than 10, but none were able to name all the letters. The extremely low scores can be explained by the fact that the alphabet is usually not systematically introduced to children until they enter first grade.

#### **iv. Sounds in Words and Rhyming Words.**

On average, for these tasks the children scored correctly on approximately 46 % of the items. These phonological awareness tasks posed difficulty for many children, who appeared to be unfamiliar with the task requirements. It was also not apparent that the kindergarten curriculum included any specific focus on phonological awareness, thus the difficulties may reflect a lack of exposure to phonological awareness tasks rather than deficits per se. On average Sonnenschein's participants scored correctly on 80% of the rhyme detection items and 60% of the rhyme production items. On average, they were able to identify words with the same initial sounds 60% of the time.

These skills show that children do not go to school as empty slates but with a lot of skills which can be tapped by the teacher to develop children's literacy in class.

#### **v. Story Retelling.**

In the retellings, the children produced few Introductions (e.g., *Once upon a time*) or Orientations (e.g., *There was a boy called William*), 45% of the children identified a problem in the story (e.g., *William was afraid the bear might eat him*), but only 33% mentioned a resolution (e.g., *William fed the bear every day*). Generally the children experienced difficulty recalling the information units in the story. They produced an average of two out of a possible 13 information units in their narratives. The maximum number of information units produced was seven.

As has been discussed hitherto, children in any environment have skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour which are important to the emergent of literacy as they go to school.

### **Emergent literacy practices and skills in Botswana**

In a study conducted by Mathangwane and Arua (2006) concerning the attitudes of parents towards reading in rural communities in Botswana, the most important factor in respect of children who did not read at home in the Letlhakeng community was that their parents did not know why they didn't do so and presumably did not encourage them to read. This point was

important because it pointed to the fact that some of the respondents did not know that it was important to understand why their children did not read. They did not understand that they could encourage their children to read. However, Mathangwane and Arua (2006) also mentioned that the parents also read bibles and hymn books. Some of the parents read bibles that were written in Setswana. This scenario was also observed by Unwin (1995) who described a situation in which Elizabeth, one of the subjects she studied, read the Bible almost daily because it was integral to her family and personal life. According to her (Unwin, 1995), Elizabeth's Bible reading was perhaps the most important literacy-related activity that her children saw her demonstrate. The children in Botswana rural on the other hand, were reported to read school texts mainly. Again, this was not surprising; as education seemed to be the driving force of literacy in the rural areas.

## **2.6.0 EMERGENT LITERACY PRACTICES AND SKILLS IN ZAMBIA**

### **A Study by Mary-grace Musonda (2011)**

Musonda (2011) conducted a study to establish the Literacy behaviours which pre-schoolers exhibited in selected households of Lusaka urban. This research had established that, despite the fact that teaching of reading and writing were not prioritised in the areas of research, pre-schooler children generally exhibited enough literacy behaviour. All the children did exhibit behaviours ranging from correct handling of books to pretend reading. They were also able to engage in other literacy-related games and play which teachers would build on once these children went to school. All the children had language knowledge because they had well developed oral language skills. The research also revealed that children in the research areas were able to orally count and write numbers. They were also able to identify numbers. The study further established that the children in the sample were able to sing the English alphabet song and Zambian songs. The research established that, apart from environmental print, there could be other variables at play in the development of emergent literacy behaviours in children. This could be; age, peer influence and parental scaffolding in literacy related activities. It finally revealed that parents and care givers lacked awareness of the concept of emergent literacy.

### **A Study by Thomas Zimba (2011)**

The study by Zimba (2011) was done in Kasempa and Solwezi districts of Northwestern province. This study examined emergent literacy support in early childhood education and hence focused on pre-school classroom practices in urban settings of the two districts. Zimba (2011) established that music was one of the most crucial literacy practices which was used to enhance literacy skills among children. It was shown in his study that the children had low level reading practices. Handling of books was observed to have been restricted to reception or grade 1 level. The study also revealed that children were left alone to engage in practices which would promote literacy such as singing. For instance children were rarely read to and did not engage in any form of reading or shared reading. It is clear from the reviewed studies that the children who were targeted in the above mentioned studies do not represent those who come from rural areas. It is for this reason that the current study set out to establish the emergent literacy practices and skills in rural areas.

#### **2.7.0 Summary of chapter two**

This chapter presented related literature reviewed, and it did so by starting with a discussion on some concepts which directly and indirectly relate to this study. The chapter also cited studies which relate to this study as reported outside Africa. Then, it narrowed down to those studies which had been done in Africa. Finally, those studies which were done in Zambia were reviewed and then, a conclusion was drawn.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter explains the research methodology used to collect the data. It firstly deals with the research design. Thereafter, particular emphasis is placed on population, sample and sampling method. It also shows the processes of primary and secondary data collection used just before the subsection that will show the method of data analysis as well as some limitations of the study.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

According to Ghosh (2003), a research design is a plan of the proposed research work. He stated that a research design is not a very highly specified plan and so cannot be followed without deviation since it is just a series of guide posts to keep the researcher heading into the right direction. It should be mentioned from the outset that this research employed qualitative design as it sought to get views, opinions, and perceptions from parents and other members of the community about emergent literacy practices and skills among children. Leedy and Ormrod (1985:101) described a qualitative research as a research “typically used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena, often with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participants’ point of view.” The qualitative aspects were employed during face to face interviews and interpretation because the data were highly qualitative in nature although they were quantified as themes. It however, used some features of quantitative design such as tables to display data. It was also naturalistic because there was no any systematic manipulation of any processes. Rather the researcher observed the phenomenon under study without any systematic manipulation. To be particular, a case study of two selected villages in Mwense district was undertaken. According to Cohen et al (2007:253) “a case study is a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle...it is the study of an instance in action.” A case study was appropriate because the research sought to take an in-depth analysis of the two villages which were selected from the district’s rural areas. It was also used as it proved helpful in understanding

the literacy practices and skills which were less understood before the research was undertaken in that particular area. The researcher sought to interpret his observations of the children's literacy practices and skills on one hand, and respondents' views on the other to establish the emergent literacy practices and skills among the children in rural areas of Mwense district.

### **3.3. Data Collection**

#### **Population**

Population in research has been defined by White (2003) as a group of individual persons, objects, or items from which samples are taken for statistical measurement. In this study, the population included all the children of the age range 2-6 years, the parents and community members in the rural areas of Mwense District of Zambia.

#### **Sample Size**

The sample for the study was drawn from two villages and was made up of 20 households. The two villages were located more than 40 kilometres from the nearest district town, Mansa and they are about 20 kilometres away from the main road and access to the villages is by bicycle or on foot. Utility vehicles belonging to ZESCO occasionally reach the area but not frequently. It was for this reason that the researcher designated it as a rural setting for this study. Ten households from each village with an average of four to six family members were selected. These were parents or guardians and children, and all these were both male and female. The children were given labels and in this case the labelling system used letters of the alphabet with child (a) being the first and child (t) being the last. Therefore, the participants (children from the households who were observed) in this report have been referred to using letters (a) to (t). The parents who were interviewed were also referred to using numbers related to the letters representing their children. Therefore, parent (1) corresponds to child (a), parent (2) corresponds to child (b) and this continued progressively up to parent (20) who corresponded to child (t). The Children labelled a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s and t were the ones who formed the sample for the age range of 2-6. Children were 20 in total. The researcher only gave labels to children who were between 2 and 6 years of age in each family. If the home had more than one child who was in that age range, the researcher

only observed one child from that family. The rest of the siblings were treated as other family members who were allowed to participate in interviews for that particular home. For guardians or parents, only one of the two was assigned a number but both of them were free to participate in the interviews.

### **Sampling Procedures**

The research employed non-probability sampling since a case study focuses on an object with certain specific characteristics. Purposive sampling was employed to include people of interest and those referred to here, included households where there were non-school going children aged 2-6 years. This was in line with Kombo and Tromp (2006) who state that purposive sampling is used to target the group or subjects who are believed to be reliable for the study. The study also used volunteer sampling as it gave chance to people who volunteered to participate in the research. All the households used Bemba, so it was convenient for both the researcher and the participants. The researcher firstly identified households where there were children who were between 2 and 6 years of age in each village. In each village, 30 households were identified with the help of a research assistant and other villagers who lived in the two villages. Then, names of owners of those households were written on pieces of paper. The names were then put in a tin where they were shuffled and a child was asked to pick 10 names for each village. The 20 homes which were picked by the child made up the sample for the study.

#### **3.3.4 Data Collection Procedures**

The study utilised qualitative research methods of data collection. The method used included face-to-face interviews with parents and other community members who volunteered to participate. The researcher visited homes of respondents and interviewed them from their homes. The answers were followed with follow-up questions where the researcher was not clear. Additionally, where the respondents requested to invite their neighbours to the interview, the researcher gladly allowed them as this made the respondents more comfortable and consequently led to more discussions. The researcher also allowed villagers who volunteered to be interviewed alone or together with the target households to participate in the interview. As the respondents expressed their views, the researcher was alert to capture subtle, meaningful cues and phrases in respondents' expressions and articulations of issues of

emergent literacy practices and skills. As respondents did a lot of talking, the researcher did a lot of listening and note taking. The researcher also recorded the discussions as he interviewed the participants using an audio recorder and wrote the responses.

The researcher also made observation of children as they played in their homes and surroundings. The researcher also used simple observations of respondents' nonverbal cues during interviews and surroundings so as to confirm whether some of the literacy practices they claimed to have been happening were existent or not.

### **3.3.5 Research Instruments and Tools**

The researcher used four instruments: semi-structured interview guide for parents, home literacy environment checklist, a checklist for observation as children engaged in literacy practices and an interview schedule for village heads. The use of semi-structured interview facilitated follow-up questions to obtain deeper insight on certain issues that were raised by the respondents during the direct interviews. Moreover, semi-structured rather than fully structured interview schedule offered sufficient flexibility to approach different respondents differently while still covering the same areas of data collection. Being a face to face interview, discussion was also automatically incorporated. Tools included notebook, a pencil, a pen and tape recorder to capture everything under discussion.

### **3.3.6 Data Analysis**

Data were analysed qualitatively. It commenced immediately the research began. The researcher made sure that the data were consistent during data collection. This was ensured by asking follow-up questions in order to make the data clarified. The researcher categorised, data as they were received. The researcher made sure that all data collected on a particular day were organised and summarised according to themes and then categorised under those themes.

## **4. Ethical considerations**

The researcher sought the consent of the village heads of the two villages in which this research was conducted. In conducting the research among the villagers of the two villages, permission was sought from the parents and their children before administering the

instruments. Assurance was given to them that no harm, neither emotional nor physical, would be inflicted on the subjects and indeed no harm was inflicted. And the parents were further assured that the findings of the research would be used for academic purpose only and that confidentiality would be maintained and names of subjects withheld. All respondents were asked to read the consent form and if they were not able to, they were read to, and only when they agreed to participate in the research, were they allowed to sign the form. For those who could not read, the researcher read for them and asked them to sign only if they were interested in taking part. The care-givers of the children who participated in the research gave consent on behalf of their children. Further, care-givers were also free to be present when the child was being observed without interfering in the process.

## **5. Summary**

The chapter above presented a description of the methods; data collection techniques and sample size. This chapter also presented the ethical considerations. The chapter that follows presents findings of the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents findings based on data collected using different research methods and instruments. The findings are presented under themes which were derived from the research questions; and these were; what emergent literacy skills children in Mwense district possessed before they entered formal schooling, what emergent literacy practices children in Mwense district were exposed to before they entered formal schooling, what rural community-based organised practices offered in order to help and support emergent literacy practices and skills in children and finally, what literacy environments that existed in the households and environment which would support emergent literacy development in children.

#### **4.2 Findings**

The findings, where a table is used to summarise, are presented in the order of the alphabet which has been used to code the respondents, that is, children and their parents or guardians. In some cases, the findings are also presented using numbers which have been used to code parents. The age of each child is indicated just below the code of the child when presented in a table. Having said this, let us start by looking at emergent literacy skills displayed by children in Mwense rural.

##### **4.2.1 The Emergent Literacy Skills Displayed by Children before they Enter Formal Schooling**

The research question of this study was what emergent literacy skills which children in rural areas of Mwense district exhibited before they entered school? The following were some of the emergent literacy skills exhibited by the children of Chisheta and Chipongoma villages.

