

**An Ethnographic Study of Rural Community Literacy
Practices in Bweyale and their Implications for Adult Literacy
Education in Uganda**

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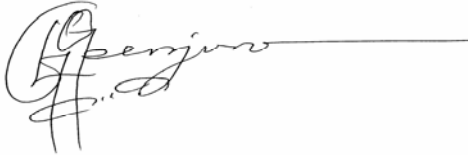
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2008

DECLARATION

I, George L. Openjuru, do hereby declare that this is my own original work, except for the acknowledged assistance and referenced citations. It has not been previously submitted to any university for the award of a degree.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Openjuru", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Date: 29th February 2008

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother Ventrina Ladur Odong (Oveni) who strongly believed that I was a good and capable child, and my father Garisiano Erocano Ladaah Odong (Agari) who struggled to keep me in school against all odds, and gave me the most inspiring advice ever, to become a teacher and not a pilot, my dear wife Eunice Openjuru and children: Raymond, Max Godwin, Flower Elsie, and Warren, for their love and moral support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAU	ActionAid Uganda
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Organisation
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CCF	Christian Children's Fund
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CRS	Catholic Relief Service
CWA	Community Welfare Assistants
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
IIZ-DVV	The Institute for International Co-operation of the German Adult Education Association (Institut für Internationale Zusammenarbeit des Deutschen Volkshochschul-Verbandes)
EFA	Education for All
FAL	Functional Adult Literacy
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IGA	Income Generating Activity
INFOBEPP	Integrated Non-Formal Basic Education Pilot Project
JET	Joint Education Trust
KADDO	Karamoja Diocesan Development Organisation
Kiira AEA	Kiira Adult Education Association
LABE	Literacy and Adult Basic Education
LC	Local Council

LNA	Learning Needs Assessment
MoGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
NAEA	National Adult Education Association
NALSIP	National Adult Literacy Strategic Investment Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLPN	National Literacy Programme in Namibia
NLS	New Literacy Studies
P. 1-7	Primary school education from year One to Seven
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PMA	Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture
REFLECT	Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques
S. 1-6	Secondary school education from year One to Six
SOCADIDO	Soroti Catholic Diocese Integrated Development Organisation
SOMED	Support Organisation for Micro Enterprise Development
TOCIDA	Tororo Community Initiated Development
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UK	United Kingdom
UNCST	Uganda National Council for Science and Technology
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
US	United States of America
WEP	Women's Empowerment Programme

ABSTRACT

This was a study of rural community literacy practices in Uganda. I used the social practices theory of literacy as a theoretical framework to investigate literacy use in rural community life in Bweyale. The social practices theory of literacy sees literacy as variable social practice that can only be understood within the social context of its use. Consistent with the social practices theoretical perspective and following similar research traditions in this area of literacy study, I used ethnographic research methods to collect data and grounded theory methods to analyse data on literacy use in Bweyale.

The study revealed that rural people, contrary to popular perceptions about their illiteracy and hence lack of literacy, actually use reading and writing in a variety of ways in different domains of literacy use. Literacy pervades most aspects of rural community life, making rural people use literacy in many rich and creative ways. Most people, regardless of their literacy status, participate in local literacy practices. The most prominent areas of literacy use in rural community life are livelihood activities, education, religion, bureaucracy, household life, and personal life.

The study also found that the conception of literacy among rural people in Bweyale is similar to the dominant conception of literacy. In this conception, literacy is seen as equal to education and/or schooling and it relates to modernity. Rural people see literacy as a valuable and important aspect of life. The literacy they value most is the dominant English language literacy. This is due to the multilingual nature of Uganda and the national language policy that made English the dominant language of literacy even in rural community life. The use of English literacy is also reinforced by its use as the language of instruction in Uganda's education system where most people learn how to read and write. This dominance of English complicates literacy use in rural community life because it brings in the need for translation, especially when people who do not understand English are involved in a literacy event. It also complicates local language literacy learning.

The use of English is closely associated with the dominant non-traditional activities like school education, the police service, modern trade practices, and to some extent, Christian religious practices. Local language literacy is mainly used when

communicating information relating to traditional activities, for example, traditional medicinal practices or for personal use.

The study recommends that adult literacy education curricula should be tailored to the local literacy practices of the people for whom the literacy programmes are being developed. This will help to make the literacy programmes immediately relevant to the everyday literacy practices of the learners' community. The programmes should promote literacy use in the community by exploring new areas of literacy use in rural community life. These are areas in which the use of literacy could lead to better management of some activities in rural community life.

In all, rural people are literate in ways that are not acknowledged in dominant literacy thinking and hence even by rural people themselves. This way of thinking must be discouraged.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1.1 Introduction and research problem

In the case of formal education, moreover, it is not only oral proficiency that is needed: the skills of reading and writing are at least equally important to success. The higher one goes within the education system, the more essential is the information that are conveyed through books, and those who can access books for themselves and can read them without help enjoy the greatest advantage. Equally, students are regularly asked to demonstrate what they have learned through writing. If they do not have fluent writing skills, their knowledge of their subject, however extensive, may not be recognised.

Nor is the practice of reading and writing confined to schooling. When individuals have finished their formal education, they still need to be able to access information, whether it be in their areas of work, or in the nation's political life, or in their personal and emotional development (Nsibambi, A., 2000, p. 3).

This statement emphasises literacy for education, development, and work. It was made by Professor Apollo Nsibambi, who was Minister of Education in Uganda at the time, while opening an Annual National Language and Literature Teaching conference held in 1998 at Makerere University. The statement is an expression of the value of literacy in people's life both inside and outside the school education. This perception of literacy is different from the general public perception that sees literacy only as a tool for accessing new information, and only in terms of school education/learning, formal employment, and personal/economic development. The expression also reveals that some public officials are aware that literacy is a normal aspect of everyday life and social interaction just like talking. As Barton puts it, "In going about their ordinary daily life, people today are constantly encountering literacy" and "this is true for most people in the world" (Barton, 1994, p. 3). In spite of this understanding of literacy, many aspects of literacy, for example for organising life, for sense making, for social participation, for documenting life and for living often go unnoticed (Barton & Hamilton, 1998).

The perception of literacy in terms of school education, employment and personal economic growth and development is the dominant and traditional view of literacy. This dominant view sees literacy in terms of the technical skills of reading and writing (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996b). This view sees the literacy practices of dominant institutions like the school¹, government and bureaucracies as the only literacy that counts (Herbert & Robinson, 2001). This traditional view of literacy seems to inform rural people's perception of literacy along the same lines: as being able to read and write in the school model and mainly for the purposes of accessing information, education and/or

¹ School literacy is the "learning of conscious knowledge through explanation and analysis and the attainment of some degree of meta-knowledge about the subject" (McEwan & Malan, 1996, p. 198).

employment. This view of literacy, as already alluded to above, ignores, marginalises and denigrates local usage of literacy in rural people's everyday lives (Street, 2001). It is therefore a perception that discourages the promotion of literacy among rural people.

Local literacy practices, which are sometimes referred to as 'vernaculars' or just local literacies (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Street, 1993b), are the various ways literacy is used in different contexts of everyday life. In this study local literacy refers to how local people in Bweyale use reading and writing in their day-to-day lives. Local literacies, because of the influence of the dominant view of literacy, are not visible to officialdom. Consequently, only the dominant literacy practices generally inform public knowledge, research, policy, practice, and programme development in adult literacy (Rogers, 2001).

As discussed above, the influence of these dominant institutional literacy practices often discourages the development of local literacies. An example of the negative influence of the dominant model of literacy on vernacular literacies is evident in the organisation and evaluation of adult literacy programmes in Uganda. Firstly, literacy classes in Uganda are modelled along the school system of learning with levels of literacy attainment running from beginner to post literacy. Secondly, teaching and learning arrangements are also very similar to the teaching and learning process of the lower primary schools in Uganda. Furthermore, primary school teachers are often recruited to work as adult literacy facilitators with a few weeks of additional training. This limited training is often not sufficient for them to overcome the temptation of reverting to school teaching methods used at the lower primary school with which they are more familiar (Openjuru, 2002, 2004d). As a result, the teaching and learning process used in adult literacy classes often contradicts the identity and status of the learners as adults in their families and society (Rogers, 2003a). This conflict in identity construction negatively affects the participation and learning of adults in literacy programmes meant for them. For example in South Africa, McEwan and Malan (1996) note that, "An exclusive focus on schooled literacy without any understanding of local perceptions and uses of literacy could further alienate adults targeted for ABET interventions" (p.196).

The negative influences of the dominant model of literacy manifest themselves in a number of ways. For example, during the 1999 World Bank evaluation of adult literacy programmes in Uganda, the graduates of two literacy programmes (Functional Adult Literacy (henceforth FAL) and Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques (henceforth REFLECT)), were compared to pupils who were in their third and fourth years of primary school education as the 'control group'. A second

control group was made up of the non-literate² people who were not participating in the adult literacy programs that were being evaluated (Carr-Hill, Okech, Katahoire, Kakooza, Ndidde, & Oxenham, 2001; Okech, Carr-Hill, Katahoire, Kakooza, & Ndidde, 1999). In the same study reading newspapers, magazines, and textbooks were taken as the evidence for the "utilisation of reading, writing, and numeracy" skills by rural people. Other incidences of reading not related to these activities were considered "circumstantial" literacy activities (Okech, et al., 1999, p.177). These circumstantial reading and writing activities are the everyday ways of using reading and writing vital for coping with a text-mediated environment around us. This shows that the evaluation was being approached with a school literacy mentality. How literacy is taught and used in formal schools, and is used by primary school pupils is certainly not the same as how adults in everyday community life outside the school use literacy. School literacy practices are certainly different from how the community use their reading and writing in their everyday life. This raises some question about the relevance of the findings of such evaluation studies that expect to see school-like reading and writing as evidence of literacy in a rural community.

To expose and encourage local literacies in rural people's lives, I decided to investigate how rural people in Bweyale use reading and writing in their day-to-day lives. It is expected that such knowledge of literacy or local community literacy practices can and should be used to inform adult literacy education policies and programmes. I used the social practices theory of literacy as a theoretical framework for this investigation (see Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 1990; Heath, 1983; Kulick & Stroud, 1993; Street, 1984).

1.2 The rationale for the study

There are many reasons why this study is important. Firstly, the problem of illiteracy³ is recognised in most reports on the state of literacy in the country (See, Carr-Hill et al., 2001; Okech, et al., 1999; Openjuru, 2002). Illiteracy affects people living in different areas differently. For example, the available statistics show that the illiteracy rate is higher in rural than urban areas. According to the latest information from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2005), the illiteracy rate for adults⁴ in Uganda was generally

² In this study I have decided to use the term 'non-literate people' to refer to people who are not able to read and write instead of 'illiterate' that is seen as a pejorative term that is not very dignified, and could easily mean the person has completely nothing to do with texts.

³ This refers to ignorance due to the inability to read and write.

⁴ For this statistic, an adult was considered to be a person who was 15 years and over. This includes children over that age limit that are still at school so it may not be a true reflection of adults who are already out of school.

at 30 per cent. The largest proportion of this percentage is in rural areas. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2005) survey done in 2003, the illiteracy rate in rural areas is higher at 30 per cent, while in urban areas it is only 1 per cent⁵ (UBOS, 2005). For that reason, there is a need to understand how literacy is used in rural community life to help in promoting literacy in rural areas.

While the above illiteracy statistics may be informative, I have used them with the awareness that the methods used to collect them are not very reliable. This is because literacy rates are obtained by calculating the numbers of people who have completed at least four years of school education, who are assumed able to read and write. The statistics also do not take account of the differences in literacy needs (the literacy practices required for effective participation in a particular community) and practices of rural and urban areas. Arguing from the social practices perspective, the literacy practices of rural people are not the same as those of urban people. Therefore, rural and urban areas cannot be treated as if they are the same or uniform.

Another reason why this study is important is that the government of Uganda considers literacy to be a “major vehicle for poverty eradication”, improved productivity and sustainable development (Baryayebwa, 1998; Ministry of Gender Labour and Social development, 2003, p. 1). Therefore, adult literacy programmes are being implemented as part of a bigger ‘Plan for the Modernization of Agriculture’ (PMA), and support to micro finance institutions working in rural areas. Within the PMA, literacy is seen as a tool for the improvement of agricultural productivity and therefore poverty reduction (Baryayebwa, 2004). For that reason, Uganda is presently concerned with improving adult literacy rates especially in rural areas of the country, in the expectation that it could facilitate the PMA and boost agricultural productivity. Therefore, any study like this one that focuses on gaining more understanding of literacy in rural community life is good for the country.

According to Okech et al’s (1999) World Bank evaluation of adult literacy programs in Uganda, little progress is being made toward improving the basic literacy skills of rural people. This is despite the fact that adult literacy education programmes have been a top government priority in Uganda since 1945. This makes it imperative to understand how literacy is used in rural community life. This lack of progress could be because adult literacy education programmes and evaluation studies are not sensitive to local communities’ everyday literacy realities. The adult literacy education programme would

⁵ The illiteracy rate was obtained by subtracting the official literacy rate (given by UBOS) from 100 to give a percentage.

consequently lead to learning or literacy practices that are not relevant to the ways local people use literacy in their daily lives.

Furthermore, this same evaluation by Okech, et al. (see reference below) also discovered that, most participants in adult literacy programmes (73 per cent) are people who have dropped out of school at a level sufficient for them to learn how to read and write. Only 27 per cent had never been to school (see Carr-Hill et al., 2001; Okech, et al 1999). While there is no problem with literate people attending adult literacy programmes, it is surprising to know that non-literate people are not participating in adult literacy programmes organised for them, because according to the literacy statistics there are more people who are not able to read and write in rural areas. The adult literacy classes are therefore not attracting those who have not been to school in large numbers. What is stopping the non-literate people coming for adult literacy programmes? Could it be that the literacy classes are not meeting their literacy expectations?

Not much is known about how rural people use reading and writing in their day to day lives and for what purpose in Uganda's rural areas. Generally, "little attention has been paid to trying to understand the context specific ways in which the practices of reading and writing (and calculating) occur outside of schooling" (Mpoyiya & Prinsloo, 1996, p. 177). Only a few studies have been conducted on rural literacy practices in Africa. These were in South Africa (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996b), in Namibia (Papen, 2001) and in western Nigeria (Probst, 1993). Only one study of everyday literacy practices has been conducted in Uganda. This study looked at literacy within the context of a multilingual society. The study covered both rural and urban areas in Kampala and Mpigi districts in central Uganda (Glanz, 2003). Therefore, there is still a need for an in-depth study and documentation of how rural people use literacy in their day-to-day lives in different parts of Africa.

Knowledge of local literacy practices (vernacular literacies) in rural community life is important for exploring ways of improving the provision of adult literacy education for rural people and making recommendations that can inform the design and delivery of adult literacy education programmes for rural people in Uganda and similar African countries. Literacy practitioners, evaluators, researchers, and policy makers can use the information to come up with programmes that take account of the different ways rural people use literacy in their ordinary day-to-day lives. Such programmes would help the rural poor to 'take hold' of literacy in ways which are beneficial to them (Kulick & Stroud, 1993; Street, 1993b).

There is need to improve adult literacy education programmes through new literacy planning designs. For a long time a centralised planning model issued by the central government has been the dominant planning arrangement in adult literacy education work. Centralised planning models are based on standards that assume a cultural uniformity or uniformity in literacy in the whole country. These centralised planning models are informed by the autonomous model of literacy. This model, which according to Street (1984) is advocated by Goody (1987), sees literacy as a single, neutral, technical skill that is learnt once and used in all situations demanding literacy, and by any group in the same way regardless of their social and cultural differences. The manifestation of central planning is seen in the use of one national adult literacy curriculum designed for use in the whole country and for all groups of people involved in literacy programmes, what Busingye (2005, p. i) described as a, “One size fits all” curriculum. There is also one primer translated into all the different languages (see sample pages in Appendix 5). This, I argue from the social practices perspective of literacy (see Chapter Two), ignores local literacy practices, and imposes a centrally conceived idea of literacy that may not be consistent with local uses of literacy. It includes curriculum content that is not very useful for the everyday literacy in rural community life. In such cases, literacy learners may play ‘ignorant’ to fit in with the expectations of the programme provider just to allow them sit in the class in the hope of learning how to read and write and then later go on to use it in their own way (see Robinson-Pant, 1999 cited in Carr-Hill et al., 2001; Papen, 2005a). A decentralised or a localised literacy design process could be closer to the local people’s idea of literacy than a central planning arrangement.

A localised literacy design process that starts with an understanding of how literacy is used by the community in which a literacy programme is to be launched, and how such literacy can be supported as part of a community resource, needs to be encouraged (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). In such a case, the literacies on which programmes are based could originate from the community and not the central programme organisers’ external development agenda. The focus of the literacy programme could also change away from individuals to the whole community, including people who are able to read and write who may need to be facilitated to have access to reading materials of their choice. This could be community literacy and not just the illiterate people in the community that are assumed not to be interacting with texts in their everyday lives and to whom such use of texts should be introduced. A good example of this localised design process was tried in a community literacy project in Nepal, in which a mixed group of literate and non-literate people were put together as participants in a single literacy class instead of focusing only

on non-literate people, with a literate person facilitating the literacy learning process (Community Literacy Project Nepal, 2004). In this way, the literacy practices in a particular community could be promoted. To do that, an understanding of how literacy is used in the local communities could be important, hence this research.

Community participation in adult literacy development programmes especially in Learning Needs Assessment (henceforth, LNA) needs to be enhanced. In Uganda presently, literate members of the local community are often not included in adult literacy education programmes development processes. Only non-literate members of the community are seen as targets for adult literacy programmes. In most cases, the involvement of the local community only consist of the local leaders' participation in managing and administering adult literacy classes in their areas of jurisdiction and the selection of some literate members of the community who have attained at least eight years of school education to be trained as adult literacy facilitators (Openjuru, 2002, 2004d). By leaving out literate members of the community, the programme organisers are ignoring people who know the reading and writing practices that are used in a particular community. Literate members of a community are part of the social networks that facilitate literacy in the community. Their use of reading and writing is shaped by the factors that influence literacy in the community and they are the harbingers of the community's ways of reading and writing to those who are learning how to read and write for themselves. This exclusion of literate people in the community could be motivating some members of the community to turn up for adult literacy classes pretending not to be literate (Okech, et. al 1999).

There is a need to use the social practices perspective for understanding literacy use in different contexts. In theoretical terms, over the last three decades, there has been a significant move away from the cognitive theory of literacy in which literacy is seen merely as an individual skill, to literacy as a social practice (Barton, 1994; Street, 1993a; Street, 1984, 1995). This is a move away from concern over how individuals acquire literacy skills to how literacy is used in social and economic settings. This theoretical framework allows for research into how people use reading and writing within the context of their everyday life (Street, 1993b). According to this theory (see Chapter Two for details), understanding literacy in social contexts is more important than understanding literacy as an individual skill. I therefore thought it was a good idea to use this perspective on literacy to understand literacy use in the contexts of rural community life in Bweyale. This rural community provides a new context for an ethnographic study of literacy as a social practice. Many of the studies conducted using this theoretical framework were in

America, (Heath, 1983), Iran (Street, 1984), Papua New Guinea (Kulick & Stroud, 1993), South Africa (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996b), and Lancaster (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). This study therefore contributes to a greater understanding of literacy practices in different contexts, and to a further refinement of this theoretical perspective.

Finally, I am personally interested in understanding and encouraging rural literacy in Uganda. I thought this study would provide me with the opportunity to get a deeper understanding of how literacy is used in everyday rural community life. This knowledge should help me to come up with a suitable literacy education project that could consolidate literacy among rural people where this study was conducted, and make life easier for some members of the community.

1.3 The nature of this study

This was an ethnographic study of literacy using the social practices theoretical framework (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Papen, 2001). Sometimes this framework is called the New Literacy Studies' (NLS) theoretical framework (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 1998; Papen, 2001; Street, 1995). The social practices theory of literacy was developed from a number of ethnographic studies conducted in Britain, United States, Africa, and Iran (see, Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984). Others studies in Africa were done in South Africa by Prinsloo and Breier (1996b) and in Namibia by Papen (2001). In Uganda, a study by Glanz (2003) covered both rural and urban areas in Kampala and Mpigi districts in central Uganda. These studies have been reviewed in Chapter Two.

One rural community in Uganda was identified for this study, and an investigation of literacy in different contexts of rural community life was conducted. Different methods of data collection: participant observation, in-depth interviews, photography, and the study of documents were used. Forty-eight respondents were interviewed (see Appendix 1.1 and 1.2). The data collected during the study was subjected to a grounded theory method of analysis, from which conclusions were drawn. The product of this study is a description and analysis of literacy practices in the different domains of everyday life in Bweyale.

The community selected for this study is in Bweyale, a village in Kiryadongo Sub County (see Figure 1). Bweyale provides a new setting for the study of local literacy practices following the social practices approach to literacy. Bweyale is located on the main road linking Kampala and Gulu town. The centre of this village is a budding trading centre with a multi-ethnic population. Bweyale is described in detail in Chapter Five. Rural community life in Uganda is different from those communities in the USA, South Africa,

Papua New Guinea, Lancaster and other parts of the world where similar ethnographic studies of literacy as a social practice have been conducted. This study therefore offers another opportunity to study literacy in everyday life in a different time and space where no such study has been undertaken before. These differences put this study in a position to contribute to a better understanding of local literacy practices in diverse social and cultural settings and contexts. Besides, the study of literacy as a situated social practice calls for understanding literacy in its context of use.

On the other hand, while Bweyale may be different from other rural communities outside Uganda, it has some basic characteristics that it shares with some rural communities in Uganda and other African countries. For example, the livelihood practices in rural trading centres in Uganda are very similar in many ways, for example selling in shops that are lined up in a row along major roads. What could be unique to Bweyale is its multi-ethnic nature owing to its long history of hosting different refugee groups from Congo, Kenya, and Sudan who started coming to Bweyale in the 1950s until the 1980s. To this group was added what has become known in Uganda as the Internally Displaced People⁶ (IDP) from the troubled districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader. Some other groups from different parts of Uganda have also moved and settled in Bweyale.

Although I was a researcher and different from the local people by virtue of my education and research activities, I had a clear understanding of the local language and culture of the majority of the people who live in Bweyale. My mother tongue is the Luo language commonly spoken by the majority of the people in this community. This saved me a lot of research time that could have been spent learning the language and culture of the people to facilitate an ethnographic research process.

1.4 The purpose and objectives of this study

1.4.1 The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate and document the everyday local literacy practices of the people in Bweyale, a rural community in Uganda, with a view to suggesting how knowledge of local practices could be used to improve adult literacy education in Uganda. This knowledge consists of a detailed description of what people think about literacy, where they read and write, how and what they read and write and for what reason they read and write. The purposes of this study were refined in the following objectives.

⁶ This is the name given to people who have moved away from their homes and migrated to other safer parts of the country to avoid the Lord's Resistance Army fighting the Government in the two districts of Gulu and Kitgum.

1.4.2 The objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were as follows:

- to determine what rural people in Bweyale think about reading and writing,
- to identify the most prominent literacy domains (see section 2.5.4.3 for the concept of literacy domain) in which rural people use literacy in their day-to-day lives,
- to describe the literacy practices (see section 2.5.4.1 for the concept of literacy practices) associated with the identified literacy domains by:
 - studying the literacy events (see section 2.5.4.2 for the concept of literacy events) that are taking place in the identified literacy domains and describing how reading and writing is used in such literacy events,
 - identifying the value and role that literacy plays in those literacy events and in the life of the local people,
 - determining the nature of the activities in which literacy (reading and writing or text) is used in the day-to-day lives of rural people,
 - establishing the language of choice commonly used in local literacy practices in rural community life in Bweyale
- to find out how non-literate people cope with the literacies that they encounter in their day-to-day life
- to suggest ways in which knowledge of local literacy practices can be used to improve the provision of adult literacy education in Uganda

These objectives are all related to each other and they were not treated as discrete phenomena in this study. They were instead seen as signposts during the process of collecting data. Interesting issues related to local literacy practices that emerged during the process of data collection were also taken on board and investigated accordingly. One of the most outstanding issues that emerged during data collection was the question of language and it had to be highlighted as part of the objectives to help focus on it. Some of the original objectives were adjusted to help focus the investigation on very specific aspects of local literacy practices. This is a normal practice in ethnographic and grounded theory research done to allow data to shape the course of the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

1.5 The research focus

According to Hammersley (1990, p. 24), “‘research focus’ refers to a general set of phenomena about which the study makes a claim.” Accordingly, the primary focus of this ethnographic research, as stated in the purpose of the study, was to find out how rural people read and write in their day-to-day lives. The following were the focuses used in this study.

1.5.1 Local conceptions of literacy

As an entry point, the study focused on what the people in Bweyale think about literacy. The assumption here was that how people think about literacy affects how they respond to issues related to literacy in their life. For example, if they think that literacy is only for those who have been through formal school education then this could affect their decision to participate in adult literacy classes, or even to make a personal effort to learn how to read and write, or their participation in literacy events could be shaped by that thinking and attitude. For that reason, understanding the local conceptions of literacy was seen as important in understanding local literacies.

1.5.2 Literacy domains

The main defining focus of this study was to identify the most prominent domains of literacy practices in rural community life in Bweyale. These are the distinct social and economic institutions shaping literacy in rural community life. Examples of these institutions are schools, family, churches, and government institutions such as the judiciary and the police. An investigation of the dominant domains of literacy included investigating the activities that call for the use of reading and writing in rural people’s lives within these identified literacy domains. These activities were described in terms of their history, purpose in rural people’s lives and cultural practices. The values of literacy in the identified domains of literacy were investigated. The immediate physical locations (e.g. a church, a shop, a marketplace, school, and the homesteads) of the activities, and the different influences (e.g. religious, commercial, educational, or cultural) on the activities were also investigated.

1.5.3 Literacy practices

What literacy practices are associated with the identified prominent literacy domains and how are they described? The primary concern of this question was to find out how people in a rural community setting use their reading and writing skills, the role texts plays in the activities associated with the identified prominent domain of literacy, and the value of text in the interaction and execution of activities that take place in the setting. I wanted to

know if texts play a symbolic, informative or operational role or all three. What are the different observable and consistent behaviours exhibited by those participating in the identified literacy event? What are the different roles being played by different participants in the literacy events unfolding in the domain being studied? What other influences can be seen in the literacy events taking place? What kinds of texts are generated from the setting and what purposes do they serve? These questions raised above were for purposes of probing the situation of literacy and they are not the only questions that could be asked during the examination of a particular event or activities in which text was involved.

1.5.4 Coping strategies

Being a rural community, there were many people who were not able to read and write. It was therefore important to find out how they were dealing with the literacy demands in their everyday life. What strategies do they use to confront new literacy situations? This was deliberately brought up to avoid a common problem of thinking that people who are not able to read and write have nothing to do with text in their lives, which is not the case.

1.6 The location of Bweyale

The study was conducted in Bweyale, a rural community in Western Uganda (Rwabwoogo, 2002, 2005). There is no documented information about Bweyale. It does not even appear in most available information books and maps of Uganda. Although Bweyale is informally well known, it is not a big and significant administrative entity in Uganda (see details in Chapter Five below).

Uganda is one of the three East African Countries. The other two are Kenya and Tanzania. Uganda is a landlocked country, bordered by Sudan to the North, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to the west, Rwanda and Tanzania to the South, and Kenya to the East (Central Intelligence Agency, 2005; Muwonge, 2003). See Figure 1 below:

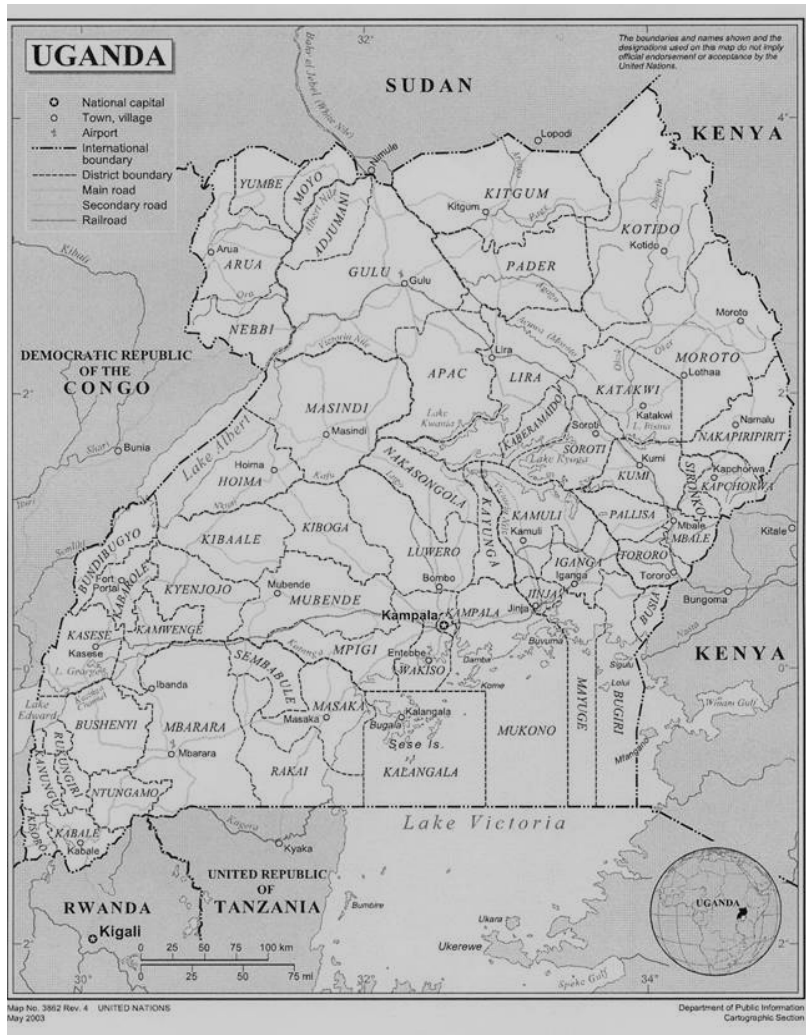


Figure 1: Map of Uganda showing the approximate position of Bweyale.

Uganda is made up of 56 districts grouped into four regions, namely: Central, Western, Northern, and Eastern regions. Masindi district is located in the Western region. It lies at an altitude of between 621m to 1158m above sea level, in the savannah climatic zone. It borders Apach in the east, Gulu in the North, Hoima in the South and Lake Albert in the West.

1.7. Why Bweyale?

I deliberately selected Bweyale for this study because it is a rural, largely Luo speaking community, and I am therefore familiar with the dominant culture and language of the people in this community as I am a Luo and my mother tongue is Luo. This knowledge of the local language and culture enabled me to interact freely with the majority of the local people in the language they speak and to understand and work with the data I was

collecting in the local language as well. These advantages saved me a lot of time which a foreign researcher would have spent “learning the language, the social customs, and the pattern of behaviours that exist in a setting” (Purcell-Gates, 2004, p. 99).

However, although I was familiar with the research setting, I was in the community as a researcher investigating a phenomenon which I had never paid any attention to before. This made it a completely different and new experience for me. I learnt many things about how people use and think about reading and writing in their everyday life. I was also able to work with people of other languages and cultures using English as the medium of communication. These other ethnic and linguistic groups also became part of this study because they were members of the same community.

1.8 Organisation of the thesis

In this section, I am providing not only the organisational structure of this thesis but also the logic of this organisation. For that reason, overviews of each of the remaining chapters are provided separately with their rationale.

In Chapter Two, I present a review of related literature for this study. This covers the theoretical framework within which this study is situated. This is presented against the backdrop of other theories of literacy to facilitate positioning this study in the major debates that are currently going on in the field of literacy study, and to define the contribution this study makes to this debate. Two contesting models of literacy, the autonomous and ideological, which are informed by the cognitive and social practices theories of literacy respectively, are particularly discussed in detail because they are the basis of the main arguments that run through this thesis. The ideological model, informed by the social practices theory of literacy, is presented in more detail because it is the theoretical perspective taken in this study of literacy practices in the context of rural community life in Bweyale. These details include the key concepts that make up this social practices theory of literacy.

Related to this social practices perspective of literacy, other concepts like community literacy practices, ‘social contexts’ and ‘community’ are also presented. These concepts are important when discussing literacy from the social practices perspective. The chapter ends with a review of seminal and major studies of literacy that used the social practices approach to investigate different aspects of literacy in use in different communities.

Chapter Three provides a comprehensive description of the ethnographic research methods used in collecting data for this study. This comprises of a description of the data collection methods like participant observations, in-depth/biographical interviews,

collecting documents, visual ethnography and documentary photography. The grounded theory method used to analyse the information collected is explained.

The purpose of this study was to understand how rural people use literacy in their daily lives with a view to using this information to improve the provision of adult literacy education in Uganda. In Chapter Four, I provide information about literacy generally and adult literacy education in Uganda. The information on the current adult literacy education programme is based on a documentary study of the existing curriculum and the primers used in the provision of adult literacy education in Uganda. The objective of this chapter is to provide the information for making the implications of this study to adult literacy education in Uganda clearer. This includes a review of the history of literacy and adult literacy education, the policies, the curriculum and the primers used in adult literacy education in Uganda.

Following this discussion on literacy and adult literacy education in Uganda, I provide a description of Bweyale as the context within which this study was conducted in Chapter Five. A good understanding of this context is important because this study is about understanding the social and economic uses of reading and writing in a community. This understanding cannot be achieved without a clear understanding of this community. Therefore, Chapter Five provides information on the history, growth, and development of this community. The present social and economic lives of the people in this community and the different social groups that make up Bweyale and how they live their daily lives are presented. These factors have a bearing on understanding how literacy is presently used in this community.

In Chapter Six, the findings of the study are provided according to the major domains of literacy identified in rural community life in Bweyale. These are livelihoods, school education, religion, bureaucracy, the homestead, and personal literacy practices. Each of these comprises a wide range of diverse literacy practices that correspond with different activities related to that particular domain. The findings reveal a very rich and diverse use of reading and writing that is often discounted by both literacy programme planners and the local people themselves. This discounting is based on an understanding of literacy that is not consistent with how rural people are using their reading and writing skills.