**4.2.1.1 Findings from the Interview schedule for parents/ caregivers for Chisheta and Chipongoma Villages**

Table 1: Emergent literacy skills

		Chisheta village										Chipongoma village										Percentage (%)
	<b>Label of child</b>	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	I	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	T	
	<b>Age</b>	2	3	4	3	6	6	6	5	4	3	5	6	6	4	6	4	2	5	4	7	
	<b>Literacy skills displayed by child</b>																					
	Holding a pencil correctly	x	v	v	v	x	x	v	v	x	v	x	x	x	v	x	x	x	x	v	<b>40</b>	
	Drawing	v	v	v	v	v	x	v	v	x	x	v	x	v	x	x	x	v		v	<b>60</b>	
	Scribbling	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	x	v	v	v	v	v	x	v	v	v	v	v	<b>90</b>	
	Pretend/Writing	x	v	v	v	v	x	x	v	v	v	x	v	x	v	v	x	v	v	v	x	<b>65</b>
	Correct holding of book	x	x	v	x	x	x	v	x	x	x	x	x	x	v	v	v	x	x	x	v	<b>30</b>
	Pointing at words correctly	x	x	v	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	v	x	v	x	x	x	v	<b>20</b>
	Print Knowledge	v	x	x	x	x	x	v	v	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	v	<b>20</b>
	Pretend/reading	x	x	v	x	x	x	v	x	x	x		x	v	v	v	v	x	x	v	<b>40</b>	
	Comprehension skills and narrative skills	v	v	v	v	x	v	x	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	<b>90</b>
	Knowledge of letters.	v	x	x	v	x	x	x	v	x	v	x	x	x	x	x	v	x	x	v	v	<b>35</b>
	Linguistic awareness	x	x	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	x	v	v	v	<b>85</b>	

**Table 1: Source: field data (2012)**

Table 1 above summarises the emergent literacy skills displayed by the children in both Chisheta and Chipongoma villages. The paragraphs below explain the trends in the table.

**a. Holding a pencil/pen correctly**

As observed from table 1 above, in Chisheta village, six children were able to hold a pencil or pen correctly. In Chipongoma village, three children were able to do so. This number of children who would hold a pen or pencil correctly represents 45%. The parent to child *b* explained that the child used to hold the pencil correctly using the left hand. It was hard for the child to hold the pencil using the right hand and so we decided to let him continue holding using the left hand.

**b. Drawing**

From Table 1, In Chisheta village, eight out of the ten children were involved in drawing while two did not. In Chipongoma village, four children were involved in drawing and these included *l*, *n*, *r* and *t*. The total number of children who participated in drawing represents 60%. When asked what the children were drawing, parent to child *r* had the following to say: *umwana uyu alitemwa ukudrawer utumazingulu elyo na abantu*, translated as *my child likes drawing circles and people*. The mother to child *d* said that her child drew whatever came to his mind and sometimes the things he drew did not make sense but if asked to explain what he drew, he was able to tell even though what he drew did not match with his explanation. The mother to child *n* said that sometimes children draw certain patterns as they played with their friends. The picture below, taken in Chipongoma village, shows some of the patterns children drew. This pattern is called ***Kabangili***.



*Picture by Researcher*

Parent 9 also explained her child initiated all the drawing activities that he did alone without involvement of elderly people. Sometimes he drew when he saw his older siblings do their homework.

**c. Scribbling**

From Table 1, in Chisheta village, nine children were involved in scribbling and only one child did not. In this village it was found that nine children (90%) exhibited the skill of scribbling. In Chipongoma village, all the children did some scribbling except for child o who was not reported to have been involved. Put together, both villages reported a 90% participation of children (18 children) in scribbling. Parent 2 reported that her child used to scribble on the ground as paper was hard to find in the village. It was also observed that some of these children scribbled on papers which were provided by their older siblings who were already in school.



*The pictures above show children scribbling in Chipongoma village- pictures by the researcher*

#### **d. Pretend Writing**

From Table 1, in Chisheta village, seven children did what was known as pretend writing. They did this mostly when their older siblings were doing their homework or as play. Parent 3 said that her child used to write own-invented spellings which we did not know. He wrote words which he could read alone. In Chipongoma village, five children were also involved in pretend writing. The total percentage was 60. This means that only the 12 children (60%) in the sample were able to pretend write, some of whom made their own spellings. The mother to child *n* explained that the child used to mix those things which looked like letters and things which were totally different from letters.

#### **e. Correct holding of a book**

From Table 1, in Chisheta village, only two children were consistently holding the book correctly. The rest of the children would sometimes hold it correctly and sometimes not. The mother to child *d* explained that “*ine umwana wandi limo-limo alekata bwino ibuku lelo limo-limo alapilibula ico ashaishiba umwakubelengela, aba abakuti babuulafye amabuku nga bamona abakulu balebelenga,*” meaning *my child sometimes holds the book correctly while other times he holds it upside down because he doesn't know how to read and that they (children) only get books when they see those who are older than them reading*. Another parent said that it was difficult for children to know how to hold the books properly because they had not yet started going to school.

In Chipongoma village, four children were able to hold the books correctly while the rest of the children did not. If put together with those in Chisheta village, the total number would be six representing 30%. Parent 13 explained that children were only able to hold the books the correct way if there were pictures in side; otherwise, they would not use words because they did not know the letters of the alphabet.

#### **f. Pointing at words correctly and left to right movement**

From Table 1, in Chisheta village, only child *c* could point at words correctly, following them from left to right. Parent 3 explained that the child started by just moving his finger from any point on the page to anywhere. Thereafter, the child, through the help of older

siblings who were attending school, started pointing at the words correctly. In Chipongoma village, three children were able to point at the words in any book correctly. The children in the study sample who could point at the words correctly were only 4 representing 20%.

#### **g. Print Knowledge**

In Chisheta village, two children knew the use of print. Child *a* said that *ifi fyakubelenga* meaning *these are for reading*. In Chipongoma village, only one child was able to tell the use of print. In terms of percentage, only 20% of children were able to tell the use of print (Table 1).

#### **h. Pretend reading**

In Chisheta village, only three children were doing pretend reading. These children would look at the page in a book and say words which were not in the book or on the paper. In Chipongoma village, six children did pretend reading. Altogether, nine children exhibited pretend reading. So, it can be said that 45% of children were doing pretend reading (Table 1).

#### **i. Narrative and Listening Comprehension skills**

All children proved to have listening comprehension skills. They were able in some cases to retell the folktales which were told by their peers or adults. The children were also able to tell the story in the order of *introduction*, *main body* and *conclusion*.

### **4.2.2 The emergent literacy practices children in Mwense district were exposed to before they enter into formal schooling**

The second objective which this study aimed at achieving was establishing the kind of emergent literacy practices which children in Mwense district were exposed to before they entered formal schooling. This question aimed at collecting data on emergent literacy practices in Mwense rural communities. The findings of this question were divided into three parts. Firstly, findings on oral emergent practices are presented. These include practices such as, riddles, folktales, and songs. This was followed by practices which involved games and play such as, *Isolo*, *Iciyenga*, *Icimpombwa*, and skipping. Lastly, other emergent practices which could not be categorised under the two categories are presented, such as, racing, and creative activities. The following are the findings on emergent literacy practices and skills found in the two villages.

#### 4.2.2.1 Oral Emergent Literacy Practices

##### a. Findings from an Observation Checklist

Table 2 below shows oral literacy practices in which children were involved in Chisheta and Chipongoma villages respectively. In the tables below, the tick (v) represents the child's participation in a particular oral emergent literacy practice whereas the cross (x) represents the non-involvement of the child in that particular oral literacy practice.

Table 2: Oral literacy practices in Chisheta village

#	Label of child	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	H	I	j	Percentage (%)
		Age of child	2	3	4	3	6	6	6	5	4	
<b>Oral Literacy Practice Activities</b>												
Riddle sessions		v	v	v	v	v	v	v	x	v	v	<b>90</b>
Folktales		v	v	v	v	v	v	x	x	v	v	<b>80</b>
Songs ( <i>ifisela</i> , hymns, games etc)		v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	<b>100</b>
Inquisitiveness		x	v	v	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	<b>20</b>
Prayers		x	x	v	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	<b>10</b>
Bible Memory verses		x	x	v	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	<b>10</b>

Source: field data (2012)

The above table (Table 2) shows oral emergent literacy practices commonly found in the community in which children were involved in Chisheta village. Below is a brief explanation of the scores summarised in the table.

**i. Riddle sessions**

In Chisheta village, it was found that nine children were engaged in riddle sessions. However, child *h* did not participate in these riddle sessions. Explaining why children participated in these riddle sessions, parent 1 said that “*kuno abaana ukucoleka ificoleko caaba kwati ni ntambi. Abaanna abengi balakolongana icungulo mukushimika utushimi elyo ne ficoleko*” meaning, *here, it is like a custom for children to gather in the evenings to tell folktales and riddles*. The above explanation by parent 1 was confirmed by Parents 2,3,4,5 and 6 who added that these children gathered with their friends in the evening around a fire and sometimes even during day time. Parent 9 explained that children engaged in riddle sessions on their own with friends but sometimes even parents give them riddles. Some of the riddles that children posed were:

Table 3: Examples of riddles and responses from children as told by children

<b>Riddle</b>	<b>Response</b>
<i>Kungulanga-kungulanga</i>	<i>Kwa lesa takwaba icaani</i>
<i>Umubili wapya lelo umushipi washala</i>	<i>Ninshila</i>
<i>Ing’anda yaba yama iyabula umwinshi</i>	<i>Liini</i>

**Source: field data (2012)**



*An elder telling children riddles around a fire in Chisheta village: Picture by researcher*

## **ii. Folktales**

On folktales, eight parents reported that children took part in telling folktales. Parent 1 reported that her child just listened to those who were able to tell but he could not himself tell any stories. Parent 3 said that her child could tell only short stories and not those which were very complicated. However, parents 7 and 8 reported that their children did not take part in telling folktales. They neither listened nor told stories. Folktales included *Kalulu na Cimbwi* (The Rabbit and the Hyena), *Umntu Na Mafupa Yoko-yoko*, (The man and the monster) and *Impombo Na Fulwe* (The Duiker and the Tortoise).

## **iii. Songs (*ifisela*, hymns, song games)**

All parents reported that their children involved themselves in songs. These songs differed, most of them being those dubbed from popular Zambian music, songs used when playing games, gospel songs(or hymns) or other songs sung while playing. Others included songs which accompany folktales. *Ifisela* included songs which children sung while they played.

Table 4: Examples of songs

SONG TYPE	WHEN/WHERE IT IS SUNG	EXAMPLES OF SONGS POPULAR AMONG CHILDREN IN THE TWO VILLAGES
<b>Ifisela</b>	It is sung when children are playing. This song is accompanied by dance	<i>Lizzy umwana afyelwe ubushiku</i> <i>Nendoshi shonse Shaile mukulowa</i>
<b>Hymns</b>	These are gospel songs sung either at church, funerals or as part of play for children.	<i>Mwecilibwe ca kale iye iye</i> <i>Kamfisame muli 'mwe iye iye</i> <i>Umulopa na menshi iye iye Fyasumine</i> <i>mulimwe iye iye iye iye iye iye iye iye</i>
<b>songs accompanying games</b>	Sung when children are playing. The song is sung with certain complicated rule-governed clapping.	<i>Amina Amina kadala, Small wear,</i> <i>Amina dushe spakaliba, Eloi, eloi</i> <i>bamusha mulunsonga, Maneneke-</i> <i>maneneke,zimpompo</i>  <i>Amina dushi, dushi Bus ileya kwisa,</i> <i>Buchi kamitondo Dushi, dushi</i>





*The picture above shows children singing a song in one of the games played- Pictures by researcher*

The above pictures illustrate games accompanied by *song*. These are sung with certain patterned claps which follow the lines in the song. For example, the first three lines are followed by three successive claps. From the first three lines, the number of claps increase and this involves turning of palms making them face downward and upward while at some point they clap while fingers are raised upwards as can be seen from the picture above. If one playing this game fails to clap according to the rules of the game at a particular part of the song, such a one is disqualified. The important thing in this song is to follow rules given.

#### **iv. Inquisitiveness/Asking questions**

In Chisheta village, only children **b** and **c** were reported to be inquisitive. The mother to child **b** said that her child used to ask a lot of questions about things or people he did not know. Parent 2 said that *uyu umwana alashupa ngateshibefye icintu kano wamulondolwela. Limolimo alepushapo pali balupwa abo teshibe*, meaning, *this child troubles me if he doesn't know someone or something unless you explain to him. Sometimes he even asks about relatives whom he does not know*. Most of the parents said that photographs of relatives were starting points for talks between them and their children. The rest of the children, that is, **a, d, e, f, g, h, i** and **j** were not reported to be inquisitive.

**v. Prayers and Bible Memory verses**

Parent 3 reported that her child could say a sensible prayer in iciBemba. The rest of the children did not say any prayers at all. Parent 3 said that her child was able to memorise verses from the bible if those verses were read to him by his older siblings, friends, or leaders at church in Sabbath school.

**b. Findings from an Observation Checklist for Chipongoma Village**

Table 5 below shows the oral literacy practices which children in Chipongoma village were regularly involved in. These were the most common activities in this village.

Table 5: Oral literacy practices in Chipongoma village

#	Label of child	k	l	m	N	O	p	q	r	s	T	Percentage (%)
	Age of child	5	6	6	4	6	4	2	5	4	7	
<b>Oral Activities</b>												
	Riddle sessions	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	<b>100</b>
	Folktales	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	<b>100</b>
	Songs ( <i>ifisela</i> , hymns, games etc)	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	<b>100</b>
	Inquisitiveness/Asking questions	×	v	×	v	×	×	×	v	×	v	<b>40</b>
	Prayers	×	×	×	×	×	×	v	v	×	×	<b>20</b>
	Memory verses	×	×	v	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	<b>10</b>

**Source: field data (2012)**

The above table (Table 5) shows oral emergent literacy practices in which children were involved in Chipongoma village. Below is a brief explanation of the scores summarised in the table.

### **i. Riddle sessions**

Riddles are done in the evening around a fire. In Chipongoma village, all the children who were the subjects of this research reported to participate in riddle sessions. All the mothers reported that it was their way of life. Every child had to go through this kind of life. Parent 12 said that

*kwena eflyo caabafye kuno pantu bonse emo tupita. Twalifisanga elyo nabaana beesu nabo bakonkafye inshila imo ine. Twakwaba nokufunda abaana ati caabe fi. Cintu cimo ico baisangamofye, meaning it is like a custom here because we all go through the same way of riddles. We found this custom and our children found it and so they just follow in our footsteps, actually, we do not even teach them that they should start engaging in riddle posing but they just find themselves doing it.*

In Chipongoma village, parent 13 also reported that her child learnt riddles from his friends and from his older siblings. Examples of riddles included such ones as *uku lupili nooku lupili pakati paafuma umunshinga* I literally translated as , *one side a mountain and on another side a mountain, a missile comes out from between them.*

### **ii. Folktales**

In Chipongoma village, all the parents reported that their children participated in telling folktales. However, parent 17 said that her child was not able to tell a sensible story. She, however, said that her child would listen to stories from other children. Examples of folktales included, *2 koloko na kalulu ncenjele*, and *Akatanshi takalisha*.

### **iii. Songs (ifisela, hymns, games)**

All parents reported that their children were singing different songs. Parent 16 said, *uyu ilingi-line aleemba ne shakulumbanya Jehova pantu ni nte yakwa Yehova* meaning *the child usually sings praises to Jehovah as he is a Jehovah's Witness*. However, the child sung also other songs especially when playing with his friends. The rest of the children sung songs when playing. Parents 12 and 17 added that their children sung along when the song was playing on radio. Examples of songs sang during *ifisela* included songs like:

*Kabanse eya eya ee*  
*Kabanse eya ee*  
*Kabanse eya eya ee ee*  
*Bwaila bwaca*



*Children playing ifisela in Chipongoma village: Picture by researcher*

Examples of songs sung as hymns included a song like:

*Jehovah Jireh, mwimbile (Jehovah Jireh sing for Him)*

*Alpha omega, mwimbile (Jehovah Jireh sing for Him)*

*Haleluyah ni Lesa wesu mama mwimbile (hallelujah, He is our God sing for Him)*

#### **iv. Inquisitiveness/Asking questions**

In Chipongoma village, only four parents reported that their children were very inquisitive. It was reported that children wanted to find out about things they did not understand. Parent 14 said that her child used to ask his father on how to make fishing nets. The rest of the children were not reported to be inquisitive. Children *l* and *t* were reported to be inquiring more about relatives who were on pictures.

**v. Prayers and memory verses**

In Chipongoma village, only parents 17 and 18 reported that their children were able to offer prayers. In addition to prayers, some children were involved in memorising bible verses. The rest of the children were not able or did not. In Chipongoma village, no parent reported that they engaged their children in memorising verses from the bible. Parents 17 and 18 said that their children were helped by their older siblings to memorise verses from the bible.

**c. Findings from the Interview Schedule for Chisheta Village.**

Table 6 below shows some practices practised in some households that support emergent literacy development in children. These practices include what members of the families did and these were mainly performed or done by older siblings.

Table 6: Practices households did in their homes that support emergent literacy.

#	Label of child	a	b	c	D	E	f	g	h	i	J	Percentage (%)
		Age	2	3	4	3	6	6	6	5	4	
	<b>What households do</b>											
1	Engaging children in reading	×	×	×	×	v	v	×	×	v	v	<b>40%</b>
2	Reading to the child and point out important features such as title, font, author of the book	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	v	×	<b>10%</b>
3	Encouraging child to scribble and pretend write while playing	×	×	v	v	v	v	×	×	v	×	<b>50%</b>

**Source: field data (2012)**

The paragraphs below explain the data in Table 6.

**i. Engage children in reading**

Four parents engaged their children in reading, that is, parent 5, 6, 9 and 10. This represents 40% of the parents who engaged children in reading. This was practice performed by parents

but in most cases older siblings engaged their young brothers and sisters in reading as can be seen from the pictures below:



*Picture by researcher*

However, the remaining six parents (60%) did not engage children in reading. Parent 1 said that she did not engage the child in reading because she did not know how to read in both English and Bemba. In response to whether she engaged the child in reading or not, parent 2 answered by asking the researcher a question that: *bushe uyu nao kuti twamubelengela uushaishiba neefyo fipilibula?* Meaning, *Can we read for this child who does not even know the meaning of print?* This showed that most parents assumed that their children did not know anything about reading and writing and because of this assumption; they did not consciously plan to read to the child.

**ii. Reading to the child and pointing out important features such as title, font, author of the book**

In Chisheta village, only one parent read to children and pointed out important features of the text such as title, font and author features of the book. The rest of the households did not. When asked if she read and pointed out features of a book, parent 2 only asked a question in response *Bushe ifi nafyo fyaliba nencito?* Meaning, *is it important to show these things to the*

*children?* Like parent 2, most of these parents said that they could not see the connection between reading and pointing out features of a book.

**iii. Encouraging children to scribble and to pretend write as they (children) were playing**

In Chisheta village, five parents, that is, 3,4,5,6 and 9 encouraged children to scribble and pretend write while playing. Parents 1, 2, 7 and 8 did not encourage children to pretend write and scribble during their pretend play. Four parents represent 40% of parents who did not encourage children to engage in pretend writing and scribbling while the children were involved in pretend play. The percentage of parents who encouraged children to engage in pretend writing and scribbling was 60%.

**d. Findings from the Interview Schedules Chipongoma Village**

The table below shows practices found in some households which were practised in order to enhance emergent literacy development in children in Chipongoma village. These practices include what all members of these families did. Most of the practices were actually done by older siblings.

Table 7: Practices households where involved in which support emergent literacy

#	Label of child	k	l	m	N	O	p	q	r	s	T	Percentage (%)
	Age of child	5	6	6	4	6	4	2	5	4	7	
	What parents/guardians do											
1	Engaging child in reading	×	×	×	×	×	v	×	v	×	×	20%
2	Reading to the child and point out important features such as title, font, author of the book	×	×	×	×	×	v	×	×	×	×	10%
3	Encouraging child to scribble and pretend write while pretend play	×	v	×	×	v	v	×	×	×	v	40%

**Source: field data (2012)**

The paragraphs below explain the data in Table 7

### **i. Engaging children in reading**

In Chipongoma village, two parents, 16 and 18 engaged children in reading while the rest of the households did not do so. Most of these parents said that they did not have time to just sit and read stories for children. Therefore, when converted to percentages, it meant that only 20% of parents engaged their children in reading while 80% did not. When the two villages were combined, it was only 60% of the parents who engaged children in reading whereas 40% did not. Some parents added that children were engaged in reading by their older siblings. This was also observed happening by the researcher. The picture below shows a parent engaging children in reading.



### **ii. Reading to children and pointing out important features such as title, font, author of the book**

In Chipongoma village, only parent 15 did point out such features of the book as title, font, author and publication. The rest of the parents did not read to their children and so did not point out important features of a book to children.

### **iii. Encouraging children to scribble and pretend write**

In Chipongoma village, four parents encouraged the children to engage in scribbling and pretend writing while 6 did not. Therefore, 60% of parents did not encourage children to

engage in scribbling and pretend writing and only 40% encouraged their children to scribble and pretend write while playing. Hence, 50% of all the parents in both Chisheta and Chipongoma villages combined encouraged their children in this practice.

**e. Findings from the Home Literacy Environment Checklist for Chisheta and Chipongoma Villages**

These findings relate to songs, games and play which have not been categorised under the literacy skills above but which have made a contribution to literacy development. This is because they have rules of play and song for one to follow.

The table below shows more of the practices done by households to help their children develop emergent literacy skills.

Table 8: Other practices with which households helped their children.

Category	Label of Child	Chisheta village										Chipongoma village									
		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t
	Age of Child	2	3	4	3	6	6	6	5	4	3	5	6	6	4	6	4	2	5	4	
<b>What households did</b>																					
	Reading a picture book with the child	×	v	v	×	×	×	v	×	v	×	v	×	×	v	×	v	×	×	×	<b>35</b>
	Teaching new words to the child	×	v	×	×	v	×	×	×	v	×	×	v	×	v	v	v		v	v	<b>45</b>
	Having detailed and informative conversation with the child	v	v	v	v	×	v	×	×	v	v	v	v	×	v	v	v	v	v	v	<b>75</b>
	Encouraging the child to say what he or she wants using complete sentences.	v	v	v	×	×	v	v	×	v	v	v	v	×	v	v	v	v	v	×	<b>70</b>
	Encouraging the child to participate in oral language contexts like folktales, songs.	v	v	×	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	×	v	v	v	v	v	<b>85</b>

Source: field data (2012)

**i. Reading a picture book with the child**

It was noted that the most common picture books in this area were the Watchtower magazines.

In Chisheta village, five parents read picture books with children. Parent 3 said *Uyu umwana tulabelenga nankwe ifitabo ifyo umwaba ifikope kwati cilabushiku*, meaning, *we read picture books with the child almost every day*. Parent 7 said that she did not actually read picture books with the child but his elder siblings helped him to read pictures. Parent 3 said that she read picture books with the child almost every day. Parent 1 was unable to do so because she did not know how to read. Parent 1 said that she could not read and could not teach what she was not able to read. When asked if she read a picture book with the child, parent 2 answered the following: *nebo nshaishiba ukubelenga kwinenene but nda mutambisha ama picture apaaba balupwa*, meaning, *I do not know how to read properly but I show him the photographs of our relatives*. Parents 3, 7 and 9 read a picture book with their children at least once a week. Parent 1 was unable to do so because she did not know how to read. Parent 1 said that *kuti namufunda shani neushaishiba ukubelenga?* Meaning, *how can I teach when I cannot read?* In Chipongoma village, it is only three parents who read picture books with their children four times a week. Parent 13 said that the only picture book she read for and with child was a Jehovah's Witness magazine even though the book was not age and level appropriate. In addition, parent 15 said that she did not actually read the picture book but the child's older siblings read **Lapenda 1 and 2** and **Adult Literacy Program Book**. Parent 15 was at some point involved in an adult literacy program which was no longer there at the time of research. The rest of the parents did not read a picture book at least four times a week.

**ii. Teaching new words to children**

Parents 2, 3, 4 and 6 taught their children new words nearly every day. Parent 2 reported that she taught new words nearly every day especially when talking about people in general. Parent 3 said that this was usually unplanned for but happened when the context demanded. Parent 4 explained that the child was taught new words when the child was looking at the pictures. Parent 6 reported that she only taught a particular word which the child did not understand. In Chipongoma village, three parents taught their children new words at least once a week.

### **iii. Having a detailed and informative conversation**

In Chisheta village, parents 1, 4, 6 and 10 had a detailed and informative conversation with the children nearly every day. Parent 1 said that this was done mostly when planting. Parent 4 reported that she used to have normal conversations over social issues. Parent 6 mentioned they would gather in the evenings to talk about life issues. Six parents had detailed and informative conversations with their children at least once a week. Parent 12 said *tulalanshanya maka-maka nga tulemufunda imisango iisuma* meaning, *we converse with the child especially when we are teaching him good manners.*

### **iv. Encouraging children to say what they want using complete sentences**

In Chisheta village, parents 1, 2, 3 and 10 encouraged children to say what they wanted to say using complete sentences. This was done to encourage and correct oral language in children. Parent 2 said that she corrected grammar and encouraged him to be completing the sentence every time he wanted to say something. However, parent 3 said that the activity was only done when a child said an incomplete sentence. Parent 10 said that she encouraged the child only if the child was struggling with word use. Parents 4, 5,6,7,8 and 9 did not encourage their children to say what he or she wanted using complete sentences. In Chipongoma village, five parents encouraged their children to say what they (children) wanted using complete sentences. Parents 11 confirmed by saying that *tucitafye ifi nga umwana afilwa ukupwisha ifyo alelanda*, meaning, *this activity only happens when the child showed failure to complete what he is saying.* Meanwhile, parent 14 said that *ifi ficitikafye nga umwana afilwa ukubomfya ishiwi nangu umuseela bwino*, meaning, *this only happens when she uses a word/sentence wrongly.* Parent 16 said that she did so in a bid to teach the child how to speak. However, five Parents confirmed that they did not take any step to encourage their children to say what they wanted or speak using complete sentences.

### **v. Encouraging children to participate in oral language contexts like folktales and songs.**

In Chisheta village, nine parents encouraged their children to participate in oral language contexts like folktales and songs. Parent one reported that this was done daily in the evenings before going to bed. Parent 4 reported that the child went alone; they (children) tell these stories even during day time. Parent 5 explained that the child told tales with his grandparents

and narrates them to his parents. Parent 6 explained that her child also participated in riddles and folktales when others were participating. Parent 7 said that the child was encouraged to participate but he (the child) liked to be told and not to tell. However, parent 3 did not encourage the child to participate in oral language contexts like folktales and songs. The pictures below show parents and children telling folktales while the other one shows children involved in dance and songs. In Chipongoma village, eight parents encouraged their children to participate in oral language contexts like folktales and songs. Parent 12 explained that the boy participated in riddles and folktales in the evening around fires and songs during play time and that the boy also learned from both his siblings and parents. Picture below shows children sitting around a fire where folktales are told.