The conclusions, discussion and recommendations from the findings of this study are presented in Chapter Seven. This is done by bringing together the various arguments that were developed from the beginning of this thesis to the end. In this chapter, I start by making general conclusions of the findings of the study. This is followed by a review of

the different chapters as a basis for presenting and discussing the highlights of the major findings of the study. This overview provides the background needed for outlining the implications of the findings for adult literacy education policies in Uganda. The chapter ends with proposed models of provision that could be used to overcome the difference noted in this study between current adult literacy education curricula and everyday literacy practices in the life of the community.

CHAPTER TWO: Theories and ethnographies of literacy

2.1 Introduction

In this literature review, I discuss the social practices theory of literacy, the chosen theoretical framework for this study. I start this discussion with an examination of the difficulties involved in defining literacy. These difficulties as I explained relate to the different theoretical perspectives from which literacy can be investigated. I give a brief overview of these different theoretical perspectives on literacy based on Grabill's (2001) taxonomy of literacy theories. In this brief overview, I place emphasis on two theoretical themes: the ideological and autonomous models of literacy. The ideological model of literacy is based on the social practices theory of literacy, which came up "as a challenge to the 'Great Divide' or 'autonomous' model of literacy" (Brandt & Clinton, 2002, p. 337). This includes a review of the different concepts that make up the social practices theory of literacy as the theoretical framework for this study.

In the last part of this literature review, I summarise some of the seminal and major studies that contributed to theoretical development in the social practices theory of literacy and those that have applied the theory in ethnographic studies of community literacy practices in Africa and other parts of the world. This was done to provide some insight into research in community literacy practices and to look at the key findings that have been generated from other ethnographic studies of local literacy practices in other parts of the world.

2.2 What is literacy?

Social concepts such as literacy ... are integrally tied to their labels. Like jelly and sand, they are without intrinsic shape, defined and redefined by the vessels that hold them (Venezky et al., 1990, p. ix).

Literacy, which is at the heart of this study, is a seriously contested and notoriously fluid concept as the above quotation summarises. It is shaped by the institutions within which it is used or evaluated. It is a subject of a long- running debate by researchers, policy makers, and practitioners in literacy. This amorphous nature of literacy is a source of many definitions. Each definition is informed by a different theory of literacy generated by the different disciplines that sponsor them (see Baynham, 1995; Gee, 1990; Holme, 2004; Lind & Johnston, 1986; Mace, 1992; Stromquist, 1997; Thomas, 1989). The effect of such interdisciplinary perspectives on literacy is a confusion that often results "in identical issues being discussed in quite separate contexts with different vocabularies" (Levine, 1986, p. 6). This is not something that is easy to resolve, and it is not the intention of this review to resolve this problem of defining literacy.

As Levine (1986, p. 22) cautions, “In tackling the problem of a suitable definition of literacy and illiteracy it is important not to start with unrealistic expectations about the possibility of achieving a simple formulation acceptable to all interested parties.”⁷ This, in my view, is a realistic observation because any attempt at seeking an acceptable definition of literacy seems to lead to more disagreements reflecting different ideological, theoretical, and disciplinary backgrounds. For example, those in psychology tend to look at literacy as an individual skill, which is the ability to personally read and write. Those in sociology and social linguistics, tend to say that literacy is a social practice embedded in social relationships (Holme, 2004). Those who are interested in community development activity are mostly interested in literacy as a functional skill to perform particular social and economic functions or to initiate radical social and economic transformation in society. These differences relate to different approaches/perspectives to issues of literacy such as, “How people acquire the ability to read and write..., how people actually read and write, how one should think about reading and writing” (Grabill, 2001, p. 17). All these definitions from psychology, sociology, and social linguistics relate to literacy in learning, education, pedagogy and to the conceptions of literacy.

The meaning of literacy also changes according to time, place, and use. These changes make defining literacy a “moving target” to borrow words from Prinsloo and Kell (1997, p. 83). For example, the definition of literacy has been moving from the ability to read and write to literacy as a social practice. New notions of multiple literacies are emerging and gaining acceptance (see Fingeret, 1993). This image of defining literacy as a moving target is well exemplified by the many attempts made by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (henceforth UNESCO) to secure an acceptable and working definition of literacy. From 1946 to 1975, UNESCO made several modifications to existing definitions of literacy to accommodate different interests and concerns that would arise at different periods in the history of major debates in literacy. To date there is still no acceptable definition of literacy in sight (see Beder, 1991; Fingeret, 1993; Lind & Johnston, 1986, 1990).

Before 1945, not much attention seems to have been given to defining literacy (see Venezky, 1990). In 1946, literacy was defined as the ability to read and write a short simple statement about everyday life. Later on, other aspects like acquiring essential knowledge and skills, which can enable an individual to engage in activities in which literacy were required for functioning in one’s community were added (UNESCO

⁷ This term is often used to refer to people who fail to meet some minimum level of reading and writing requirements set by an authority e.g. Governments (Glanz, 2003).

definition in Gillette & Ryan, 1983, cited in Lyster, 1992, p. 11). In 1975, another dimension concerning literacy contributing to liberation and development was added to take account of the development of critical consciousness, and ideas about authentic human development and empowerment (Bataille, 1976, cited in Lyster, 1992, p. 11; Lind & Johnston, 1990, p. 35). UNESCO's definitions of literacy were generally from the perspective that sees literacy as a skill, specifically a functional skill, required for social and economic development.

In all attempts made to officially define literacy under UNESCO's efforts, the preoccupation with what literacy should do, based on the popular ideology of the time, obstructed a clear understanding of what literacy really is (see Lyster, 1992). For example, the addition to the definition of literacy adopted at a meeting held in Persepolis in 1975, shows that one of the primary concerns of the time was literacy for liberation. Paulo Freire was championing this line of thought about literacy through his ideology of literacy for 'conscientization' (Lind & Johnston, 1990; Smith, 1987). This adjustment to accommodate Paulo Freire's ideas shows how literacy is "a shifting abstract term, impossible to define in isolation of specific time, person, place, and culture. It is therefore described as historically and culturally relative" (Fingeret, 1993, p. 3). The definition or an idea of literacy is always under the dominant thinking and concerns of a particular time.

With this elusive nature of literacy, the search for an acceptable definition of literacy is still an ongoing process. According to Mace (1992), there is an increasing agreement in literacy studies that finding an acceptable definition of literacy is not possible. Welch and Freebody (1993) also argue that such a definition may not even be necessary, because literacy is a complex concept to which the application of different forms of reasoning from different disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, politics, psychology, linguistics, and economics are possible.

Understanding the different definitions of literacy is important because they all have different implications for literacy research, policy, and practice. For example, those who see literacy as a functional skill focus the responsibility for literacy on the individual and not the community of which the individual is a member. Solving the problem of illiteracy in this case could require teaching the individuals how to read and write. Those who see literacy as a social practice see literacy as part of a social practice in a community, and this community determines the literacy requirements of its members. Teaching literacy in this case requires understanding the context within which literacy is being used and using

such information in literacy curriculum development and delivery processes (Gee, 1990; McKay, 1993). In this case, changing the literacy practices and environment of the entire community could be the focus of the literacy programme (Community Literacy Project Nepal, 2004). These definitions are guided by the main concerns and disciplinary interest pushing themselves for attention at different times since 1946 when collective attention started to be given to the issue of literacy (Lind & Johnston, 1990).

To conclude this section, I use the description of literacy by Shuman, to say that “literacy has become a name for many issues, including the invention of modernity, the invention of history or technology, the representative of education in general, or a name for a privileged domain of culture” (Shuman, 1993, p. 247). All these are ideological orientations that are influencing people’s perceptions of literacy at different times in human history thus generating different models of literacy. Baynham (1995, p. 15) summarises these models as follows:

- skills development model, which looks at literacy as a skill;
- therapeutic model, which sees literacy as a way of working with problems;
- personal empowerment model, which sees the development of literacy as a process of developing confidence and personal power in life;
- social empowerment model, which sees literacy as a process of securing social change
- functional model, which sees literacy as a tool to achieve a particular purpose in a particular social and economic context of life, and
- critical model of literacy, which sees the teaching of literacy as a way of developing critical thinking.

All the different ideological viewpoints struggle to have a stake in understanding literacy from their own viewpoints and purposes. However, in all these differences, there is something to do with reading and writing, as the “core component of literacy” (Holme, 2004, p. 64). This is the only area where there is some agreement.

In this section, I have pointed out that lack of agreement on the exact nature of literacy is the major source of controversy in literacy study because literacy is a multidisciplinary subject that comfortably fits with many divergent theoretical applications. In the next section, I outline some of these theories and proceed to articulate the social practices theory of literacy with its antithetical autonomous model of literacy.

2.3 An overview of literacy theories

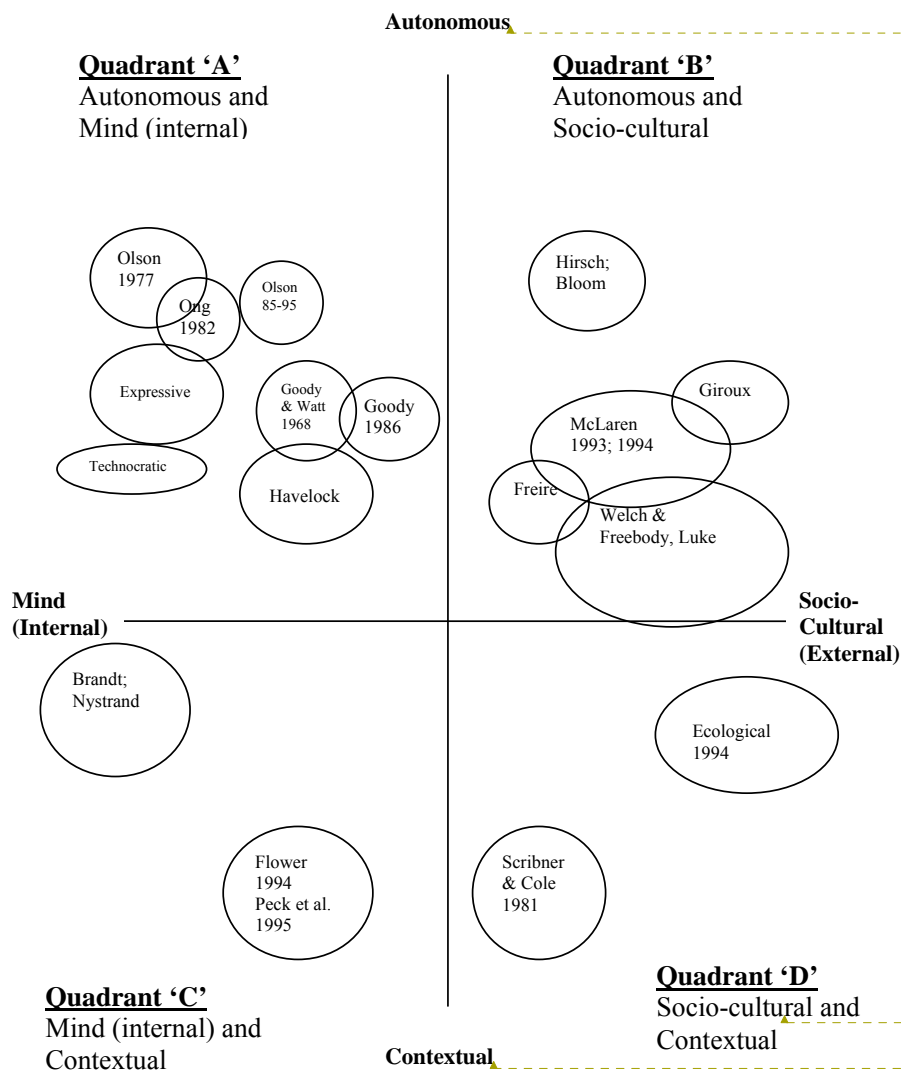
The difficulty with defining literacy, as already noted above, emanates from the many theoretical perspectives that are used in understanding and explaining literacy. In this section, I present a general overview of the major groups of theories that influence how literacy is defined, researched, and taught. This presentation is based on Grabill's (2001) taxonomy of literacy theories.

Theories are the different ways people make sense of and explain the world around them. According to Barton (1994, p. 15), "Theory provides the terminology and framework for talking about an area." In this study, the area to talk about is literacy, how people make sense of it, and the terminologies and frameworks they use to talk about it.

There are many theoretical classifications applied in understanding, researching, and organising literacy. Street (1984) for example, classifies the different theories of literacy into two major categories of autonomous and ideological models. This classification by Street (1984) was later developed by Grabill (2001) into a complex taxonomy of literacy theories. This taxonomy is used in this review to provide an overview of the major categories of literacy theories that are currently used to understand literacy. There are other classifications that could be used to group the different theories of literacy, for example, Baynham's (1995, p. 13) "models of literacy/illiteracy". Of all the available classifications of literacy theories, Grabill's (2001) taxonomy referred to earlier, in my view, provides the most comprehensive and clear overview of all the different theories that are used in the study of literacy. Grabill (2001) summarises all the theories of literacy from the field of education, psychology, anthropology and social linguistics that were developed from the 1980s to date. Grabill's (2001) summary also brings together all the theories that deal with literacy outside of the school system, which make this overview most relevant for this study.

The model below shows how Grabill groups all existing literacy theories into "four themes of mind, culture, autonomy, and context" (2001, p. 20). In his presentation, Grabill imagines two interrelated continua. The horizontal continuum, moves from theories that focus on mind (internal) on the left to theories focusing on socio-cultural issues (external) on the right. The vertical continuum moves from theories that fit with the autonomous model of literacy at the top, to theories that fit with the context based model of literacies at the bottom. The intersection between these two continua (lines) creates four separate quadrants with different combinations of the four thematic areas of mind

and context, socio-cultural and contextual, autonomous and socio-cultural, and autonomous and mind.



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Mind (internal) on the left of the horizontal continuum represents the theories that locate the meaning and value of literacy in human beings. These theories, according to Grabill (2001), focus on self-expression, emphasising the cognitive and intellectual processes involved in the development and use of written literacy on the individual, and the development of reading and writing skills by the individual. The social cultural theories on the right represent theories that locate the meaning and value of literacy outside of human beings and looks at literacy as an external social process and culture. Socio-

cultural theorists see the meaning of literacy as residing within the social practices of institutions and communities where literacy is used (Grabill, 2001, p. 20).

The vertical continuum, according to Grabill (2001, p. 22), expresses the tensions between the autonomous concept of literacy at the top and the context-based concept of literacy at the other end of the continuum. The autonomous end of the continuum at the top of the line represents theories of literacy that claim positive cognitive consequences from the acquisition and use of literacy. The bottom end of the line represents the context-based theories of literacy that locate the meaning and value of literacy in specific contexts and practices. In other words, these theories contextualise literacy in its context of use.

Quadrant 'B' consists of autonomous and socio-cultural theories of literacy. Quadrant 'C' consists of mind and contextual theories. 'A' consists of autonomous and mind (internal) theories. Finally, Quadrant 'D' consists of socio-cultural and contextual theories of literacy. The last two theoretical categories, 'A' and 'D', are discussed in much detail in this chapter, because they are the focus of this review and the most common.

As noted by Grabill, Quadrant 'B' represents a unique combination of theories that bring together both the autonomous and the social-cultural aspects of literacy. Theorists in this quadrant focus on literacy as a struggle over cultural meaning. Hirsch (1987, p. 2, cited in Grabill, 2001, p. 26) is given as a good example of theorists who say, "to be literate is to be culturally literate, 'to possess the basic information needed to thrive in a modern world'". Being culturally literate is to have that knowledge which is necessary for greater economic prosperity, social justice, and democracy. To be culturally literate is concerned with the common good of the community at all levels. The theorists in this category also see literacy as a necessary condition for cultural and political struggle.

One of the most outstanding theories within this category is the radical theory of literacy. According to this theory, all social institutions must be subjected to critical examination and change. The objective of this critical examination is to ensure that the process of teaching literacy does not perpetuate the dominant Discourse (for the use of the capital 'D', see Gee, 1990) in ways that undermine the existence of other groups in society. The teaching of literacy should therefore help to unmask the powers that are hidden in dominant literacy Discourses⁸. In this way, both the learning and use of literacy could not perpetuate the dominant position of the privileged groups in society but liberate the underprivileged and oppressed people in ways that contribute to social justice in society. Paulo Freire is cited as one of the theorists who pointed out very strongly and clearly how

⁸ See more detailed discussion of discourses on page 35, Section 2.5.3.

some methods of teaching literacy perpetuate the dominant discourse of those in power or of powerful institutions of society. He proposed a new radical method to overcome such problems, which he called conscientization (1992, 1995 cited in Grabill, 2001, p. 28). Unfortunately, for those who advocate a struggle against the dominant discourse, Gee (1990) points out that the dominant discourse determines how the resources of a community are allocated. Therefore, contesting this dominant discourse excludes you from the mainstream resource distribution system in the community.

Quadrant 'C' consists of the mind (internal) and contextual theories of literacy. This quadrant brings together the socio-cognitive theories of literacy. For these theorists, there is no fundamental difference between oral and literate practices. According to Grabill (2001), Brandt is a typical theorist in this category. As Grabill (2001, p. 29) explains, theorists in this category see literacy as involvement and seek to "understand how readers and writers do reading and writing together." According to Brandt (1990, pp. 7, 38, cited in Grabill, 2001, p. 29), literacy as involvement is about "'knowing what to do now' in the process of making meaning through reading and writing". In this process, the writers construct a mental picture of the expectation of the reader. This is the cognitive part of this theory. On the other hand, the process of constructing the reader is influenced by the rules that govern social communication between people in a particular relationship. That too constitutes the contextual aspect of the theories in this category. Therefore, an awareness of the discourse conventions of the community is necessary for effective communication to take place. This attention to the discourse practice of the community removes the emphasis from the text and places it in the practice of the community (context) within which the reading and writing is taking place. The awareness of the discourse practice of the group constitutes the social part of theories in this category.

In the above section, I only dealt briefly with Quadrants 'B' and 'C' because in my view they are not as relevant for this study. In the next section I turn to Quadrant 'A' the autonomous model and Quadrant 'D' the social cultural model. As I stated earlier, these are the most relevant for this study.

2.4 The autonomous model of literacy

The autonomous model of literacy is one of the major theories selected for a detailed discussion in this thesis because it is against this theory that the social practices theory of literacy came up as a challenge (see Street, 1984). Explaining the autonomous model of literacy is therefore important in understanding the social practices theory of literacy.

In Grabill's (2001) taxonomy, the autonomous model of literacy is presented in Quadrant 'A', the autonomous and mind (internal) quadrant (see p. 22). Sometimes theorists in this category are referred to by their critics as the 'Great Divide' theorists (Baynham, 1995; Prinsloo, 2005; Street, 1995). In this thesis, I have used only the term 'autonomous model' to refer to the 'Great Divide' theory or the cognitive theory of literacy and any other names used to refer to this group of theories. According to Grabill (2001, p. 22), the literacy theorists in this category focus on "literacy itself" and explain literacy in relation to the mind/cognition in ways that account for cognitive and historical development that humans are said to have experienced over the years. Because of their concern about literacy and the mind, theorists in this category are said to think more about literacy as an individual skill, and emphasise the changes that individuals experience when they learn how to read and write or acquire, the "technology of the intellect" (Goody, 1968a, p. 1). This change, according to this theory, provides the individual with a new way of experiencing the self and the world. To become literate, according to this theory, only means being able to read and write without considerations of the contexts in which the skill of reading and writing is to be used.

Furthermore, according to Holme (2004) theorists within the autonomous model of literacy say literacy is responsible for the cognitive differences between individual literate and non-literate people. Literacy, they argue, fosters abstract, logical, critical, analytical, rational, and postoperative (abstract) thinking. For that reason, literate and non-literate people are believed to think in fundamentally different ways, and thinking in non-literate cultures is seen as inferior to thinking in literate cultures. Therefore, literate people in literate societies are intellectually or cognitively superior to non-literate people living in non-literate societies. Because of this focus on the mind, theories in this category are sometimes referred to as the 'cognitive theories of literacy'.

Apart from this specific focus on the cognitive consequences of literacy, the theorists in this category are also known for focusing on the consequences of literacy on society. These consequences are said to account for the "differences between oral and literate societies and cultures" (Grabill, 2001, p. 23). According to Goody (1968b), and Goody and Watt (1968), with whom the 'Great Divide' theory of literacy is associated, literacy is responsible for the large-scale historical, economic, and social changes in society, such as the growth and development of human civilisation. They argue that literacy enables the accumulation and evaluation of knowledge in ways that lead to the development of new methods of solving problems. Literacy is then a prerequisite for civilisation or modernity. Oral societies are said to be backward because they do not have the ability to accumulate

and evaluate their knowledge and that consequently reduces their ability to make progress in knowledge, because oral presentation of knowledge does not have the capability of reproducing knowledge for analysis and inspection (Havelock, 1982, cited in Grabill, 2001). Literacy is, therefore, said to be the basis for the 'Great Divide' between oral cultures with little or no use of literacy and literate culture with fuller use of literacy in the form of reading, writing, and print (Gee, 1990). Within this theoretical framework, oral cultures are said to be intellectually inferior to literate cultures (see Lyster, 1992).

The educational psychologists within the autonomous model of literacy are concerned with explaining why children from 'oral' backgrounds do not perform well in schools. They argue that students who come from 'oral' cultures tend not to perform well in school because of this background. This is something which Heath (1983) studied in South Carolina in the United States of America⁹. However, Heath's findings reveal that schools tend to be based on, and supportive of, the cultural practices of the well performing children thus accounting for their good performance compared to those children who come from backgrounds whose cultural practices are alien to the cultural practice promoted in the school.

According to Havelock (1982 cited in Grabill, 2001), the fundamental argument that supports the autonomous theory of literacy is that written words have meanings that are independent of contexts and they resist individual and social interpretations. With this ability to resist both contextual and social influences, Havelock argues, literacy allows for an objective representation of the world. Oral discourses on the other hand are context-dependant, that is, they gather their meanings from the contexts in which they are produced and reproduced in ways that do not guarantee consistency in the meaning of the same utterance (Holme, 2004). For Havelock (1982, cited in Grabill, 2001) as a strong proponent of this view, "written language means distance and abstraction, while oral language marks the local and particular" (p. 23). Havelock is reported to argue that with the invention of writing, language was abstracted and separated from the authors and made available for inspection, reflection, and analysis. This then made possible written records that give historical sensibility, because "the pastness of the past ... can hardly begin to operate without written records" (Goody & Watt, 1968, p. 34; also cited in Grabill, 2001, p. 23)

Literacy research following the tradition of the autonomous model, investigates the effects of literacy on society and the individual. Research takes the form of historical

⁹ This study is reviewed in a later chapter of this thesis.

studies of the development of literacy and its effects on societies that used them (see Goody, 1968a, 1983, 1987, 1968b; Goody & Watt, 1968). The autonomous model of literacy emphasises teaching/learning the skills of reading and writing as the most important aspect of literacy education.

2.4.1 The practical application of the autonomous model

The autonomous model of literacy has, for a long time, been a major influence in literacy work. The Experimental World Literacy Programme is a good example of a literacy programme inspired by theories under the autonomous model of literacy. The concept of functional literacy which has been promoted by UNESCO since the 1960s (see Lind & Johnston, 1990), is inspired by ideas of literacy generated by the autonomous model of literacy.

Consistent with the literacy argument within the autonomous model, functional literacy emphasises issues of economic development, modernisation, and individual employability. Literacy under the concept of functional literacy is defined as “a set of skills that enable an individual to function better in the social economic areas” of their everyday life and community (Holme, 2004, p. 21). Becoming literate means acquiring the basic level of literacy required to perform a particular task and contribute to the economic development of your community (Venezky, 1990). Gray confirms this when he defines a functionally literate individual as a person who “has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enable him to engage in all the activities in which literacy is normally assumed in his culture or group” (Gray, 1956, p. 24 cited in Levine, 1986, p. 28). According to this view, literacy must have a practical use in the economic life of the literate person. Teaching literacy must, therefore, be accompanied by learning technical knowledge such as in agriculture, health and income generating activities to facilitate the process of achieving a “fuller participation of adults in ‘the’ economic and civic life” (Lyster, 1992, p. 33) of their community.

Since functional literacy is associated with the development of useful and productive skills, training in functional literacy is expected to lead to a general increase in productivity in the economy, and to individual development in terms of employability and growth in ones chosen career path. Literacy was, and still is, within the functional literacy circles, seen as something that enables individuals in their communities to use printed and written information to achieve their life’s goals. It enables a person to participate in the civic life of their country and hence practice good citizenship (Holme, 2004; Levine, 1986). Therefore, it links literacy to economic development and social change in society

and to the present and future work force needs of a country. That is the idea of human capital development, which holds that investment in human capital could lead to participation of adults in economic life and thus economic modernisation (see Lyster, 1992, p. 26).

The concept of functional literacy has influenced policy makers and literacy practitioners, especially in developing countries like Tanzania, Uganda, and international bodies like UNESCO, to see literacy education as investment in human capital with clear social and economic benefits. Therefore, training in basic skills is seen as adding value to the workforce in the economy. The teaching of functional literacy based on a minimum standard of literacy through universal primary education and remedial adult education was thought to be sufficient to eliminate the problems of illiteracy, and set the developing nations firmly along the path to a sustainable development (see Wagner, 1995).

Presently, the concept of functional literacy is re-emerging “as a way of describing the degree of literacy necessary to cope with the demands of society and the workplace” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 73). This development in the definition of functional literacy is seeing its revival and expanded use even in countries like Britain, the United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. These countries were originally thought not to require functional literacy. This shows that the idea of functional literacy is gaining new ground even in highly industrialised and developed countries, for the same reasons it is being promoted in the developing world. In these new areas, the concept of functional literacy is being used to help marginalised groups enter the mainstream economic and social values and practices of the dominant group in their societies by making them employable and/or productive through teaching them functional literacy. The best-known example of this new wave of functional literacy was the, ‘Right to Read’ literacy campaign in Britain (Lankshear, 1993).

According to Levine (1986) and Venezky (1990), the concept of functional literacy became prominent during World War II. That was when the idea of literacy for the purpose of employment, social integration, and adjustment became popular in literacy work. This concept emerged from the USA’s failed military recruitment exercise in which many people who came to join the service could not meet the basic level of literacy required to serve in the US Army. “The US Army defined as illiterates, ‘persons who were incapable of understanding the kinds of written instructions that are needed for carrying out basic military functions or tasks’” (Harman, 1970, p. 227 cited in Levine, 1986, p. 26). From this idea, “the US Bureau of Census used the term ‘functional

illiterate' to refer to a person who had completed fewer than five years of elementary school education, on the assumption that this correlates with an inability to comprehend simple written instructions." This idea developed as functional literacy, which became important in organising literacy programmes that are assumed to respond to the functional literacy needs of individuals in their society (see Levine, 1986; Venezky, 1990).

2.4.2 Critique of the autonomous model of literacy

According to critics of the autonomous model like Street (1984) and Prinsloo (2005), this model of literacy is based on a culture-specific essay or schooled type of literacy, which emphasises standard literacy and seeks to see standard meanings coded in texts. They claim that this model has a narrow focus on texts and the skill of reading and writing, which limits the understanding of literacy to its traditional conception as the ability to read and write.

The autonomous model of literacy is challenged by some critics for its many wrong assumptions (Hodge, 2003; Corley, 2003; Gee 1990). Firstly, they argue that the model wrongly assumes that literacy is ideologically and culturally neutral, when it is not. Secondly, it assumes that non-literate people are intellectually inferior to literate people. Thirdly, that texts are able to fix meaning across place and time and this meaning is the same in all situations. Fourthly, that society is static, and does not change with time, yet these changes can also change the literacy demands of different societies (Hodge, 2003). Fifthly, it is criticised for linking literacy to social and economic development, by assuming a causal relationship between literacy and socio-economic development when it does not exist. Protagonists of the ideological model with its social practices theory of literacy (Corley, 2003; Gee, 1990) seriously challenge these inflexible features of the autonomous model.

Contesting the positive link between literacy and development claimed by the autonomous model, Graff (1981, cited in Holme, 2004) argues that there is no convincing evidence to support this link between literacy and socio-economic development in nineteenth century European and American lives. In this period, some people with low levels of literacy had a high occupational status and some literate people occupied lower occupational positions. From that study, Graff concluded that, "Literacy cannot be identified as a major and consistent factor which determined occupational status", instead gender, race, and social background are responsible for different occupational positions in society (Holme, 2004, p. 22). At the national level too, Graff's study found no historical evidence to link increases in literacy levels to economic growth. Instead, economic

development led to increased levels of literacy, because a society with greater use of technology could start making greater demands on education and literacy for its workforce. To support the view that literacy does not lead to development, Graff cites the example of Scandinavia, which pioneered a successful mass literacy campaign that did not translate into a clear economic benefit (Holme, 2004). Graff's findings, in my view, are the only valid argument against Goody and Watts' (1968) claims about the consequences of literacy on society.

The autonomous model of literacy is also criticised for looking at literacy as a technical skill or a set of competencies. Protagonists of the social theory of literacy, Street (1995), Gee (1990) and Barton (1994), contest this idea of literacy as a skill and claim that literacy is not a single set of competencies but different social practices embedded in different social institutions and ideological practices of the people and institutions using it. It is more than the skill of reading and writing. It includes having the knowledge of how reading and writing is used in different social contexts and/or situations. That is, knowledge of the rules governing the use of written communication in different contexts. This view of literacy rejects the idea that literacy is a single neutral technical skill that is uniformly used in every context.

According to Kozol (1985, cited in Lankshear, 1993) the autonomous model of literacy as manifested in functional literacy dehumanises people because it sees people as a means to an end. These ends are economic efficiency and social cohesion. By emphasising economic development and its human capital development ideas, functional literacy reduces human beings to mere objects of economic production, instead of exalting humans as the end of all human endeavours and productive processes. Literacy programmes based on the autonomous ideas of literacy leave people at the level that makes them easier to exploit for the benefit of the dominant class. This is a viewpoint that does not encourage social justice.

2.5 The ideological model/the social practices theory of literacy

Quadrant 'D' in Grabill's (2001) taxonomy of literacy theories, (see p. 22), consists of the social-cultural and contextual model of literacy. This is what Street (1984) calls the ideological model of literacy. In this model, as already stated above, literacy is a social practice that differs from one context to the other. Sometimes this model is referred to as the New Literacy Studies (NLS) model. For consistency in this thesis, I use the social practices theory of literacy to refer to ideas of literacy in this category.

As stated in the introduction to Chapter Two (section 2.1) above, this social practices theory of literacy is the theoretical framework used in this study of rural community literacy practices in Bweyale. Below I attempt to trace the philosophical origins and background of this theory of literacy, before presenting the theory in detail. I also summarise the key concepts that make up this social practices theory of literacy. I then review some of the major criticism of this theory.

2.5.1 Philosophical trends that gave rise to the social practices theory of literacy

The theoretical framework used in this study is an application of postmodernism or post-structuralism on literacy thinking. According to Holme (2004, p. 37) postmodernism as “an intellectual movement that has influenced the study of art, architecture, sociology, philosophy and literature during the later half of the twentieth century,” started as a reaction against the single model of culture promoted by modernist thinkers. In the 1980s, this movement became crystallised as a recognisable discourse of postmodernism (see Beck, 1993).

Postmodernism is a philosophical movement away from, and a rejection of, the grand meta-narratives or universal narratives, traditions, and authority to the espousing and celebration of small localised or mini narratives and small practices (Klages, 2003). In other words, postmodernists replace meta-narratives by focusing on specific local contexts as well as the diversity of human culture and experiences (Wikipedia, 2006b). The discourse associated with postmodernism "has such features as challenging of conventions, the mixing of styles, tolerance of ambiguity, and emphasis on diversity, acceptance and indeed celebration of innovations and change, and stress on the constructedness of reality" (Beck, 1993, p. 2). The philosophy of postmodernism is anti-foundationism, anti-reificationism and anti-universalism (rejection of universal truth).

The main argument of postmodernism is that there is no objective reality. “No longer should we see ourselves as seeking to uncover a pre-existing reality; rather, we are involved in an interactive process of knowledge creation” (Beck, 1993, p. 5). In postmodernism, all that we see and do is part of our own creation depending on our needs interests, prejudice, and cultural traditions. Therefore, human context is very important in understanding human activities, because it is what shapes human activities as much as they are shaped by it (Beck, 1993; Grassie, 1997; Klages, 2003).

The recognition of the value of human contexts as shaping human activities in the study of literacy started with the works of Scribner and Cole (1981) and Street (1984). These works led to the development of the social practice view of literacy over the last two

decades. The social practices view of literacy was a move away from a “psychological or autonomous model of literacy as a set of skills to one which includes the socio-cultural practices associated with reading and writing” (Hamilton, 2000, p. 1). This move is characterised by a rejection of the cognitive meta-narrative in literacy as popularised by Goody (1987) and Ong (1982), what Gee (1998, p. 4) refers to as “cognitivism” which “saw ‘higher order thinking’ and ‘intelligence’ as primarily the manipulation of ‘information’ (‘facts’) using general (‘logical’) rules and principles. Fact and ‘logic’, not affect, society, and culture, were emphasized”. As already stated earlier in sections 2.3, and 2.4, this is what Street (1984) refers to as the dominant, autonomous model of literacy. The social practices theory of literacy sees literacy as an ideological practice embedded in the human contexts and experiences within which it is used and which therefore does not have universal meaning. The meaning of literacy is constructed in different societies and settings (Street, 1995). Literacy in this view cannot be understood without its social, cultural context of use (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanič, 2000).

To conclude this discussion, the salient features of postmodernism in this theory of literacy are its rejection of universalism and reification of literacy and its emphasis on the importance of human contexts and experiences in understanding literacy. As Gee (1998, p. 4) puts it, this theory was also a “reaction against the behaviourism of the early part of this century and the cognitive revolution of the 60s and 70s that replaced behaviourism, both of which favoured the individual mind.” In my view, the social practices theory of literacy fits within the postmodernist philosophy.

2.5.2 Background to the social practices theory of literacy

The postmodernist philosophical framework, with its emphasis on human context in understanding phenomena, encourages the application of ethnographic methods of research in the study of literacy. The body of knowledge that has been assembled because of the application of ethnographic methods of research in the study of literacy has led to the development of the social practices theory of literacy. This development started in the early 1980s, and over the last twenty years it has been refined as a new focus in the study of literacy (see Gee, 1998; Hamilton, 2005; Street, 2001).

It is not exactly clear when the first reference to the social approach/perspective on literacy as, ‘The social practices theory of literacy’ was made. My review of the literature on this approach reveals that the formulation was applied by Barton and Hamilton (1998, p. 6) when reporting their study of local literacies in Lancaster, England. In 2000, they again use the same term (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 7). In 2001 Papen (2001, p. 41)

also used it. Before this identification, the social perspective on literacy was referred to variously as the 'ideological model of literacy' (Street, 1984), 'social literacies', 'investigating literacy in social contexts', 'literacy as situated social practice', and 'researching literacy as social practice' (see Baynham, 1995), and "the social uses of literacy" (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996a, pp. 24-29). In 1998, Barton and Hamilton used the term 'local literacies' and Street (1995) talked about 'social literacies'. By 1995, the social practices approach to literacy was taking shape as a model, or a different and identifiable theoretical model that could be used by literacy researchers in the study of literacy.

According to Kim (2003), this theory is one of the major theoretical frameworks in literacy research. According to Street (2003b, p. 1), it now "represents a new tradition in considering the nature of literacy, focusing not so much on acquisition of skills, as in the dominant model, but rather on what it means to think of literacy as a social practice."

2.5.3 The social practices theory of literacy

According to the social practices theory of literacy, literacy is a social activity affected by human relationship:

Literacy is primarily something people do; it is an activity, located in the space between thought and text. Literacy does not just reside in people's heads as a set of skills to be learned, and it does not just reside on paper, captured as texts to be analysed. Like all human activity, literacy is essentially social, and it is located in the interaction between people (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 3).

Literacy is a "social practice embedded in specific contexts, discourses and positions" (Street, 1996, p. 1), and it derives its values, attitudes and meanings from the social institutions in which they are embedded. As mentioned in section 2.2 above, different social institutions and relationships support different literacy practices, which they shape and are in turn shaped by the literacy within them. "What counts as literacy varies depending on the people using it and the social political context within which reading and writing take place" (Papen, 2001, p. 41). Each society has its own literacies or literacy practices constructed around its own culture and each literacy domain produces its own literacy practices that are tailored for the communicative practices that take place within that domain or social and economic formation (Mpoyiya & Prinsloo, 1996). For example, institutions like schools, hospitals, churches, and taxi operators have their own distinct ways of using reading and writing that are developed and suited for their kind of activities (see Prinsloo & Breier, 1996b; Mpoyiya & Prinsloo, 1996). Street (1993) further explains that according to the social practices theory of literacy, making meaning through literacy

is constructed through social processes or relationships for very specific purposes and specific purposes promote specific literacy practices and ideology associated with it. Unlike UNESCO's perspective, the social practices theory of literacy is concerned with what people do with literacy and not what literacy can do for people, and how literacy is used in different contexts of social and economic life, and not how literacy leads to social and economic transformation of poor, preliterate communities.

Although literacy practices differ from one context to the other, this does not mean that every context or society has its own form of static literacies, because these contexts change over time and so do the literacy practices within them. Therefore, literacies in all contexts are under a continuous process of reconstruction and negotiation. It is not a static concept, but an ideologically dynamic concept and these changes cause members to continue learning new literacy practices to cope with the changes in their contexts of literacy. Kell (1996), for example, provides a good example of how change in discourse affected a woman who was acting as a literacy mediator during the South African liberation struggle years. The woman, Tsotso, functioned well as a literacy mediator, during the years of struggle against apartheid. She had developed and perfected her 'print management skills' (Klassen, 1991) which she used to serve her community within the discourse of the anti-apartheid struggle. The changes that came with the end of the apartheid era brought in a new discourse of development and reconstruction that her print management skills (literacy practices) were not sufficient to deal with. She was redefined as an illiterate and had to join a night school to learn reading and writing to enable her to participate in the development and modernisation programmes of the new democracy. Prinsloo (2005) introduces the concept of 'variable literacies' to capture this aspect of variability in literacy practice over time and place.

According to the social practices theory of literacy, literacy is implicated in power relations within society, in terms of ideological influences that make some literacies more powerful than others (see Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Baynham, 1995; Crowther et al., 2001; Parry, 2000a; Street, 2005). Gee (1990, p. 27) argues that "any view of literacy is inherently political (in the sense of involving relations of order and power among people)." In most cases, the literacy practices of those in mainstream society tend to be dominant over and above the literacy practices of some minority groups.

Furthermore, according to the social practices theory of literacy, it is not enough to learn how to read and write without the knowledge required for using the skill in culturally and

ideologically specified contexts (Scribner & Cole, 1981). This knowledge is the discourse practice of a group in a particular context. Learning or fluent control over this discourse is important for using literacy in the contexts that are defined by that particular discourse. A discourse is a socially accepted way of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or social network (Gee, 1990). It is a shared realm of making meaning in a defined social group or institution.

Literacy, as a secondary discourse involving the use of print (see Gee, 1990, pp. 137-193), may draw patterns of making meaning from the group's primary discourse. It is, therefore, subject to the rules that regulate making meaning in the group. The group's primary discourse is its original communicative repertoires that are used in ways specific to the functioning of the group. These repertoires are fashioned by the group's survival and communicative environments. The group's communicative repertoires also fashion how language and literacy are used to create and communicate meanings in a way that promotes and serves the interest of the group. The group's mode of survival in this case determines how the group uses literacy in their everyday lives to sustain their existence. Therefore, teaching literacy as if it is a neutral technology has the danger of introducing a different discourse that may not find meaning in the real life of the learners (see Gee, 1990). However, a careful reading of the literature reveals that it is possible to learn how to read and write in different contexts with completely different discourses and still be able to transfer the literacy knowledge and skills for use in other contexts (see Kulick & Stroud, 1993; Street, 1984).

As a theory that arose in opposition to the dominant autonomous model of literacy discussed above, the social practices theory of literacy rejects all the major claims of that model, especially the idea that literacy leads to social and economic development and modernisation. It also rejects the view that literacy is a neutral technology and argues that literacy is ideological.

Basically, the social practices theory of literacy takes a "socio-cultural approach to examining literacy as it is acquired and used by members of various cultures in relation to structures of power and authority" (Kim, 2003, p. 1) in their communities. The basic tenets of the social practices theory of literacy are summarised by Barton and Hamilton (1998, p. 7) as follows:

- literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events mediated by written texts;

- there are different literacies which are associated with different domains of life;
- literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others;
- literacy is purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices;
- literacy is historically situated;
- literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making

Barton (1994, pp 34-35) provides a similar summary of these basic tenets of literacy as social practice. In the summary, Barton emphasises the specificity of literacy in social contexts and relationships, with a past, an attitude and values all of which inform people's behaviour in producing texts in different social and economic contexts. He also mentions that, "Literacy is a symbolic system used for representing the world to ourselves. It is part of our thinking. It is part of the technology of thought." Although this part of the earlier summary was left out of their 1998 summary outlined above, it is like an endorsement of the cognitive '*consequence*' theory of literacy (see Ong, 1982) against which the theory came up as a challenge.

The social practices theory of literacy, with its new perspective on literacy, refocused the study of literacy from:

- concern about the technology of literacy to literacy in social relationships;
- literacy instruction to literacy use in context;
- concern for individual literacy skills to literacy practices in context (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996b);
- search for universality to investigating available choices in specific societies;
- the study of how literacy instruction affects people to how people are affecting literacy and how this should relate to instruction (Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1993a)

In sum, the social practices theory of literacy focuses attention on, and values the technology, more than the uses, of literacy.

In taking the focus outlined above, a study of literacy involves a study of the social relations that influence literacy. This change in focus presents a new dimension in the study of literacy that popularised the use of ethnographic methods and case studies that can handle the study of social relations in different contexts of literacy (Baynham, 1995).

2.5.4 Key concepts in the social practices theory of literacy

In this section, I review some key methodological and analytical concepts in the social practices theory of literacy. Although these concepts have not yet been refined (Street, 2000a), the volume of work accomplished using these concepts is great, for example see works edited by Barton and Hamilton, Prinsloo and Breier and Street (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996b; Street, 1993a; Street, 2001). These key concepts or notions are: 'literacy practices', 'literacy events', 'literacy domains', 'literacy networks' and 'literacy mediators'. Other concepts include 'literacies' as opposed to 'Literacy'. Associated with these are the concepts of 'multiple literacies', and "multi-literacies" (Baynham, 1995, p. 40; Street, 1984). The use of these concepts in literacy study started in the 1980s. After 1995, the advocates of the social view of literacy started putting together the different ideas generated by different studies in social literacies to build the social practices theory of literacy as a major theory in the field of literacy study (Barton, 1994). The latest conceptual development in the social practices theory of literacy seems to be coming from Prinsloo (2005), who introduces the concept of 'variable literacy' to describe how literacy changes in both time and place. This concept seems to be an alternative to the concept of 'situated literacy'.

2.5.4.1 Literacy practices

To articulate the concept of 'literacy practices' I start with an explanation of the word 'practice'. This word 'practice' is used in identifying the theory of literacy as a social practice and it is central in the concept of 'literacy practices'¹⁰. This concept of 'practice,' according to Glanz (2003), can be traced back to the social theory of the French cultural sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Barton (1991) traces the use of the word 'practice' to Scribner and Cole (1981, pp. 234-238) and Street (1984). Scribner and Cole explain 'practices' as "a recurrent goal-directed sequence of activities using a particular technology and particular systems of knowledge...they are socially developed and patterned ways of using knowledge and technology to accomplish a task" (p. 236). It is this concept of 'practices' that redirects attention from the technology of literacy to the sociology of literacy or the study of literacy in use. 'Practice' is therefore something that happens regularly or unfolds according to a repeated pattern (Holme, 2004). 'Practices' is the generic pattern in which any activity always occurs. Several dynamics, like the interaction between people and equipment create generic patterns in any activity. Words

¹⁰These are the recurrent ways of reading and writing that are associated with a particular group or community or "a broader concept pitched at a higher level of abstraction and referring to both behaviour and conceptualisations related to the use of reading and writing" (Holme, 2004). The details of this concept are provided below.

that are similar to 'practice' are 'tradition' and 'custom'. For any practice to be enacted, three things need to be put together. These are knowledge, technology, and skill. Skill in this case is the act or behaviours that are required to apply the knowledge (Scribner & Cole, 1981). Regular involvement in this activity will ingrain this practice into the thinking of the people involved, thus making it part of their communicative repertoire or discourse when dealing with that task.

If this understanding of practice is applied to literacy, it will be a repeated way of reading and writing in a recurrent literacy event (Barton, 1994). The knowledge of this practice will be that which is required to accomplish the activity or to participate in the literacy event. The technology will be a pen and paper or any other appropriate surface or media depending on the activity. The skill is the ability to read and write, and all that is required in the act of coding and decoding a language on/or from paper or any other media. Therefore, whenever and wherever this activity/literacy event happens again, the three (knowledge of activity, pen and paper, and skill of reading and writing required for that activity) will come together to reproduce the same generic pattern associated with that activity. This is because the dynamics of bringing the three elements together reproduce the pattern associated with the literacy event. This pattern then becomes the practice, which must be learnt by all those who engage in that particular activity, and from which they draw in any reading and writing associated with that activity. The talking that comes with the putting together of this activity and the pattern it reproduces, constitute a part of the discourse that informs the literacy practice that relate to that literacy event. As already discussed in many sections above, different activities generate different literacy practices or regular patterns of reading and writing that can be identified and associated with a particular activity and these practices in turn identify the activity.

When discussing the concept of practice above, the concept of 'literacy practice' was mentioned. This is the defining concept in the social practices theory of literacy. According to Street, 'literacy practices' refers to the "behaviour and the social and cultural conceptualisations that give meaning to the uses of reading and/or writing" (Street, 1984 cited in Prinsloo & Breier, 1996a, p. 18). It is the broader cultural ways of using literacy that people bring to literacy events and which give meaning to the events (Barton, 1991, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1998, 2000; Street, 2000a). Using the concept of 'literacy practice' is important for understanding literacy in different contexts, and how it relates to different cultural practices in different social and economic institutions in which literacy is used like schools, church and bureaucracy (Welch & Freebody, 1993).

Literacy practices are not observable units of behaviour because they "involve values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships...this includes people's awareness of literacy, constructions of literacy, and discourse of literacy" (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 7). Literacy practices consist of literacy events as their practical and visible manifestations. In other words, literacy practices can only be inferred from literacy events, because literacy practices are the ideological preconceptions related to a literacy event, which give it meaning (Street, 1993b).

Literacy practices link literacy with the social institutions/activities in which they are embedded. They define what people do with literacy. Literacy practices hold and define the discourse practices of the institutions with which they are associated. Literacy practices connect the different individuals in an institution into one community of practice (Gee, 1998, Wenger, 1998). In other words, it is what enables different people in one institution to communicate with each other within the same realm of meaning making. In doing that, literacy practice becomes a social process that mediates interpersonal social relationships beyond its communicative purpose (Herbert & Robinson, 2001; Hodge, 2003). "Membership in a community is partly defined by knowing and participating in these practices" (Barton, 1991, p. 8).

Literacy practices operate at different levels with sub-levels within a particular practice. For example, legal literacy practices are a combination of different literacy practices that are associated with different sites of generating legal documents such as compiling a police report, construction of courtroom records, interpreting and arguing the law and a host of other related activities in which such writing is involved. These legal literacy practices associated with the law constitute different practices that come together as legal literacy practice (Holme, 2004). This is best explained by the concept of 'community of practice' that brings together people of common interest within a single or shared communicative practice or a discourse community. Communicative practices are collective and related ways of making meaning in reading and writing to serve a particular purpose or realm of meaning making.

In a literate society, a single individual may participate in a number of activities supported by different institutions that give rise to different literacy practices. For example, as individuals move from home to the market and from the market to the church in the course of living their daily lives, they encounter different literacy practices in the process. Specifically, the individual will be engaged in different literacy events that fall under

different literacy domains (this concept of literacy domains is explained below) (Holme, 2004).

Literacy practices also change with time although they provide some measure of stability that limits extreme variation in practice over a short period of time (Holme, 2004). These changes are brought about by changes in technology, media or in the mode of production that take place in the institutions within which a particular literacy practice exists. When changes do happen, it means unlearning of old practices and learning new ones to ensure continued participation. Such learning may take place informally, non-formally, or formally. This makes literacy learning not a once and for all affair but an everyday life process (Brandt, 2001).

To study literacy using the concept of literacy practices is about understanding not only how people use literacy in their day to day lives but also, what they make of what they do with literacy, the value they place on it and the ideology that surrounds its use in accomplishing a particular activity. The concept of practice “implies both doing and knowing” what you are doing, it allows for the study of literacy in use, and as an aspect of social life (Baynham, 1995, p. 39).

Since the concept of literacy practices is responsible for reproducing the behaviour, format and ways of doing and understanding a given text genre¹¹ involved in a literacy event, it cannot be the basic unit of analysis in literacy research. Therefore, this concept of literacy practices can only be understood through inference, interpretation or observing literacy events that regularly unfold in people’s everyday lives in a given domain of literacy.(Barton and Hamilton, 1998, 2000).

2.5.4.2 Literacy events

The term ‘event’, which is included in the concept of ‘literacy events’, is derived from the socio-linguistic idea of speech events (Barton, 1994). Street (2000a) explains that Barton (1994) noted the use of this term in a study of young children at home by Anderson, Teale, and Estrada (1980, cited in Barton, 1994, p. 36). Ordinarily ‘event’ refers to a phenomenon located at a single point in place and time; it is a fundamental observational entity to which attention is drawn (Wordweb, 2005). Where literacy is involved, this phenomenon is a literacy event.

Literacy events are the basic unit of analysis in the social practices theory of literacy (Barton, 1991, 1994). They are "those occasions in which the talk revolves around a piece of writing" (Heath, 1983, p. 386). Anderson, Teale, and Estrada (1980, p. 59 cited in

¹¹ This refers to different forms of writing like poems, novels, academic articles (Grabill, 2001, p. 21)

Heath, 1983, p. 386) defined 'literacy event' as "any action sequence, involving one or more persons, in which the production and/or comprehension of print plays a role." This interaction usually involves talk and behaviours around texts or activities/actions in which reading and writing is involved (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Heath, 1983). The texts may or may not be present at the site in which the event is unfolding but they do affect the behaviour of the people involved in that particular activity.

Two types of texts can be evident at a literacy event; these are imposed and generated texts. Imposed texts are generated from outside the context of the literacy event and generated texts are produced during and within the context of a literacy event (Herbert & Robinson, 2001). In ethnographic studies of literacies, no distinction is made between the different types of texts.

Literacy events are observable activities. They can be photographed or videoed (Hamilton, 2000), and described because they are visible, distinguishable, and identifiable evidence/signs of literacy practices that shape/pattern literacy events (Holme, 2004). A clear understanding of literacy practices can be achieved through a close examination of literacy events in a given context.

Talking of literacy events locates literacy within a visible social context amenable to observation. As an observable element of literacy practices, it is what I focused on in this study of rural community local literacy practices. This concept has been consistently used and illustrated in works reported by Barton and Hamilton (1998), Barton and Ivanič (1991), and Hamilton, Barton, and Ivanič (1994). I also used the same concept not only in selecting phenomena for observation but also in guiding the data collection processes like interviews and photography during my fieldwork in Bweyale. This is discussed in Chapter Three.

2.5.4.3 Literacy domains

Another important concept in the social practices theory of literacy is 'literacy domains'. According to Barton (1991), the term 'domain' in 'literacy domain' has its origin in the study of language. Ordinarily, domains are arenas, areas, or fields of action (Wordweb, 2005). This concept of literacy domains is useful for understanding how literacy practices differ from one situation to the other. Domains, as used in the social practices theory of literacy, are the distinct social institutions that determine how literacy is used. They are "social spaces within which literacy practices are embedded" (Baynham, 1995, p. 68). They include schools, family life (homes/households), work, religion, public places and other institutions in society that give meaning to literacy (Barton, 1991, 1994; Klassen,

1991). Literacy practices are generated, supported, and sustained by different literacy domains. Literacy sponsors, these are those who organise literacy programmes, often promote literacy practices of a particular domain of social life (Brandt, 2001).

A domain is not necessarily a physical location for literacy events but places or social fields, which bring together a “variety of complementary actors who interact within a certain kind of social microcosm” in which different literacy practices are enacted (Glanz, 2003, p. 4). For example, school homework is still a school literacy practice within the school domain although it may be physically located within the family or home environment, while simultaneously constituting the literacy practices that go on in the home domain. These different domains exert different influences on literacy that are associated with them. Domains are definition-sustaining institutions, since they shape and give meaning to literacy events and practices associated with that particular domain (Barton, 1991; Baynham, 1995). The concept of a literacy domain is useful in identifying the different cultural and social influences in the use of literacy in a community, because different cultural practices define different domains, which shape literacy within them.

As definition-sustaining institutions, each literacy domain has its discourses that inform the use of literacy within it. These discourses shape the behaviour of participants in the domain in ways that facilitate communication between members of that social group and define their identity in relation to that particular domain of literacy. To gain acceptance and effective participation, participants must adhere to the discourse practice of the group for a proper and effective functioning of the group. New members are socialised into these discourses (Gee, 1990). For example, the school domain that often defines literacy has its own discourse to which participants must adhere if they are to be successful students or learners. If they do not comply, the school ejects them as failures. This is the same for the church and all other social and economic institutions influencing literacy in society. This, however, should not be interpreted to mean that each domain has a specific group of people, because, as already mentioned above, an individual may participate in different domains of literacy practices in a single day, for example from home to work or home to school (Holme, 2004).

Since literacy practices consist of many levels and sublevels as discussed under section 2.5.4.1 above, likewise, a single literacy domain does not contain only one set of literacy practices, but a collection of related literacy practices, which fall within one set of communicative practice, discourse community or communities of practice (Barton, 1994; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000). For example, in a school, different literacy practices exist

within the school domain. These are the literacy practices in the staff room, the classrooms and the Principal's office. However, all these different practices come together to constitute literacy practices in the school domain. Although there are these differences within a single domain, the concept of literacy domain is still useful for structuring and investigating literacy in different social contexts.

There are no clear-cut boundaries between different domains of literacy practices since they overlap. For example, it is not possible to say the religious literacy domain starts here, and ends there, and the school literacy domain starts and ends here. They all intersect and fuse into each other in a complex web of everyday life in ways that are not very easy to distinguish with measurable precision. For example, as already pointed out above in this section, the school literacy practice of doing homework at home is also influenced by the home environment and becomes part of the literacy events that constitute the home literacy practices in the home domain. Another example is the practice of carrying personal writing like children's cards and drawings to offices, thus mixing the office and home literacies. However, this does not mean that a distinction between the literacy practices which take place within the different domains cannot be made (Barton, 1994; Hodge, 2003). It is, however, only not possible to apply precise distinctions. Therefore, it is with such awareness that I used and discussed the concept of literacy domain to identify and separate the different literacy practices in Bweyale.

2.5.4.4 Social networks and literacy mediators

The concepts of social networks and mediators contribute to the social nature of literacy and therefore, to the theory of literacy as a social practice. These two concepts work together in tandem. Therefore, I have decided to discuss them together. Barton (1994) discusses social networks in relation to the different social roles people engage in to support each other with their literacy tasks¹². These roles are performed in social networks. Literacy mediation is one of the roles people perform for each other in social networks and that is how literacy mediation goes together with the concept of literacy networks (cf. Malan, 1996). However, literacy mediation does not only take place within social networks.

Referring to the works of Boissevain (1978) and Fingeret (1983), Baynham (1995) explains 'network' as an interconnection of social relationships with several zones beginning with the first order zone or primary network zone, moving on to the second and third zones. In the first order zone, the individual connects directly or personally to

¹² These are activities requiring the use of reading and writing skills.

members of his or her network. In the second order zone, the individual is connected to other members not known directly to him or her but indirectly linked to her or him through members of her or his first order zone and so on. Members of the social networks live interdependent lives (mutual dependency on each other) as opposed to dependant lives, which are characterised by one person depending on the other without reciprocating the support they are getting from their fellow members of the network (see Baynham, 1995; Fingeret, 1983).

These social networks are resource-sharing structures characterised by reciprocal exchanges, interdependency and mutuality (Fingeret, 1983). The social networks offer access to resources that an individual may require but not be able to access. This resource sharing includes the use of literacy skills. Such social networks, it is argued, make it unnecessary to develop every skill a member needs personally (see Baynham, 1995, p. 64; Fingeret, 1983, p. 134). In the case of literacy, individuals can use members of their network who can act as literacy mediators for them to fulfil their literacy needs, while they (the non-literate people) contribute other skills needed by other members of the network. Through these social support networks people are able to meet their everyday literacy needs and learn new ones (Barton & Padmore, 1991). These social networks may span the entire community with different members of the network being associated with particular literacy tasks that are referred to them as part of their roles and contributions to the social networks to which they belong. Within a formal network of social relationships, literacy is a community resource to which all members of the community are entitled regardless of the person who has this resource (Barton, 1994).

In social networks, the help of literacy mediators can be solicited when dealing with unfamiliar texts or any text for those who are not able to read and write. Literacy mediators are people who make their literacy skills available to others on a formal or informal basis to help them accomplish specific literacy tasks (Baynham, 1995). Literacy mediation takes place all the time, anywhere, anyhow in places like banks, post offices, markets, shops and roadsides (to read road maps and interpret directions on the ground) (see Barton & Padmore, 1991). These supports are not only solicited by, or extended to, non-literate people in social networks, but anybody who is not able to read and write or is facing some difficulties in comprehending a particular new variety of, or specialised, literacy practice or text genre with which they are not familiar.

2.5.5 Other important concepts for this study

In this section, I discussed the other important concepts in this study. These concepts are community literacy practices and the social context and community.

2.5.5.1 Community literacy practices

This is an important concept because this study is about community literacy. Therefore, an understanding of community literacy practices is useful. Community literacy is defined as the reading, writing, and numeracy that is carried out by people in different social contexts of their life as members of their community. In other words, these literacy practices are part of the social and economic life of a particular community (Community Literacy Project Nepal, 2004).

Community literacy is influenced by the different power relations, values, perceptions, different literacy needs and levels of literacy skills that exist in the community. Some people are more skilled than others; some are not interested in literacy altogether and do not see it as necessary in their life, others are simply excluded from participating in literacy by the form, format and language in which literacy is used, while others are involved in the dominant literacy practices in the community. All these mixtures constitute community literacy practices (see Community Literacy Project Nepal, 2004). Different social institutions in the community support different aspects of community literacy practices.

2.5.5.2 Social contexts and community

Context in this study of rural community literacy practices includes all forms of human activities in economics, politics, and social relationships that occur in it. This context is therefore not limited to that surrounding a literacy event. Street (1993, p. 14) refers to this expanded interpretation of contexts beyond that in which the literacy event takes place as the "wider parameters of context". How literacy is used and the role it plays in the functioning of the community was the focus of this study. This included the "production and interpretation" (Baynham, 1995, p. 4) of texts within the different social contexts of community life in Bweyale, and the power relations involved in the process of producing and interpreting texts.

The obvious social context for this study is Bweyale, a rural community in Uganda. Therefore, the word 'community' in this study refers to the people who live in Bweyale village. The concept of a community as used in this study refers to the geographical community. In addition, members of the community interact physically on a face-to-face basis with each other: depending on one another, using the same social, economic and

political institutions in their community; the same natural and social resources located in the community and having some common values or ideals that are important for life in their community. The members of the community have similar historical backgrounds. For example in Bweyale, discussed in Chapter Five, most members share a historical background of migrating away from their original homes to Bweyale. Crow and Allan (1994) refer to community as “the realm of ‘local social relations’, which mediate between the private spheres of family and household and impersonal, formal organisations” (cited in Barton & Hamilton, 1998, pp. 15–16).

The shared social institutions referred to above are the social, economic, political and administrative organisations established to serve the community. Examples of such institutions include schools, churches, and local administrative systems like the police and local council systems that are instituted in a community. Social values are the things that the community collectively agree are important and good for their day-to-day co-existence.

The concept of community in this study is not only limited to the descriptions I have given above. In this study, other uses of the word outside of what I discussed above exist, for example, as in ‘community of practice’ or ‘discourse community’ or ‘text community’. These usages are not restricted to the deliberate limitations I am applying to my conceptual definition of ‘community’ as a main concept in this study. For example, an academic community is not geographically limited and it can constitute a defined textual or discourse community. Therefore, in instances where this usage occurs, their meanings are qualified and/or should be interpreted within the context of that use and the meanings that surround them.

Another area of caution in the use of the concept of community is that in Western Europe, North America and Australia, this concept may conjure up pictures of what they classify as minority and non-mainstream groups like aboriginal indigenous groups, immigrants, and linguistic and other social minorities in those countries. These groups tend to attract a lot of research interest in those parts of the world (see Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Grabill, 2001). In this study, I dealt with a rural community in Uganda, where they are the majority. Ninety per cent of Uganda’s population is rural (Rwabwoogo, 2002, 2005). However, they are not the dominant social groups in the country.

2.5.6 Critiques of the social practices theory of literacy

One area of criticism against the social practices theory of literacy relates to the difficulty of defining literacy. While the traditional definition of literacy is criticised for its concern

with who is literate and what literacy should be for, the social practices definition of literacy is criticised for its silence on that same issue. The model, it is argued, is only preoccupied with the social uses of literacy and ignores the literate reader and reading as a solitary activity (see Gough, 1995). My understanding of this is that, although literacy is a social practice, it involves individual performance (reading or writing) in the social context. Therefore, the identity and role of that individual reader or writer needs to be recognised and acknowledged when analysing literacy in social context.

Geidt (1994) argues that the use of the word 'practices' in the social practices theory of literacy opens up the understanding of literacy into an infinite number of possible social contexts that have to be taken into account, because, "If literacy can be any social practice connected to the use of reading and writing or texts, it must include much of the modern world" (p. 7). In his view, the suggestion of plural literacies or literacy practices does not solve the problem of understanding literacy for improving literacy provision. Following his argument, if every activity or context were so distinct that it produced a very distinct literacy practice, then the purpose of literacy as a communicative tool would be lost, because different contexts and time lead to different meanings for texts.

Geidt (1994) argues that the social practices model holds a very pessimistic view of literacy by casting doubts on and rejecting the view that literacy is an enabling factor that leads to development, social and economic mobility, cognitive development, and civilisation. In doing that, the model seems to downplay the fact that illiteracy "handicaps the ability of people to change and control their lives" (Geidt, 1994, p. 1). By claiming that literacy is a social practice involving the use of social networks and literacy mediators, the model devalues individual literacy or literacy as an important aspect of private personal communication just like oral communication. It also creates a situation of power imbalance between people who are able to read and write and those who are not, in which those who are literate have more power than those who are not.

In the social practices view of literacy, non-literate people are not seen as disadvantaged members of their communities, because they belong to a resource-sharing network to which they too make a contribution that benefits members of their network and community. In this network people contribute different skills as equal members (see Baynham, 1995). It is true that non-literate people are able to obtain support from literate members of their communities. However, according to the findings of Klassen (1991) which were confirmed by this study, the non-literate members of the community do feel disadvantaged and powerless because they view literacy as a valuable aspect of personal

life, and they are not comfortable with depending on other people for all their reading and writing needs. They find such dependency not only inconveniencing but also embarrassing at times. This shows that literacy is still an important personal skill for which society must take responsibility to ensure that everybody is able to read and write for him or herself. The extreme arguments within the social practices theory of literacy are therefore not a very useful framework for addressing such problems as felt at a personal and individual level.

Gough (1995) challenges the social practices view that literacy is ideological and implicated in power relations in society. He argues that literacy has nothing to do with politics, because the fact that politicians use literacy should not mean that the study and teaching of literacy is political. He argues that although literacy campaigns have been driven by political motives as in Cuba in the 1960s and Nicaragua in the 1980s in which the primers were used to communicate political messages, it should not be taken to mean that literacy is political. He therefore concludes that the issue of literacy research and instruction should not be politicised. In this rendition, Gough has taken a very limited understanding of politics as something that is related to issues of state and governance only. The analysis ignores the other dimensions of politics, which relate to social relationships involving the sharing of everyday power and authority (Wehmeier & Ashby, 2004; Wordweb, 2005). The social uses of literacy model has implications for power and authority in social relationships (Bartlett, 2003).

Gough (1995) also challenges the idea that literacy is relative, by arguing that text is the same everywhere; it is the way of understanding texts that is relative because it is influenced by the reader's background knowledge. Gough (1995) based his arguments on the work of Brown (1991, cited in Gough, 1995). Brown argues that cultural relativism, from which literacy relativism seems to draw inspiration, has been seriously challenged by research that reveals that humanity has very similar cultures. Brown's argument notwithstanding, I agree with Gough's arguments because distinctions should be made between 'literacy', 'reading and writing'. In this case, literacy should always be seen in its broader sense including making and ascribing meanings to texts, while the productions of (writing) or decoding (reading) texts should constitute the technical aspect of literacy that is uniform in all literacy events. That is, a distinction should be made between the technology and the sociology of literacy. This study is primarily about the sociology of literacy.

Extending the relativism argument above, according to Gee (1990), contexts are not static situations because they are constitutive and co-constructed by the participants who are active in the literacy events unfolding in a particular context. This means that whatever takes place in a particular context will not reoccur because the combination of participants, their roles, time, and/or place will be different, and likewise the literacy event generated at that particular instance will be different. The literacy events draw their meanings from the created context that brings together both oral and written communication to solve a problem. Outside of that context of use, the text becomes meaningless or takes a completely different meaning and serves a different purpose. Literacy users are therefore in a constant process of generating and learning new literacy practices.

This argument of context being constitutive and co-constructed leaves the concept of literacy practices without a theoretical base for understanding literacy and or teaching literacy, because if literacy events cannot show observable consistency then there are no practices to be identified. Moreover, since the concept of 'literacy practice' is at the core of the social practices theory of literacy, the theory loses its basis for researching literacy. This is, of course, an extreme form of analysis because consistencies do exist within broad categories of similar activities that occur in some contexts with a high degree of similarity to permit the identification of social or literacy practice associated with them.

Another challenge to the relativity aspect of the social practices theory of literacy is that it romanticises local literacy in ways that seem to promote the exclusion of marginal groups from learning the dominant literacy practices of the mainstream or dominant groups in society (Street, 1996). The model, Geidt (1994) argues, advocates for keeping the status quo in society. Therefore, like at a personal level, reinforcing non-dominant literacy for non-dominant groups is a way of excluding the non-dominant groups by those who advocate local literacies that are not very relevant to the ruling resources distribution systems in society. According to Geidt (1994), romanticism gives value to local literacy practices that are not useful for modern life. By espousing local literacies, he argues, "The reality of a world where an ability to skilfully handle and create texts enables access to the dominant, technologically powerful, textually structured institutions of society is thus denied. This is an abdication of moral value" (Geidt, 1994, p. 13).

Gough (1995, p. 81) contests the view that literacy is a social activity. He says, "Ordinary reading, in contrast strikes me as one of the most private, unsocial things which people do. ... The act of reading, that is, literacy itself, is one of the least social of human

activities". In his view, social activities must involve other people like in conversation or watching a football game. According to him, it is also possible to separate a reader from the society that gives meaning to their uses of literacy and to assess their literacy skills. This analysis, of course, ignores the impact of socialisation on people's understanding of texts and the world around them even when they are alone and far from the society into which they have been socialised (Gee, 1990). It also ignores the fact that the assessment criteria, like those used in schools, are culturally based tools, which may not be good for assessing the literacy practices of a person from other cultural contexts (see Heath, 1983 for this line of argument). This omission weakens the Gough's (1995) argument for separating a reader and assessing their literacy skills.