*Picture by the researcher*

Parent 14 said that the child was proactive in initiating songs, tales and riddles though parents also initiated sometimes. Parents 3, 15 and 20 did not encourage their children to participate in oral language contexts like folktales and songs. The picture on the next page shows children participating in song and dance.



**f. Findings from interview schedule for parents**

Below is a table summarising findings from both Chisheta and Chipongoma villages combined.

**Table 9: Help rendered to the child by parent and/or member of household**

Category	Label of Child	Chisheta village										Chipongoma village										Percentage (%)
		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	J	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	
	Age	2	3	4	3	6	6	6	5	4	3	5	6	6	4	6	4	2	5	4	7	
<b>Help rendered to the child by parent and/or member of household</b>																						
Helping the child learn to sing or say the alphabet		v	x	v	x	v	x	v	x	v	v	x	v	x	v	v	v	x	x	v	<b>60</b>	
Help the child to name letters of the alphabet		v	x	x	x	x	x	v	x	v	x	v	x	x	v	v	v	x	x	v	<b>45</b>	
Helping the child learn to write letters of the alphabet		v	x	x	x	x	x	v	x	v	v	v	x	v	v	v	v	x	x	x	<b>45</b>	
Help the child to write his or her name		x	x	x	x	x	v	v	x	v	x	v	v	x	x	v	v	x	x	x	<b>40</b>	
Helping the child learn the sounds that letters of the alphabet make (e.g., “T” makes the /t/ sound).		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	v	x	v	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	<b>10</b>	

Source: field data (2012)

**i. Helping children to learn singing or reciting the alphabet**

In Chisheta village, only parent 5 said that she helped the child to sing the alphabet songs. Parent 1 said that the child was only being taught songs which they were learning from church. Parent 7 reported that his brother (the child's brother) and sisters helped him to say the letters of the alphabet. Parent 12 reported that she helped the child though that did not happen always. Parent 14 said that she only helped the child when the child's older siblings were reading and this was initiated by the child's siblings. Parent 16 did help the child sometimes. Parent 20 said that the child was being helped by his older siblings.

**ii. Helping children to name letters of the alphabet**

In Chisheta village, Parent 1 reported that helping the child to name the letters of the alphabet was done as play and mostly was not meant for enriching the child's literacy skills. Parent 7 said that the child was being helped to name the letters of the alphabet. Of all parents in Chisheta village, only parent 9 taught the child the letters of the alphabet seriously in order to help the child achieve literacy. Some parents said that sometimes the children were helped by their older siblings as they played. In Chipongoma village, Parent 16 was the only one who helped the child to learn to write the letters of the alphabet. Parent 16 added that sometimes the child was helped by a neighbour who was in school. The picture below shows girls demonstrating to the boy how to write letters of the alphabet.



*Picture by researcher*

Parent 14 did not help the child because she thought that the child was too young to learn to write the letters.

**iii. Helping children to learn to write letters of the alphabet**

In Chisheta village, parent 1 said that she only helped the child to write numbers and not letters. Parent 7 said that she helped the child to learn to write letters of the alphabet but the child did not know. Parent 9 said that the child was being helped by older siblings to write letters and could write. Parent 10 only helped the child to learn to write alphabetical letters on occasions. Parents 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 said that they did not help the child to learn to write the letters of the alphabet. The picture shows the child being helped to write by his older sibling.



*Picture by Researcher*

**iv. Helping children to write their names**

In Chisheta village, Parent 7 and 9 said that they were helping the children although they did not know how to write their names. Parent 7 said that *uyu umwana abamwafwa bakulu bakwe*, meaning, *this child is helped by his older siblings*. Eight parents did not help the children to write their names. Parent 6 explained that they thought that she thought the child

could not learn even if they taught him. The picture below shows two boys being helped to write their names by an older sibling.



*Picture by Researcher*

Parents 12 and 15 said that they had been helping their children to learn how to write their names but their children did not know how to write their names. Parent 16 said that she was helping the child to learn how to write the name. Parent 20 said that she did not help the child but the child was being helped by older siblings. Therefore, six parents did not do anything to help the children to learn to write their name.



**i. *Iciyenga***

In Chisheta village, it was found that children participated in games that promote emergent literacy. Parents 1, 6 and 7 reported that their children engaged in a game called ***Iciyenga***. The rest of the parents reported that their children engaged in other different games. Children ***b, c, d, e, h, i*** and ***j*** did not play ***Iciyenga*** but played other games which promoted emergent literacy. ***Iciyenga*** is played using small stones which they put in a small round sunken hole or round drawn circle as seen in the picture. The one playing holds a round stone or fruit which is known as ***Icisai***. This is thrown up and at the same time the ***Icisai*** is thrown up, the hand that threw the ***Icisai*** is used to scatter the small stones or seeds in the circle. The small stones are called ***utwana*** (babies). When all the stones are out of the circle, the player begins to put them back. At first, he or she puts them one by one, this is the first stage. At the second stage, the player puts in the circle two stones at once. The number of stones depends on the stage. When all the stones have been put back, the player puts everything at the end. When this stage is over, the one playing throws the ***Cisai*** up while picking any number of ***Utwana*** but the total number should be an even number. Below is a picture of children playing ***Iciyenga***.



*Picture by Researcher*

In Chipongoma village, four children engaged in playing *iciyenga*. These included children *n, q, s* and *t*. Six children did not play *iciyenga*.



**ii. Isolo**

It was also observed that the children who played *Iciyenga* were the same children who played *Isolo*. This means that children *b, c, d, e, h, i* and *j* did not play *Isolo*. One common form of *Isolo* which was played was draft. But children also played the tradition *Isolo*. It was reported by the parents of children *n, p, q, r, s*, and *t* that these children played *isolo*.

**iii. Icimombwa (Football)**

Five children played *Icimombwa* (football using a ball made out of plastics). However, children *b, d, g, h* and *i* did not play this game. In Chipongoma village, only five children played *icimombwa* and the rest did not. This is football even though it does not always follow all the rules of the game. But basic rules such as offside, handball and others are strictly enforced sometimes.

**iv. Drawing**

In Chisheta village, parents *1, 2, 4, 7* and *8* reported that children engaged in drawing as a game which they played either alone or with their friends. This was done when playing and

mostly they were drawing on the ground. This is different from the drawing which some children did when seeing their older siblings solving some homework. Those who played the game included children of parents 3, 5, 6, 9 and 10. In Chipongoma village, parents 12, 13, 14, 15 17 and 20 reported that their children were drawing and painting when playing while parents 11, 16, 18 and 19 reported that their children did not draw while playing.

**v. Ukubuta (Make believe play)**

Parents 3, 5, 6 and 9 reported that their children did not engage in any activities of make believe play. However, they did not hesitate to mention that the children played other games. However, parents 1, 2,4,7,8 and 10 said that their children engaged in *Ukubuta*. In make-believe play, children imitate life as they see it. Children perform tasks which are performed at home such as cooking. In some cases, some children act as fathers while others act as mothers. These children even pretend to own children as they play. In the picture below, the “mother” is cooking for her children in Chisheta village.



It was also recorded that six parents confirmed their children’s participation in make believe play. Parents 14 and 18 added that their children played different roles as they played. Parent 14 said that her child liked taking the role of the mother as she played with her friends. The picture below shows a group of girls involved in make-believe-play and the site of play in Chipongoma village.



*Picture by Researher*

vi. ***Kambushi kalila-lila***

In Chisheta village, only one child (child *a*) was engaged in the game of ***Kambushi kalila-lila***. Nine Children did not play the game. In this game, children sit in a circle as one of them goes round singing a song. At certain points of the song, mostly determined by the one going round, the one going round drops a cloth on one of the seated colleagues and runs round to come and take the position of the person where he or she has dropped the cloth. The one on whom the cloth is dropped begins to chase after the one who dropped the cloth in order to hit him/her with the same cloth. If he or she does not manage to do this up to the time the later sits, he or she in turn begins the song and drops the cloth on another person and the game begins all over again. In Chipongoma village, only parents 15 and 18 said that their children were involved in playing ***Kambushi kalila-lila***. Below is a picture showing children playing ***ka mbushi kalila-lila***.



*Picture by Researcher*

**vii. Touch**

In Chisheta village, only child *a* played touch, the rest of the children did not play. In Chipongoma village, children *k*, *q*, and *r* played ***Touch*** very regularly.

**viii. Rounders**

In Chisheta village, children *a*, *d* and *g* played Rounders with their friends. The parent to child *d* explained that *aba abaana bangalafye ilingiline mumainsa pantu elyo bashila bwino umwakwangalila*, meaning, *these children mostly play rounders in the rain season because that is when they draw well the lines in which the game is played*. In Chipongoma village, *r* and *k* are the only children, among those whose parents were interviewed, who played that game. In addition, there was only one child who participated in the game called *Chidunu*. This was child *a*.

**ix. De mama**

Children c, d, g and h of Chisheta village played a game of De mama. This game resembles skipping game (Wider) where the challenging group skip the rope which hangs in the legs or waist of the defending group. In Chipongoma village, k, r and t played the game while the rest did not. De mama is almost played like wider or skipping. The two games do not differ significantly in terms of rules.

**x. Wider/skipping**

In Chisheta, village, only g and h played this game together with older siblings and friends. The picture below shows children with older siblings playing Wider. In Chipongoma village, children l, q, r and t played the game of wider or skipping.



*Picture by Researcher*

### 4.2.2.3 Other Emergent Literacy Practices

#### a. Findings from the interview schedule for Chisheta and Chipongoma villages

The table below shows literacy activities which were captured as other emergent literacy activities for both Chisheta and Chipongoma villages and these are explained just below the table.

Table 11: Other literacy practices

		Chisheta village										Chipongoma village										
Label		a	b	c	d	e	F	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	Percentage
	Age	2	3	4	3	6	6	6	5	4	3	5	6	6	4	6	4	2	5	4	7	%
<b>Other Literacy practices</b>																						
Moulding clay cars/doll		x	x	v	v	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	v	x	v	<b>20</b>
Motor activities		x	v	v	x	x	x	x	x	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	<b>70</b>
Fishing		x	x	x	x	v	v	x	x	x	x	x	v	x	v	x	x	x	v			<b>25</b>
Creative activities		x	x	x	x	v	v	x	x	x	x	v	v	v	v	v	x	v	x	v	v	<b>50</b>
Planting		x	x	x	x	x	v	v		v	v	v	v	v	v	v	x	v	v	v	v	<b>65</b>

Source: field data (2012)

**i. Moulding clay cars/dolls**

It was observed that four children were involved in this activity. These children included *c*, *d*, *r* and *t*. This number represents 20% of the total number of children who were the subjects of this research. The picture below shows a boy moulding a motor car using soft clay from an anthill.



*Picture by Researcher*

**ii. Motor skills based activities e.g. running, jumping, handiwork, racing**

It was observed that children *b*, *c*, *i* and *j* of Chisheta village engaged in the practices above and that all the children of Chipongoma village involved themselves in the practices. That is 70% of the children were engaged in motor skills based activities. The picture below is a demonstration of children involved in racing.



*Example of motor skill based activity – running and jumping games: Picture by researcher*

**iii. Fishing**

From Chisheta village, two children were engaged in fishing while the rest of the children did not and only three children from Chipongoma village were engaged in fishing. A total number of five represented 25% of the total number of children.

**iv. Creative practices**

A total number of 10 children engaged in creative practices such as making balls out of plastic, hats, sculpting, decorating the house with mud. This represented 50% of the total number. In Chisheta village, it was children *e* and *f* and in Chipongoma village it was children *k, l, m, n, o, q, s* and *t* that took part in these practices.

**v. Planting**

From Chisheta village, four children were observed helping their parents to plant maize and cassava. All the children in Chipongoma village, except for child *p* were engaged in planting various crops such as maize, cassava, and groundnuts. This represents a total number of 13 who engaged in this activity and a percentage of 65%.

### **4.2.3 Community-Based Interventions that Enhance Emergent Literacy in Children**

The third research question which this study aimed at establishing was what rural community-based interventions were practised that enhanced emergent literacy in children.

#### **a. Findings from the interview with the village heads for Chisheta village**

When the village head was asked whether there were any arranged or organised activities to promote emergent literacy, the following was the answer from the head of Chisheta village:

*Akale, panuma ya kubombesha, abo abakwete amaka baalekolongana mukushana insomba na masha yambi. Inshita imo kunuma abana baalesa mukushana kuno kwisano. Elyo panuma kwaaleba ukusalapo umushi umo abacimfya. Nga muli na akalupiya akanoono, mwabapeela.*

Translation;

*(Long time ago, they were, after hardwork, they would assemble in the evening to dance Insomba (a traditional dance) and sing, those who were energetic. Sometime back, children would come and dance for me. They would gather here, and beat drums and dance and then, you would select one or two villages and would say these are the winners.)*

From the above response that the village head gave, it was inferred by the researcher that the village organised certain practices which could promote literacy even though the villagers were not conscious about it. These activities included dance, songs, competition and other activities.