The social practices model is challenged for its lack of practical applicability to literacy policy making and pedagogical practices unlike the autonomous model of literacy that has for a long time served as a basis for literacy policy development and pedagogical practices. The argument by some critics of the social practices theory of literacy like Kim (2003) is that it has failed to come up with a clear, concrete, and systematic procedure that can be used by policy makers and practitioners in the field of literacy education. Without these practical guidelines for implementing the social practices ideas of literacy in educational contexts, teachers will not be able to implement the social practices view of literacy in teaching literacy (Kim, 2003).

Even though it is possible to implement the social practices view of situated literacy in education, the idea of multiple or varieties of literacy practices or variable literacy as Prinsloo (2005) calls it, will still present some administrative challenges such as resource constraints. For example, teachers would need a lot more time to include the local literacy practices of the community in which their schools are located. Teachers would have to be trained in ethnographic methods of research to enable them to collect information about the different local literacy practices that take place in their students' communities. The school assessment and examination system and curriculum will need to be de-standardized and made more flexible to accommodate the many literacy practices that would be taught in the many schools or literacy learning centres in a country. These changes require many resources to implement and a flexible curriculum would be difficult to administer under a centrally control system of education (see Kim, 2003).

The social practices theory is criticised for over-emphasising the influence of local contexts on literacy. Deriving from the argument that literacy is ideological and not neutral, the advocates of the social practices theory of literacy do not take account of the

fact that literacy, for example in Africa, except Ethiopia and the Vai of Liberia, came from outside and it came with its ideology and functions. Furthermore, those who learnt how to read and write only did so in contexts such as formal school and the church, and these were foreign to African cultures. Therefore, it is difficult to talk of local literacy practices since such practices are not originally local. What exist are local appropriations of literacy. These local literacy practices are combinations of the foreign and local ideologies contained in foreign language literacy and the local culture. This may generate hybrid literacy practices, which are neither local nor foreign (see Brandt & Clinton, 2002; Street, 2003a).

In summary, while the social practices theory of literacy does have some weaknesses or flaws, as pointed out in this section, many of its theoretical proposals are still relevant for literacy research and practice. The most outstanding of these is the recognition of the influence of local contexts on how reading and writing is used in everyday life. This means that the teaching of literacy should take account of this contextual influence. While recognising the influence of local context on literacy, it is also equally important to note that literacy comes with some foreign influence to local contexts.

2.6 Ethnographic studies of community literacies

The social practices theory of literacy developed out of many ethnographic studies of literacy conducted over many years. The seminal studies that have contributed significantly to the development of this theoretical perspective were first, those done by social psychologists, Scribner and Cole, *The psychology of literacy* (1981) among the Vai people of Liberia, second, the work of Heath in the Piedmont Carolinas, *Ways with Words* (1983). Third was the ethnographic study of literacy by social anthropologist Street, *Literacy in theory and practice* (1984) in Iran, and the critical work of Levine (1986) in sociology. In this section, I review these three major seminal studies, and later in the section other studies that came after them and contributed to the conceptual development of the social practices theory of literacy, what Prinsloo (2005) describes as the second-generation studies.

The objective of reviewing the seminal studies is to look at what the different studies have contributed to the conceptual and theoretical development of the social practices theory of literacy. The other studies are reviewed to show how different scholars have applied this theory in literacy research. An attempt is made to point out specific contributions of some seminal studies to the understanding of literacy within the social practices theoretical framework. The review of seminal and major studies is organised under similar themes of

literacy and cognitive consequences, literacy and community life and schooling, and literacy and everyday community life. The seminal studies that are seen to have contributed significantly to a particular theme will be discussed under that particular theme.

2.6.1 Literacy and cognitive consequences of its use

Scribner and Cole (1981) conducted a study of the relationship between literacy and cognition. They were interested in establishing the cognitive effects of literacy by comparing three distinct groups of people using three different scripts and literacies among the Vai people of Liberia. These scripts and literacies were the Vai, Arabic, and Roman scripts. The Vai script is an indigenous script developed and used by the Vai people, and its use is learnt outside of the educational system. The Arabic script is learnt as part of Islamic religious instruction and the Roman script is learnt in formal schools. This setting provided the perfect opportunity for the study of the effects of literacy on cognition.

This study of the cognitive effects of literacy took account of the social context in which literacy was used, which was the everyday life of the Vai people. The Vai people developed a tradition from the mid 19th century of using the Vai script for ordinary everyday life and organisational purposes such as keeping records of their organisation and other pragmatic and cultural activities. These records consisted of lists of members, lists of dues paid and owed, lists of expenses, lists of clans, and lists of participants and contributions at a funeral, family correspondence, and business letters. They also use it for writing stories and proverbs (Scribner and Cole, 1981 cited in Goody, 1987, pp. 194-208). On the other hand, all religious matters were handled in the Arabic script. This included reading the Koran and the accompanying religious instruction. The English or Roman script was used for non-indigenous transactions, like school instruction. The use of these different scripts for different purpose also involved the use of different languages. The Vai script was used in the context of the Vai language, the Arabic script with the Arabic language and the Roman script was used for English, the official language of Liberia. In some cases, like in the Malodi Association, different people were assigned to each script. However, it was the activity that determined who used which script. For example, a person assigned to handle the financial record would use the Vai script; while a person with religious responsibility would write in Arabic script for most of the time (see Goody, 1987). Scribner and Cole (1981) took advantage of the existence of these different scripts and script uses to investigate the relationship between literacy and cognition.

Scribner and Cole (1981), according to Prinsloo (2005), drew from the work of Luria who studied the cognitive effects of literacy acquisition on some Russians farmers. Luria employed the same experimental research methods or the comparative cross-sectional research design, to compare three groups of people. These groups were traditional non-literate farmers, the participants of short-term literacy programmes, and participants in short-term teacher training programmes. Luria conducted psychological tests on reasoning and categorization. Findings from Luria's study revealed that there were graded differences depending upon exposure to literacy (see also Goody, 1987). In other words, there were many differences between the cognition of those who were able to read and write compared to those who were not and Luria concluded that the differences were a direct outcome of the ability to read and write (Goody, 1987). According to Goody's (1987, p. 205) rendition of Luria's study, writing enables "the organisation of intellectual activities in the user". However, Prinsloo (2005) notes that Luria's study did not control for other factors, such as the effect of participation in schooling that could possibly cause cognitive changes.

Aware of this gap in Luria's study, Scribner and Cole (1981) were concerned with making the distinction between the cognitive effects of literacy, schooling and social processes. Scribner and Cole used a similar experimental research method to Luria, employing "comparative cross-cultural psychological tests along with interviews and detailed observations of the community" to collect data on the effects of literacy on cognition among the Vai people (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 13). They studied the consequences of literacy in the three different scripts, language, and context. From their study, they were able to distinguish between the effects of literacy and schooling on the "Vai persons' cognitive, perceptual and conceptual processes ... abstraction, memorisation, categorization, and verbal explanation skills" (Prinsloo, 2005, p. 10). In their conclusion, Scribner and Cole (1981, pp. 251–252) clearly stated that "Literacy is not a necessary and sufficient condition for cognitive development. Therefore literacy is not a good substitute for schooling with respect to intellectual consequences" (see also Gee, 1990, pp. 56-59; Prinsloo, 2005). Therefore, being able to read and write was not responsible for the development of cognitive skills such as logic, abstraction, memory, and communication. They noted that what was identified as the cognitive effect of literacy in Luria's study was actually the effect of schooling, which improves people's ability to explain in a school related manner when giving answers to questions. Those who had been to school developed those cognitive skills, which were missing among people who had not been to school but were literate in the other two scripts. They found

that the people who had not been through the school system had developed different cognitive strategies (Scribner & Cole, 1981).

The contribution of this study lies in its disputing of the cognitive effects of literacy on individuals and re-directing attention to the effect of society's cultural practices on literacy. This opened up a new focus in literacy research leading to the construction of the social practices approach to literacy research. Their study noted social activities that shaped how reading and writing was used among the Vai people. Therefore, this new approach was more interested in investigating the relationships between social processes and literacy. From this study, Scribner and Cole (1981) introduced the central concept of literacy practices (discussed in section 2.5.4.1 above) in the social practices approach to literacy study. This turned literacy research away from texts to context, and from the individual to the society of which the individual is a member (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). What follows are a number of research studies that pursued this line of inquiry in literacy.

2.6.2 Literacy and community life in relation to school/education

Following Scribner and Cole's work in Liberia was a study, *Ways with Words*, carried out by Shirley Brice Heath (1983) in North America. Heath's study was concerned with finding out "the effect of pre-school, home and community environments on the learning of those language structures and uses which were needed in classrooms and job settings" (1983, p. 2). The study particularly focused on the "communities in which the children are socialised as talkers, readers, and writers" (1983, p. 6). Heath studied three different communities that she named as Roadville, Trackton, and Townspeople, in the Piedmont Carolinas. However, the concentration of the study was on the two working class communities of Roadville and Trackton. The Roadville group was a white, working class community with a long tradition of working in the textile-mills, and the Trackton community consisted of black, textile-mill workers coming from a long tradition of farm work. That is, their older generations were farm workers. The Townspeople were white and black mainstream groups of the region, and in the study, they were presented as participant researchers of the other two communities of Roadville and Trackton. All three groups had very distinct social and cultural practices although they shared in the commercial, political, and educational life of the Townspeople.

Heath (1983) refers to the method she used as, "Ethnographies of communication" (p. 6). This involved observations and conducting interviews during home visits, listening to and recording patterns of conversations in the communities where the children she was studying were "socialised as talkers, readers, and writers" (see Heath, 1983, p. 6).

Records and descriptions of different aspects of communication were made. This included the natural flow of life both in and out of class and in the community. She also studied the current ecology and history that influenced communication in each community. In this way, she was able to follow the children from their home to the classrooms.

She was able to gain entrance into the two communities because of her childhood experience of growing up in a mixed race (black and white) neighbourhood, in addition to personally knowing some members of the two communities. With this background, she had a lot of shared experience and similar unconscious habits of interaction. Therefore, the customs of both communities were very familiar to her as the principal researcher. She was able to live the ordinary daily life of the community she was investigating and avoided as much as possible doing things differently. Research equipment like tape recorders and other items that were not familiar to the community were not used until they became acceptable to the community as much as was possible. The data collection process did not interrupt the normal community life. As mentioned above, Heath used collaborative research methods involving some members of the community like the teachers in the communities she was studying. These teachers were part of her teacher-training programme at the University with whom she developed a research partnership.

Heath's (1983) findings in the Carolina Piedmont provide evidence for the existence of a variety of literacy practices in people's lives, and these differences are due to the home and community environment, and social/cultural backgrounds or socialization processes that take place within a particular community. These differences affect the way children learn how to use both oral and written language. The uses of texts are governed by the social rules that regulate the communicative practices in a particular community or group. In this case, the home and community literacy environments may be supportive of the school literacy and curriculum and vice versa. In her study, the school curriculum was based on, and supportive of the literacy practices of the townspeople. It therefore favoured the children from the mainstream townspeople and it enabled them to perform well in school reading and writing exercises. The children from the working class communities whose home discourses were different from that of the school had problems with learning the school-based literacy discourse. Heath's study shows that different cultural practices support different literacy practices. Therefore, for literacy learning to be effective for both adults and children, the teaching and learning discourses must be similar to that of the community from which the learners come (Heath, 1983). The significance of Heath's study was the development of the concept of literacy events

(discussed in section 2.5.4.2 above). This concept became a key concept in the social practices theory of literacy.

In Namibia, Papen (2001) studied the meaning and uses of literacy in and around the National Literacy Programme in Namibia (NLPN). This adult literacy education programme was implemented in all regions of the country. Although it was not overtly stated, the study was a critique of the policy and literacy perceptions framing the NLPN. She focuses on showing how the literacy programme is used to achieve the government's development and political agendas and how these positions are reflected in the government policy documents, the political speeches and the common perceptions of literacy held by government officials, learners and common citizens. These perceptions were played out through speeches and songs made during the National Literacy Day celebrations.

Using the social practices theoretical framework, Papen (2001) critically analysed the National Literacy Day event, the literacy policy documents, the curriculum and teaching materials used in the NLPN, and public and private speeches made in relation to the adult literacy education programme in Namibia. These secondary and primary sources of data were generated through class observations of, and interviews with, the learners and the adult literacy instructors, and documentary analysis of the government documents. In addition to using the social practices perspective on literacy, Papen (2001) also used the critical model of literacy associated with Paulo Freire to critique the NLPN.

Papen's (2001) findings show how the dominant conception of literacy (the autonomous model) as promoted by UNESCO in the 1960s, informs literacy policies and programmes in Namibia. This conception of literacy sees literacy as leading to economic, social, democratic, and cognitive development. She also points out how such conceptions of literacy hide the negative construction of non-literate people as people who are not able to make proper choices in life such as choosing the right leader and avoiding HIV/AIDS. She observes that these perceptions ignore "existing literacy and language skills, non-dominant literacy practices and prior knowledge" including informal learning conducted outside the formal settings (Papen, 2001, p. 51).

The literacy programme classes, according to Papen (2001), had a very strong school orientation, in terms of the dominant position of the teacher in the class, dependency on textbook knowledge and the nature of the exercises. The classes also put a lot of emphasis on developing the life skills of the learners. All these undervalue the experience and knowledge of the learners (Papen, 2001).

From the critical/radical literacy perspective, Papen (2001) observed that literacy discourse in Namibia has changed away from the original revolutionary and liberation ideology of the pre-independence struggle years to embrace the economic development ideology emphasising social and economic responsibilities and citizenship in the new Namibia. These, according to Papen (2001) and most of the protagonists of the social practices theory of literacy, are based on the influence of the dominant, autonomous model of literacy. In my view, the actual point for change was necessitated by the need to discourage critical and radical attitudes towards the new government as that may lead to dissension against the government among the population who could begin to question their performance. It was all right during the struggle years since they needed the co-operation of the people to root out the colonialist from Namibia.

In the United States, (US) Purcell-Gates, Degener, Jacobson, and Soler (2000) carried out a highly structured study investigating the relationship between two dimensions of adult literacy instruction and change in the everyday literacy practices of adult literacy learners and how this relates to children's emergent literacy development. Cast into the bigger dimension of community life, the question would be how classroom instruction in adult literacy classes relates to the social and cultural practices of the community from which the learners come and spend most of their time, or how classroom instruction affects the literacy practices of the literacy learners.

The research questions, which also reflect the two dimensions of instruction, were: "What the relationships are among (a) the degree to which adult literacy classes employ real-life literacy activities and materials; (b) the degree to which students and teachers share decision-making; and (c) changes in students' out-of-school literacy practices" (Purcell-Gates, Degener, Jacobson, & Soler, 2000, p. 9). Specifically, the two dimensions of instruction in these questions relate to (1) the authenticity of the instructional materials in terms of the real life experience of the learners and (2) the instructor/teacher collaboration. Authenticity was defined as the actual reading and writing activities in which the learners are engaged in their everyday life and not those designed for the purpose of teaching reading and writing (Purcell-Gates et al, 2000).

The data for this study were collected from three different sources using three different methods from 83 adult literacy classes in 22 states. The three different sources and methods of data collection were questionnaires with teachers, observation of classroom processes, and interviews with students. The findings from these three different sources were triangulated. The classes were given scores reflecting their measurement on the two

dimensions of instruction under investigation. These two dimensions of instruction were firstly, adult learners' use of real life and authentic materials in literacy learning and secondly, the extent of collaboration between learners and teachers during adult literacy education classes. The data on changes in the literacy learners' out-of-school literacy practices were analyzed from adult literacy learners' comments on a 173 question questionnaire about their home literacy practices that can be attributed to their literacy learning (Purcell-Gates et al, 2000).

The following conclusions were made from this study. Adult learners in classes that use real life (authentic) literacy activities and texts read and write much more and use a greater variety of texts in their everyday life. The extent to which literacy instructors and learners collaborate in the learning process has no influence on the everyday literacy practices of the learners. Those students who come to learning centres with lower levels of literacy skills and stay much longer experience more change in their literacy practices than those who come with higher levels of literacy and stay for a shorter time. Surprisingly, learners attributed their change in literacy to factors other than use of authentic real life material during literacy instruction.

From the findings of their study, the researchers recommend that teachers should use more real life materials and encourage learners to stay longer in class since this has a positive effect on their out of school literacy practices. Researchers are encouraged to investigate further the impact of different aspects of classroom instruction on the literacy practices of literacy learners (Purcell-Gates et al, 2000).

2.6.3 Literacy and everyday community life

In the same year as the study of Heath discussed above, Fingeret (1983, p. 133) reported another study carried out in the United States of America. This study contributes the concept of social network to the social practices theory of literacy. This concept explains how non-literate adults create supportive social structures to deal with the literacy demands of their life. Within these social networks, non-literate people develop a different "notation of dependency and independency" (Fingeret, 1983, p. 133), in which they see themselves as interdependent members of a mutually helping social network. The social network is characterised by mutuality and reciprocal relationships and social roles that involve sharing a wide range of skills between members of the network. All members of the network are treated as equal regardless of their literacy skills. From this study Fingeret advised that, adult "literacy programmes must learn to respond to adults in networks" (Fingeret, 1983, p. 133).

Fingeret used unstructured in-depth interviews and participant observation with 43 adults in an urban setting. She stayed in the communities she was studying “in order to understand how they viewed their social relationships and the role literacy played in their social world” (1983, p. 134). The population sample for this study consisted of both urban white and black North Americans who were not able to read and write at the time the data was being collected. The choice of the respondents to participate in the study was based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study, and their relevance as participants of the study. However, efforts were made to include a wide range of people with different educational backgrounds

In addition to contributing the concept of literacy networks, Fingeret’s (1983) study shows that in communities where literacy mediates many aspects of everyday life, non-literate adults in that community will develop different strategies to cope with the literacy demands in their life. These strategies include reducing the number of times they have to depend on other people to deal with the literacy demands in their life by developing what Fingeret calls ‘formulaic literacy’, a strategy that takes advantage of the format of a particular document like a regular telephone bill. Through learning the format, they fill in the information required by copying from other older documents without seeking help, and developing close working relationships with professional people who became their readers for technical documents like legal documents.

In Iran, Street (1984), a social anthropologist, conducted a study that contributed to the theoretical development of the social practices theory of literacy. This study was on literacy in two rural communities in Iran: Cheshmeh and other mountain fruit-growing villages, and the plains grain-growing villages. The concentration of his study was in Cheshmeh. From this study, Street identified three different forms of literacies in use. These were:

- 'religious literacy' with its base in the *Makhtab* Koranic School,
- 'commercial literacy' used in the fruit trade between the rural fruit farmers in Cheshmeh and the townspeople, and
- 'schooled literacy' of school children from urban schools in town

These three literacies had different uses in the community’s everyday life. The religious literacy in Arabic scripts was firmly based in the practice of Islam and used by the community in their religious life. This involved reading the Koran, praying, and for those who became Mullahs, teaching the faith. Learning the *Makhtab* literacy provided social

status and leadership opportunities in both religious and commercial life in Cheshmeh for those who were literate in it. In an extended argument, Street noted that, although the *Makhtab* literacy was based in Islamic religious literacy, it was not uniform across the Islamic faith. He noted that there were some varieties of literacies within Islam as much as there was a lot of variation in the practice of the Islamic faith. The different variety of the Islamic faith provided the ideological framework within which reading and writing could be learnt and used. According to Street, the Cheshmeh variety of Islam was flexible enough to allow for the learning and use of literacy outside of the practice of religious life. For that reason, the Cheshmeh religious students were able to adapt their literacy skills to commerce leading to the development of a new commercial literacy. Street says this transferability was a social and not a technical (skill) phenomenon as the autonomous model of literacy would like to claim. My reading of Street (1984) makes this seem to be an evasive argument that is not firmly supported by his presentation in most of Chapters 5 and 6 of his 1984 book.

Commercial literacy was used in fruit trade by ‘tajers’ (fruit traders). They used it for keeping various types of business records like credit records, payment records, quantity of fruit supplied by each individual farmer, business contracts with the peasant fruit farmers, labelling their crates, lists of suppliers and signing cheques. Commercial literacy was a development from the *Makhtab* religious literacy. All the ‘tajers’ were former learners of the *Makhtab* schools and they were the ones who were responsible for adapting the *Makhtab* literacy to commercial use.

School literacy was only used by the younger generation who were attending government states schools in town. These students did not have the social authority commanded by the older people who attended the *Makhtab* religious schools. Therefore, even though their literacy knowledge could be well suited to the fruit business, it was not widely acknowledge by the local community. The use of literacy in a community therefore requires some acceptable social authority in a community. The *Makhtab* literacy, unlike school literacy, had a firm foundation in the spiritual practices of the local community members and this made it readily acceptable for use in the context of everyday trade and the practice of religious life (Prinsloo, 2005; Street, 1984).

From his findings, Street (1984) concluded that literacy differs from one context to the other, and proceeded to develop the concepts of multiple literacies and literacy practices to explain this new approach in literacy thinking. It was from this study that Street came up with the autonomous and ideological models of literacy. This theoretical classification

generated a lot of debate and research around the concept of literacy as a skill and social practice thus leading to the articulation of the social practices theory of literacy. Over the last two decades, this view of literacy has been developed and refined and it is still undergoing further refinement (Street, 2000b).

There are many interesting lessons that can be drawn from Street's (1984) study. One interesting lesson that is not highlighted in later discussions or references to Street's work in Iran relates to commercial literacy, which was a development from the *Makhtab* religious literacy. Street noted that most of the 'tajers' were former *Makhtab* students who adapted the literacy skills they acquired from the *Makhtab* classes for use in the new literacy domain of trade and commerce:

...the 'tajers', who were the crucial group in enabling villages like Cheshmeh to cash in on the new economic circumstances, were able to achieve their successes partly on account of a basic knowledge of, and acquaintance with, forms of literacy acquired in the 'makhtab' (1984, p. 159).

This finding shows that literacy skills and knowledge gained from one context can be adapted for use in completely different contexts. This was possible because of the favourable social and economic conditions that existed in Cheshmeh and the other mountain villages to motivate them to adapt their religious literacy knowledge to take advantage of the favourable economic situation that existed for them. However, this does not negate the fact that the teaching of literacy must be based on content that is immediately relevant to the learners' everyday lives. In Iran, because religion was immediately relevant to the learners' lives, they were able to transfer the literacy skills and knowledge to another area that provided them with sufficient demand for the use of reading and writing to organise their commercial life.

The second interesting lesson not highlighted in Street's (1984) later work is in explaining the economic differences between the fruit-growing mountain villages including Cheshmeh and the plains grain-growing villages. Street says:

A significant factor in enabling villages with the infrastructural advantages I have noted to actually cash in on the economic possibilities provided by the 1970s boom was the fact that a number of them had previously developed specific literacy practices and skills. This basis in 'makhtab' literacy as I have described it ...facilitated the development of a new 'commercial' literacy practice and associated skills (1984, p. 159).

Street is arguing here that literacy *inter alia* facilitated economic growth for the mountain people, because it enabled them to take advantage of the economic boom of the 1970s compared with the plains people whose literacy was for religious purposes only. Interestingly, Street's (1984) position that literacy had a significant role in the

development of the mountain people supports the position of Goody and Watt (1968) whom he opposes, and contradicts the position of the NLS that literacy has no role in social and economic development (Prinsloo, 2005; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996a).

After these three seminal studies, there have been a plethora of similar studies in different parts of the world following the literacy research tradition set up by these key studies. In this tradition, literacy research focuses not on the individual but the community and their ordinary day-to-day lives. It's not possible to review all these studies in this work, therefore, I have selected a few that I consider most relevant to this study which is also based on the same research tradition. Several of these studies have been documented in books edited by Street (1993, 2001)

Barton and Hamilton (1998) conducted a similar study of local literacies in Lancaster. They analysed everyday reading and writing practices in the lives of people living in Lancaster. Their study was of "a mainly white working class community." The study covered communication between people in different contexts of everyday life at home, school, work place and the public domains. The study reveals that even within one context like the home, there are a wide range of literacy practices that apply to different purposes, experiences, roles, and values. For example, reading a recipe or cookbook in the kitchen is different from reading newspapers in the sitting room. These are different literacy practices in the home domain. The study also reveals that different contexts in people's lives overlap in a number of ways, e.g. workplace literacy practices being part of the home literacy practices and vice versa (Barton & Hamilton, 1998).

This study also provides details of the ethnographic approach used in the study of literacy as social practice. This approach brings together a diversity of research methods such as in-depth biographical interviews, observations, and historical studies of literacy. In their work, too, Barton and Hamilton provide a research approach that locates the study of literacy in both time and place (see Hodge, 2003). The time element of this study consisted of tracing the historical development of literacy in Lancaster to the time the study was carried out and contrasting the two (time and place) elements. The place aspect of the study was in locating the study in a particular location named 'Springtide' whose literacy practices they describe in detail in their work (Barton & Hamilton, 1998).

In South Africa, a group of studies funded by the Joint Education Trust (JET) was carried out following the social practices approach to literacy. The outcome of this ethnographic study of literacy-in-use in different contexts and communities in South Africa was a volume of work on the social uses of literacy edited by Prinsloo and Breier (1996b). The

primary concern of this study was to inform adult literacy education policies in South Africa. The study was motivated by concerns about the difficulties that were being experienced by literacy agencies in recruiting and retaining adult literacy learners in South Africa. The big question for the study was to find out why, if illiteracy is responsible for personal and social problems being experienced in South Africa, people are neither turning up for literacy classes nor completing in large numbers. The researchers speculated that there was a difference in the expectation from literacy between the policy makers and the social life of ordinary South Africans. In this mismatch, the policy makers see illiteracy as a major problem and assume a large demand for literacy education, and go on to encourage the launching of adult literacy education programmes for a large section of the population to fit this assumed demand. On the other hand, people are not responding with corresponding zeal to these adult literacy programmes, and they seem not to see literacy as one of their major priorities. The study therefore investigated the assumptions on which adult literacy policies are based and how these assumptions reflect the actual practices in the lives of ordinary South Africans (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996a).

They employed the ethnographic methods of research that are commonly used in the study of literacy as a social practice. This method involves the use of “concentrated observation over a period of time” (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996a, p. 24). The chosen focus for this investigation was the local literacy practices in different social contexts of South African life. The areas covered included literacy in schools, factories, the taxi industry and farms in South Africa's black and coloured settlements and townships.

One of the outstanding findings of this study is that a lot of informal learning goes on in people's everyday social interactions at work and in ordinary everyday life. This informal learning includes informal acquisition of literacy skills in everyday life activities and livelihood activities. They also discovered that people often work as a team in activities involving literacy. This collective involvement provides literacy mediation and learning through social networks of support in real life situations. The consequence of this finding was that there are actually more people who are literate in their own context of life than those reflected in national statistics and policy documents for adult literacy education in South Africa. The research recommended that adult education should move away from the conception of literacy and learning in terms of schooling to apprenticeship learning in real life situations (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996a). The South African study is particularly important because it highlights the disparity between adult literacy education policy and literacy learners' expectations and experiences of literacy.

In Papua New Guinea, Kulick and Stroud (1993) studied how the local people in Gapun village use literacy in their own ways. Individuals in a newly literate society, far from being transformed by literacy, instead actively and creatively apply literacy skills to suit their own purposes and needs. Literacy was introduced by the missionaries in Gapun. The missionaries believed that literacy would have a positive effect on the people in Gapun, in terms of the preservation of their language. Instead, the people of Gapun had their own perception of literacy that was being shaped by their culture or ways of life.

In Gapun, there are two dominant languages: *Taiap* and *Tok Pisin*. *Taiap* is an isolated Austronesian language spoken only in Gapun, and it is not yet written. *Tok Pisin* is an English-based Creole that is most widely spoken in Papua New Guinea. Since the 1950s, few members of Gapun have been nominally literate in *Tok Pisin*. With the introduction of the government-run grammar school in the neighbouring village in 1967, which was attended by most children from Gapun, English, the language of instruction used in this school, became the third language in Gapun. The children of Gapun were thus acquiring literacy in a language that was not used in daily life within their community. After learning literacy under very difficult condition of unfamiliar English language instruction, “the children are able, without any formal instruction, to transfer those skills to *Tok Pisin*, thus becoming functionally literate in that language” (Kulick & Stroud, 1993, p. 32). There are two transfers made in this case, first the transfer from English to *Tok Pisin*, and second the transfer from school literacy to everyday life. This finding raises questions about the relevance of insisting on a context and language consistent literacy teaching/learning model advocated by protagonists of the social practices model. If it was possible in Gapun, can it not be possible elsewhere?

On another note, Kulick and Stroud (1993) make for very interesting reading because, although they acknowledged that schoolchildren were able to transfer their literacy skills to *Tok Pisin*, they observed with some care that:

Outside of school, however, literacy skills are almost never used. Most boys and virtually all girls who became literate in school make almost no use of their reading and writing abilities outside the classroom, and after they leave school at age fourteen to fifteen, many of these young people may never read and will almost certainly never write again. There are only a few opportunities in the course of normal life to read and write. the only type of literature that regularly enters the village, for example is the Sydney Morning Herald, but which is purchased in loose sheets by the villagers and is used to roll cigarettes; it is never read” (p. 32).

In spite of the above observation, Kulick and Stroud (1993) were able to note that Gapunners do own “some printed matter which is occasionally looked at, and a few villagers do sometimes write” (1993, p. 32). They also noted that Gapunners do not read to

gain information about things that do not concern them. The objective of reading is to accomplish some immediate life task, “like confirming the words to a hymn, preparing to recite a prayer, reading a note one has been given, deciding to discover a heretofore concealed truth in a religious text” (1993, p. 33). Unless their understanding of reading, writing and information was different, I think, seeking to discover a concealed truth in a text is a search for information.

Likewise, writing also has a very specific purpose in Gapun. For example, they do not keep diaries for purposes of planning their daily chores, nor do they write letters to long distance relatives and friends for maintaining contact. The writing that is done in Gapun consists of mostly short notes that they write for very specific reasons like requesting a favour to use one’s dog for hunting. Other uses of writing include recording bereavements that take place in the village, and lists of names of some important people (Kulick & Stroud, 1993).

Most literacy events in Gapun relate to the practice of the Christian faith, in which they read religious literature. This is because literacy was introduced within the context of the Christian religion. The obvious text available for this Christian literacy practice was the bible, the prayer book, the hymnbook, religious calendars, and liturgical instructions – always written in *Tok Pisin*. In a small survey conducted in Gapun, most (97 per cent) of all the printed matter in Gapun was religious materials. Surprisingly, in spite of this predominance of religious texts, Kulick and Stroud noted that:

With the exception of the hymn booklet, which the villagers take with them to the mass and sometimes look in while singing, most of this literature is almost never read. Only printed matter containing pictures or line drawings is ever really looked at. Nobody ever actually reads the Bible, for example, but schoolchildren or an adult and several schoolchildren sometimes page through it together and comment to each other about the abstract line drawings of figures they find there. This paging through printed materials and commenting to one another about the pictures there is how the villagers often ‘read’ such materials (Kulick & Stroud, 1993, p. 36)

While it is true that, Gapun villagers did “take hold” of literacy and incorporated it into their communicative repertoire, they also associated literacy with European cultures such as the village prayer leader being “neatly dressed in a button shirt” and the “European-style window” of the believer’s house (Kulick & Stroud, 1993, p. 39). This is also supported by the strong link between literacy and Catholicism as reported by Kulick and Stroud (1993). All these go to show that literacy, in the conception of the Gapun villagers, is associated with modernity based on European cultural influences. This is a fact not emphasised by Kulick and Stroud who focus on the agency of the villagers in shaping literacy in their community.

However, the initiative of Gapun villagers can be appreciated by recognising a two-way relationship between the community and literacy. That is, the community was able to appropriate literacy into their local communicative practices while at the same time associating it with a new and modern cultural influence such as the Catholic religion and European style of dressing which are closely associated with literacy. This blending of literacy, Catholicism, European cultural influence and the local communicative practises, in my understanding, produced a new communicative practice, which is neither foreign nor traditional, but a hybrid of all the three phenomena.

2.6.4 Literacy and language

In Uganda, Glanz (2001a) described her study as “an explorative and descriptive study of the forms and functions of literacy practices in multilingual societies from a linguistically ecological perspective”. She used the social practices theoretical perspective or the NLS’s approach, to investigate everyday literacy use in different domains of literacy in Kampala and Mpigi District in Central region of Uganda. This was in Buganda and the main language spoken in this region is Luganda.

The focus of her study was the influence of language policy on literacy use of first languages versus lingua franca and/or official languages. Her second focus was on how, in what language and contexts, different social groups use written information, and finally to identify some cultural factors which promote or restrict multilingual literacy practices. To seek answers to these questions Glanz (2001a) used qualitative methods of collecting and describing data. These were interviews and observations of literacy events in different social contexts of life.

Glanz (2001a) groups her findings into 15 different domains of literacy use. These domains covered most aspects of private and public everyday life. Her second classifications were the social events in which literacy was being used. Each domain was broken down into several social event types. For example under private transport, she had the activities of a guide, ticket sales, customer complaints, message delivery, and passing waiting time. She also broke down the social events into literacy activities that take place in these social events. Therefore, the activities of a taxi guide involve them in the following literacy activities: registering of incoming and outgoing vans and buses in the park, distributing of tickets, reading portable signposts on vehicles. The languages in which these literacy activities take place were Luganda and English.

Glanz’s (2001a) findings reveal that the national language policies influence people’s choice of the language of written communication because such policies give that language

status as official language and language of instruction in schools. However, in Buganda, English is used for inter-ethnic communication between people from different linguistic backgrounds, and for official communication at national and international levels.

Luganda, on the other hand, is a language of everyday communication in Buganda. Glanz also identified several factors, which promote or encourage literacy use in everyday life. These included location, i.e. rural/urban. She noted that urban areas with their literacy-rich environments tend to promote literacy use. The existence or lack of literate facilities or institutions such as libraries, bookshops, schools, hospitals and churches also encourage or discourage literacy use respectively. The financial capabilities of the community, the amount of time available for reading and writing, and the general educational level of the community were some of the factors which, she noted, influence literacy use in everyday life in a community.

In Northern Ghana, Herbert and Robinson (2001) studied the relationship between literacy and language in a multilingual context. They raised the important question of the position of language in shaping local literacy practices in northern Ghana, which is characterised by high linguistic diversity. They were interested in finding out which language is used for written communication in the different domains of literacy practices and why, if both literacy and language are cultural phenomena that change according to cultural contexts, does difference in language mean difference in literacy practices. These and other questions related to the relationship between literacy and languages were addressed by Herbert and Robinson.

The findings of Herbert & Robinson (2001) show that in Ghana, most people speak more than one language and they may be literate in all these different languages. Accordingly, they use different languages for different purposes, and the choice of which language to use for a particular purpose depends on a number of factors such as the history of that particular event, the perceived power of the language and the role it plays in that communication practice or situation. This was very evident in the language of worship used in the Northern Churches where the language of the people who first brought the faith continued to be used even when the local language bible and prayer books were published (see also Probst, 1993). Different social meanings that are attached to literacy by a particular group also shape people's uses of reading and writing. For example, the language used for printing the local funeral and other traditional matters is the local language as this shows social identity (Herbert & Robinson, 2001). Formal letters are written in English even when the person writing the letter does not understand English. In such case, mediators are used to type out the letter like the scribe who sits at the Post

Office with a typewriter offering his services for a fee. Any person who intends to have a formal letter written for them would orally present the information to the scribe who then types them out in English and in the format appropriate for communicating such information. The scribe therefore does both the translation and the typing.

In economic settings, what Herbert and Robinson (2001) call, “Economic literacies,” English is used in employment, while the other languages are used for different economic purposes. Some people directly use their literacy skills to earn money by typing out people’s letters for them, for example, at the Post Office.

Literacy was also used in meetings, what Baron and Hamilton called, “Meeting literacies” (1998, p. 215), which consist of reading minutes, and agendas in English, and reading aloud of financial and progress reports in the local Deg Language, when the minutes have been taken in English. The talk around this meeting as a literacy event is in Deg, the local language of the Northern Ghana people. The translation of the minutes into the local language is done concurrently as each minute is being read. The language used in the meeting depends on the composition of the membership. For example, if there are government officials, then the whole meeting is conducted in English and translated into Deg. The choice of language use according to Herbert and Robinson (2001) is based on the perceived status of what is being written, therefore, formal letters and information like the agenda of the meeting are written in English. While this practice of language mixing goes on in the meeting, some elements of the traditional communicative practices are also employed in communicating what is considered important, and for which trust must be developed (Herbert & Robinson, 2001).

Other reasons for the use of local language literacy or English, includes the use of literacy in asserting one’s identity, keeping one’s privacy, and the need to correspond with a lover without the involvement of a third party. The practice of writing long essays in the local language is motivated by the need to communicate dialogue during disagreement and negotiations. People also paint proverbs in local languages on their bicycles and other vehicles. Writing, according to Herbert and Robinson (2001), is perceived to be a respectful way of communication among the Vaglas people in Northern Ghana, and they called this ‘personal literacy practices’. This includes, for example, writing a letter in traditionally appropriate ways and delivering it in a way that shows respect for the person who is receiving it (Herbert & Robinson, 2001).

Herbert & Robinson’s (2001), findings also show other modes of communication like making marks by women who sell beer to remind themselves about their debtors and

people informing their friends that they have gone ahead. Many other communicative symbols are used by people in different situations. For example, dressing in a particular way can be used to communicate some information in a community. These non-verbal and non-written systems of communication are part of the community's communication repertoire that are based on the cultural practices of the community.

In their study, Herbert and Robinson (2001) identified literacy use in all the six overlapping areas of literacy use defined by Barton and Hamilton as organising life, personal communication, private leisure, documenting life, sense-making, and social participation (1998, pp. 247-250). Literacy uses in all these areas were rooted in everyday experience that serves different purposes. These literacy practices “are informally and non-formally learned, (and) not usually supported by formal institutions, (therefore) less valued in Ghana by dominant cultures” (Herbert & Robinson, 2001, p. 134). The literacy practices also involve the use of different media and symbol systems (see Barton & Hamilton, 1998).

Herbert and Robinson (2001) make several conclusions about the relationship of literacy and language, as well as raising issues for further investigation. In relation to local language use and vernacular literacy, they conclude that local language literacy (i.e. literacy in the local language) might not be the same as vernacular literacy although the use of vernacular language in literacy gives rise to practices that are similar to vernacular literacy.

On the question of differences in language practices being responsible for differences in literacy practices, Herbert and Robinson (2001) conclude that different languages do not necessarily mean a different literacy practice because there are many other factors that account for differences in literacy practices. These different factors include cultural and customary differences, historical differences and differences in external political influences. Although these factors may be carried and symbolised in languages, they are not caused by them. Therefore, differences in literacy languages have very little to do with differences in literacy practices. Surprisingly, they found that personal local language literacy practices are similar across language differences.

They also found that local languages in Ghana contrast with literacy in English much more than with each other. This is because English is a language of power and higher social status in Ghana as in most post-colonial African countries. Local language literacies are in common use at the grassroots level and for personal, non-institutional purposes.

Another study focusing on language use and literacy practices within the context of community development was conducted by Aikman in Peruvian Amazonia. Specifically this study was about literacy and development in a bilingual society in South-Eastern Peru (Aikman, 2001). Aikman's study "examines different and contested development discourses and practices and the conceptualisation of and expectation for literacy embedded in them" (2001, p. 103). This shows how different discourse-bearing contexts in community life influence the conceptualisation and motivation for literacy and how it is used in the everyday life of the community.

Aikman (2001) undertook her investigation of literacy and language use among the indigenous Harakmbut people through an examination of three antagonistic development conceptualisations in Madre de Dios. These three development conceptualisations are: (1) the church's development practices aimed at civilising the indigenous people and integrating them into the mainstream life style through education and production, (2) the government's neo-liberal economic policies' aims of exploitation of the natural resources on which the indigenous people depend for their livelihood, (3) the indigenous people's self-development conception set as a counter hegemonic discourse to the church and government development discourses. The indigenous people's self-development agenda is pursued through the formation of and participation in social movements that fight for the preservation of their cultural heritage as indigenous people.

These heterogeneous development conceptions exist in a linguistic milieu characterised by the use of the indigenous Harakmbut and Spanish languages. The Harakmbut use the indigenous language to communicate with each other and Spanish is used for inter-ethnic communication with non-Harakmbut speakers. The use of Spanish is growing due to intermarriages between Harakmbut and non-Harakmbut speakers. This bilingual situation also creates biliteracy in the two languages. In addition to being the lingua franca, Spanish is also the language of commerce, justice, and education. This usage reinforces the use of Spanish among the Harakmbut especially the younger generation who have attended schools in Spanish (Aikman, 2001).

It is within the above linguistic configuration in which Spanish is the dominant language and the heterogeneous and contested development framework that the conception of literacy by the Harakmbut is framed. The church and the government development agendas for the indigenous people aim at the integration of the indigenous people. This development agenda prioritises individual people's rights and equal citizenship that is inconsistent with indigenous people's collective rights in terms of territorial integrity and

the need for self-determination. The government pursues this through a national Spanish language curriculum. The literacy conception promoted through the school is Spanish language literacy. This Spanish language literacy is cast as the language of civilisation, development and modernity. This conception of literacy promotes it as a requirement for access to the knowledge and skills that will modernise and develop the individual. The combination of Spanish and schooling, and schools being used for the spread of literacy in Harakambut influences the conception of literacy as being equal to schooling and being literate in the Spanish language.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter was about the theoretical framework used in this study and a review of related ethnographic studies of literacy that have been carried out in other parts of the world. In this literature review, an attempt was made to show that literacy is a very complicated abstract term that is difficult to confine to one standard definition acceptable to all. Consequently, there are many working theories that have all attempted to explain literacy from very different perspectives and for very different reasons that are difficult to reconcile.

High in this debate over literacy are issues related to the consequences and purpose of literacy. The theories that are grouped under the autonomous model of literacy argue that literacy has both cognitive and economic effects on individuals and society respectively. The cognitive model asserts that literacy leads to cognitive development and functional literacy proponents argue that literacy leads to economic development and modernisation and must be taught to achieve those ends. This model of literacy is seen by critiques of the model as the standard and dominant model of literacy. Sometimes this autonomous model of literacy is referred to as the school model. Research informed by this model emphasises literacy pedagogy, which is how and why literacy should be taught.

On the other side of the debate are the social models of literacy that emphasise that literacy is a social practice and can only be understood within specific social contexts of use. True to its postmodernist roots, the social view of literacy emphasises the study of literacy in specific contexts of literacy use and is opposed to the dominant view of literacy based on a single dominant culture model that is touted as the standard. In this respect, the social model of literacy is a challenge to the dominant traditional model of literacy.

Because of its interest in everyday literacy and in opposition to the models that promote the school type of literacy, the ideological model is not strong on the teaching of literacy but rather on understanding how literacy is used in everyday life. In some extremes of this

model, there is a call for promoting non-school acquisition of literacy in real contexts of everyday life that gives meaning to particular literacy practices.

Finally, the review of the ethnographic study of literacy shows that literacy is used differently in most domains of life and yet these domains are interlinked in the home domain. In living their daily lives, people engage in a number of literacy practices spanning all the domains in which literacy is used, and the demands for literacy differ from one domain to the other. For some communities, literacy in some domains involves the use of different languages.

The review also shows that not many studies of this nature have been carried out in Africa and the majority of the studies in this field have been conducted in North America and Europe, particularly Britain (Lancaster). The communities in which these studies are conducted and the objectives they intended to achieve were not and cannot be the same as for communities in Africa. In North America and other countries of the North, the major focus of literacy studies are minority and/or indigenous groups struggling to fit into their hosting societies. These studies were very informative. However, the few studies that focused on rural communities in Africa and elsewhere, Namibia, South Africa, Ghana, Gapun, and Harakambut, were very directly relevant for this study.

CHAPTER THREE: Methods of data collection and analysis

3.1 Introduction

The perception of literacy as a social practice demands the use of a method that facilitates the study of literacy within the social context in which it is used. Literacy in this case is a cultural aspect of the people using it. It is part of their everyday lives. For that reason, I used ethnography, which is one of the best ways of studying everyday life. In literacy study, the ethnographic method, "Enables us to examine in detail the role of literacy in people's contemporary lives, histories, and traditions of which these are a part, and which explores some of the contemporary environments in which people are carrying out their everyday lives" (Hamilton, 1998, p. 2). How the various research techniques are used in ethnography depends on the nature and source of the data.

This multi-methods approach involves the use of extensive and intensive key informant interviews (sometimes known as biographical methods), participant observation, and collecting and analysing documentary evidence of literacy in the community. These were the primary approaches to data collection and analysis, which are commonly used in anthropology. In using these methods, I was seeking to understand and represent the perceptions and use of literacy by members of a community (Castaldi, 1991). These methods have been used in many similar studies of literacy conducted in other parts of the world. Some of these studies were discussed in Chapter Two above.

The presentation of the methods of this study starts with a definition of the population of the study and the unit of analysis, which is the focal point for collecting data. I then provide a detailed description of what I did in the field to collect the data required for this study. I term this the ethnographic research process. The section ends with a description of the methods of analysing the data.

3.2 Population of study

The population for this study was made up of the people living in Bweyale located in Kibanda County of Masindi district in Uganda (see the Map of Uganda in Chapter One). This is a multi-ethnic and multilingual population. It is made up of different people: men, women, and children participating in different social and economic activities, like selling in shops, the market, tailoring, farming, and working for monthly salaries like teachers, police officers, and community development workers. There are also social institutions like churches, schools, families/households and the local administrative institutions like the Local Council that influences people's behaviours, and therefore their literacy practices in the community. Detail of this population is provided in Chapter Five below.

3.3 The unit of analysis

The basic units of analysis for this study were the literacy events taking place in the lives of the people in Bweyale and the individuals who are responsible for generating and using the texts and literacy artefacts that are visible in the community. To collect data from all these units, observations of the literacy events unfolding in different literacy domains in the day-to-day lives of the community and interviews with some members of the community were conducted. This covered the different institutions within which reading and writing was used such as: family, schools, public spaces like roads and shopping centres, and churches, and individuals or a group of people involved in literacy events. The individuals who were selected for biographical interviews; the personal and public letters and documents that were collected and studied all constituted units of analysis for this study (See Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995).

3.4 The tools and equipment for data collection

Tools for each method of data collection (observation, interviews, documentary analysis) were designed and used in the initial phases of the study. How these methods were used in collecting data is presented in section 3.5 below. As the research progressed and themes started to come up because of using the grounded theory method of data analysis, new tools were designed to guide the research process. The process of moving from one theme to the next is also explained in section 3.5 below.

Some methods of collecting data like photography required the use of equipment. I used a camera to collect the visible evidence of literacy in this community. This included photographs of literacy events and artefacts displayed around in the community. A tape recorder was used for recording interviews and talk which came up as part of the interactive process of a literacy event (i.e. talk around texts).

3.5 The ethnographic research process

“Ethnography usually refers to forms of social research having...strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomenon, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them” (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 248). The social phenomena I explored were the everyday literacy practices of rural people in Bweyale. I worked with unstructured data and investigated small cases in detail. Analysis of data involved explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of literacy as discerned in literacy events unfolding in the daily lives of the community. In presenting the findings from these methods, I used verbal descriptions and explanations of the literacy practices that I observed in Bweyale; there are no calculations and statistical analysis in this study (see

Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). Although I prepared very detailed interview schedules and observations tools, they were used much more like guidelines and in general, data collection and analysis were unstructured and not based on a pre-designed tool. I also had no pre-given categories for grouping the data. Data were collected in natural settings in real life activities as they unfolded in the daily life of the community (see Hammersley, 1990). Although I allowed the data to shape the findings, a re-examination of my original plan shows that, the difference between what I set out to do and what came out from following the outcome of data analysis in the field was small. This was because I had conducted a preliminary study in another rural area in Uganda (Openjuru, Forthcoming)

Different tools were designed corresponding to the different methods of collecting data. These were observations, interviews, and documentary analysis guides (see Appendix 3). Visual ethnography and documentary photography were used to capture information in visual form for analysis. These tools were used as guides during data collection in the initial days. As themes started emerging at the later stages of data collection, the interviews and observations became more focused on particular themes that were generated from analysing the data collected during the general interviews and observations phase. The process of moving from the general to the specific is explained in the following sections below. The process was not restricted to the questions that were on the guides because pertinent information that came up during the course of interviews was equally pursued.

3.5.1 Securing the co-operation of the community

In keeping with the ethnographic research process, I started by gaining access to this community. To do that, I sought clearance from the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST). I used this clearance to approach the Masindi district local government authorities to seek permission to do research in their district. The permission from the district authorities was used to approach the local leaders in the community and inform them about my intention to undertake a study in their community and to seek their co-operation in the process. Finally, with permission from the local leaders, I went about getting the co-operation of the community and the people I was purposively selecting to participate in the study as key informants. I explained to the participants why it was important to study literacy in the day-to-day lives of people in a particular community. I also explained what their role in the process was and how important this role was in understanding literacy in their everyday lives.

It was not difficult for me to gain access in this community because I was familiar with the dominant culture and language in this community, because I belong to the same culture and speak two dialects with ease: Acholi and Alur, both dialects of the Luo language that is commonly used in this community.

Although I described myself as an insider in terms of the dominant culture and language of the community, I was at the same time an outsider in terms of my social status, education and my position as researcher. Secondly, although I had relatives in the community/research area, I was not a daily member of this community before the research began. It was the first time I had lived in this area. Whatever the case, being a cultural insider (Ganga & Scott, 2006) put me in a double role of insider/outsider in the research process which is what consolidated my position as participant observer (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). Nonetheless, this ambivalence meant that I had to keep negotiating between the two positions of researcher and participant in the action. For example, retreating to take field notes and being on the lookout for literacy events to follow up while at the same time keeping my participation as natural as possible were some of the negotiations I had to endure during the research process (cf. section 3.5.2 below). The theoretical lens which I adopted for the study enabled me to see more than I was able to see in ordinary life experience. I believe this guaranteed the objectivity of my observation as an insider and confirmed my outsider status as a researcher. The other advantage of being a cultural insider was that it afforded me some degree of social proximity and a measure of unity with the respondents (Ganga & Scott, 2006; Merriam, Ntseane, Lee, Kee, & Johnson-Baily, 2000). I had free access to the research participants including their homes and shared life with them without appearing to be artificial due to my being a cultural insider. On the downside my outsider status as an educated person and researcher could have influenced their response to me in relation to their understanding and benefits of literacy in relation to education (see also Papen, 2005a).

3.5.2 Extended residence in the community

After gaining access, I stayed in the community for one year. The extended stay enabled me to conduct participant observations of literacy events that were unfolding naturally in the everyday life of this community (Adler & Adler, 1994; Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Hammersley, 1990).

During my stay, I became integrated into the everyday life of the community. I made friends, I was a neighbour, and I had relatives and friends who visited me and I visited them too. I participated in community activities like going to church and attending social

meetings, participating in social functions, buying food from the market, sharing meals and drinks together and hanging out with the boys watching football and arguing over favourite teams. In participating in these activities, I was retreating to take field notes of significant literacy events that I was noticing and identifying people for further interview. Once in the community, I used participant observation, in-depth interviews, documentary analysis, visual ethnography and documentary photography to collect data on literacy practices in this community. In the coming section the basics of these methods and how they were applied to collect data will be explained.

3.5.3 Participant observation

Participant observation was a key technique of data collection. I describe my observation as participant observation because, although there are many forms of participant observation with several degrees of involvement that can be distinguished (see Bryman, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Hammersley, 1990), as Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) argue, the meaning of participant observation can be difficult to pin down. They point out some of the distinctions being made between participant and non-participant observation, when they say:

Although it is important to recognise the variation to be found in the roles adopted by the observer, this simple dichotomy is not very useful, not least because it seems to imply that the non-participant observer plays no recognised role at all. This can be the case but it need not be. More subtle is the widely used fourfold typology: complete observer, observer as participant, participant as observer and complete participant... Moreover, it has been argued that in a sense all social research is a form of participant observation, because we cannot study the social world without being part of it (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, pp. 248-249).

True to Atkinson and Hammersley's (1994) conclusion, during the process of collecting data I was completely immersed in the community's way of life and became part of it. They knew that I was conducting research on reading and writing and I participated in a number of community activities as a member of the community for the period I was in this community. My observations were naturalistic as Adler and Adler (1994, p. 378) explain in support of Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) when they argue that:

Qualitative observation is fundamentally naturalistic in essence; it occurs in the natural context of occurrence, among the actors who would naturally be participating in the interaction, and follows the natural stream of everyday life. As such, it enjoys the advantage of drawing the observer into the phenomenological complexity of the world.

Therefore, I did not do a pure detached, unobtrusive and non-interventionist kind of observation only possible under controlled research settings. I was part of the daily life (world) I was participating in while at the same time observing the goings on in literacy in this community. I asked for explanations and sought clarification about literacy events

that I was observing. I was very visible to the people I was observing and some of the research subjects were conscious participants in this research process. They were willing to explain to me how they use reading and writing with the full knowledge that the information was needed for the purpose of this study. This involvement and visibility on both my side and the community's, ruled out the use of non-participant observation. Portalli's (1991, p. 31) description of the interview process as "mutual sighting (in which) one party cannot really (see) the other unless the other can see him in return," summarises how I used the observation method in this study.

The use of participant observation focused on identifying and studying literacy events that were taking place in the day-to-day lives of the community members. The observations were recorded visually by taking photographs of some literacy events, in addition to taking field notes on what was being observed. The observations covered literacy events in both private and public space and different literacy domains in the day-to-day lives of the community such as homes, markets, trading centres etc. The observations were continued until the point of theoretical saturation from observing one particular situation was achieved. This was the point where continued observation of one particular situation was bringing in no more new data (Bryman, 2001).

Typical of unstructured and naturalistic research, the observations were spontaneous as and when significant literacy events were noticed or something from an interview seemed to require follow up using observation methods. Some observations generated information that was followed up through in-depth interviews. In this way, the methods triangulated and complemented each other. For example, the realisation that religion was a common theme arising from interviews motivated a need to observe how people behaved in the church and during church related activities. This church observation led to interviews with the parish priest of the church and further participation and observation of church meetings that were organised after the formal church services. Generally, selection of people for interviews or sites for observation depended on the outcome of data analysis. Detail of how the data analysis was conducted is provided in section 3.6 below.

3.5.4 General observation of community life

To conduct the observations and to identify other issues to concentrate on, I spent the initial days of fieldwork collecting general information about the social-economic structure of the community. The information collected included how different groups of people (children, adults, working people, business people, farmers, women, men, youths and elders) in the community lived their everyday lives. Other information included the

settlement patterns of the community, which groups of people lived where and why, the economic activities people were engaged in or what they did to earn their living (selling in the market, shops, farming, and artisans). Social activities like going to church, social interaction during leisure time and participation in community social events such as welcoming and important public figure to the community were observed. I conducted this information gathering using unstructured observation of life in the community as it is naturally lived by its members (see Erben, 1998). The objective of this was to generate the patterns and structure from the data.

As members of one community, people perform different roles and belong to different but overlapping subsections of community life. From the general information gathered, the different social and economic groups were identified (See Bryman, 2001; Glaser & Strauss, 1967 for details of this process). These different groups were farmers, shopkeepers, employees of government (like the police) and of NGOs (like community development workers). The detailed activities of these different groups of people are presented in Chapter Five.

3.5.5 Identification of literacy events and domains

An ethnographic study emphasises the examination of phenomena as they naturally occur. After mapping out the community as explained in 3.5.4 above, analysis of the data collected revealed the most noticeable domains of literacy in the community. These included livelihood practices, education, religion, bureaucracy, households, and personal uses of reading and writing skills. The literacy events taking place within these domains became the focus of my investigation.

I made regular observations of these everyday literacy events taking place in the different literacy domains in rural community life, taking field notes about what was observed, listening to talk around texts, and photographing some of the literacy evidence in the community and some of the activities in which reading and writing was involved. I also participated in those events as a member of the community. Examples of some of the social events observed included welcoming the paramount chief of the Acholi people to Bweyale, examination of a new radio, transactions taking place in shops, drug shops, bars, restaurants and tailor shops. I also observed a community meeting being held in the school, and a church meeting planning for construction and family life in three different homes. I was a regular and accepted visitor in these households. I also observed the activities taking place in some institutions like the police station and the local council offices. In the process of participating in the Sunday church services (in both the

Protestant and Catholic churches), I documented the literacy involved in the process of the Sunday services. I also monitored the use of information posted in public places, the activities around the newsvendor shop and those selling both newspapers and magazines in the community.

In some of these events, I was a participant. For example, I documented the literacy practice involved in the purchase of my bicycle. This list is endless, and some of the observations were not just done once but several times with the intention of identifying patterns. All these activities were grouped into those related to livelihood practices or the economic life of the community; those related to education, those related to law and order in the community and the religious life of the community. These were the different domains of literacy in the life of the community.

I did not use any systematic procedures to identify the literacy events and domains to be observed (Atkinson, and Hammersley, 1994). Initially this was a spontaneous and non-purposive process meant to understand all aspects of literacy in Bweyale. From this general observation of the different aspects of literacy, specific instances of literacy activities were followed up for detailed investigation (Bryman, 2001; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The focus was on understanding the local literacy practices of the community. It was not about individuals who were not able to read and write, but how literacy was used in the community by both those who are literate and non-literate. This does not mean that individual actors were not important. They were important as players in the collective processes and contexts of community life. The study therefore collected data from individuals as contributors to what made up the day-to-day life of the community as a whole. Each individual represented different aspects of everyday community life.

3.5.6 In-depth/biographical interviews

I conducted in-depth/biographical interviews with people belonging to different sections of the community, such as elders, women, youths, shopkeepers, teachers, police officers, community development workers etc. The biographical method is sometimes treated as one of the methods used in ethnography, but it is also a method of data collection in its own right. This method is sometimes referred to as the "life history method." It is similar to in-depth interviews since they both use unstructured and structured interviewing (see Bryman, 2001, pp. 310, 316). The main difference between the two is in the different time frame adopted by each. In this study, I adopted a mix of the two methods. This was because I was interested in understanding the current literacy practices that is, how the

individuals use their reading and writing skills in their everyday lives. To understand the present, required an understanding of some biographical data, for example, how and why they learnt or could not learn how to read and write. The biographical backgrounds of the respondents were important to understand how they learnt how to read and how long they stayed at school where reading and writing is mostly learnt.

The use of interviews had both general and specific purposes for this study. The general purpose was to provide insight into the nature, value, and meaning of literacy in the community as expressed in the lives of the selected individuals. This was because individuals are part of the cultural network of the community (See Erben, 1998; Smith, 1994). Their way of life is a product of the community's culture that shapes their behaviour as much as their behaviours are expressions of the same culture. Therefore, the best way to understand the wider community was by studying a few selected individuals in this community.

The specific reason was to understand the literacy in the day-to-day life of the individuals in a manner that would facilitate understanding the literacy practices in the community (See Erben, 1998; Smith, 1994). This helped to understand the literacy practices of individuals as members of the larger community. The selected individuals were asked to relate their personal life history to help formulate some ideas about their present literacy practices. I did this by interviewing them and spending long periods with some of them as they went about the day-to-day activities of their lives.

Two types of interviews were conducted: an in-depth/biographical interview with selected key informants and short spontaneous interviews. I recorded the first type of interviews on tape and handwritten notes as considered appropriate and acceptable by the informant. This was negotiated with the participant prior to the interview. The audio recordings were transcribed in the language in which the interview was conducted. The interview transcripts were then subjected to different forms of analysis as I explain in 3.6 below. The short and spontaneous interviews were less extended interviews conducted to seek clarification or get additional information from some research participants. The selection of subjects for the less extended interviews was spontaneous depending on the literacy events needing closer attention and more details to understand them. In such cases, some of the participants in such literacy events were interviewed. These interviews were recorded as supplementary field notes.

For the in-depth/biographical interviews, informants were selected and in-depth interviews conducted to get information about their use of reading and writing in their

everyday lives. The first interviews normally lasted between two to three hours followed by subsequent short interviews seeking clarification on specific issues and conversations relating to reading and writing. The literacy in the life of the people selected for interviews was assumed to have been shaped by the forces that influence reading and writing within the same community. As I discuss in section 3.5.7 below, different members of the community were selected representing different aspects of social life and groups within this community. These different social life and groups were identified after analysing the initial data collected from the community.

The interviews sought information on literacy in the lives of the people selected (see Appendix 1.1 and 1.2). This consisted of finding out their life experiences and views about reading and writing, and identifying the reading and writing activities that regularly occur in their day-to-day lives, how and why those literacy activities occur regularly in their everyday lives. In addition, the interviews were useful to get information on how the individuals learnt how to read and write. They were asked to explain what they experienced and what strategies they use in the process of dealing with new literacy situations. Similar appropriate questions were addressed to those who were not able to read and write.

3.5.7 Selection of research participants for interviews

After identifying the different social and economic groups and structures of the community as I explain in section 3.5.4 above, I conducted a closer examination of each group. This meant conducting interviews to get some idea about the characteristics defining each group. To implement this process, I used purposive sampling procedures (Bryman, 2001) to select two or three people from the identified group for further interview. From the selected people, one or two people were again selected for a more detailed biographical interview of their everyday uses of reading and writing. In some cases where there were only a few people like those reading storybooks, I used 'snowball sampling' (Bryman, 2001, p. 98). This is a form of convenience sampling in which a researcher makes an initial contact with the first person and uses them to identify the next person (Bryman, 2001),

The person selected should be close to a typical example of a member of a group exhibiting the major characteristics that defines that group. The selection of representatives from the different groups was done in collaboration with some members of the community whom I identified as belonging to a particular group. For example, to select a person to represent farmers as a distinct economic group, the person who fits the

definition of a farmer according to the community's idea of a farmer was recommended to me as a candidate for biographical interview. I then sought to meet and discuss with the person so selected and to ask if they were willing to provide information related to their everyday use of reading and writing in relation to their life as farmer, shopkeeper or tailor etc. This information was used to understand how members of that group use reading and writing in their everyday life (Merriam & Simpson, 1995 cited in Openjuru, 2002).

When themes started coming up from the initial analysis of the data collected, following up the different themes became the primary focus of further data collection. In this case, purposive sampling was used to select people who have information relating to particular themes. For example, police literacy practices, a school and community literacy relationship, the church and community or literacies related to health, and so on.

The selected persons became my key informants and active participants in the study. The number of people selected as key informants was determined by the need to cover as many aspects of life as was possible. In total, 48 respondents were interviewed. This included 15 females, and 33 males. This number was made up of a primary school pupil, school leavers, homemakers, shopkeepers, police officers, community development workers, medical personnel, *Bodaboda* riders, local council leaders, schoolteachers, casual labourers, and elders in the community. This included both literate and non-literate members of the community. The focus of the interviews with elders was to get historical information about Bweyale (see Appendix 1.1 and 1.2 for details of the people interviewed).

The interview covered different aspects of literacy use in Bweyale. These different aspects of literacy included literacy in trade, church/religious practices, bureaucratic institutions and households, and personal reading and writing. The information generated from the interviews was used to decide on how to proceed to the next phase, for example, an analysis of the local council's bureaucratic literacy revealed that they had many interactions with the local police. Following that revelation, an interview and investigation of the literacy practices that are associated with police activities in the community of Bweyale had to be investigated. This was done following the grounded theory framework (see Bryman, 2001; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, a runaway situation in the form of unlimited categories, endless connections and leads, was deliberately limited and or terminated due to the time restriction placed on this study.

Although I was striving to include all the economic and social groups in the community in this study, representative sampling or "representativeness" (Bryman, 2001, pp. 85, 309)

was not the objective of my sampling. In other words, proportionate representation of the different subgroups in the study population was not the objective of the sampling used in this study. The sources and methods of collecting data remained open and subject to change depending on the outcome of the grounded theory process as the main method of determining the source and nature of data collected. Accordingly, the nature and source of the data determined the method used in collecting it, interviews, observation or documentary analysis as and when deemed relevant. In the process some were triangulated for example, in an interview with a *Bodaboda* rider, there was some data about paying road licences at the revenue office in Masindi. This information was triangulated by both observations and interviews conducted in the revenue office in Masindi.

3.5.8 Documentary and material culture

Documents and records (Hodder, 1994) related to the selected members of the community, such as personal letters, land sale contracts, pocket diaries and other written family information were studied and used to gain information on the literacy practices of individuals (Bryman, 2001; Erben, 1998). These documents and records (literacy artefacts¹³) were generated by the community as part of their literacy events (see Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Bryman, 2001; Hammersley, 1990). Owners or producers of some of these documents or literacy artefacts were interviewed and listened to in ordinary conversations as well. Other documents were retrieved from where they had already been thrown to study their content and assess the kind of reading and writing that goes on in the community.

According to Hodder (1994) documents and records are different in that documents are prepared for personal reasons, e.g. diaries, letters, memos, field notes and so on. Records on the other hand are prepared for official reasons. Records include things like driving licences, marriage certificates, contracts, and banking details. Hodder (1994) explains that there may be some legal restrictions to accessing some records. Yet these materials provide “alternative insight into the way in which people perceive and fashion their lives” (Hodder, 1994, p. 394). Hodder argues that material evidence is good because what people say is sometimes different from what they do (Rathje & Murphy, 1992, cited in Hodder, 1994).

With the exception of voter cards, identification documents and educational certificates, I did not see many official records. This is because, I think, some of the processes that are

¹³ These are the pieces of material evidence of literacy that are either handwritten or machine or computer printed.

responsible for generating such official records are not followed in this community, for example, the issuing of birth and death certificates. Church marriages are also limited because in this part of the country traditional marriages are still popular. However, certificates of education are sometimes displayed inside certain houses for all to see. Even if such information were available, I could not collect them because they were important personal documents. I was only able to see them especially educational certificates and records, make some notes and leave them with the owners. It also shows the value of such documents to the person holding them.

3.5.9 Visual ethnography and documentary photography

Visual ethnography and documentary photography are research methods involving the use of film, video, and photographs to provide visual data. Visual ethnography involves the taking of pictures of phenomena under investigation while documentary photography deals with the study of existing pictures as evidence of what is being investigated (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Harper, 1994). However, for ease of reference and because the methods are difficult to separate, I have referred to both as visual ethnography. These are methods in which “text and images mutually inform” (Harper, 1994, p. 404) or constitute part of the research data. In describing documentary photography as a method of data collection, Bateson and Mead (1942) say:

We are attempting a new method of stating the intangible relationship among different types of culturally standardized behavior by placing side by side mutually relevant photographs.... By the use of photographs, the wholeness of each piece of behavior can be preserved, while the special cross-referencing desire can be obtained by placing a series of photographs on the same page (p. xii) (Cited in Harper, 1994, p. 404).

In this study, photographs of literacy events and artefacts were taken (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Harper, 1994). I took the photographs of literacy events unfolding in different domains of literacy to illustrate significant findings and to draw interpretations from them. As already explained earlier in section 2.5.4.2, literacy events are occasions in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participant's interaction and their interpretive process (Heath, 1983), and literacy artefacts are the material evidence of literacy events. Taking photographs of literacy events and some artefact provided visual evidence and helped to reduce the material and the visual information to a form that can be placed in a report like this.

3.6 Techniques of data analysis

In ethnography, “analysis of data involves interpretation of the meaning and functions of human action, and mainly takes the form of verbal description and explanation” (Hammersley, 1990, p.2). This is what I did using the grounded theory method to identify

and describe patterns in the data. In addition to the initial field analysis of data undertaken to guide the research process, the data obtained (the interview transcripts) were coded and analysed thematically using N-vivo software for qualitative data analysis.

3.6.1 Grounded theory method of data analysis

The method of data analysis used was grounded theory. According to Barton and Hamilton (1998, p.68), “This is not a methodology in itself,” but a way of approaching data analysis and collection. In this approach, data is collected and analysed and the analysis is used to decide what data to collect in the next round of collection in a circle of repetition. This process of data analysis moves back and forth between data collection, analysis, and conclusion (See Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Bryman, 2001; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Generally, grounded theory is more popular as a method used for generating theory. However, it is also used to validate and extend an existing theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). In spite of that, “Grounded theory has become by far the most widely used framework for analysing qualitative data” (Bryman, 2001, p.390). Ethnography generates qualitative data through unstructured interviews, observations, and collecting documents of all kinds like diaries, letters, and newspapers. All these data are of a qualitative nature that is suitably analysed using grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Furthermore, my study was focusing on the social uses of literacy for which grounded theory is best suited. Therefore, I used grounded theory as a method of data analysis in the ethnographic research process. Barton and Hamilton (1998) used grounded theory as a method of data analysis to approach their research data on local literacies in Lancaster.