#### **b. Findings from the interview schedule for the village head for Chipongoma village**

Asked if children were participating in these practices, the village head of Chipongoma village said that: *Ebasangwamo. Eba cinda (they are the ones who participate. They are the ones who dance)*. The village head emphasized that children were found in places where dancing was inevitable and in most cases, the children were the ones dancing and singing.

#### **c. Findings from Interview schedule for parents or caregivers**

Some fathers interviewed confirmed that children used to attend sessions where sketches which were performed by a drama group engaged by the clinic to disseminate information

about drug use. And in responding to the question as to whether the children were participating in any of these practices, one father's response was that:

*Ukuba kwena abana balaya mukutamba uko abantu baleyangala utusela uto tubomfya mukufunda abantu mukubomfya umuti wakucipataala elyo nokufunda bana mayo abaali na 'mafumo ukuya mukupimisha. Muno mumushi icabamofye ico aba bengasambililamo ukwishiba amashiwi nifilya fine nga baya mukutamba utusela elyo nengoma eko bengasambilila amashiwi. Ifi abaletako niba kiliniki.*

Translation;

*Children go to see sketches which we perform when teaching people about drug use and women about the importance of antenatal. The thing in this village from which these children can learn more words is when they go to watch those who perform drama. This is organised by the clinic.*

From the above responses, the researcher found out that the practices which were conducted were more inclined to play and song and so, they were promoting oral language in children. The researcher also found out that the sketches which were used by the local health post to disseminate health information was one of the richest sources of emergent literacy as children also composed scripts which they acted out to their fellow children.

#### 4.2.4 Literacy Environments That Existed in Various Households and the Environment

The last question aimed at investigating if the environment in which the children were found was rich in literacy related materials.

##### a. Findings from Interview schedule for parents or caregivers

Table 12 below shows some of the literacy materials or tools that children had access to in their homes such as alphabet book, crayons, pencils, paper or writing table for writing which has been provided by his or her parents/guardian. The table shows both Chisheta and Chipongoma villages.

Table 12: What some children have in the home

CATEG ORY	LABEL OF CHILD	Chisheta										Chipongoma										Percentage (%)
		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	
	AGE	2	3	4	3	6	6	6	5	4	3	5	6	6	4	6	4	2	5	4	7	
	<b>What the child has</b>																					
	At least one alphabet book	x	x	x	x	x	x	v	x	v	x	x	x	x	v	v	x	v	v	x	x	<b>30</b>
	Crayons and pencils for writing and drawing	x	v	x	x	v	x	v	v	x	v	v	v	x	v	v	v	v	v	x	x	<b>60</b>
	Paper/book for writing and drawing	v	v	v	x	x	v	v	v	v	x	v	x	x	x	v	v	v	v	v	v	<b>70</b>
	A table or surface for writing and drawing.	x	v	x	x	x	x	x	x	v	x	x	x	x	v	v	x	v	v	v	x	<b>35</b>
	At least one rhyme book.	v	x	x	x	x	x	v	x	x	x	x	x	x	v	x	v	v	v	x	x	<b>30</b>
	At least one picture book	x	x	v	v	x	x	v	x	v	x	x	x	v	v	x	v	v	x	x	<b>40</b>	

Source: field data (2012)

From table 12 above, two children from Chisheta had alphabet books and four from Chipongoma village. Five children had crayons and pencils for writing and drawing while only seven from Chipongoma village. Seven children from Chisheta village had papers or books for writing and drawing while the other seven came from Chipongoma village. In addition, only two children from Chisheta village had access to a table or surface for writing and drawing while five were from Chipongoma village. Two children from Chipongoma village had access to rhyme books while four children had access from Chipongoma village. Of the children who had access to picture books, four came from Chisheta while the other four came from Chipongoma village as can be seen from Table 12 above.

**b. Summary of findings from an observation checklist on home print**

Table 13: **Home literacy environment**

Category	Label of Child	Chisheta											Chipongoma											Percentage (%)
		a	b	C	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	L	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t			
	<b>AGE</b>	2	3	4	3	6	6	6	5	4	3	5	6	6	4	6	4	2	5	4	7			
<b>Home print</b>																								
Writings on clothes		v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	<b>100</b>		
Calendars		x	v	v	x	x	x	x	x	v	x	x	x	x	v	v	v	v	x	x	<b>35</b>			
Radio		x	v	v	v	x	x	x	x	v	x	x	x	x	v	v	x	v	v	x	<b>40</b>			
Television		x	v	v	x	x	x	x	x	v	x	x	x	x	x	x	v	v	x	x	<b>25</b>			
Decorative paintings on the wall		x	v	v	v	x	x	x	x	v	x	x	x	x	v	v	x	v	v	x	<b>40</b>			
Money		v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	<b>100</b>			

Source: field data (2012)

As can be seen from the table 13 above, all the children from both villages had access to writings on clothes. It was observed that only three children had calendars in their homes in Chisheta village and five from Chipongoma village. Four children from Chipongoma village had radios in their homes while the other four who had access to radios in their homes came

from Chipongoma village. Nevertheless, it was observed that almost all children accessed the radio from their neighbours. Three children from Chisheta village had Television (TV) sets in their homes while only two from Chipongoma village had Television sets. However, it was noticed that even children who did not have television sets in their homes had access to TV sets accessed it from their neighbours. It was observed that four children from Chisheta village lived in houses which had decorative paintings on the walls while the other four came from Chipongoma village. One interesting source of literacy was money which all children from both villages had access to as can be observed from Table 13 above.

Below are examples of pictures showing what home literacy children were exposed to:



*Picture showing print on clothes*



*Picture above shows calendars in a home*



*Picture showing children watching television in a home.*



Pictures showing houses with decorative paintings: Pictures by researcher

**c. Summary of findings from an observation checklist on environmental print**

Table 14: Environmental print

Category	Label of Child	Chisheta										Chipongoma										Percentage (%)
		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	M	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	
	<b>AGE</b>	2	3	4	3	6	6	6	5	4	3	5	6	6	4	6	4	2	5	4	7	
<b>Environmental print</b>																						
Posters		v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	<b>100</b>
School Signpost		v	v	v	v	x	v	x	x	v	v	v	x	v	x	x	x	v	x	x	v	<b>55</b>
clinic signpost		v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v		v	v	v	v	v	v	<b>100</b>
Writings on shops		v	v	x	v	x	v	x	x	v	v	v	x	v	v	x	v	x	x	v	v	<b>60</b>
Poster of Farm names		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	v	x	x	v	x	x	x	x	x	x		<b>10</b>
Pictures on the walls of the clinic		v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	<b>100</b>
Other signposts		v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	<b>100</b>

Source: field data (2012)

It was observed that all the children from both villages had had access to posters. This represented 100%. Seven children had access to school sign posts while four were from Chipongoma village. All the twenty children from both Chisheta and Chipongoma villages had access the clinic sign, representing 100%. Six children from Chisheta village had access to writings on the shops while the other six came from Chipongoma village representing 60%. 10% of children from both villages had access to posters of farm names. 100% of children (20 in number) from the two villages had access to the pictures on the walls of the clinic. In addition all the children had access to the other signposts. Below are some pictures showing environmental print:



*Pictures showing print on shops and commodities in Chisheta village: Picture by Researcher.*



*Print on sign posts in Chisheta village*



*Environmental print in Chipongoma village: all pictures by researcher*

#### **4.2.5. Summary of Chapter Four**

This chapter presented findings based on data collected using different research methods and instruments. The findings were presented under themes which were derived from the research questions; and these were; what emergent literacy skills children in Mwense district possessed before they entered formal schooling, what emergent literacy practices children in Mwense district were exposed to before they entered formal schooling, what rural community-based organised practices were offered in order to help and support emergent literacy practices and skills in children and finally, what literacy environments that existed in the households and environment which would support emergent literacy development in children.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion of findings organised according to the objectives of the study which were: to establish emergent literacy skills children in Mwenze district possess before they entered formal schooling, to establish what emergent literacy practices children in Mwenze district were exposed to before they entered formal schooling, to ascertain whether there were any rural community-based organised practices offered in order to help and support emergent literacy practices and skills in children and finally, to establish the literacy environments that existed in the households and environment which would support emergent literacy in children in children.

#### 5.2.0 Major findings

##### 5.2.1 Major emergent Literacy skills displayed by children

The findings of this study revealed that children displayed a range of emergent literacy skills which are discussed below:

##### a. Holding a pencil/pen correctly

The findings revealed that some of the children were able to correctly hold pencils and pens even though they could not write conventionally with good handwriting. This skill was acquired through different practices in which the children participated. This skill was well developed in some children and here, suggestions can be made that teachers of grade one can build on the skills children come to school with. This agrees with what Hall (1987) says that literacy skills that children already possess such as holding a pencil should not be ignored by teachers when they teach initial literacy to children. Children sometimes practice this skill by using sticks with which they draw on the ground. This way, children can be said to have been prepared for conventional literacy even before they go to school.

##### b. Drawing

It was also discovered that some children were able to draw figures which resembled things they intended to draw. Most of the children drew people. The researcher here argues that drawing is like a double edged sword which does not just help children to handle and hold a

pencil correctly, but also helps them to become creative as they plan what to draw and how to draw what they have planned. This process takes higher mental activities in which children have to translate what they imagine on to paper, ground or floor as the case maybe. This means that children strive to put on paper the exact picture they have in their minds. Consequently, their mental faculties become sharp which in turn makes it easy for them to acquire literacy skills and other skills as argued by (Ferreiro and Teberosky, 1982). As has been seen from the findings, children were able to draw certain patterns on the ground which prepare them for pattern and shape drawing in early grades when they started formal schooling. Grade one, NBTL, pupil activity book from pages 1 to 11 have drawing and pattern drawing which would benefit greatly from the emergent literacy skills that children go with to school.

### **c. Scribbling and Pretend/emergent Writing**

Furthermore, it was found that children were involved in scribbling and pretend writing. It is argued that scribbling advances from drawing circles to producing “text” that young children identify verbally as writing. Just like drawing, this skill is important as it helps children to learn how to hold a pencil and to help them to see their thoughts in print form. It was shown in this study that most parents did not take time to encourage pupils to pretend write, and more so to ask them to explain what they wrote so as to allow the pupils to translate their thoughts in print. This emanated from the idea that the teaching of reading and writing was entirely the work of teachers. It should be mentioned that this is not the case with parents who are educated and those whose social economic status was high. This was what Musonda (2011) meant when she argued that in the Zambian perspective, teaching children to read and write was the job of the teacher. It is unfortunate to think of learning as something that takes place only in school because much of human learning occurs outside the classroom, and people continue to learn throughout their lives.

Moreover, the skill we are discussing hitherto points to the fact that writing as a psychological and socio-historical practice has been invented only as a general activity but borrowed and adapted by individuals and that for its development, it is critical that we understand the mechanisms of literacy transfer from one culture and individual to another. This is in line with Ferreiro and Teberosky, (1982) who state that each cultural setting has its own way of representation in writing. Children learn the culture of writing obtaining in their

cultural systems. Behaviors such as pretending to write and learning to write letters are examples of emergent writing which children have been exposed to. Many adults have had the experience of seeing a young child scribble some indecipherable marks on paper and then ask an adult to read what it says. By so doing, the child is indicating that he or she knows that print has meaning even though he or she does not know conventional writing. This is in line with (Hall 1987) who states that children can play and communicate using print much more than we can expect.

#### **d. Correct holding of book**

Moreover, children exhibited the skill of holding the book correctly especially with books that had pictures in them. For books without pictures, children had difficulties knowing how to hold them. From this stage, children begin pretend read. Children pretend to read while pointing to and labelling pictures or naming actions in their storybooks. Correct holding of books by a child is very important as reveals a lot about child's print knowledge. Firstly, if a child knows how to hold a book correctly, it means that he or she knows the flow or direction of print. For example, it can be concluded that the child already knows that one reads from left to right in isiBemba or English. Secondly, it can be said of the child who knows how to hold the book correctly that he knows that there is a direction in which print can be read properly and a direction in which it cannot be read properly. This understanding leads us to another conclusion which is that the child knows that reading follows certain norms and rules. This understanding facilitates in the child's acquisition of literacy as he or pays attention to the rules governing a particular orthographic representation of a particular language. What we see here is what Hall (1987) refers to when he writes about children's amazing ability to handle books. He gives examples of studies which show children practicing pretend reading on books and newspapers which are read by their parents.

#### **e. Print Knowledge**

This research found that some children had print knowledge. This knowledge differed from one child to the other. Print knowledge is knowledge of standard print and its concepts such as print moves left-to-right and front-to-back orientation. Since this skill was possessed by some children, those children were able to point at the words correctly. The researcher concluded that the task of print knowledge was accomplished by children as books are

constructed according to a set of conventions that can be understood without being able to read as Clay (1966) puts it. In English and Bemba, these conventions include the left-to-right and top-to bottom direction of print on each page, the sequence and direction in which the print progresses from front to back across pages, the difference between the covers and the pages of the book, the difference between pictures and print on a page, and the meaning of elements of punctuation, including spaces between words and periods at the ends of sentences. This study found that some children had print concept and knew certain conventions about print. This situation is like that of the children found in Clay's (1966) study and it can be said that knowing these conventions of print aids in the process of learning to read and write. For example, Tunmer et al. found that scores on Clay's (1966) concepts about Print Test at the beginning of first grade predicted children's reading comprehension and decoding abilities at the end of second grade even after controlling for differences in vocabulary and meta-linguistic awareness. In this study, there was no single child who showed knowledge of all the conventions on print knowledge but almost all children showed some knowledge about print.