In using the grounded theory framework to look at my data, the process of data analysis started as soon as the first initial data were in. The use of the grounded theory method of data analyses involved the use of the following grounded theory tools of analysis.

3.6.1.1 Theoretical sampling

Theoretical sampling is a process of collecting data, in which data is collected, coded, analysed and used to decide the next data to collect (Bryman, 2001). For example, the initial data about the community was collected through general observations and interviews. From this first round of data collection and analysis, some codes and categories were generated about the socio-economic structure of the community. The conclusion from this first round of data collection and analysis was used to guide the next round of data collection that went through the same process (Strauss & Corbin, 1994;

Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This theoretical sampling was to go on until a point of theoretical saturation was attained (see section 3.6.1.3 below for details of the concept of theoretical saturation). However, as discussed in section 1.8 above, because of the scale of the research, this process generated more issues than were possible to continue pursuing within the time available for the study.

3.6.1.2 Coding

In grounded theory, coding is the process of grouping data into categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The codes or groupings are not preconceived but derived from the data as they come in. Accordingly, this process started as soon as the first data were collected and it continued as more data came in. The data collected were broken down into component parts or emerging categories. The categorisations were not conclusive, as re-categorisation of data continued. This was planned to go on until a point of theoretical saturation was achieved (see Bryman, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Tuchman, 1994).

3.6.1.3 Theoretical saturation

As mentioned above, theoretical saturation is a point where no more new categories are emerging from the data. It is a point where further classification emerging from the new data is not possible. In other words, new data is no longer bringing in new information that could change the existing categories that have been set out by earlier data analysis. The final and long surviving categories constitute the different findings on the literacy practices in the lives of rural people and/or the different things that give meaning to literacy for people in Bweyale (Bryman, 2001; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In this study of community literacy practices in Bweyale, this process of following up leads from an exhaustive analysis of data from one context to the next became difficult to conclude. This was because most of the categories generated from analysis of the data being collected after the initial general study of the social and economic structure in the community generated more categories whose further investigation continued to open up more new areas still requiring further and in-depth investigation in their own right. In other words, the process became endless. For example, literacy practices within the family as a social unit led to the following categories that all have influence on the literacy practice that goes on in the family:

- religion,
- school,
- socio-economic life in Bweyale,

- educational background and literacy status of family members,
- gender relations within the family,
- composition of the family (e.g., age range of both children and parents, presence of grandchildren etc)

These and many more were categories generated from the initial identification of the family as an important literacy domain in the community that demanded further investigations. In this case, investigating all those dynamics within the family literacy practices would have required an independent study in its own right. Because these factors have a bearing on the literacy practices in the community, they demanded an independent investigation within the context of home life.

Notwithstanding the fact that these were also major domains of literacy in rural community life, this realisation led to a strategy of anchoring the investigation at the next appropriate convenient point and the use of other methods that would end the apparently endless depth required to investigate most of the categories that were being generated. Whatever the case, this study provides a general description and understanding of local literacy practices in Bweyale.

I would like to state that for most of the data collected analysis was complete. That is, the point of theoretical saturation was achieved. What became a runaway situation was the continued follow up of the themes generated from analysing the data being collected. Each of those themes constituted new phenomenon requiring further examination.

3.6.1.4 Constant comparisons

The other tool of data analysis in grounded theory is constant comparison (Bryman, 2001) or comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). In this process, I studied the data in one category to see the connections. This helped to find out if all the data put together in one category really belong together. It also helped to come up with the characteristics that define a particular category. The characteristics facilitated the process of coming up with a generalization for the data falling under that category. The different categories were then compared and refined through critical examination. In doing that, new categories were emerging from splitting or merging existing categories (See Bryman, 2001). As I have already explained above, this process of constant comparison, like theoretical saturation, could not be brought to a meaningful conclusion for most categories of data generated from this study. Likewise, the constant comparison had to be deliberately anchored at the next most convenient point in analysing a particular

category. This deliberate restriction in theoretical analysis (theoretical saturation and constant comparisons) of the data had to be applied because this study was time bound. For example, the analysis of data related to religious literacy practices in the community generated the following categories: The Sunday church service, private Bible or religious reading, Bible study reading, Catholic and Anglican literacy practices etc. When the church service as a category was further analysed, the following came up: the use of reading and writing by the priest or the reading and writing that goes on around the altar, the reading and writing done by the congregation, the reading and writing used in organising the Sunday service like prayer and songbooks. This breakdown can go on endlessly into investigating the meanings of certain literacy practices, the church doctrines, how they inform each practice in different church processes and the local appropriation of the universal church literacy practices. For that reason, I decided to deliberately confine the investigation to the observable present practices and describe them as they appear.

3.6.2 Textual analysis of interview transcripts and documents

Some collected documents were subjected to a textual analysis to gain some insight into the respondents' understanding of and attitudes toward reading and writing (Cacciapouti, 1998; Harper, 1994). The interview transcripts were read and reread to identify and follow different themes using content and theme analysis procedures used in textual analysis. Later the transcripts were coded and analysed thematically using the N-vivo software for qualitative data analysis as stated above.

This was not only about finding out what people say about literacy, but also how and why they say what they are saying. Thus, the textual analysis of the transcripts helped to identify the dominant discourse that influences local literacy practices in rural community everyday life. The transcription and analysis were carried out in the language in which the interviews were conducted and recorded. Only those sections of the interviews selected for use in the thesis were translated into English. This translation was done by me as a first language speaker of the Luo language in which all the non-English interviews were conducted. Those interviews conducted in English were reported as stated, with limited adjustments in the language to make it understandable in written form. The adjustments were only made if the statements were not very clear in writing. Since I conducted the interviews myself, I was in the position to understand what was being said from the context of the discussion at that particular time.

3.6.3 Photographic analysis

Photographs of some literacy events and some aspects of people's everyday life were taken to provide concrete supplementary evidence of literacy in rural community life. The photos were not subjected to any serious form of analysis except studying them and selecting the most relevant aspects needed to support the presentation of different aspects of community literacy practices in Bweyale (Harper, 1994).

3.7 Reliability and validity

The question of reliability and validity is at the heart of most research projects. It is even a serious issue in qualitative research studies like this one. There is a major paradigm debate about the relevance of reliability and validity in qualitative research (see Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers (2002). Reliability is a concept that is commonly used in quantitative research. Reliability is normally concerned with the consistency of a particular measure to reproduce the same results over time (stability), or coherent results in a multiple item tool like a questionnaire, methodological triangulation (internal reliability) or consistent descriptions of a phenomenon between two different observers or observations (inter-observer consistency). These different types of reliability are themselves tests for reliability. For example, test-retest reliability is a test for stability; split-half reliability is a test for internal reliability and inter-observer consistency is a test in itself (see Bryman, 2001, p. 70; Purcell-Gates, 2004, p. 98-99 for details).

In this ethnographic research, some of the same methods of testing reliability were applicable. As Purcell-Gates (2004, pp. 98-99) explains, "To ensure that behaviours coalesce to constitute patterns, the research needs to continue over a long enough period." This relates to a measure of stability. In this study, the concept of theoretical saturation ensured the investigation of a single phenomenon until no more new patterns were discernible. Saturation is evident when the phenomenon under examination repeatedly reproduces the same outcome on subsequent examination and even on the application of different methods of data gathering. This is consistent with the requirement of the same result over time needed to confirm reliability.

Validity on the other hand, according to Bryman (2001), is a question of the appropriateness of the measure used to measure a concept. That is, "Whether a measure of a concept really measures that concept" (2001, p. 72). Purcell-Gates takes a different view on the issue of validity. Instead of focusing on the measure, she focuses on the data and whether the data collected by the measure is the correct data (i.e. whether the data is valid). These are the same questions from two different perspectives. I will use a crude

example to illustrate these two different points. I call the first perspective Bryman's perspective and the other the Purcell-Gates' perspective. The example is about measuring intelligence by using a tape measure. According to Bryman's perspective, the question would be, "is the tape measure an appropriate device for measuring intelligence". According to Purcell-Gates' perspective, the question would be: Are the data on intelligence collected using a tape measure valid? If the device is wrong, according to Bryman's perspective, the result will also be wrong. According to Purcell-Gates' perspective, if the focus of all research is data, then the approach of validating the data and not questioning the measure or tool used is itself valid.

In ethnography Purcell-Gates (2004) recommends the use of triangulation to attend to the question of validity from the data point of view. In this study, different methods: participant observation, interviews, and the study of literacy artefacts and documents, were used to collect data on different instances of the uses of reading and writing in different contexts of rural community life. This methodological triangulation is the normal process of data gathering in ethnographic research.

This then confirms Purcell-Gates' (2004, p. 99) conclusion that, "Procedures of ensuring validity and reliability are built into all aspects of the ethnographic research process," what Morse, et. al. (2002) refer to as the constructivist approach to establishing validity and reliability.

Instead of validity and reliability, Guba and Lincoln (1985, 1994 cited in Morse et. al. 2002 and Bryman, 2001) are said to have suggested alternative equivalence to validity and reliability for qualitative research. These are "trustworthiness and authenticity" (Bryman, 2001, p.272). These are made up of four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These are equivalent to internal validity, external validity, parallel validity and objectivity accordingly. It is beyond this work to engage deeply with these debates in qualitative research. Therefore, for ease and simplicity of use I have chosen to work with the equivalent terms to describe what Guba and Lincoln were proposing as their alternatives. I therefore aligned my argument with that being advanced by Purcell-Gates (2004) because she directly relates it to ethnographic research.

3.8 Ethical considerations

This study involved human subjects and as with any research project, the maintenance of ethical standards was of primary concern. The first step taken for this study was to seek clearance and permission to conduct the research. This is a standard requirement for all researchers in Uganda. This permission was provided after a satisfactory review of and

approval of the proposal by the UNCST board. This review process was to ensure that the research process would not harm the research participants (See Approval letter in, Appendix 6.1). This process of seeking clearance continued to the district level and the local community leaders using a letter written by UNCST to the Resident District Commissioner of the district in which the research was conducted. This same letter was endorsed by the local leaders to indicate their consent to my research activities in their community (see Clearance letter Appendix 6.2).

To ensure that the rights and dignity of the participants are protected identities were kept anonymous by consistently using pseudonyms throughout the study, including the appendices. Participants were also informed of their right to refuse to participate in the research without any consequences for that decision. They were also informed of their freedom to discontinue their participation at any point during the research process should they see it fit. They were also informed that the information collected would only be used for understanding the literacy practices of the community and later in designing adult literacy education programmes.

In spite of anonymity and confidentiality, participation was voluntary, and the use of equipment like a tape recorder and camera was negotiated and agreed on. The participants were informed of the kind of information expected and how such information would be used to document local literacy practices in Bweyale. The purpose of the research was also explained with a caution that the information they were providing did not mean a literacy-learning project would be launched in the community. In most cases, respondents were inquisitive and willing to provide information about their reading and writing. Some even invited me to go to their homes so that they could show me the books they read. However, some were bothered by the number of questions I was asking them and they complained that I was asking too many questions.

In most public instances like meetings and church processes, I was introduced as a person collecting information about what people read and write in their daily life. This introduction often caused some excitement among people who wanted to learn how to read and write. I had to make it clear that the information I was collecting was not immediately going to be used to introduce a literacy project in the community.

Photographs, except those taken during public functions, were taken with the full consent, knowledge and sometimes at the request of those who can be identified in the photo. In the general photos, where some people appear who were not known to me, an attempt was

made to take the picture at a distance or angle where the people could not be easily identified.

3.9 Conclusion

All the different data were generated through the different sources of data collection: observations, interviews, documentary analysis, and visual ethnography and documentary photography. The data collected were analysed using the grounded theory methods of data analysis that included the identification of themes and categories from the transcripts, field notes, photographs, and artefacts, using theoretical sampling, coding, theoretical saturation and constant comparisons. The different information generated through the different methods of data collection was compared with each other in a process of methodological triangulation. The objective of this entire process was to construct an understanding and picture of local literacy practices in Bweyale.

CHAPTER FOUR: The history and context of literacy and adult literacy education in Uganda

4.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter Two, the social practices approach to literacy emphasises the study of literacy in its specific contexts of use. Therefore, a clear understanding of this context is useful in understanding literacy as social practice. In this study, the larger context is Uganda and it is to the organisation of adult literacy education in Uganda that the implications of this study are to have a direct relevance. Therefore, an account of literacy in Bweyale cannot be achieved without understanding the history and contexts of literacy and adult literacy education in Uganda. A discussion of this context includes a description of the population, the literacy status; how literacy was introduced and expanded; the policies and programmes of adult literacy education and the language situation in relation to literacy and literacy education in Uganda. All these have a bearing on how literacy is used in Uganda and Bweyale.

4.2 Population and literacy status in Uganda

The population of Uganda is predominately rural. For example, according to the last population census of 2001, in a population of 24,442,084 people, 87.7 per cent lived in rural areas. The proportion of people living in rural areas gets bigger in districts that are far from Uganda's capital city Kampala. Masindi District where Bweyale is located is one of the districts with a very big rural population. According to the 2001 population census, out of a population of ±469,886 people in Masindi district, 95 per cent live in rural areas like Bweyale (Rwabwoogo, 2002, 2005).

The rate of adult¹⁴ illiteracy in Uganda is 31 per cent of the total population of adults. In the male population, it is 21 per cent, and in the female population, it is 40 per cent according to estimates made in 2003¹⁵ (Central Intelligence Agency, 2005; United Nations Development Programme, 2005). There is a general acknowledgement that the rate of illiteracy is higher in rural than urban areas (Okech, 2004, 2006; Okech, et. al 1999). These statistical measures do not take account of the differences that exist between rural and urban areas in terms of literacy practices.

¹⁴ These are people who are 15 years and over.

¹⁵ Literacy statistics that are collected during the national census are often questionable because of the methods they use to obtain information about literacy status and the use of parameters like years of schooling, which may not be good determinants of individual literacy status.

4.3 Introduction of literacy in Uganda

The introduction of literacy in Uganda, as in most Sub-Saharan countries, was a result of encounters with people from outside Africa. Before these encounters, all the communities that make up what Uganda is today were preliterate societies¹⁶. Communication was largely by word of mouth carried by messengers of different status depending on the type and value of the message to be communicated. For example, to pass simple messages from one home/person to the next, children were used as messengers. Important messages like bereavement were delivered by adults only. Other methods of communication included beating drums and blowing animal horns in different ways, and shouting loudly¹⁷ while standing on strategic locations or on top of anthills in the village. These too involved the production and delivery of sound as the basic mode of communication in traditional preliterate Uganda. Other modes of communication like tying grass, dressing, marking the grounds and trees, and marking of bodies (Jones et al., 2005), were also used to carry different forms of socially and culturally agreed messages. These were non-sound based indigenous strategies of communication¹⁸.

In 1844, the Arab traders who came from the coastal regions of East Africa became the first people to use written texts in Uganda. They brought the Koran, a Moslem book of worship. The Arabs had a long trade relationship with people along the East African coastal region, around Mombasa and Dar-es-Salaam. As they traded, they practiced and introduced their Islamic faith to the local people with whom they traded. The practice of the Islamic faith involves the use of written texts that are often written in Arabic script.

Although the Arab traders were the first to introduce the use of written texts in Uganda, they were not keen on teaching the local people how to read and write in Arabic script, because they were more concerned with trade. Even teaching Islam was a secondary activity for the Arab traders. This lack of interest by Arabs in changing the people to their way of life did not encourage the adoption and wide use of the Arabic script in East Africa outside the practice of the Islamic faith. The Arab traders, of course, taught some people who showed interest in joining their Islamic religion and these people learnt how to use the Arabic script as part of their Islamic religious practices (Atim & Ngaka, 2004; Egbo, 2000; Okech, 2004; Openjuru, 2004b; Ssekamwa, 2000).

¹⁶ These are societies or communities with no cultures of writing or using a written symbol system for purposes of communication (Goody, 1968b).

¹⁷ This was often used to call children back home for meals or to undertake some simple tasks.

¹⁸ The information used in this paragraph is based on my childhood experience of rural life in Uganda, where these methods of communication continued to be used up to the early 1970s. Some are still being used as reported in the findings of this study.

In the late 19th century, Christian missionaries started arriving in Uganda. The first group to arrive were the Church Missionary Society (CMS) from England (Anglicans/Protestants) in 1877. The CMS was later followed by the Catholic White Fathers from France (Roman Catholics) in 1879. Both groups of missionaries came to preach their different denominations of the Christian religious faith. Both Christian religious faiths were based on a book, the bible, as the main text of authority and reference. As a religion of the book, the missionaries taught their converts how to read and write to enable them to practice their Christian faith (Okech, 2004; Ssekamwa, 2000).

The first group of literacy learners in Uganda were adults. The missionaries taught these adults how to read and write in their mission stations. Later, when the teaching and learning expanded beyond the evangelistic needs of the community, the missionaries started teaching children as well. This eventually led to the establishment of the first formal schools in 1898 (Okech, 2004; Ssekamwa, 2000). Through the formal schools the missionaries expanded the teaching of reading and writing in Uganda. They also continued to popularise literacy through the practice of the Christian religious faith.

To support their teaching of reading and writing, the missionaries developed the first orthographies for most local languages in Uganda. They used these orthographies to translate the bible, prayer books, and hymn books into different local languages (see Kalema, 2001). The first bible in a local language, Luganda, was produced in 1896 (Walusimbi, 2001). In 1902, Bishop Tucker found that the complete Bible, translated by George Pilkington, had sold over 1100 copies in its year of publication together with over 4000 copies of the New Testament and 13,500 copies of single gospel translations. were sold out. The number of 'reading rooms', reading teachers and readers who were not only interested in reading but understanding what they were reading was also increasing (see Oliver 1965, cited in Okech, 2004, p. 184). The Protestants were particularly active in promoting literacy in Uganda, as this statement will confirm:

At the end of 1893 the protestant community at the capital experienced a typical manifestation of evangelical 'revivalism' but associated in this case with one of the most remarkable and spontaneous movements for literacy and new knowledge which the world has ever seen (Oliver 1965, p. 184 cited in Okech, 2004, p. 183).

By teaching their converts how to read and write in the local languages of Uganda, and translating the bible and many other religious texts into the local languages, the missionaries popularised and legitimised local language literacy in Christian religious practices. The missionaries further consolidated this by importing the first printing press to be used in Uganda, and starting to print more books in the local Ugandan languages.

With the printing press now in Uganda, the missionaries introduced the first Luganda¹⁹ language newspapers in Uganda (Byakutaga & Musinguzi, 2000; Kasozi, 2000). The work done by the missionaries consolidated local language literacy within Christian religious practices and embedded Christian religious literacy in people's everyday life in Uganda (Okech, 2004; Parry, 2000a).

The missionaries established physical facilities, which they used for their church activities in the communities. These facilities included church and school buildings, and residential houses. Most of these facilities were strategically located in rural communities that needed adult literacy programmes. Both government and Non-Governmental Organisations (henceforth NGOs) in Uganda now use some of these facilities to run their adult literacy programmes for rural people (Openjuru, 2004c).

The missionaries established the first formal school education in Uganda in about 1898. In these schools, the missionaries continued to teach their Christian knowledge and practices to local children. Ssekamwa (2000) recorded this when he quoted a 1925 Annual Report of the Uganda Department of Education. In that report, the missionaries stated, "The idea that dominates our school system may be summed up clearly and concisely first and foremost, the spiritual interests of the child are paramount to every other matter and these divine interests are supreme" (Ssekamwa, 2000, p. 39).

In these schools, the missionaries continued to teach reading and writing, and learning new knowledge took the form of reading books and writing notes. This mode of learning was very new to Ugandans who started referring to schools as 'reading homes' in most local languages. (For example, '*Gang Kwan*' in the Ugandan Luo language). When a new parish is established, one building is used for both teaching and church services during the weekdays and weekends respectively (see also Okech, 2004; Ssekamwa, 2000).

Unlike in their religious teaching, the missionaries encouraged the use of English in their formal schools. In this way, the introduction of school education extended the use of reading and writing further by providing a new way and language of literacy outside of the church, religion, and local languages use. This new English literacy learnt at school by the younger generations became more powerful and dominant and tended to denigrate local language literacy that was being taught through the church. By encouraging English literacy in schools, while at the same time encouraging local language literacy in the church and religious practices, the missionaries created a conflicting language and

¹⁹ This is one of the local Ugandan languages spoken by the Baganda, a big ethnic group in Uganda. All foreigners who came to Uganda first settled in Buganda.

literacy situation in Uganda. This conflict worked against local language literacy, which gradually became less privileged and unpopular in Uganda. English literacy became more dominant because English became the language of power and of the ruling local elites who were school educated and employed by the colonial government. This group had access to many privileges that also became identified with English and school literacy. Parry (2000b, p. 62) summed up this well by saying that school literacy “has a powerful social function” of controlling access to higher social status in society. School literacy therefore enables access to the dominant structures of power in society at both local and international level.

Although schools became and maintained a dominant social and economic influence in Uganda, the African traditional ways of life persisted at the community and family level. In rural areas, life continued to be based on the communities’ old, traditional, social and economic structures and modes of production. The community, in contrast to school education, continued to propagate traditional values and knowledge through indigenous systems of education (Ocitti, 1988). Children were being exposed to both the western colonial system of education in schools and their local African indigenous system of education while at home in the family. Those children who could not go to school only learnt through African indigenous education (Ocitti, 1988; Ssekamwa, 2000). This effect of schooling created a dual character in the structure of everyday life in Africa. In this dualism, literacy is more prevalent in the way of life propagated through school education than through the traditional indigenous system of education. School literacy with its privileges of employment, was associated with work and modern European ways of life, and its use only found meaning in contexts where such life could be lived like in urban centres. In the rural areas, where traditional ways of life remained predominant, reading and writing had limited use.

In addition to teaching religion and introducing school education, the missionaries also introduced technical education in Uganda. In these technical schools, the missionaries taught carpentry and joinery, brick making, building houses using bricks, modern farming practices and many other practical skills. They also established other training institutions like teacher training colleges, leadership training centres and built more facilities that are now being used for adult and other forms of non-formal education in Uganda (Atim & Ngaka, 2004; Openjuru, 2004c). These institutions were instrumental in promoting the way of life in which literacy was seen to be relevant by the local people.

Before the entry of government into adult literacy work in 1945, only the different Christian religious groups were involved in teaching people how to read and write. The literacy work of these religious groups was primarily for advancing their religious interests in Uganda. Each religious group had a different influence on the literacy practices of their followers. Parry (2000a, p. 63) outlines these differences as follows:

For Muslims, the sacred text must always be presented in Arabic and ideally, it should be recited rather than read; the written text serves mainly, then, as a mnemonic. For Catholics, too, the sacred text and accompanying liturgical material though in written form, are made accessible through oral means, but there is less emphasis in this tradition on learning text by heart. The Protestant tradition, on the other hand, lays particular emphasis on individuals reading of text for themselves which means it must be rendered in the individual's own language and learning to read becomes an essential religious activity

The success of religious literacy²⁰ in Uganda was because of this close link between religions (Christianity and Islam) and literacy. The practice of these new religions integrates the use of texts naturally and provides the immediate milieu within which literacy is regularly used.

The primary objective of the missionary literacy work was not literacy but teaching their religion. This religious teaching involved teaching reading to enable the converts to read religious books for themselves. Although not much is known about the methods used by the missionaries to teach literacy because they were not well documented, they must have used traditional methods, which emphasised learning the letters of the alphabet first before moving on to the vowels, consonants, and syllables. Whatever the merits and demerits of these methods, the missionaries seem to have been successful in their literacy work, if the extent to which religious literacy became rooted in the religious life of most Christians in Ugandan can be taken as positive signs of success (see Parry, 2000a). Since they taught literacy for practicing the Christian faith, it can be argued that the missionaries applied the functional approach to teaching literacy well before UNESCO recommended it.

Literacy teaching by the different religious groups was mainly for the advancement and practice of their religion. For that reason, many reading materials were developed and printed for the advancement of these causes. Good as this was, it only focused on one aspect of social life, ignoring all others. It was not, therefore, useful for developing a literate culture that could facilitate a wide use of reading and writing in all aspects of everyday life.

²⁰ This refers to the use of reading and writing in religious practice like prayers, Sunday service, and reading texts like the bible for spiritual growth.

4.4 Government adult literacy education programmes

Following the lead set by the Christian missionaries in the provision of adult literacy education in the late 19th century, the government joined in organising non-religious adult literacy education programmes from the 1940s to date. This entry brought in two new dimensions to adult literacy education work. Firstly, the provision of adult literacy education was now the responsibility of two distinct organisations. These are the government and NGOs. Secondly, it introduced a new focus for adult literacy education. This was literacy for development. Since then, different national adult literacy education programmes have been organised to address the ‘problem’ of illiteracy, which is seen as a significant barrier to the social and economic development of people. These programmes have been offered by both government and NGOs (see Baryayebwa, 1998, 2004; Carr-Hill et al., 2001; Okech, et. al, 1999; Openjuru, 2002, 2004c).

4.4.1 The colonial government adult literacy education work (1894 to 1962)

In this section, I discuss the role of the colonial government in adult literacy education work. This discussion starts with an examination of the adult literacy education policies during the colonial time.

4.4.1.1 Colonial government adult literacy education policies

Not much is known about colonial adult literacy education policies in Uganda. However, the policies that applied at that time can be discerned from secondary reading of information about adult education during that time, the methods used and the objectives of the programmes. The immediate intention of the colonial government through the provision of adult literacy education, according to Okech (2004), was to keep the demobilised World War II veterans busy as Community Welfare Assistants. He says, to “keep them away from any mischief they might be tempted to do” (Okech, 2004, p. 185). This means teaching reading and writing was not even the primary intention of that literacy programme. Instead, the programme was introduced to serve a political agenda of the colonial government. It is possible then to argue that, the programme’s success or failure was not of interest to the colonial government, as long as their political objective of keeping the soldiers busy was achieved. The declared intention was of course, to improve the welfare of the natives.

The immediate political intentions of the colonial adult literacy education programme notwithstanding, there were official colonial policies that supported the adult literacy education in many ways. For example, the colonial government promoted local language literacy through its national language policy. It established the Uganda Literature

Committee that worked with the District Literature Committees charged with the responsibility of promoting local languages through the development and production of reading materials in the local language of the area. A lot of work was done through these structures leading to the production and distribution of many local language books that promoted literacy in the population (see Atim & Ngaka, 2004). This is discussed in more detail in the next section 4.4.1.2.

Other colonial government policies that supported adult literacy education were those geared towards improving the welfare of its colonial subjects. These policies *inter alia* provided the justifications and the frameworks within which adult literacy education was implemented. Of course these were not literacy policies, they only had a strong bearing on the provision of literacy education that was seen as a prerequisite for improving community welfare. Literacy was only one way, among others, through which the colonial government hoped to improve the welfare of their subjects (Okech, 2004, 2006; Okech, et. al, 1999). How these policies affected the provision of adult literacy education work during the colonial period is discussed in the following section.

4.4.1.2 Colonial government adult literacy education programmes (1894 to 1962)

The first government adult literacy education programme was established in 1945 soon after World War II. As already discussed above, the immediate purpose of this programme was to teach the returning World War II veterans how to read, write and later use them as Community Welfare Assistants (C.W.A) in the newly established Department of Public Relations and Social Welfare. This was the first government department to take responsibility for adult literacy work in Uganda. This department became the precursor of the current Department of Community Development, which is now responsible for adult literacy work in Uganda (See, Baryayebwa, 1998, 2004; Carr-Hill et al., 2001; Okech, et. al, 1999; Openjuru, 2002, 2004b).

Apart from the above, there is not much written information about adult literacy education programmes during the colonial period in terms of how the 1945 literacy programme was implemented in the country, the methods and materials used, how the materials were developed at that time, how many learners participated in it, and what was achieved.

The Department of Public Relations and Social Welfare also had other adult education responsibilities alongside adult literacy. These included supporting local community leaders and government workers in educating the public on matters of self-help, agriculture, civic education, home economics, handicraft and other development

initiatives. The department also imparted income-generating skills like carpentry and joinery, brick making, and musical instrument playing to enable people to earn a living. They used a variety of methods and materials like cinemas, lectures, posters, demonstration teams, organising group meetings, discussions and radio programmes to reach out to the community. These programmes, although resident within the same department, were not related to teaching adult literacy. This arrangement left the literacy programmes with teaching reading and writing only. There was therefore no link between learning how to read and write, and literacy practices in real life situations. Other government departments like the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Prison Department were active in providing adult education programmes related to their concerns as Government Ministries without relating to adult literacy. In addition to the colonial government departments, government parastatals and semi-autonomous national institutions were also involved in adult education work (See Atim & Ngaka, 2004).

As stated above, a lot of reading materials were produced to promote reading in the local languages. This was done by the Uganda African Literature Committee. This committee had various sub-committees that translated and distributed reading materials into five selected local languages: Luo, Luganda, Runyoro-Rutoro, Ateso, and Lugbara. These materials were published by the Uganda Bookshop and the East African Literature Bureau. By 1950, 170 books had been translated into different local languages by teachers, civil servants, private individuals and college students. Reading charts were also produced to aid the teaching of reading and writing in many local languages. In addition to these local reading materials in the local language, various newspapers were established in the local languages, for example, *Ebiffa Mu Buganda*, *Munno*, *Munyonyezi*, *Sekanyola*, and *Mutalasi*. Some of these papers were produced by missionaries (see Atim & Ngaka, 2004). Most of the books published during the colonial period were targeted at schoolchildren and the school-educated colonial elites. This is not to say that these materials did not encourage reading as an activity in people's lives. They did, and many of these books were still being read up to the early 1970s when they started disappearing.

4.4.2 The post-colonial government adult literacy education work (1962 to date)

In this section, I discuss the role the post-colonial governments played in the provision of adult literacy education to its population. This discussion starts with an examination of the adult literacy education policies from the immediate post-colonial time to the present.

4.4.2.1 Post-colonial government adult literacy education policy

The main motivation for the provision of adult literacy education came from outside the country and some policy statements were made to support these international declarations and commitments. Most of these were local restatements of the international statements. In this section, these policies are discussed. I divide this discussion into two subsections. The first deals with the earlier policies and policy responses of the 1960s that came immediately after the declaration of national independence. The second deals with the current adult literacy education policies that are still in force. Since this is the most relevant for this study, I give it more attention in the discussion.

4.4.2.1.1 Adult literacy education policies in the 1960s

I am not focusing much on the immediate post-colonial adult literacy education policies of the 1960s because much of that came in the form of African or international declarations and commitments to eradicate illiteracy before a certain year. These declarations guided the provision of adult literacy education at that time, emphasising total coverage of the entire population in the country. It was believed at that time, that massive adult literacy education campaigns would remove the problem of illiteracy. Therefore, local national responses to such declarations were massive adult literacy campaigns covering the whole country.

4.4.2.1.2 Present adult literacy education policies from the 1990s

The present official literacy policy in Uganda relates to school education and the language of instruction for Universal Primary Education (UPE), which is a government policy to provide free education to all children in Uganda. There are some limited policy statements addressing issues related to adult literacy education. What is completely lacking is a specific policy for adult education outside of the constitutional acknowledgement that it is important for the development of the country (Sandhaas & Asnake, 2003). The limited policy statements related to adult literacy education are provided under the general policy on education. Within this general policy on education, there are statements of commitment to the provision of adult literacy education to the people of Uganda, and statements concerning the languages in which adult literacy education should be taught. This policy provision was not sufficient because it did not provide more refined and detailed statements that could guide practitioners in the field of adult literacy education in their work. There are also some government documents, which inform the provision of adult literacy education in the country. In this section, the content of these policy documents are discussed in relation to the provision of adult literacy education in Uganda.

The first document that contains policy statements related to adult literacy education in Uganda is the 1992 White Paper on Education (Government of Uganda, 1992). In this document, literacy is mentioned “no fewer than 48 times, and its converse, illiteracy, a further nine. They also express quite clear attitudes and intentions on the subject: illiteracy is an evil to be eradicated” (Uganda Government 1992, cited in Parry, 2000a, p. 59). This same document also identifies the different groups of people who can benefit from adult literacy programmes as, “Young people who have never been to school, primary school drop-outs, rural peasants, urban workers and other unskilled persons who should be given basic functional literacy” (Obbo, 2004, p. 53).

In the White Paper on Education, the government made a number of commitments and recommendations related to adult literacy education, namely: to eradicate illiteracy by initiating an adult literacy campaign; to organise post-literacy programmes to provide systematic learning opportunities for adults; to promote literacy by establishing public libraries and a rural press, and to institute Universal Primary Education to reduce the problem of illiteracy in future. In making these recommendations, the government advised that, “Literacy, especially as taught to adults, should be ‘functional’ and not just ‘basic’, and it should also be ‘permanent’ and ‘developmental’” (Uganda Government 1992, cited in Parry, 2000a, p. 59). It also recommended that literacy should be taught in the local language and Kiswahili where necessary to both adults and schoolchildren (Parry, 2000a).

According to Parry’s (2000a) analyses, the literacy policy as stated in the White paper aims to achieve two aspects of development. The first aspect of development is economic development, which is closely related to the concept of functional literacy mentioned in the same policy document. The objective of teaching adult literacy according to this economic development aim is to eradicate poverty, and increase productivity. The second aim of adult literacy education as stated in the White paper is to achieve “the intellectualisation of all the people” (Government of Uganda, 1992, pp. 15, 16 cited in Parry, 2000a, p. 60). These broad objectives for teaching adult literacy in Uganda are subjects of the ongoing international debates questioning the economic and cognitive consequence of literacy discussed in Chapter Two above (see Goody & Watt, 1968; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984, 1995, 2001; Wagner, 1995).

Parry (2000a) notes that while the authors of the White Paper were interested in promoting reading in the country through establishing public libraries and rural presses, they made no recommendation on the kinds of books and publications that should be

stocked and printed in those libraries and rural presses respectively. Parry cautions that such vague policy statements are not useful for achieving the objectives of the policy if those implementing the policy are not able to fill in the missing details that have not been stated clearly in the policy document.

In the White Paper, the government defined the structures through which adult literacy education should be implemented. This included the establishment of a National Council for Non-Formal and Adult Education with district committees to work with the local communities, the National Teachers Colleges and the National Curriculum Development Centres. A Directorate of Adult and Non-formal Education was to be set up within the Ministry of Education to, among other things, liaise with the National Council and the National Campaign for Adult Literacy and Basic Education in the promotion of adult literacy education programmes in the country (Ministry of Education and Sport, 1992, pp. 176-185 cited in Obbo, 2004, p. 54). Unfortunately, none of these structures were activated and only remained on paper. The national adult literacy education programme continued to be the responsibility of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD).

Another document in which the government pronounced itself on matters of adult literacy education is the National Adult Literacy Strategic Investment Plan (NALSIP). In this document, the government was committed to achieving a 50 per cent improvement in literacy levels between 2002 and 2007. The overall objective of this plan was to achieve a literate, well-informed, and prosperous society. This was one of the promises made in the country's Vision 2025, which is the long-term national plan for the country. The Vision 2025 promised, "An enlightened, well-informed and prosperous society" (Government of Uganda, 2002, cited in Okech, 2006, p. 11). To achieve this vision NALSIP was designed to support the five pillars of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). These pillars²¹ are:

- rapid and sustainable economic growth;
- structural transformation;
- good governance and security;
- increased ability of the poor to raise their incomes and
- enhanced quality of life for the poor.

²¹ These pillars have been revised twice – in 2001 and 2004. The 2004 version was economic management; production, competitiveness and income; security, conflict-resolution and disaster management; good governance; and human development.

In response to these economic development wishes expressed in PEAP, the strategic objectives stated in NALSIP all focus on issues of rural community development. Its implementation structure is a restatement of the government's ten-year-old unimplemented commitment contained in the 1992 White Paper on Education. There were other new recommendations that were proposed in NALSIP such as the establishment of a national accreditation framework and the establishment of a research and development unit. Apart from organisational objectives like securing the participation of districts, sub-counties, and communities in the implementation of the programme, there were other interesting commitments like, "Enhancing access for literacy services for people with special learning needs; and establishment of community/village libraries to promote a literate environment for neo-literates" (Okech, 2006, p. 13). The implementation of these recommendations is still being awaited four years after the publication of NALSIP document (see Obbo, 2004; Openjuru, 2004b).

Other policies that support adult literacy education include PEAP, which has already been mentioned above as one of the reasons for which adult literacy education ought to be implemented. This is because, adult literacy education and Universal Primary Education (UPE) are seen by the Government of Uganda as important in the fight against rural poverty (that is why they are emphasised in the PEAP document). PEAP is the government's twenty-year planning framework, which is sometimes referred to as the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (PRSP). PEAP was formulated in 1997 and has since been revised twice, first in 2001 and in 2004 (Okech, 2006). According to Obbo (2004) other similar policies include the Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA), the national health policies, the national gender policies, the national youth policies, and the Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESIP). Adult literacy education relates to these policies in a number of ways, for example, the topics used to develop the adult literacy education curriculum cover issues like improving agricultural practices, good health and hygiene practices, and family literacy programmes that are intended to support and improve school children's learning experiences.

Excluding the early adult literacy education offered by the missionaries, literacy policies in Uganda are informed by UNESCO's well-known position of promoting functional literacy, which says, "Literacy should be incorporated into and correlated with, social and economic development plans" (UNESCO cited in Lyster, 1992b, p. 33) of the country (see also Openjuru, 2004b; Parry, 2000a). Consequently, all adult literacy education programmes organised by governments and NGOs in Uganda aim to promote literacy for national, community, and personal economic development. Yet the link between literacy

and development is questionable (see Parry, 2000a; Street, 1984, 1995, 2001). Some NGOs may not agree with this conclusion, that adult literacy work in Uganda is all functional literacy for promoting economic development. The NGOs who may object to this conclusion will argue that they teach literacy for community empowerment, yet a closer examination of their programme objectives, contents and methods reveals otherwise (see Fiedrich & Jellema, 2003; Openjuru, 2004b).

This idea of teaching literacy ignores literacy in everyday life, like writing and reading personal letters, diary notes, and wedding invitation cards, reading storybooks to pass time, the organisation of parties, funerals, and such social ceremonies and functions that are not related to economic development. These are some of the most common uses of literacy in rural life (Openjuru, 2003; Openjuru, Forthcoming).

4.4.2.2 The objectives of the Government adult literacy education programmes

In response to the government adult literacy education policies discussed above, the government adult literacy education emphasised socio-economic development and/or poverty reduction.

Unlike the colonial government, the post-colonial government implemented adult literacy education programmes with the genuine intention of poverty reduction and achieving social economic development in the country (See Baryayebwa, 1998, 2004; Carr-Hill et al., 2001; Okech et al, 1999; Openjuru, 2002, 2004c). To achieve these objectives, the government of Uganda, like all other governments in Africa, aimed at achieving universal literacy by 1980. The expectation was that literacy would wipe out poverty and cause development. This was in line with the thinking of the time, which assumed that literacy leads to positive social and economic changes in society, and cognitive development in individuals (Goody & Watt, 1968).

By 1980, this expectation was not realised and the traditional method²² of teaching literacy was identified as one of the major causes for this failure. To overcome this problem, UNESCO again proposed the functional approach to teaching adult literacy. This approach, it was hoped, would open the floodgates to social and economic development, and transformation expected from teaching adult literacy. In this approach, literacy was to be taught for a purpose (function). In this functional concept, as discussed in Chapter Two, literacy “is a set of skills that enables an individual to function better in the socio- economic arena” of their everyday life (Holme, 2004, p. 21). In this approach,

²² This is a method of teaching reading and writing based on first learning the letters of the alphabet and practicing on sentences that have no connection to the any thing in the lives of the learners.

teaching literacy is combined with teaching functional skills like in agriculture and other income generating activities (Elwert, 2001; Lyster, 1992b). This combination of literacy and functional skills is often not an easy one for literacy facilitators who are selected to teach in adult literacy education programmes without giving them sufficient training (Lyster, 1992a; Openjuru, 2002, 2004d). In the process of teaching, little attention is given to literacy. Instead, the literacy programme is used to create community development and health awareness among people.

This functional approach proposed during the 1960s adult literacy campaign could not be implemented for reasons already discussed in section 4.4.1.2 above. In addition to the problems discussed above, there were other problems of political instability following the overthrow of the government of Milton Obote I²³ by Idi Amin in 1971. This political disruption disorganised the programme completely despite Amin's efforts to continue with it. It was not until 1992 when the country had achieved some measure of political stability that this approach was tried again. This 1992 programme was evaluated in 1999 with financial support from the World Bank. Largely, the conclusions of this evaluation were that the functional literacy programme had a number of positive effects. The evaluation also made a number of recommendations for further improvement of the programme. These recommendations included, first attracting and retaining non-literate people in adult literacy education classes instead of those who have some primary school education. Second, considering the introduction of formal qualifications and equivalence to different levels of the school system, and third, exploring ways of involving NGOs in the organisation of adult literacy education programmes (see Carr-Hill et al., 2001; Okech et. al, 1999).

4.4.2.3 Post-colonial government adult literacy education work

In this section, I discuss the role of post-colonial government in the provision of adult literacy education programmes. As with the discussion of policy above, I divide this discussion into two. The first section deals with the earlier post-colonial government efforts in the provision of adult literacy education. The second section deals with the current organisation of adult literacy education programmes.

4.4.2.3.1 Previous post-colonial government adult literacy education efforts

After independence, the new post-colonial Government of Uganda continued with the organisation of adult literacy education programmes. The Government joined other African governments in their call to uplift the standard of education amongst their

²³ Obote I refers to the first time Dr. Milton Obote was prime minister and later president of Uganda from 1962 to 1971 when Idi Amin overthrew him from office.

citizens. This call was a collective resolution made in 1961²⁴ by all African Heads of State in Addis Ababa. The aim of this resolution was to secure universal literacy by 1980 to enable the promotion of social and economic development in Africa.

In response to this Addis Ababa resolution, the government of Uganda launched a mass literacy campaign covering the whole country in 1964. This literacy campaign covered 22 languages, with primers and follow up readers written in those languages. During the 1992 National Learning Needs Assessment Survey that was done to launch the 1992 Functional Adult Literacy education programme, some people who participated in the 1964 adult literacy education campaign programme as teachers, administrators and learners, were asked to give their view of the programme. The finding was that many people benefited from the programme and were able to learn how to read and write their names and some simple statements, including doing some simple calculations.

Although the link between the fall in the level of illiteracy registered in late 1960s and early 1970s and the literacy campaign of 1964 was not established through systematic research, there was a noticeable decline of 10 per cent in the level of illiteracy in the country following the launch of that programme. Furthermore, most of the people who participated in it as either learners, teachers, or administrators generally had good memories about the effect of the programme (see Okech, 2006).

In 1966, UNESCO attempted to introduce the idea of Functional Literacy into the programme that has been started in 1964. This attempt failed because the learning materials had already been developed based on the non-functional ideas of teaching literacy that emphasized learning the skills of reading and writing without reference to any purpose for using the skills as envisaged in the functional literacy approach. The materials could not therefore support the use of the functional approach to teaching adult literacy that was now being proposed by UNESCO. Discarding the already developed materials was seen as a waste of the resources that had already been committed to developing those materials in use in the 1964 programme before the idea of functional literacy was proposed. For many reasons, by 1970, this adult literacy programme had almost collapsed. In 1973, the government of Idi Amin, which came to power after overthrowing the government of Milton Obote, tried to revive the failing programme without much success. Among the many reasons for the failure of this programme was the use of force and untrained teachers including primary school children. After the complete collapse of the programme launched in 1964, there was no other attempt to organise

²⁴ Uganda got its independence from the British imperial government on October, 9. 1962. This was after the 1961 Addis Ababa resolution.

another adult literacy education programme in Uganda until the 1980s (See, Baryayebwa, 1998, 2004; Carr-Hill et al., 2001; Okech, 2004; Okech et. al, 1999; Openjuru, 2002, 2004b; Sentumbwe, 2001).

In the 1980s, African governments who had come together in Addis Ababa in 1961 realised that universal literacy had not been achieved as planned in 1961. From this realisation, African governments again recommitted themselves to eradicating illiteracy by the year 2000. This commitment was made at a meeting held in Harare in 1982. In response to this Harare commitment, the government of Uganda again attempted, with support from UNESCO, to revive the provision of adult literacy programmes during the early 1980s. A National Intersectoral Committee was set up to plan for the implementation of an adult literacy programme in the country. This committee was not effective in fulfilling its mandate due to lack of financial support from the government and political instability that was experienced in the country during the early 1980s (see Carr-Hill et al., 2001; Okech, 1994, 2004; Okech et. al, 1999; Openjuru, 2004b).

In 1992, motivated by the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, and the United Nations Assembly's declaration of the 1990s as the International literacy decade, the government of Uganda initiated another literacy programme with support from UNESCO, UNICEF, and The Institute for International Co-operation of the German Adult Education Association (IIZ-DVV) (Openjuru, 2004b; Sandhaas & Asnake, 2003). The new programme was initially called the Integrated Non-Formal Basic Education Pilot Project (INFOBEPP). This project started in eight districts, one in each region of the country. In 1996, it was renamed the National Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) Programme and rolled out over many years to cover the remaining districts in Uganda. By 2004, it was in all the 56 districts of Uganda (Busingye, 2005; Carr-Hill et al., 2001).

4.4.2.3.2 Present adult literacy education provision

Presently, adult literacy education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD), which is responsible for organising the programme at the national level. At the district level, the Chief Administrative Officer and the Community Development Officers are responsible for implementation. Below this structure are the FAL co-ordinators who operate at different levels from Sub-County to parish level (Busingye, 2005; Ministry of Gender Labour and Social development, 2003).

In describing the implementation of FAL in Uganda, Babikwa (2004, p. 43) says, "The government-run Functional Adult Literacy programmes (FAL)... in Uganda have, for

example, often been developed following an expert-led technocratic centre to periphery model” of planning. This planning model excludes the target community from participating in planning the literacy programme. This observation is not consistent with the actual process followed by the MoGLSD. This process involves conducting Learning Needs Assessments (LNAs). The information collected during the LNA is then used to develop adult literacy education curricula and materials for teaching literacy. After a period of implementation, the programmes are evaluated. The literacy facilitators are recruited from amongst the local communities through local leaders of the areas where the programmes are organised, and to which the selected adult literacy facilitators are posted to work after their one-week training in methods for facilitating adult literacy classes.

However, the way LNAs are conducted (See Bhola, 1979, pp.77-93) does not enable information to be obtained about the local literacy practices of the communities for whom literacy programmes are developed. For example, LNAs target and focus on obtaining information on the learning needs of those who are not literate. The literate members of these communities are not part of this process because they are considered to be outside the target group for adult literacy education programmes.

Furthermore, in the process of organising LNAs, the non-literate people are seen as people who do not interact with text in their everyday lives. For that reason, the LNA does not focus on getting information on how they are involved with text in their everyday lives. However, the literature review in Chapter Two shows that research on community literacies in other parts of the world reveals that non-literate people also interact with print in their everyday lives in a number of ways, like through using their social networks and employing personally developed print managing strategies (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Klassen, 1991). In Uganda too, texts are an unavoidable part of human life for most people regardless of their ability to read and write. Yet literacy programmes are not developed with the input of the non-literate people in the community. For this and other reasons²⁵, non-literate people have been found to keep away from such adult literacy programmes (Carr-Hill et al., 2001; Okech et. al, 1999; Oxenham, 2001).

Confirming this distorted view of rural literacy, during literacy programme evaluations, the focus of the evaluators was often on literacy practices involving reading materials such as magazines, newspapers and textbooks. For example, a 1999 World Bank evaluation of adult literacy programmes conducted in Uganda was looking for such activities as evidence of the use of the skill of reading and writing by the graduates of the

²⁵ See Klassen (1991, pp. 44, 51–56) for a detailed discussion of the other reasons that discourage non-literate people without previous school experience from participating in adult literacy programs.

adult literacy programmes they were evaluating. These materials, while they are important as reading materials, are often written in a language and style that make them inaccessible to an adult beginner reader²⁶ who has just completed learning how to read and write. Secondly, most of the materials deal with subjects that are not of immediate interest to adult beginner readers. The reading of road signs, labels, and notices was described as circumstantial reading (Carr-Hill et al., 2001; Okech et. al, 1999). Yet according to the literature review, this is the reading and writing people do in their everyday lives (see Barton & Ivanič, 1991).

LNA findings also reveal that they are designed to collect other equally important information like the poverty and development needs of the community, which are not immediately related to how reading and writing is used in the community. For example, a literacy LNA study conducted by MoGLSD, "Revealed that poverty is a priority concern among adult learners" (Ministry of Gender Labour and Social development, 2003, p. 4).

This was obviously not an expression of a literacy need but rather an economic development need. This conflation of literacy and development is a long-standing source of problems for both development and adult literacy workers, and an area of a long running debate in adult literacy circles (Openjuru, 2004a). It shows that literacy is in most cases not the primary focus in LNAs. Instead, it is the social and economic development needs of the communities that are the focus. The outcome of such processes is an adult literacy education programme that is not related to the literacy practices of the local communities for whom the programmes are being designed.

In the end, literacy programmes for rural people tend to be designed without any knowledge of how rural people actually use literacy in their everyday lives. This is not a denial of the important role literacy can play in the development of poor rural communities, but rather I am questioning how literacy programmes are conceived and implemented without recourse to the local uses of reading and writing and the condition and activities of the people for whom the programmes are to be designed (Openjuru, 2004a). Because of these problems, programmes based on such approaches to LNA and other forms of survey, often fail to capture the real literacy practices of rural people or their real literacy needs. As a result, not much is achieved in terms of improving the local literacy practices of rural people, or solving the problems of rural poverty which adult literacy education programmes are designed to address (Okech et. al, 1999). A new way

²⁶ This term was defined by Lyster (2003, p. 3) as denoting "adults with very basic literacy skills". Other terms commonly used in the literature are: *neo-literates* and *newly literate adults*.

of approaching the organisation of literacy programmes for rural people needs to be investigated.

4.4.2.4 The content of the government FAL primers

Responding to the objectives of the different literacy programmes, the content taught in government adult literacy classes focuses on issues of development and/or poverty eradication through improved agricultural productivity and income, health and hygiene, family planning, and social responsibility (Acaye & Omara-Akaca, 2003; Department of Community Development, 1993).

This content is presented in the form of themes and pictures (see Appendix 5), which are assumed to depict both negative local realities that need to be changed, and positive situations that need to be introduced or encouraged. In the Luo primer for example, out of 21 pictures, eight depicted negative situations that need to be changed and the rest, (13) were pictures depicting positive situations that need to be introduced or encouraged in community life. The lessons following these pictures were intended to communicate information or knowledge that would correct the negative depictions and introduce or encourage the learners to live according to the positive depictions that are associated with many social and economic benefits for them. Most of the negative pictures were related to lessons on good hygiene, positive gender relations between husband and wife, and family planning, and social responsibility. Other lessons were on health and nutrition, improved agricultural production, better income from sale of agricultural products, co-operation in community work, and the benefits of trees for the environment (Acaye & Omara-Akaca, 2003; Department of Community Development, 1993).

These pictures are similar in all primers printed for use in different languages. For example, the first picture for the first lesson in the Luo primer depicts a picture that is well described by Busingye (2005) in the Runyankore/Rukiga primer. These pictures show dilapidated grass-thatched houses that are falling apart with children defecating on the compound and some eating dirt from the same compound, in both there is man who could be the father of the children sitting around holding his chin. The holding of a chin is meant to depict a worried person. These pictures are evidently intended to portray poverty and poor home hygiene. The title of this first lesson for which the picture was drawn in the Luo primer is, “*Cilo kelo peko*” (Acaye & Omara-Akaca, 2003, pp. 1-2). The direct translation of this title is, “Dirt brings problems.” This is a lesson on proper home hygiene with its danger of increased problems. It is a lesson that is consistent with the picture. Although it was not stated succinctly, the lesson is very clear, to inform the learners to

avoid health problems by keeping their home in good hygienic conditions. Instructors are trained to emphasise that point (Openjuru, 2002).

It is evidently clear that these primers are not developed with knowledge of the local literacy practices of the community in mind. Instead, they are intended to communicate information and knowledge that the government or the organisers of the literacy programme think the learners would need to improve the conditions of their lives. The literacy programmes are therefore more concerned with the poverty and/or development problems being experienced in the community than ensuring that the community is literate. The primers therefore betray a hidden primary objective that is not about learning how to read and write. Learning how to read and write in that case is mainly used to maintain a meaningful interaction with the learners over a long period for the development messages to take hold in learners' lives. It can be concluded that the objective of the lesson is to communicate a message on the value of good hygiene while teaching the learner how to read and write. The problem is that the lesson is not based on the reading and writing practices in the community, which could be the reason for which non-literate people would want to learn how to read and write.

4.5 Non-Governmental Organisations' (NGOs') adult literacy work

There are different types of NGOs²⁷ working in Uganda. There are religious or faith-based NGOs, which are church founded NGOs that pursue the church development objectives outside the normal church structures. There are national NGOs, which are locally founded and work only within the boundaries of Uganda. There are international NGOs that originate from outside Uganda. These organisations have been, and continue to be very active in providing adult literacy education in Uganda, and like government, the primary objectives of NGO's adult literacy education work is to improve the condition of life of the participants of their programmes (Openjuru, 2004c). In this section, the roles of NGOs in adult literacy education work are discussed, starting from the colonial period moving on to the post-colonial and present period.

²⁷ Non-Government Organisations, according to Fowler's (1996, cited in Openjuru, 2004c) demarcation of society into three sectors, fall in the third sector called civil society organisations. The state is the first sector, and business/profit making organisations or market is the second sector. Civil society organisations are therefore non-state and non-market organisations that operate outside government structures like ministries and departments, and do not make profits from their activities. As civil society organisations, NGOs are voluntary organisations whose roles are to pursue personal or social interests, beliefs, and concerns. In pursuing these interests, civil society interacts with the state without compromising its independence (Openjuru, 2004c).

4.5.1 NGOs' adult literacy education work during the colonial period (1894-1962)

Before independence in 1962, apart from the church, which has already been discussed earlier in section 4.3 above for their central role in introducing literacy and adult literacy education in Uganda, there were few NGOs or civil society organisations active in adult literacy education (Openjuru, 2004c). At that time, most NGOs were involved in other aspects of adult education, which could have involved the teaching of reading and writing. These NGOs included the St. John Ambulance Brigade, the Young Men/Women Christian Associations, the Uganda Red Cross Society, the Family Planning Association of Uganda, Co-operative Union, and the Uganda Trade Union Congress. These organisations engaged in training people in various skills including health and hygiene education. The adult education work of these organisations did not include adult literacy education. They simply taught their members even if they were not able to read and write (Atim & Ngaka, 2004).

Like the colonial government, the NGOs that worked during the colonial period did not involve their beneficiaries in developing the programmes meant for them. They used a top-down, or the expert-led programme development model (Babikwa, 2004). The programme beneficiaries were seen as people who did not know anything and needed to be helped. The most commonly used method of teaching was demonstration, film shows, and extension services that regularly monitored the progress of members and advised them accordingly. These methods did not require extensive use of literacy by the learners (Atim & Ngaka, 2004).

Some of the NGOs that started work during the colonial time were still active at the time of conducting this study. Examples of these surviving NGOs are the Family Planning Association of Uganda, the Uganda Red Cross Society, and the Young Men/Women Christian Associations. Others like the Uganda Trade Union Congress, which had some political orientation, could not survive the bad political developments that started in the late 1960s.

4.5.2 NGOs' adult literacy education work during the post-colonial period (1962 to date)

After independence, many NGOs devoted to adult education and adult literacy education work were established. One of the first adult education organisations to be founded in Uganda was Kiira Adult Education Association (Kiira AEA) in 1979. Kiira AEA worked in four districts in Eastern Uganda. The second NGO in adult education was the National Adult Education Association (NAEA), founded in the early 1980s. It has branches in most parts of the country.

From the late 1980s, an increasing number of national and international NGOs and/or civil society organisations were founded and some became very active in adult literacy education in different parts of the country. These were: ActionAid Uganda (AAU); Women's Empowerment Programme (WEP); Save the Children UK; Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE) and smaller community-focused organisations e.g. Tororo Community Initiated Development (TOCIDA) who work at the community level. These are referred to as Community Based Organisations (CBOs) (Carr-Hill et al., 2001; Okech, et. al, 1999; Openjuru, 2004c). In addition to the churches, the non-religious NGOs have played a significant role in the development of adult education and adult literacy education in Uganda.

Other aspects of the role of the church in the introduction and development of adult literacy education in Uganda have already been discussed in 4.3 above. However, with the proliferation of NGOs in late 1980s, the different churches in Uganda founded a number of NGOs to which they transferred most of their community development work including adult literacy education. Examples of church-based NGOs include Soroti Catholic Diocese Integrated Development Organisation (SOCADIDO), the Catholic Relief Service (CRS), the Adventist Development and Relief Organisation (ADRA), and Karamoja Diocesan Development Organisation (KADDO). These NGOs execute development work on behalf of their church founding bodies. Adult literacy education is one of the development activities they organise for their Christian communities (Openjuru, 2004c).

Some NGOs actively involved in organising adult literacy education programmes for rural communities in Uganda are doing it in very innovative ways. For example, AAU was responsible for the research initiative that led to the introduction of a new and innovative participatory approach to teaching adult literacy known as REFLECT (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques) (Archer & Cottingham, 1996). ADRA is experimenting with different combinations of livelihood skills training and adult literacy education (Katahoire, 2002). Some organisations like LABE are engaged in developing versatile training packages that include literacy materials development, training adult literacy facilitators, and capacity building for organisations involved in adult literacy work in Uganda (Openjuru, 2004c; Sentumbwe, 2001). Collectively, the contribution of adult education NGOs supplements the efforts of government in providing more opportunities for adult literacy education to the people of Uganda (Okech, 2004).

4.5.3 The objectives of NGO adult literacy education programmes

Like government, the primary concern of these NGOs involved in adult literacy education is to achieve social and economic improvement for the rural poor, through improving their productive capacity. They both aim to achieve this through teaching adult literacy and imparting skills, which the learners can use to improve their own welfare and conditions of life in their communities. It is for that reason that teaching adult literacy is aimed at promoting positive practices like good agriculture, good health and hygiene practices, and income generating skills. To achieve these philanthropic ends, ActionAid for example, uses the REFLECT tools like the health matrix, seasonal calendar, hygiene map, and record keeping. These tools are used to help the community to become conscious of the value of locally available resources in their environment, which they could exploit to their advantage (Archer & Cottingham, 1996; Openjuru, 2004b).

4.6 The ideologies influencing adult literacy education work in Uganda

There are two contesting ideologies informing adult literacy education work in Uganda. These have a strong influence on the provision of adult literacy education programmes and on the selection of methods or approaches used (Openjuru, 2004b).

The government adult literacy programme, FAL, is guided by the idea of Functional Literacy, which advocates that literacy should be taught for practical developmental purposes. Some NGOs like ActionAid Uganda on the other hand, advocates that literacy should be taught for developing critical thinking, social empowerment and liberation of the community from oppressive systems that are the source of their poverty (Archer & Cottingham, 1996; Openjuru, 2002, 2004b).

These differences between the government FAL programme and ActionAid's REFLECT programme are evident in the methods they use in teaching adult literacy. The REFLECT approach, according to ActionAid, is more participatory and responsive to the local contexts and needs of the learners and would empower the learners in the process of learning to take local initiatives to address their own plight (Archer & Cottingham, 1996; Openjuru, 2004b). However, the government also claims to be using a participatory functional adult literacy approach, which it claims also leads to the same benefits such as empowerment of the learners and responding to the needs of the community. An evaluation conducted in 1999 found no difference in the outcomes of adult literacy work by both government and NGOs (Carr-Hill et al., 2001; Okech et. al, 1999).

Although they use different approaches to teaching literacy both FAL and REFLECT aim at the economic development of the local community. The stated objectives of the REFLECT programmes are aimed at improving the economic welfare of the community through proper identification and use of locally available resources. This is not very different from the objectives of the government FAL programme that also aims to achieve socio-economic changes in the communities in which the literacy learners live (Archer & Cottingham, 1996; Department of Community Development, 1993; Openjuru, 2004b).

Neither the government nor the development NGOs' adult literacy education programmes are based on knowledge of literacy use in the everyday life of the communities. The participatory model followed by the development agencies, and the LNA exercises used by government, often reproduce the dominant perception of what constitutes knowledge, learning, and literacy and not how local communities use reading and writing in their everyday lives, which should be the primary focus of a literacy programme. As discussed in section 4.4.2, the LNA conducted may even bring out completely different findings that are not even related to literacy or reading and writing in the community.

Both government and NGOs always approach communities with the attitude and intention of fixing problems in the community. As a result, all processes are geared toward the identification of the assumed problems and agreeing with the communities, in the spirit of participation, how best the problems can be addressed. For example, lack of skill or power is assumed without investigating how power is constructed in that community (Fiedrich & Jellema, 2003). Therefore, what is done under FAL is to identify the skills that are required for a community through conducting LNA, and that is how the FAL approaches the problem of lack of skills in the community. REFLECT on the other hand use participatory dialogue with the communities to understand them and identify their problems together with them, and that is how REFLECT approaches the problem of lack of power in the community. REFLECT also argue that their teaching is consistent with the argument advanced by the NLS (Archer & Cottingham, 1996).

It is assumed that lack of literacy is a major cause of the community's problems. Therefore, participation and other strategies are mobilised to see how best the community can be liberated by being made literate. What comes after the LNA or community dialogue are literacy programmes designed to address the identified problems, which are either lack of power or productive skills. While these practices may be good for rural communities, they do not pay attention to how rural people use literacy in their everyday

lives. This could be contributing to the lack of programme impact on literacy within the target communities (see Carr-Hill et al., 2001; Okech et. al, 1999).

4.7 The language context in Uganda

In Uganda, there are varieties of ethnic groups who speak many unrelated languages. According to Parry (2000a) oral language use closely relates to or affects everyday literacy, which is the ability to use language in a written form. There are 45 languages in Uganda and two of these are reported as extinct (Gordon, 2005). The 43 remaining languages are grouped under five major linguistic groupings: Bantu, Nilotic, Madi-Moru, Nilo-Hamites and Highland Nilotic (Myuganda, 1996). Luo is part of the Nilotic group of languages. There are other forms of classification, which distinguish Luo as a distinct group (Nsibambi, R., 2000). The Bantu group of languages is spoken in most of the Western, Southern, and Eastern parts of Uganda. The Madi-Moru languages are spoken in the West Nile region of Uganda. The remaining languages are spoken mostly in Northern Uganda. There is no clear information on the number of languages that are written and those that are not. However, from my personal experience there are less than five languages that are not written (Openjuru, 2004b). Whatever that case, the multiplicity of languages could also mean a multiplicity of literacy practices.

Although there are many languages, English is the dominant language of literacy in Uganda. According to the constitution of Uganda, English is the official language of Uganda (Government of Uganda, 1995). As the official language, it is used in governance, the judiciary and legislature. The country's political elites and the educated rich people prefer to use English most of the time including in their homes and with family members who can all speak one local language. It is seen by most Ugandans as a "language of the social achievers...*and*...symbol of success" (Magoba, 2001, p. 54). This makes English the dominant language in Uganda. It is the language of power, and it pervades every aspect of people's everyday life in both rural and urban areas of the country (Kasozi, 2000). Regardless of whether you are able to speak, read, or write in it, English is unavoidable in ordinary life in Uganda. Being able to read and write in English can enable access to jobs or to a much easier life than a person who is not able to do that (Kwesiga, 1994; Nsibambi, R., 2000).

English is also the language of instruction after the first four years of school education. In schools that are located in rural areas, any local language can only be used during the first four years of education. For schools located in urban areas with a mixed linguistic population, English is used from the first year of schooling (Nsibambi, A., 2000). The

speaking of English was enforced through peer embarrassment²⁸ of the pupils caught speaking their mother tongues (Magoba, 2001). As the main language of instruction in schools and because of the way it was enforced in schools through the stigmatisation of local languages, English became the preferred language of literacy for most people in Uganda. It is the language in which most people learnt how to read and write. To be literate in Uganda has come to mean being able to read and write in English. Nsibambi points this out when he says, “When we speak of high level of literacy skills in Uganda, we naturally think of English as the language in question since it is the medium of instruction at all but the lowest levels of schooling” (Nsibambi, A., 2000, p. 3).

Unlike Kenya and Tanzania, Uganda has failed to develop a national language²⁹ policy (Kasozi, 2000). This failure to develop a national language is due, firstly, to the multilingual nature of Uganda which makes it difficult to adopt one language for use as a national language. Selecting one language from among all the other languages is seen as giving unfair advantage to and promoting the hegemony of the group whose language is adopted as the national language of the country. Secondly, the government failed to initiate a comprehensive programme to adopt a national language policy initiative (Kasozi, 2000; Nsibambi, R., 2000; Prah, 2001). It is for these and other reasons that Luganda, the language with the largest number of speakers, could not be adopted for use as a national language (Kasozi, 2000).

Kiswahili, a widely spoken language in East and Central Africa, could not be adopted as the national language for a number of reasons. Firstly, just like English, it is a non-native language in Uganda (Kwesiga, 1994). Secondly, there was resistance from the Baganda who speak Luganda, a language that was rivalling Kiswahili for consideration as national language. Thirdly, its lowly status as the language used by unschooled trouble causing urban riffraff and the often-unpopular armed forces (Army, Police, Prisons, and other security organs) in Uganda in my opinion caused Kiswahili to be stigmatised as a language of coercion and thuggery. Generally, Kiswahili was seen as the language of the lowly uneducated³⁰ class. This perception made it difficult for the schooled non-military politicians to support the establishment of Kiswahili as a national language (Kasozi,

²⁸ Pupils caught speaking their local languages (vernacular) are made to hang a bone around their necks until they catch the next person committing the same offence and transfer the bone to them. While wearing the bone they will be subjected to ridicule by teachers and fellow pupils.

²⁹ ‘National language’ here refers to an indigenous national language spoken throughout the country. It is different from ‘official language’, which is any language, local or foreign that is given status as the language for transacting government business.

³⁰ Ugandans generally have a rather snobbish attitude towards people who have not been to school. In Uganda, education is a strong status symbol. Therefore, people who have not been to school have no voice. In Ugandan speak, ‘they cannot talk’. If they want to talk, they must first go to school and pass exams.

2000). The missionaries too were strongly opposed to the use of Kiswahili, which they saw as a language of Islam that would encourage the transmission of Islam. They described it as a language of, “Mohammedanism, moral and physical degeneration and ruin” (Tucker, 1908/1970, p. 216 cited in Kasozi, 2000, p. 26).

Presently, the Government of Uganda is trying to recognise and promote the use of Kiswahili in the country. This is being done in the spirit of unity with the other two East African countries, Kenya and Tanzania, where Kiswahili is used as the national language. Kiswahili has been instituted as a compulsory subject alongside English and Maths to be taught in all schools in Uganda (McGregor, 2000). This, it is hoped, will encourage increased use of Kiswahili in Uganda.

The dominant position of English in Uganda, the failure to promote Kiswahili that is learnt informally through social interaction and the failure to promote local language literacy complicates the literacy situation in Uganda in ways that discourage widespread use of literacy.

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, the literacy history, policy, programmes, and language of adult literacy education in Uganda were reviewed. The review shows that literacy has a long history in Uganda and that there are many NGOs in addition to the government who are active in adult literacy education work. I also argued that although the methods used are different, the adult literacy education content taught by both NGOs and the government literacy programmes are similar in many respects. These adult literacy education works, as I noted, are going on without any clear policy framework and with little recognition of the way people use reading and writing in their everyday lives. In the next section, a similar presentation on the context of literacy is presented by an examination of everyday life in Bweyale.