**f. Pretend reading.**

Children in Mwense rural displayed emergent reading. They pretended to read and sometimes showed lip movement as if they are about to pronounce the words they were looking at on a paper or book. They recognised some of writings, symbols, labels or signs. This is in line with what Teale and Sulzby (1986) argued. They argued that pretending to read and reading environmental print are examples of emergent reading. Before children can read words, they are often able to recognize labels, signs, and other forms of environmental print. It is the argument of this study that advocates within the emergent literacy movement such as Goodman (1986) have suggested that this skill demonstrates children's ability to derive the meaning of text within context. However, this study has not generally shown that there is a direct causal link between the ability to read environmental print and later word identification skills, but has shown that children are able to identify and recognize words which they see in their environment. Take for example a child who cannot read in the conventional way but is able to "read" writings on the pack of *Chiko* biscuit. This comes with intentionality on the part of the child. Clay (1966) and other scholars have assessed a factor that is termed "intentionality" by asking children what printed words on a page might signify. Children who

indicate that they understand the functions of print (e.g., that the print tells a story or gives directions) have high levels of print intentionality. In contrast, children who have low levels of print intentionality do not indicate that they understand that print is a symbol system with linguistic meaning (e.g., they may simply name letters when asked what words might signify). Like children in Mwense rural, Purcell-Gates (1996) found that children's understanding of the functions of print (i.e., intentionality) was related to children's print concepts, understanding of the alphabetic principle, and concepts of writing (i.e., use of letter-like symbols). A number of qualitative studies such as that of Zimba (2011) have examined how preschool-aged children behave in situations in which reading is typically required in order to uncover the knowledge and beliefs that children may have concerning reading. For example, Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) conducted an extensive study of 4-to 6-year-old children in Argentina and described what appeared to be an orderly developmental progression of children's understanding of print. For instance, 4-year-old children recognized the distinction between "just letters" and "something to read" (typically three or more letters). This situation is unlike that of most children in Chisheta and Chipongoma villages who, even most of those who were six years old thought that everything could be read. Children in both Chisheta and Chipongoma villages were unable to distinguish between what can be read and what cannot be read, "just letters" and words. Some evidence suggests that these early manifestations of print motivation expressed by these children are associated with emergent literacy skills and later reading achievement (Thomas, 1984). A child who is interested in literacy is more likely to facilitate shared reading interactions, notice print in the environment, ask questions about the meaning of print, and spends more time reading once he or she is able.

#### **g. Narrative and Listening Comprehension skills**

Narrative skills include being able to understand and tell stories and being able to describe things. During sessions of folktales, the researcher observed that most of the children were able to retell the stories which they heard from adults. This retelling of the story came from what they heard from capable peers and adults. This practice was also found in South Africa as has been seen in chapter two (Holdaway 1979:20,).

#### **h. Knowledge of letters.**

Further, the study showed that some children had knowledge of letters as some parents and older siblings taught letters to the children. This practice was also observed by Stahl and Murray, (1994) who argue that in alphabetic writing systems, decoding printed words

involves the translation of units of print to units of sound, and writing involves translating units of sound into units of print. At the most basic level, this task requires knowing the names of letters. What is being put across in this study is that a beginning reader who does not know the letters of the alphabet cannot learn which sounds those letters relate to. In some cases, this task is facilitated by the fact that some letter names provide clues to their sounds. Take for instance, “k” has a sound /k/ and the letter “p” has the sound /p/. Knowledge of the alphabet at entry into school is one of the strongest predictors of short-term and long-term literacy success. It is again suggested here, that higher levels of letter knowledge may reflect a greater underlying knowledge of and familiarity with print or other literacy-related processes. Consequently, whereas teaching letter names may increase surface letter knowledge, it may not affect other underlying literacy-related processes, such as print familiarity. A number of related studies, however, have indicated that letter knowledge significantly influences the acquisition of some phonological sensitivity skills (Stahl and Murray, 1994).

**i. Linguistic awareness.**

The children displayed the skill of linguistic awareness. It has been inferred from the findings of this research that most of the children had linguistic awareness. Most of the children of this study were well able to discriminate the difference between two words as evidenced by auditory evoked responses or by simply being able to respond appropriately to linguistic units incorporating these distinctions (e.g. *Mputwilako aka mwembe. Ndetela nomba*. “Cut a piece of Mango for me. Now bring it”). Linguistic awareness can be a situation where a child knows a part of it or most of it. A child may be aware of some portion of the way language is organized (e.g., that propositions are formed from words) without being aware of other aspects of linguistic organization (e.g., that words are formed from phonemes). Evidence from this study suggests a developmental hierarchy of children’s sensitivity to linguistic units which is measured by the ability to segment a spoken sentence or word. For example, it was observed that children seemed to achieve syllabic sensitivity earlier than they achieve sensitivity to phonemes and children’s sensitivity to intra-syllabic units and rhyme normally precedes their sensitivity to phonemes. This is in line with many scholars (Fox and Routh 1975, MacLean, Bryant, and Bradley, 1987; Treiman, 1992) who argue that the operationalization of the construct of linguistic awareness is further complicated by the fact

that tasks used in assessment vary considerably in the cognitive and linguistic demands they place on children within particular levels of language have advanced. It can be mentioned here that children who are better at detecting syllables, rhymes, or phonemes are quicker to learn to read (i.e., decode words), and this relation is present even after variability in reading skill due to intelligence, receptive vocabulary, memory skills, and social class.

### **5.2.2 Emergent Literacy Practices**

The second objective was to establish what emergent literacy practices children in Mwense district were exposed to before they entered formal schooling. From the findings outlined in chapter four, it has been shown that the family is cardinal in promoting emergent literacy. It was seen in this study that most households, knowingly or unknowingly, did much to help the children to develop their emergent literacy skills.

#### **a. Story telling**

It was found that parents and capable peers told stories to children in the comfort of their homes. This was a social activity which was practised by most families. This practice resulted in children developing strong oral literacy skills which they used to mediate their way in life. This finding links with what Bruner (1994) had in mind when he argued that human beings organise thoughts and make sense of their lives through the stories they tell themselves and others. It is argued by scholars such as Richgels (2004) that story telling exposes children to some form of language which is holistic, rich and complex. This thought (the thought that oral language is cardinal to the growth of oral literacy) is also in line with other studies (Richgels, 2004) which have been conducted around the world about emergent literacy. It has been discovered that storytelling allows children to tune into the rhythms and structures of language and broaden their conceptual worlds and their vocabulary to express themselves. In Chisheta and Chipongoma villages, the children showed very good skills in oral language by the way they talked about the things in their environment, by telling evening stories and by having daily conversations with both their peers and the adults. It should be mentioned here that some children of Mwense district actually did not just listen but participated by telling folk stories since they mostly told folk stories in the evenings around a fire.

Furthermore, this practice was found to be important in Chisheta and Chipongoma villages as it led children to be well versed in oral language which is closely linked to emergent literacy in the sense that children cannot learn to read and write a language they have never heard before. In an environment where language can be heard, most children (children in the same environment) naturally develop oral language at the same rate and in the same developmental sequence; and consequently they develop literacy related skills such as comprehension and narrative skills almost at the same time. Other skill sets which children learn include language abilities (vocabulary), the ability to identify the names and sounds of letters (the alphabet), and the ability to identify and manipulate sounds (phonological awareness). In this perspective, this study takes the side taken by Hill (2009) who pointed out that in the years before school, the development of children's oral language in the home environment is viewed as an important factor for early reading success.

Additionally, this study has shown that most children participated in other rich oral language contexts like riddles and proverbs. According to Thompson (2008) proverbs are concise statements, in general use, expressing a shrewd perception about everyday life or a universally recognized truth. Most proverbs are rooted in folklore and have been preserved by oral tradition. From these contexts, children developed vocabularies which they could use to describe and talk about almost all the things within their environment. The other skill which children developed from this practice is that of linguistic awareness which has been discussed. It was moreover found that children developed comprehension skills as they could retell a story which they heard from their peers or adults. In addition, most of the children were able to tell a story, following the conventional structure of the introduction, main body and conclusion. This narrative skill emanated from the stories which the children were told.

#### **b. Engaging children in reading**

This study reveals that in some homes, shared reading was an important practice which was undertaken especially by older siblings. Shared reading between care givers and children is one of the most important ways to enhance emergent literacy skills in children. Reading to young children has long been recognized as having a positive impact on language development, and has been shown to be associated with the development of vocabulary skills. This study shows similar but not exact results with those found by Hill (2009) in Australia. In Australia, a lot of parents were involved in reading to and for children. Active parental help

in the form of increased book ownership, information about frequency and style of book reading, the use of finger-pointing and interactive questioning along with shared story telling have all been shown to promote a number of important emergent literacy skills in Australia and elsewhere by Musonda (2011). The selection of predictable or patterned books and alphabet books is suggested as supporting parents to engage young children in the activity of shared reading and to assist in the development of word identification and awareness of how letters map onto sounds. The study found out that there was ignorance on emergent literacy among most parents/caregivers because reading and writing were associated with school only and not home. This was what Musonda (2011) found in Lusaka urban where very few parents and caregivers read for children. Where parents read for and to children, pointing to the words, children begin to associate sounds to words and sound patterns. This can be well explained using the behavioural theories of learning like classical conditioning where associations are important in as far as learning is concerned.

The findings of this study reveal some interesting habits about shared reading found by Musonda in Lusaka and those practices of shared reading found by the researcher of this study in Mwense rural. In Lusaka urban, the results by Musonda (2011) show that most of the help was given at least to those children who were already in school by parents. It was seen that only few households engaged in this practice. The perception of emergent literacy among the parents of the children of Musonda's study that literacy has only got to do with those children who were already in school could have led to this situation or even acknowledgement of emergent literacy activities as important. Hence support for emergent literacy did not come as a planned practice but rather coincidental and usually initiated by the child him/herself or friends. This was because emergent literacy was not known by parents in these areas and therefore its support was purely coincidental, it was not their core business. This coincidental shared reading practice was done by children to and for fellow children. In like manner, Musonda (2011) puts it bluntly that this is contrary to the Western culture where literacy activities are planned, such as shared book reading or bed time story reading is done even by male parents.

This study, just like Armbruster et al. (2001: 24), suggests that one of the most important activities for building the knowledge and skills eventually required for reading appears to be reading aloud to children. It has to be noted that the interaction between book, child, and parent is important and the principle underpinning this literacy practice is that in order to

learn to pretend read, the child needs to read, just as there is a need to pedal in order to learn how to ride a bicycle. This gives rise to automaticity. According to Armbruster et al. (2001: 24), automaticity is the “fast, effortless word recognition that comes with a great deal of reading practice”. He further contends that “continued reading practice helps words become more automatic, rapid and effortless”. This scenario therefore suggests that children learn to read naturally if they are exposed to print. This is the basic knowledge which the child will use as the foundation for reading once he or she is in school, and teachers will build on it by guiding children where they encounter problems.

**c. Engaging children in writing**

Fifty per cent (50%) households which encouraged their children to pretend write encouraged their children for three reasons. The first was because their children initiated the practice of scribbling and pretend writing. In this case, the role of parents or capable peers was to scaffold the children in the activity of scribbling. The second reason was that some children saw their older siblings do their homework and so they also joined in the work of writing and scribbling. This point can be well explained by saying that the children (subjects of this research) were motivated by being found with their older siblings who were either doing their homework or studying for its own sake. The third reason was that parents found children to be bothering and disturbing them in what they were doing. So, the only way to get rid of them was to send them to their older siblings who were reading or to find them papers to write on so that they could stop bothering them. In this case, parents did not care what their children were doing. What can be said from the above information is that whatever the reason, these households in one way or the other engaged the children in some kind of writing which was important for the development of emergent literacy. Engaging children in writing is one of the crucial practices for emergent writing just as Jacqueline (1986), Hill (2009) and ABS (2006) put it in their studies.

Fifty per cent (50%) of the parents reported that they actually discouraged their children from scribbling as they thought they (children) were just wasting paper and ink for their older siblings. Asked why they discourage their children from scribbling on the ground, parents said that they did not want their children to be dirty. They also stopped their children from scribbling on the wall with charcoal as they thought that children were just making the wall dirty. This situation seems to be similar to what Musonda (2011) found in Lusaka urban as

opposed to other studies reviewed (Jacqueline 1986, Hill 2009, ABS 2006, McEachern and Luther (in press), McCormick and Mason 1986, Marsh et al 2005, Goodman and Goodman 1979/2003, Zimba 2011).

**d. Encouraging children to tell the story they write to see words in print**

As Hall (1987) pointed out, parents and other caregivers are important in as far as developing literacy skills is concerned. The picture which is presented in terms of parents encouraging children to tell the story they write in order to see the words in print in Mwenze rural somehow differs from what other research findings show (See McCormick and Mason, 1986). What should be noted here is that by having children explain what they write, they develop necessary phonological awareness which is the ability to manipulate sounds which children hear. These sounds may be within the words or independent of words' meanings. Children must be able to hear and identify the distinct sounds of the individual phonemes when words are pronounced even though the sounds that make up the word are co-articulated. The other important point to note is that as children talk about what they write, they increase their knowledge about print. The connection between reading and writing on one hand and oral language on the other is that children use this cultural tool (oral language) to talk about things they observe in the natural world. It is this same cultural tool which they begin to learn which is represented in print and decoded. Children also increase their cognitive skills as they tell stories of what they have written even though the spellings they use are those which they invent. In telling what they write or scribble, when correct spellings are shown to them, children easily associate the words to sounds and they begin to become familiar with the words long before they begin to learn conventionally. In addition, children develop comprehension skills which in turn help to comprehend advanced skills concerning writing and reading.

The other point is that as parents encourage their child to explain what they have scribbled or written during pretend writing, they find an opportunity to teach new words to their children and this will increase their vocabulary. It should be noted that in doing so, children can be learning many oral language skills at the same time. Direct instruction provides opportunities for children to learn new vocabulary, new concepts, definitions and synonyms for words, and to use this rich language in meaningful contexts.

This study suggests that children who have larger vocabularies are usually better readers, but they also must have an understanding of word meanings and word usage. Their basic vocabulary needs to expand to include words that might be encountered less frequently, but that are still important to know both receptively and expressively. Children can have large receptive vocabularies which enable them to read well, but if they do not have a corresponding definitional vocabulary, their reading comprehension suffers.

When adults use conversations to expand children's knowledge, they are using a technique known as scaffolding in the Vygotskian language discussed in the theoretical framework of this study. Scaffolding means providing the support children need to reach a slightly higher level of skill, giving them opportunities to build on and extend their current skills. Parents have chances to scaffold children's learning through instruction, modeling, questioning and providing feedback for a child's vocabulary development. For those who had time to teach children did mostly through normal daily conversations they had. This is referred to as narrative talk (see McCormick and Mason, 1986). When adults and children have a conversation, they are engaging in narrative talk. Adults can support children's oral language development through these conversations by responding to what children say, asking for additional information and inserting new words into the discussion. Narrative talk allows adults to provide examples of words and their meanings within a context where the words have an understandable real-life application. The 30%, representing the parents who planned to involve children conversations (narrative talk) aimed at increasing the vocabulary of their children should be followed by sensitization of the villages on the development of emergent literacy.

**e. Changing books for the variety and interest of children**

The findings of this study also reveal that some parents changed books for their children to read. The practice of changing books could be helpful in showing the children the varieties of books and varieties of writing such as poetry, narrative, expository and argumentative. This practice also increases the enjoyment of children to read books as they develop written language awareness which refers to young children's implicit and explicit knowledge concerning the nature of written language. This works well when combined with developed phonological awareness skills. This finding is in line with what Bus (2001) found. Bus (2001)

states that children's knowledge in both areas of phonological awareness and written language awareness arises from similar contexts and practices, primarily adult-mediated interactions with oral and written language embedded within meaningful, contextualized early childhood experiences. Bus (2001) further states that changing books for favorite and interest of children increases children's motivation to interact with written materials and eventually increase the chances and opportunities for children to acquire emergent literacy. In addition to what Bus (2001) states, Haas and Genishi (1994) argue that both written language awareness and phonological awareness are strongly associated with children's oral language competence, specifically, meta-linguistic skills. Together, these two domains serve as the foundation for subsequent successful attainment of the alphabetic principle and fluent, skilled reading ability. For many children in the emergent years of literacy achievement, sophisticated levels of knowledge in both domains are acquired effortlessly and rapidly through primarily incidental means. Particularly important to this process are frequent, informal, and naturalistic interactions with written and oral language within the broader context of supportive, mediated opportunities with adult caregivers. This means that emergent literacy development maybe delayed for children who are experiencing developmental difficulties and for children who lack this natural interaction with different written language materials and rich oral language contexts.

**f. Helping children to name letters of the alphabet**

It was also shown in this study that households helped the children to name the letters of the alphabet. In addition to this, some households had time to help the child learn the sounds which letters of the alphabet make (e.g., 'K' makes the /k/ sound). The importance of this activity is that the knowledge of the letters enables learners to develop the ability to read words in isolation and in text. The relationship between the alphabetic principle and phonics is that it enables learners to recognize letters of the alphabet and how they relate to phonics. This situation is in agreement with that of Murray (2006) who states that as children learn their alphabet and begins to read, their phonemic or phonological awareness improves. The goal of phonics instruction is to help children learn and use the alphabetic principle, which is the understanding that there are systematic predictable relationships between written letters and sounds. Knowing these relationships will help children recognize familiar words accurately and automatically and decode new words.

**g. Games/play and other emergent literacy practices**

One other important feature which was observed among children was the practice of play. In general, this study offers a positive view of play or games as providing opportunities to children to build important cognitive and linguistic skills needed by emergent readers and writers. It also suggests that different aspects of play may be important in emergent reading and writing. Play is deemed to be a universal feature of early childhood and it appears early as a critical aspect of language development. Babies have been observed to play with their body parts such as their mouths and listen to the sounds they produce. Gopnik, Meltzoff and Kuhl (1999) state that babies will lie in their cribs all by themselves and play with sounds, squealing with delight and producing *ee*'s and *aa*'s and *ba*'s and *ga*'s for long stretches. It is being suggested in this study that by playing in this way, children learn how to make the sounds they hear us produce. This goes in line with Piaget (1962) who identified many different forms of play and pointed out that it is symbolic (or imaginative) play that has most particular relevance for early literacy learning. Symbolic play is at its greatest between the ages of two and five, but continues until at least seven, and sometimes further, depending on the cultural influences that are brought to bear on children. Symbolic play often involves pretending that one object stands for something else than what it is generally used for and though it is one of the most remarkable aspects of early childhood, it is sometimes misinterpreted by parents and teachers who nervously brush it aside as 'lies' in favor of 'real' and 'serious' learning. Research into symbolic play suggests that it underpins and precedes the understanding of written language. In addition, Vygotsky (1978:101) states that play is important not because it is a "predominant feature of childhood but it is a leading factor in development." When children play, they are bound by the rules that they have encountered in real life, and so play creates a zone of proximal development and provide a time when children have to learn to exert self-control. Vygotsky (1978:106) also makes the connection between children's symbolic play and written language as "second order symbolism which gradually becomes direct symbolism." He suggests that the preschool years are the ideal time for a 'natural' and meaningful introduction to learning written language. His view is that "symbolic representation in play is essentially a particular form of speech at an earlier stage, one which leads directly to written language." Watson and Jackowitz (1984) state that symbolic play, along with deferred imitation and language, signals the development of representational thought. The key importance of representational thought is that the child is

now able to represent objects and events symbolically. Symbolic play is the assimilative process, which enables children to practice at symbolically representing objects and events. With the advent of symbolic play, the child progresses through the play until it becomes more decontextualised. Object substitutions become more abstract, and the play becomes more social. The progression peaks during the preschool and early primary years and declines during the middle childhood years. This process provides an important source for literacy development. Both literacy and symbolic play require the ability to use words, gestures or mental images to represent actual objects, events or actions. Symbolic play, from a relational standpoint, provides an important foundation for literacy development. The very nature of symbolic play (which can be referred to as first order symbolism) has an intimate relationship with reading and writing (second-order symbolism) in that children use a similar representation mental process in both. Vygotsky theorizes that symbolic play enables children to develop a variety of represented meanings that serve as a basis for successful literacy development. While the most significant contribution of symbolic play to literacy is symbolic representation, other features of symbolic play also offer strong support to the literacy base, namely meaning and language. Symbolic representation, through symbolic play, is the enabling factor for language to represent objects and actions. Language then becomes a tool for emerging literacy development.

There are similarities between this study and that of Isenberg and Jacob (1983:272) who propose that symbolic play fosters literacy development by providing an (1) “opportunity for children to use representational skills that serve as a basis for representation in literacy . . . and by (2) providing a safe environment in which children can practice the skills and social behaviors associated with literacy activities.” Tunnel (2007) also suggest that symbolic play fosters literacy development by (3) creating a context for social interaction where children scaffold for and engage each other in a variety of play transformations.

### **5.2.3 Community-based interventions offered in order to help and enhance emergent literacy in children**

It was established in this study that from the villagers’ perspective, the community had no established or planned activities which were aimed at enhancing emergent literacy in

children. When the village head was asked whether the village arranged any community-based interventions to promote oral language, the following was what he said “long time ago, they, after hard work, they (villagers) would assemble in the evening to dance *insomba* (a traditional dance) and sing, those who were energetic. It was established that the villages had not put any planned measures to help the children enhance their skills in emergent literacy.

From what the village head men said, one can easily infer the fact that the village head was only talking about the traditional dances which were organized for nearby and all surrounding villages to contest for a prize. This dance was seen as important by the researcher as it involved songs and performing arts which were crucial to the growth of emergent literacy and cognition in children. However, the village heads complained that this custom was slowly fading away as a new lifestyle was being ushered into the community.

In the two villages, the use of interactive language games and song singing as part of a daily routine (that is during those games and after) also provided opportunities for children to enhance their repertoire of developing literacy skills. Songs and rhymes in the songs they sang provided opportunities to develop listening comprehension and speaking skills which in turn are key to the development of vocabulary, letter identification and knowledge, and phonological awareness. These songs were equivalents to those mentioned in Zimba (2011) as ‘learning’ songs which include as alphabet songs which provided children with examples of rhyme, rhythm and repetition and may act as an effective memory aid.

The absence of planned activities by the communities does not mean that children did not benefit from what was happening in the villages. Children would meet with other children from the neighboring houses to learn and participate in oral play activities. This situation was similar to that of rural Botswana (Mathangwane and Arua 2006) where traditionally, children used to learn folktales, riddles, proverbs and idioms at home from their elders. Stories were passed down by elders orally as oral literature which taught mental development and critical thinking skills. Research findings show that some evenings were devoted to competition of riddles between them and other children in their neighborhood. The competition was some form of a game to find out who could think fast and use imagination. Some Bemba riddles are questions which are in the form of a statement, for example: *Ing’anda ya bamayo iyabuuta iyabula umwinshi* (My mother’s white house which has got no door), the answer is ‘an egg’.

One group says the riddle and the other one supplies the answer. The aim is to test one's imagination of associating things within a short time. The answers have to be given quickly or else the group loses its chance.

Another aspect which was observed in Chisheta and Chipongoma villages to be important was the fact the local health centre used drama to disseminate information to the community. This was cardinal as children picked up this practice and acted out the roles. Combined with the normal daily routine play (*ukubuta* and imaginative plays) which they did, this dramatic act was seen to be important in as far literacy acquisition is concerned. Dramatic acts, just as dramatic play which is also called symbolic play, socio-dramatic, pretend, imaginative, or make-believe play has been of most interest to literacy researchers as well as the researcher of this study. A central characteristic of this type of play is that children use make-believe transformations of objects and their own identities to act out scripts that they invent. This line of work is based on the general premise that dramatic play is an arena for developing general representational skills that are eventually applied in other domains, including reading and writing (Pellegrini and Galda, 1991). It also suggests that different aspects of play may be important in emergent reading and writing. Naturalistic observations of children's spontaneous dramatic play have indicated that children often incorporate literate behaviors as part of the play scripts they invent. In general, this study offers a positive view of play as providing opportunities to build important cognitive and linguistic skills needed by emergent readers and writers.

#### **5.2.4 Home and Environmental Literacy**

The study showed that both the home and the surrounding environments showed a range of different supportive literacy materials and print. There was a lot of home print ranging from books, calendars, pictures. Writings on clothes also provided materials for home print. It was observed that young children enjoyed interacting with some books which were in these homes. The importance of this interaction is that predictable books like *Lapenda 1* and *Lapenda 2* which contained repeated language, rhyme, rhythmic language, and familiar events or story lines invited young children into books and reading. Alphabet books, counting books, concept books, wordless picture books, and board books are all appropriate for young children. Picture books were found in Chipongoma village because one mother had been

involved in adult literacy classes where some literature was given out. The use of picture books is supported by Tunnell and Jacobs (2000) who argue that picture storybooks with interesting illustrations and simple story lines are also good choices for emergent readers. Young children often want to read or listen to favourite books over and over. Such repetition is a natural stage in literacy development, and it helps children acquire important literacy knowledge. In addition, young children benefit from opportunities to respond to books through discussions, art, play, and drama. Responses to literature help children improve their comprehension and make personal connections to books.

Parents can promote early literacy development for children by surrounding children with a literature rich environment filled with books, magazines, games, calendars, picture books and responding to questions the child might have about print in the house or elsewhere in the environment. Availing homes with literacy materials such as books, pencils and pictures help children develop concepts about print. One of the most important concepts that children can learn, even during their first three years of life, is that printed language can be used to accomplish many different goals. Children learn by watching their parents and listening to them explain what they are doing. Children can learn that grocery lists help us remember to get the items we need from the grocery store. They can learn that you can make Scones by following a recipe. They can learn that we can communicate by writing and receiving letters, even when the letters are made up of pictures, scribbles, and drawings.

It should further be stated in this study that children in Mwense rural were surrounded by a range of environmental print ranging from posters, signposts, shop names, writings on the packages and clothes and that the knowledge gained from this type of print is valuable in contributing to the development of literacy. Children pay attention to literacy based elements of their environment. Children do not ignore the value of this print. They use this print and by doing so, they continue constructing their views about how print works. As Hall (1987) points out the evidence that many children use environmental print is overwhelming. Children show competencies with contextualized print. This argument can be extended by saying that children's experience with environmental print is an intrinsic way of becoming literate language users. It should be noted that such experience works well with other experiences like oral and written language contexts. The importance of both home and environmental print is that the two forms provide encounters with written language. As a

result of these encounters, children learn words as well as how written language works. They learn that language is meaningful and that it communicates messages. This was also acknowledged by Hall (1987) as he put it, children learn that language is used by human beings to achieve certain objectives. Environmental print provides resource for looking at and thinking about written language. Note that knowledge about environmental print cannot work alone to develop a child who is an emergent reader or writer. When knowledge obtained from home and environmental print is used side by side with other types of knowledge being developed by the child, the emergence of literacy is facilitated easily.

One other important source of literacy was the radio and television where most children learnt language. Television and radio helped children to enhance word recognition. Children learnt phrases which they memorized and recited and most cases without even understanding. Most of the words which were learnt from Television and Radio were from commercials. One interesting thing to note about this was that children were able to pretend read words on such packets as those of Yoyo, Boom detergent paste, Chiko and Vanilla biscuits after seeing them on TV. Here what can be argued is that children use their associating power to read. This is supported by behaviorist psychologists, especially in classical conditioning, who believe that a reflexive or automatic response transfers from one stimulus to another brings about learning. For instance, a child who has seen certain words on TV forms a mental association between two stimuli, that is, the words he or she sees and the objects themselves, so that encountering one stimulus makes the child think of the other. People tend to form these mental associations between events or stimuli that occur closely together in space or time. This way, development of emergent literacy is aided by watching TV or listening to the radio (Mazur, 2008).

### **5.3.0 Summary of chapter five**

This chapter presented the discussion of the findings of the study. The discussion in this chapter was based on the objectives of this study. The discussion has included the researchers interpretation of the findings and how the findings related to the literature presented earlier in chapter two.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 CONCLUSIONS

This research has established that even though formal teaching of reading and writing to preschoolers is not done in Mwense rural, children generally exhibited enough literacy skills. Different children who had not started formal schooling exhibited different skills which they developed from different emergent literacy practices and environment.

The children who participated in this study engaged in literacy-related activities and practices which led to them develop certain skills which are a requisite to the emergence of literacy. Such practices included a range of songs in *iciBemba* which had rhyme and tongue twisters and many other important features such as the words themselves and phonological awareness which helped them to develop literacy skills.

The research has additionally shown that, apart from peer scaffolding of literacy practices, there were other variables at play in the development of emergent literacy behaviours in children such as socio-cultural practices which included around fire stories (folk stories), riddles, proverbs, and environmental print which was displayed on packages, clothes, paper and the books such as Bibles, magazines and school books. Other factors included parental scaffolding in literacy related practices, child participation in activities such as wall decoration and sculpting.

The study has further revealed that though most parents and care givers lacked the knowledge of emergent literacy, most parents did organise literacy practices and activities which helped their children develop some emergent literacy skills.

Moreover, the research has revealed that at community level, there were some practices which enhanced emergent literacy. However, the researcher observed that the community organised those activities which villagers organised simply as common social events in their community, such as cultural dances performed before the chief, which in fact supported the development of emergent literacy in their children.

## 6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations of this study:

- a. It is recommended that Parents be made aware of the fact that they can be participants in the learning of their children by encouraging them to develop interest in literacy and numeracy activities long before they start formal school. That way those who do not go to pre-school will benefit from the home environment which will in this way become prototype of pre-school. Further, parents should be encouraged to keep different kinds of print material, such as newspapers, magazines, health pamphlets from the clinic and old exercise books from older children, in their homes and make them accessible to their children who have not started formal school.
- b. Government and Non-governmental Organisations must jointly run adult literacy sensitization programmes and community libraries to complement each other. There is also need for parent conscientisation for them to play a role as child's first teacher at home and the importance of home literacy environment coupled with the right attitude towards knowledge acquisition among their children.
- c. Once these sensitization programmes are introduced, they should be followed with the identification of emergent literacy skills which must be included in adult literacy programmes so that parents support literacy activities in their children as they learn to read themselves.
- d. There is need for both the private and public sectors to open TV and Radio stations in Mwenze rural which will include children's programmes such as language games and activities that support literacy behaviour as there are currently no programmes to do with literacy or numeracy development in children.
- e. All stakeholders and philanthropists must engage in sociocultural activities in rural areas which promote emergent literacy. This is supported by Vuolab (2000:15) who argues that "you do not need to have books to have literature and to have literacy....stories proverbs, sayings of the wise, riddles, beliefs, poems, fairy tales, myths, taboos, legends were books and not only books but theatre. My family, my home, and nature around my home were my libraries. My literary events took place in our cowshed as we were milking cows."

- f. Since this study was aimed at only to establishing, what emergent literacy practices and skills children in Mwense district possessed before they entered formal schooling; it is recommended that more research is done to establish the connections between the practices and the specific skills which emanate from each literacy practice.
- g. Since most of the games involved motor activities, a research must be conducted to establish the link between motor-neural activities and literacy development.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I

#### Informed Consent Form

**Dear Respondent,**

This serves to give you an understanding of the purpose of this research and procedures that will be followed. Further implications for your participation are explained. Finally you are being asked to sign this form to indicate that you have agreed to participate in this exercise.

Thank you in advance.

**1. Description**

This exercise is an education research; the researcher is a student at the University of Zambia pursuing a degree in Literacy and Learning. This research is a major requirement for the researcher to complete his programme. Thus this exercise is purely academic.

**2. Purpose**

The researcher wishes to find out what literacy behaviour(s) or knowledge that children who are not yet in formal school possess or exhibit before formal instruction. The researcher is interested in looking at the home and surrounding environment that enhance early literacy knowledge acquisition.

**3. Consent**

Participating in this exercise is voluntary. You are free to decline from participating in this exercise.

**4. Confidentiality**

All data collected from this research will be treated with ultimate confidentiality. Participants are assured that they will remain anonymous and untraceable in this research.

**5. Rights of Respondents**

All efforts will be taken to ensure that the rights of the participants are protected and respected. Participants are assured that they shall suffer no harm as a result of participating in this exercise. Participants are free to ask for clarification at any point of the exercise and to inform the researcher if they feel uncomfortable about any procedure in the research.

**6. Declaration of Consent**

I have read and fully understand this document. I therefore agree to participate in this exercise.

.....  
Signature

.....  
Date

**Appendix ii**

**Home Literacy Environment Checklist**

This instrument is designed to assess whether literacy environments at home provide a range of quality literacy experiences.

Subject's Name: .....House label:.....

Date: .....

	<i>Category</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1	<b>What the child has</b>			
	At least one alphabet book			
	Magnetized alphabet letters to play with			
	Crayons and pencils readily available for writing and drawing			
	Paper readily available for writing and drawing			
	A table or surface readily available for writing and drawing.			
	At least one rhyme book.			

	At least one picture book.		
2	<b>What parents and caregiver do</b>		
	Read a picture book with the child at least once a week.		
	Read a picture book with the child at least four times a week.		
	Teach new words to the child at least once a week		
	Teach new words to the child nearly every day.		
	Have detailed and informative conversation with the child at least once a week.		
	Have a detailed and informative conversation with the child nearly everyday		
	Help child learn tongue twisters and rhymes		
	Encourage the child to say what he or she wants using complete sentences.		

	Encourage the child to participate in oral language contexts like folktales, songs.		
3	<b>What the child sees parent and caregiver doing</b>  Reading books, magazines, Bible, newspaper at least once a week.		
	<i>Reading books, magazines, bible or newspaper nearly every day</i>		
4	<b>Parent as role model</b>		
	A good reader		
	Has large vocabulary  Began to read picture books with the child before he or she was a year old.		
5	<b>Help rendered to the child by parent and care giver</b>		
	Help the child learn to sing or say the alphabet		

	Help the child to name letters of the alphabet		
	Help the child learn to write letters of the alphabet		
	Help the child to write his or her name		
	Help the child how to say tongue twisters or rhymes in songs		
	Help the child learn the sounds that letters of the alphabet make (e.g., "T makes the /t/ sound").		

## Appendix iii

### Observation Check List

Village.....

.

House label .....date.....

Name of Parent.....

Name of Child.....

#### **1. Environmental print**

- a) Posters
- b) Sign posts
- c) Road signs
- d) Farm names
- e) School names
- f) Shop names

#### **2. Home print**

- a) crayons, pencils and paper for children's writing and drawing
- b) materials containing everyday print available for pretend play, such as empty  
Cereal boxes,
- c) Packaging and labels.
- d) Calendars
- e) Wooden -plastic alphabet letters to help children learn names and shapes of  
letters
- f) Variety of materials for pretend play such as Dolls and Toys

- g) Picture books in readable condition
- h) Alphabet books or wall charts
- i) Colour picture books

**3. Document Study**

- a) Do the books for reading include a good portion of words the children can decode using phonic skills?
- b) Are the books in large print and with colourful photographs?
- c) Is the book/text easily seen by the children during guided reading?
- d) Do the books for reading have text that includes the repetition of high-frequency words?

**4 Oral Activities**

- a. Do the children participate in riddle sessions?
- b. Do they participate in folktale telling?
- c. Do they participate in games that involve songs?

**5 Games/play which promote emergent literacy**

- a. Do the children play such games as “Ichiyenga” and “Isolo”?
- b. Do the children engage in play that involves drawing e.g. cars, animals etc
- c. Do children engage in play where they assume the roles of parents “ukubuta”?
- d. what other games do they play?.....

## **Appendix iv**

### **An Interview Schedule**

This interview schedule is for parents, guardians and caregivers. It is meant to find out from them what they know about the literate behaviours that children in selected households of Chisheta and Chipongoma villages exhibit before they receive formal instruction in school. Please be free, honest and frank as you are engaged in this very important topic. The information you give will be used for academic purposes only and your personal details will be kept confidential.

#### **Interview schedule for parents or caregivers**

##### **Identification data (for official use only)**

**Name of Parent:**.....

**Name of Child:**.....

**District** :.....

**Village** :.....

**Location** :.....

**House label** :.....

**Date of interview:**.....

**Time at start of interview..... end.....**

**Sex of respondent:**.....

#### **PART ONE**

##### **Background (Education and family)**

1. How far did you go in your education?.....

2. Does your home have books or magazines children can read? .....

3. Are you able to read and write?.....
4. In what language are you able to read?.....
5. How many children do you have?.....
6. How many of your children are below school-going age?.....
7. How free are the children in your home to pick up something to read or write?.....

What reading or writing behaviour do you see in your children who have not started school?.....  
 .....

7. Do those at 7 years and above go school?      YES       NO

8. Do your children imitate older brothers or sisters when they are reading and writing?  
 .....

**PART TWO**

**Content**

1. Does the child play puzzle games?      YES       NO

2. Does the child know how to hold a pencil?      YES       NO

3. What do the children play or spend a lot of time with that you think can help them learn reading quickly once in school?.....



12. Do you have a family reading area? Or book shelf?.....

13. When reading, how does he/she hold the book?.....

.....

14. Does the child point at the words from left to right or the other way on the page?

.....

15. How many books have you bought for the child since they were born?

.....

.....

16. Do you have books/magazine, hospital cards, telephone directory in your house? What kind of books do you have?.....

.....

17. Does the child know what print is used for?      YES            NO     

18. Do you tell stories to the child?      YES            NO     

19. Does the child like story telling?      YES            NO     

20. Does the child enjoy music?      YES            NO     

21. Does the child sing?      YES            NO     

22. What motor activity does the child show?

- running

-jumping

-handwork

-other.....

23. Is the child inquisitive? Does he ask questions?

.....

24. Does the child enjoy dismantling things like clay toys?

.....

25. While reading to the child, do you point out important features of the book such as the front, title and author?

.....

26. Do you regularly change the books available, giving children access to new books as well as some old favourites?

.....

27. Do you encourage children to scribble and experiment with pretend writing during pretend play?

.....

28. Do you encourage children to dictate stories to you so that they can see their own words in print?

.....

29. Do your children participate in such activities such as basket and rid mat making?

.....

.....

30. Do they attend such gathering as insaka (men's traditional school) and Icibwase (women's traditional school)?.....  
.....

**End of interview, thank you!**

## **Appendix v**

### **Interview Schedule for the Village Heads**

1. What is the historical background of the people of this village?
2. What are the major occupations of people in this village?
3. How would you explain the sociocultural activities in this village?
4. What are the major economic activities with which people in this evolve themselves?
5. Would you amplify on each of the above mentioned economic activities?
6. Do children who below the age of seven in this village participate in these activities?
7. What activities have you put in place as community to promote literacy?
8. What is the role of parents in initiating these literacy activities?
9. How is the participation of children in these activities which promote literacy in terms of both oral and written?