CHAPTER FIVE: Bweyale: the ethnographic field site

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the context and background of literacy practices in Bweyale are described to provide a framework for understanding the literacy practices in Bweyale. It is this background and context, which according to the social practices theory of literacy discussed in Chapter Two, shapes the local literacy practices that take place within it. This context is what gives meaning to literacy in people's everyday life in Bweyale. In addition, since ethnographic studies are context-based studies, a clear description and understanding of this context is important because it provides a basis for understanding the findings of this study. Alternatively, the social practices theory of literacy, which is the theoretical framework for this study, emphasises situated literacy, which can only make sense with a clear understanding of the context in terms of place and time within which literacy events that were studied and reported took place.

Therefore, in this chapter, I describe and discuss the growth and development of Bweyale and its population, the economic activities in it, its layout in terms of patterns of settlement, and the social and administrative institutions that presently exist in this community. I start with a discussion of the historical development of Bweyale, moving on to the contemporary life and literacy practices in present-day Bweyale. All these pivot around understanding the current everyday literacy practices of the people in Bweyale.

I could not get documented historical information about Bweyale. There are virtually no written records about Bweyale. Therefore, the information used in this chapter was gathered from the field through interviews and my personal knowledge of the Luo history, learnt during my primary and secondary school days, and oral stories from elders in the community. Some information was gathered through observation of the existing social and economic infrastructure that can reveal the history and ways of life of the people living in Bweyale.

Information about the current community life was collected through interviews, observations and informal conversations with the local people presently living in Bweyale. Considering the many different methods through which this information was collected, it is difficult to identify each piece of information for proper acknowledgement of such a source of information in this work. However, those that were formally collected through interviews and easily identifiable sources were accordingly acknowledged.

5.2 The history of Bweyale

In this section, I have attempted to put together the history of Bweyale around significant events or landmarks in this history. Relating this history around significant events is a back and forth narrative in which each event or landmark has its own particular history up to the present. Some of the events have concurrent history with similar and overlapping dates that do not permit a chronological narrative. These significant events are those that people refer to when talking about their history and those that I thought were important for understanding literacy, for example the introduction of school education.

I have started with what I call the early history, which is the history of Bweyale before the arrival of the Arabs and European visitors from outside Africa. I then go on to relate the colonial history around the introduction of school education. Other significant events like the construction of the roads and the explosion in human population are all seen as important landmarks in the history of Bweyale³¹.

5.2.1 The early history

Bweyale has a comparatively recent history by European standards. For example, Barton and Hamilton (1998) who carried out similar research in Lancaster were talking about a city of over two thousand five hundred years old. Bweyale as a known world inhabited by people is less than nine hundred years old. The history of reading and writing is even shorter, less than 70 years old. In this section, I will attempt to put together this history, starting with what the name of the place means.

According to local stories gained through informal conversation with local elders, Bweyale means ‘good place’, a place of freedom and happiness. The area in which this place of freedom and happiness is now located was under the rule of the Batembuzi and then the Bachwezi. Not much is known about the Batembuzi whose rule was taken over by the Bachwezi who established the Chwezi Empire around the 10th and 11th century. The Chwezi Empire collapsed around the 15th century against the onslaught of the Luo migration from Southern Sudan. The Luo took over the leadership of the area and established the Babiito ruling dynasty of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom on the ruins of the Chwezi Empire. From then on, this kingdom presided over a very large area stretching from north of the Nile to Karagwe in Northern Tanzania. It was a very powerful kingdom until its authority was challenged by the neighbouring Kingdom of Buganda in around the 18th century (Masindi Hotel, 2006; Wikipedia, 2006a, 2006c). The subjects of this

³¹ Most of the information used in this section was gathered through interviews with some local elders in the community and are not very precise and I did not have enough time to confirm this oral information against documented information that could be obtained from the Government archives in Entebbe or the colonial archives in Britain.

kingdom were largely the Banyoro who speak Lunyoro as their language. Bweyale was part of this Kingdom of Bunyoro-Kitara. Therefore, the first people to settle in the area known as Bweyale were the Banyoro people who are still present in the area up to the time of this study.

Following the Luo migration from present day Southern Sudan into what is now northern Uganda, a group known as the Palwo occupied what is now the Murchison Falls National Park. The Palwo were part of the Luo group of people who migrated from Southern Sudan around the sixteenth century. The first wave of the Luo migration into Northern Uganda took place round 1550. At that time, Africa was still experiencing many waves of migrations by different ethnic groups moving from one place to the other in constant search of food, grazing land and water for people and animals.

Folk tales among the Luo people have it that Gikipir and Labongo, who were the leaders of the Luo people as they moved down the river Nile from Sudan, had a major disagreement that led to a split between the Luo people at a point now called Wadlayi. After this split, different groups took different directions. One group moved to West Nile (the Alur people). The other groups moved into the present day Gulu and Kitgum Districts, and they were named by Arabs as the Acholi, meaning the people of Choli. The third group moved into Bunyoro and founded the Babiito Dynasty of Bunyoro. Other groups moved to Eastern Uganda (the Japadhola) and Western Kenya (the Jaluo). Some are said to have moved down to Northern Tanzania. The Palwo were some of the groups that moved into Bunyoro³² and settled in the present day Murchison Falls Park. According to local oral history narrated by the elders in Bweyale, in 1911 the Palwo were attacked by an epidemic of smallpox in the area where they had settled. To protect them from this epidemic, the colonial government moved them to where they are now in Kiryadongo in which Bweyale is located.

Livelihood at that time was based on peasant cultivation of food crops for household consumption and rearing domestic animals such as goats, sheep and cows. People owned large pieces of land to sustain that way of life. Bweyale was said to be a huge forest full of wild animals up to as late as the 1930s and hunting wild animals was one of the major sources of food for the people. Huge hunting expeditions would be organised involving over one hundred men and women. The animals hunted included deer, buffalo, antelope, hippopotamus, and rhinoceros from the river Nile. Small animals like edible rats, squirrels, and wild birds were hunted individually or in small hunting parties around the

³² They seem not to be part of the group that founded the Kingdom of Bunyoro-Kitara over the ruins of the Chwezi Empire.

villages as the supplementary sources of livelihood. There were few people living in the area then. The small population meant that there was enough land for cultivation and large numbers of animals to hunt. These were the two major sources of food in Bweyale during that time. Generally, food came from the small family farms, domestic animals and birds that were occasionally slaughtered for visitors and important occasions, and hunting. With the exception of huge hunting expeditions, this way of life is still prevalent.

Interaction with people from outside Africa, as in most parts of East Africa, came through the Arab traders who came from Egypt through Sudan down to Bunyoro. The Arabs were later followed by the European explorers, John Henning Speke and James Augustus Grant in 1862. These explorers came through Buganda and extended to Bunyoro. These visits by the explorers paved the way for the missionaries and colonial administrators. The missionaries arrived in Bunyoro Kingdom during the early 20th century in about 1910. The King in whose reign both the missionaries and the British colonialist came to Bunyoro was Omukama Kabalege King of Bunyoro. The activities of the explorers, the missionaries, and the colonial administrators changed the way of life in Bunyoro including Bweyale. This change included the introduction of reading and writing.

5.2.2 Colonial history and the introduction of school education

School education was introduced by the missionaries from 1900 to all parts of Uganda. Through school education, literacy became more widespread in Uganda (see Chapter Four above). The missionaries started from Buganda, and spread out to other parts of Uganda including Bweyale.

The first and nearest school to Bweyale was established at Kiryadongo in the 1940s. When this school was established, young people from Bweyale, especially boys, were sent to school in Kiryadongo. These students were the first people to learn how to read and write. Some of the boys moved on to become teachers and came back to participate in establishing the first school in Bweyale in the late 1940s. According to the only surviving teacher, Mr. Yowana Ladaah, the first school in which he taught was established by a Church of Uganda missionary called Yovani Waarwo. The school was located in one of Bweyale's villages called Kichwabugingo and the students were taught under a big tree called *Mutubura*. Unfortunately, the church was not able to continue financing the school activities so the local missionary Yovani Waarwo left and the school collapsed before it could make any significant impact.

According to Mr. Yowana Ladaah, in the early 1960s, the Catholic Church established another primary school at a neighbouring village called Katulikire, and children from

Bweyale attended this school. In the 1980s, the Church of Uganda again established a primary school in Bweyale. This school was operating in a church building. However, after some time, one good Christian, Mr. William Dadau, decided to offer his own house to serve as classroom and land for building the school, which is now called Bweyale Primary School. The government later came in to take over the school's management from the local Christian population of Bweyale in 1995. Since the early 1990s, many private primary and even secondary schools have been established in Bweyale to respond to the large demand for education created by the influx of displaced people.

5.2.3 Building of the Kampala-Gulu Highway

Another significant landmark in the history of Bweyale was the building of the Kampala-Gulu Highway by the British colonial administration during the 1950s. This road was later extended to the West Nile region. To date this road is the main link between Northern Uganda and Kampala. The road opened up Bweyale to modern trade links with other parts of the country and the world. It also affected the settlement patterns in the area because most people moved to settle near the road to have easy access to transport and communication with other parts of the country. Even the administrative centre had to be moved to the roadside to ease communication with the administrative headquarters located in Masindi town.

5.2.4 Establishment of the trading centre

According to interviews with five elders, the first shops in Bweyale were established by Jabuloni Kasigwa, Thomas Kaheru, and an Indian trader who came from Atura called Gulamsi. These traders constructed small shops made of iron sheets. They traded in goods like safety pins, soap, salt, paraffin and other small items, which they brought from Masindi. The activities of these traders marked the beginning of the trading centre in the area of Bweyale. Some of the old buildings are still in use although they are in a state of disrepair.

The trading centre remained small until the late 1990s when the population of Bweyale increased due to the influx of refugees from Southern Sudan and the displaced people from Northern Uganda. The result of this influx of people in Bweyale was an expansion in the number of shops; to cater for this increased population demanding, salt, soap, clothing, bicycles, and necessities of life.

5.2.5 The increasing peopling of Bweyale

As stated in section 5.2.1 above, the Banyoro are the indigenous people who had sparsely settled in Bweyale. Their neighbours were the Palwo who had migrated from Southern

Sudan together with other Luo groups and settled in what is now the Murchison Falls National Park. In the early 1900s, the Palwo were evacuated from the Murchison Falls area by the colonial government and settled in the area that is now Bweyale.

Bweyale had plenty of unsettled fertile land with a good climate that can support agriculture. This is one a major attractions that brought different groups of people including refugees to come and settle in Bweyale. The different groups of people who were attracted to Bweyale included the Alur, the Kuku and the Lugbara all from the West Nile region of Uganda. Some of these migrants were brought in to serve their prison sentences of hard labour on the government farms that had been established near Bweyale. After serving their terms of hard labour, a few opted to stay in Bweyale and established their homes. The people who settled in Bweyale invited their relatives to come and join them. More people came voluntarily to work in Kinyara sugar plantations in Masindi and later moved to establish their homes in Bweyale.

According to Rev. Oryama, a retired Anglican Priest who came to Bweyale in the 1960s, refugees came from Sudan following the Anyanya I civil war that broke out there in the late 1960s. Other groups of refugees who came from Congo in 1960 were fleeing from civil wars. Only a few of them went back to Congo after the war. In the late 1980s, another wave of refugees came from Sudan and they were settled in the Kiryadongo refugee camp, which is located in Bweyale. In the 1990s, yet another group of people came from Gulu, Kitgum and Pader districts fleeing from a civil war in Northern Uganda. Other groups that moved to Bweyale from neighbouring areas include the Bagwere from Bugwere, the Langi from Lango, the Karimojongs from Karamoja, and the Banyarwanda³³, refugees who moved out of Kyangwali refugee camps. Bweyale is therefore composed of different groups of people coming from different places with different cultures and languages.

Although availability of land was the main attraction of Bweyale, with the influx of people from all parts of Uganda and the neighbouring countries, the pressure on land became too much and most of the displaced people are not comfortable with this situation. Some of them are just waiting for the civil war in Northern Uganda³⁴ to end so that they can go back to what they call their home. These people see Bweyale only as a place of refuge and not a home. The lack of land has meant that people who cannot afford to buy and own larger pieces of land are forced to live on very small pieces of land near

³³These are the descendants of refugees who came to Uganda in 1959 from Rwanda, who decided to become Ugandan.

³⁴ This war has been going on since 1986 between the Lord's Resistance Army headed by Joseph Kony and the Government of Uganda headed by Yoweri Kaguta Museveni.

the roadside in very congested settlements, and rent land for cultivation for which they pay the landowners for every crop they harvest. Land sale, renting and land disputes are therefore common features of life in Bweyale.

According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2005), there are 19,794 households in the whole of Kiryadongo Sub-County and the average number of people in each household is five. Two-thirds of this population of Kiryadongo Sub-County is estimated to live in Bweyale. This is approximately 13,196 of all the households in Kiryadongo Sub-County. Information relating to gender and age was not available. However, from ordinary observation there are more women than there are men.

From my observation and interaction with people in Bweyale, the majority of this population consists of people displaced by the civil war going on in Northern Uganda and most of them are staying with the hope that one day they will return to their homes when the civil war ends. As one elder from this group stated during an interview, *“I am not born of this place. If the war ends, I will go back to my home”*.

5.3 Present-day life in Bweyale

In this section, I present the present-day life of the people who make up Bweyale. This will consist of the language, the language situation and the social and economic life in Bweyale, i.e. how people earn their living and spend their everyday life.

5.3.1 Languages spoken in Bweyale

Because of its mixed population, Bweyale became a multilingual community. The most commonly used language is Luo, which is the most dominant, followed by Kiswahili, English and Lunyoro. Other languages like Lugbara, Kakwa, and Lugwere are spoken at the family level and in communication between members of the same language group. In some cases oral communication in Bweyale is characterised by code switching between different languages depending on the people involved in a conversation.

Luo is commonly spoken because the Luo speakers are the majority with five different dialects of the same language spoken in Bweyale. By virtue of their large numbers in relation to the other groups, Luo tends to dominate in Bweyale. Kiswahili is the lingua franca for informal inter-ethnic oral communication between people who are not able to speak English. English is the official language in Uganda, and like Kiswahili, it is also a lingua franca for people who are able to speak it. It is the language of instruction and of those who are educated. It also the language of status and power in Uganda. It is used in the judiciary, legislature and the civil service. The ability to speak English is seen as more advantageous than the ability to speak all the local languages.

5.3.2 Social and economic activities

In this section, I discuss the socio-economic activities that go on in Bweyale trading centre and the surrounding villages.

5.3.2.1 Economic activities in the trading centre

The nucleus of community life in Bweyale is the trading centre that is located along the main highway linking Kampala and Gulu. This trading centre is made up of rows of shop buildings lined up on both sides of the main road. Smaller dirt ‘streets’ branch off the mains road with shops on both sides and ending up in several paths that lead to the different villages surrounding the trading centre.

The shop buildings are made of burnt redbrick walls, cement and flat iron roofs (see Figure 2 and 3). This kind of architecture was popularised by Indian traders who were the first people to introduce the culture of selling manufactured commodities in shops. Some of the big shops have lots of merchandise for selling, which they display outside in front of the shop to attract potential buyers who could be passing by. These kinds of display are more pronounced on the two market days when many of the people from the surrounding villages come to the trading centres to buy some items.



Figure 2: Burnt redbrick, cement wall and iron roof shop.

Figure 2 shows a glimpse of what the trading centre looks like during the day, with Minibus and *Bodaboda* riders waiting for customers as seen in the photo.



Figure 3: The trading centre and the main road linking Gulu and Kampala.

This trading centre is always abuzz with many people doing all kinds of commercial activities like bicycle repairs; and young boys, women and children selling roasted meat, maize, cassava, homemade pancakes, and many other edibles to travellers on the Gulu-Kampala main road. As stated briefly above, there is a main market that operates daily but Bweyale has two special market days on Wednesday and Saturday. On those days, many buyers and sellers come from outside Bweyale to participate in the commercial life of Bweyale. The entire trading centre is, on those two days, full of people coming to sell and buy different types of commodities, and vehicles bringing in deliveries from Kampala or Masindi town. This is repeated every week, and towards 'big days' like Christmas, Easter, and independence days, the market is even busier. In both the daily and biweekly markets held in the same market location, people sell farm products like tomatoes, cassava, maize and beans, and manufactured goods like clothes, soaps, and salt. Some of the foodstuffs sold in the market, like fish, are brought in from other areas outside Bweyale. Most of the people who sell in the market are women, and they sell mostly foodstuff while the few men who sell in the market sell manufactured goods brought in from towns (See Figure 4 below):



Figure 4: The market in Bweyale

The market sellers not only sell farm products, they also sell old magazines, pamphlets, and old copies of newspapers that are written in English (see Figure 5 below). The purchase and use of these magazines and old newspapers is discussed in Chapter Six.



Figure 5: A display of magazines for sale.

In the trading centre, there are different types of commercial activities. They include, barber shops for men and hairdressing salons for women, tailors, retailers, restaurants, bars and shops, drug stores. Phone kiosks are another very visible commercial activity in

this trading centre. In these phone kiosks, people make calls for a fee, and they are positioned at an average of 10 meters from each other in the trading centre. Related to literacy, there is one newspaper seller, two bookshops stocking mostly primary school books, one stationary shop, and one computer typing and photocopying service in the trading centre.

With their merchandise displayed on the shelves and some hanging on frames constructed in front of the shops, the shopkeepers sit in their shops waiting for customers to come and buy their merchandise. Customers arrive looking around to identify what they want or ask the shopkeeper if they have what they are looking for to buy. The transactions between the shopkeeper and the buyer are carried out across the counter inside the shop (See Figures 5 and 6 below).



Figure 6: A shopkeeper in her mainly cosmetic shop.



Figure 7: A bookshop.

The shopkeepers keep their money in moneyboxes normally kept under the counter inside the shop. In the bars and restaurants, customers are offered seats and tables where they are served with food or drinks. The orders for food are reported to the person serving as the cashier at the counter who enters it in their record and ticks it off after payments have been made. There are also commercial entertainment places like video halls and pool tables.

The open spaces around the trading centre, for example in front of shops, are used by people who engage in different types of artisan and other business activities, like repairing bicycles, roasting and selling meat, cooking and selling food (e.g. cassava) and making tea for sale in makeshift tents. People also display and sell furniture from carpentry and craft workshops that are situated behind the shops. Farmers too sell their surplus harvest in some designated open spaces in the trading centres. All these activities take place along the main road and the small dirt streets that make up the trading centre. They are some of the different ways people earn their living in the trading centre.

The trading centre has an intermittent supply of electricity, and it can disappear for over three consecutive days. To use my computer I had to buy a standby generator. The use of standby generators is a common practice for businesses that use equipment which need electricity to run them like fridges, big music systems, barber machines, video decks used by entertainment halls showing films for a fee, grinding mills, and telephone charging

shops and the many telephone kiosks. There is no piped water in this trading centre, so, it is either fetched from boreholes, shallow wells, or collected from the roof rainwater in tanks or trapping the rainwater flowing from the roof of a house using saucers. All these sources including the roof rainwater collection are not clean, and water must be boiled before drinking. The scarcity of water provides a source of income for some families who collect water from the various sources for a fee, charging Uganda Shilling 200 (about US \$ 0.10) for twenty litres of water. Figure 7 below shows one of the many sources of water for the people in Bweyale and the twenty litre plastic water containers.



Figure 8: Fetching water in Bweyale (photo by M.J Florino).

People who reside in the trading centre use pit latrines and not water closets. There is also no garbage collection service for the trading centre. Garbage is handled by individual residents or property owners who burn it and bury the garbage that cannot be burned.

The main modes of public commercial transport around the trading centre are bicycles and motorcycle taxis (see Figure 2 above). These bicycles and motorcycles are used to carry people for short distances around the trading centre and the surrounding villages. They are more suited for travelling in the narrow village paths. These two modes of transport are known locally as *Bodaboda* meaning border to border because they were popular modes for smuggling goods over the Ugandan and Kenyan borders. Minibus taxis

are use for travelling to distant towns like Kigumba, Masindi, Kampala, Lira, Gulu, and the West Nile region. Both *Bodaboda* and minibus operators are organised in associations that regulate the behaviour of those involved in their kind of transport business. Their organisations have elective posts for a chairperson, who is the overall leader of the group. A secretary and treasurer are the key positions in the organisation. They hold meetings during which they make decisions that are recorded by the secretary of the organisations.

In Bweyale, bicycles are also owned by most families. They are cheap to buy and maintain and for that reason, most families have at least one bicycle. People use bicycles to travel between different villages and to the trading centre to sell or buy things and pass time during market days. In addition to bicycles, motorcycles are also used because they can also move easily around the village paths. However, only those who can afford to pay for their higher cost in terms of price, maintenance, hire or fare choose to use motorcycles. The only problem with motorcycles is that, because of their weight, they cannot be carried across streams that have no bridges over them.

5.3.2.2 Economic activities in the villages

Outside the trading centre, the economic activities in which people are involved are mainly subsistence agriculture. Some people grow food crops purely for selling. Other people grow tobacco or cotton to sell as cash crops to companies that promote the growing of those two crops. Some people have formed self help socio-economic groups in which they combine their efforts to raise income either through saving and credits, or pooling their labour at the time of clearing new fields for planting crops. Within some of the groups, people also engage in entertaining social activities like organising collective parties on important days, dancing and other such activities.

Most people in the villages build their homes along the main road and village paths for easy access to and from their homes. Most people live in homes made up of two to four round grass-thatched huts as shown in Figure 9 below.



Figure 9: A typical homestead and hut in Bweyale.

In addition to the huts, some families who can afford to, build modern houses made of iron sheet roof, bricks and cement walls. The defining feature of a household is not a house or hut but a homestead that may extend over several hectares of land under the headship of one person, usually a man. Some huts serve as a kitchen and others are used for sleeping and keeping valuable items like books. Other huts are for visitors. During non-rainy days, family members work and relax outside under the shade of a hut or big trees that are planted in the compounds of most homesteads (see Figure 8 and 9). Even visitors are sometimes hosted outside the huts under trees or hut shade. Cooking and eating are sometimes done or enjoyed outside the huts in the shade of the huts or trees except for important visitors or on rainy days (see Figure 10 below).



Figure 10: Cooking in the open 'compound'.

Inside the huts, calendars are often plastered on the walls and young boys (traditionally girls don't own huts) sometimes decorate the inside walls of their huts with pages of newspapers or magazines used more like wallpaper as shown in Figure 12. Some huts are partitioned into rooms with a line of wall as shown in Figure 11 below.

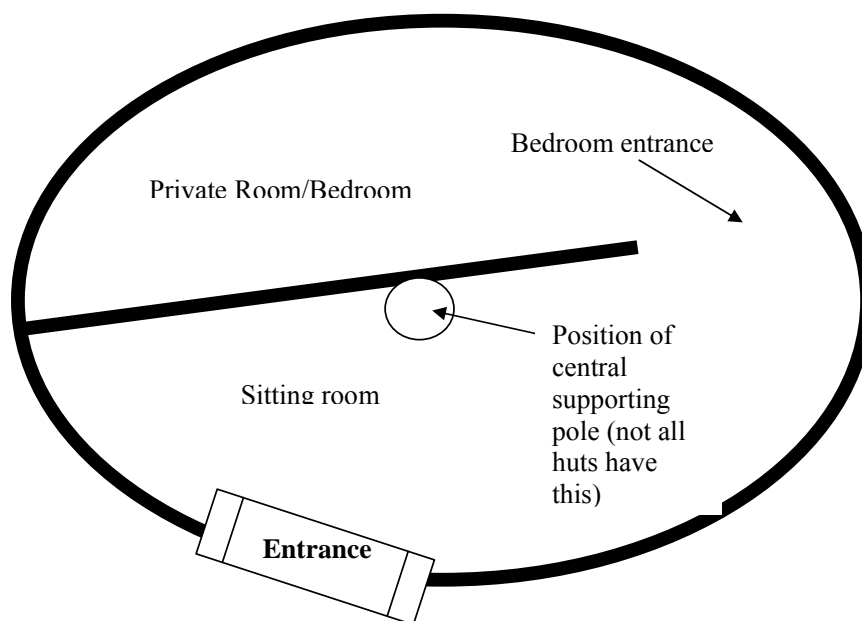


Figure 11: Plan of a hut.



Figure 12: Newspaper plastered on walls.

Different homes are linked up by small foot-beaten paths (see Figure 13 below).



Figure 13: Foot-beaten path in the village.

The reason for using more than one hut in a homestead is that in Luo culture, mature boys, sons and daughters, and visitors like in-laws do not share the same house or hut

with their fathers and mothers-in-laws. Furthermore, the internal structure of the huts does not allow for more than three rooms in one hut, and there is usually no roof ceiling to provide sufficient privacy for people using the different rooms. This rather open architectural fashion does not permit the sharing of one house by all the family members and some category of relatives. Therefore, instead of different rooms in one house there are different huts to accommodate different family members who cannot share a hut.

Outside of the trading centre, the main economic activity is peasant cultivation. This is the major occupation in the villages, in which people go to their fields or farms in the morning to plough the land using hand-held hoes, and come back home at around midday (see Figure 14 below).



Figure 14: People ploughing using hand-held hoes (Photo by M.J Florino in 2004).

The crops grown include maize, beans, cassava, potatoes, sesame seeds, and groundnuts. The crops are harvested for consumption by the family members. Some crops like fresh vegetables such as spinach, fresh beans and potatoes are harvested and enjoyed fresh from the gardens. For this reason, the vegetable gardens are often near the homes. Long-term crops like dry beans and groundnuts are processed by sun drying and stored for the season's food supplies to last until the next season's crops are harvested. This is a subsistence mode of production.

However, some crops like maize, cassava, potatoes and some groundnuts, are grown solely for selling to raise money that can be used to buy non-crop items like clothes, salt and soap, pay school fees for children, and other household luxuries like bicycles, radios and the batteries needed to power the radios. On harvesting, these crops are loaded onto bicycles and transported to Bweyale trading centre to be sold to other people in the village or intermediary traders from Kampala. Such transactions are usually handled by men.

Even the fields are often owned by the men, and the money is spent by men. Responsible men use some of the proceeds to buy some goods for the family like clothing.

Irresponsible men drink off the balance after buying what they have been planning to buy during the year like a bicycle or radio for themselves.

In addition to growing crops, some people rear a few domestic animals and birds, for example goats, pigs, cows, chicken, ducks and pigeons. Chicken and ducks are left to roam around the homesteads to look for things to feed on. Goats and pigs are tethered in the bushes around the homestead. People who have a few cows also tether them. These birds and animals are sources of food and income for the family. To supply food the family can slaughter a chicken for a family meal or on occasions like Christmas day, marriage ceremonies, and welcoming important visitors. When the family needs money, a chicken, goat or a pig is sold depending on how much money the family needs. The animals and birds therefore act as banks for emergency cash. Sometimes people sell a small portion of their own food crops like groundnuts or maize or cow's milk. For paying school fees, for marriages, and for funerals and other big expenses, cows or bulls may be sold or a large amount of farm produce from designated fields as discussed above.

People who have large herds of cattle keep them on large pieces of land, far away from the trading centre. These groups of people do not engage in agricultural activities and in Bweyale land conflict between the crop farmers and the cattle keepers is very common. Cows' milk is also brought to the trading centre and sold for cash while the rest is packed in 20 litre plastic containers (like those used for fetching water see Figure 8 above) and taken to Kampala on pick-up vehicles.

5.3.2.3 Social life in Bweyale

According to my observations, people's lives in Bweyale, which could be similar to how other people live elsewhere, can generally be divided into work and social activities.

People live in family units in which they interact with family members. Religious people participate in church functions like going to church every Sunday or to appointed bible study or choir practice sessions for example. During school time, schoolchildren go to school every morning and come back in the evenings. Sometimes people participate in social functions like community meetings that are organised to discuss social issues in the community or a particular group of people in the community.

Some people, especially men, meet regularly in the evening to share a drink with their friends. This may be either at the trading centre or in some homesteads where local brews

are made and sold mostly by women. That is also how some women raise money for their families.

In the trading centre, there are video halls that show films, and generally, young people go to watch movies and football games that are screened in those video halls. Some people play pool and card games under shop verandas. Some teenagers play football in the school playground in the evening. Casual conversations with friends or reading newspapers are some of the ways people pass the time when they are not working. People also visit each other to share a meal or a drink or just to converse with each other and while away the time.

In the homesteads, there are gendered roles in which women do the cooking and care for the young children and men deal with house construction, and repairs and attending to the family's financial needs. In addition to going to school, children also attend to their gendered responsibilities while at home. However, these roles are not set in stone because men also cook if there are no women around or they are bachelors. Women also finance the family if they are single or their husbands are not able to raise money. Some roles like cultivating the family food is shared, although traditionally ploughing was supposed to be a man's work and hand-weeding a woman's work. While ploughing is done by both men and women, men have not yet started doing hand weeding of crops like millet.

Those who own shops or other income generating activities in the trading centre normally go to tend to their farms early in the morning before going to their businesses in the trading centre. However, those who do not have land and depend entirely on money earned from the income-generating activities in the trading centre would go to the trading centre very early in the morning.

There are many Christian churches and one Mosque in Bweyale. There is one Catholic and one Protestant (Anglican) Church. The other churches are the different Pentecostal churches. The Jehovah's Witnesses are not yet well established in the area although they are one of the most active religious groups in the community. All these churches are located near the trading centre within an area of about two square kilometres. The Catholics seem to be the largest group in the community judging from the number of people who turn up for choir practices and church services on Sundays.

5.3.3 Administrative units

As briefly stated in Chapter One, Bweyale is located in Uganda's Western Region. It is part of Kichwabugingo Parish in Kiryadongo Sub-county, Kibanda County, in Masindi District. Kichwabugingo Parish is made up of 22 villages or Local Council 1's (LC 1).

This is the lowest level of public administrative unit in Uganda that administers one village. This administrative unit is headed by an elected chairperson. This study covered three villages: Kichwabugingo³⁵, Nyakadote and Bweyale. All these three villages are within one to two kilometres of each other along the Kampala-Gulu highway. The people who serve in the Local Council 1 office are not paid a salary. Below is a picture of a Local Council 1 office.



Figure 15: Office of Local Council I Nyakadote.

Bweyale village has one of the busiest trading centres in this parish. It is therefore the most dominant location thus making it the easiest reference point for the whole area.

The other important government unit in Bweyale is the Police Post situated in the trading centre. The Police Post is housed in one of the shop buildings in the trading centre. Its main work is to cooperate with the Local Council 1 in the administration of law and order

³⁵ Although Kichwabugingo is the name by which the Parish is identified, it is also a village. It's like in Durban where you have some areas called Durban, Glenmore, Glenwood, Morningside etc. although all these places are collectively called Durban.

in this community. They also conduct security patrols at night to deter criminal elements from disturbing the peace. There are about seven police officers operating the station.

5.4 Conclusion

Bweyale is a community with a short history. It is generally made up of people who have come from other areas to come and settled in Bweyale. This gives the people of Bweyale a shared historical experience and background since they all know that they did not originally come from Bweyale. The main reasons why people have decided to move to Bweyale are similar for most groups: that is they were all escaping from civil strife, disease or lack of land. Therefore, for most people, Bweyale is a place of refuge and relief for them. This shared experience fosters a sense of unity in diversity. The people are generally hardworking people who are determined to survive - a spirit that brought most of them to Bweyale in the first place.

CHAPTER SIX: Literacy in Bweyale

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present, interpret, analyse, and discuss the findings of this study of rural community literacy practices in Bweyale according to the identified domains of literacy. These are livelihoods³⁶, school, religion, bureaucracy and family (households). This includes the literacy practices of both literate and non-literate members of the community.

Since the concept of literacy practices includes what people think, feel, and say about literacy, my starting point in explaining how literacy is used is to present first how literacy is conceived of, or thought about in this community (see Baynham, 1995; Lankshear, 1999). People's conception of literacy can help to throw some light onto understanding how and why they use literacy the way they do. In trying to understand, how people think about literacy, the primary objective was to provide sufficient evidence, interpretation, and analysis of rural community literacy practices and how the information can be used to inform the provision of adult literacy education for rural people.

Although I am presenting the findings under the identified domains of literacy, it is important to note that these domains are overlapping categories of literacy as Grabill (2001) noted in his study of community literacy programmes in a case study site he named Western District. For example, school literacy practices are part of the household literacy practices. Similarly, religious literacies like bible reading or prayers are as much part of household literacy practices as they are of the church. Therefore, the themes used in this presentation are fluid and flowing categories with a lot of forward and backward reference between the different domains of literacy in the community.

Note: I personally conducted all the interviews and translated those conducted in Luo to English. All the names used in this report have been changed to protect the identity of the participants in this research.

6.2 Representation of literacy by Acholi speaking people

In this section, my primary concern is to show how people talk about literacy (that is how they represent it in their speech and conversations). I start the discussion by explaining why it is important to understand how literacy is represented before going on to explain why I only discuss how that is done in Acholi dialect³⁷. I show, using extracts from the

³⁶ This may be referred to as commerce or business.

³⁷ The question of whether Acholi is a dialect or a language is beyond the scope of this study to resolve. However, for the purpose of this work I have chosen to see Luo as the language and Acholi, Alur, Lango, and Palwo as Luo dialects in Bweyale. This is a non-authoritative distinction between the different Luo languages that are spoken in Bweyale and it should not be quoted elsewhere.

interviews I conducted, how Acholi speakers represent literacy in their everyday language. The focus of the discussion is around the use of the Acholi word '*kwan*', which represents literacy and other related concepts such as education and English literacy (ability to read and write in English). Note that the discussion in this section overlaps with the discussion advanced in section 6.14.

Understanding how literacy is represented in the local language may provide a useful insight for understanding what people think literacy is in ways that should make it easier to understand the findings presented in this chapter. Since Bweyale is a multilingual community, studying how literacy is represented in all the different languages was not possible within the period allowed for this study. Therefore, I only examined how literacy is represented by the Acholi speakers. Acholi³⁸ is one of the four Luo dialects spoken in Bweyale along with Alur, Lango, and Palwo. I have already stated earlier that Acholi is the most commonly spoken dialect. Apart from being the most commonly spoken dialect in Bweyale, the other reasons for choosing the Acholi dialect were:

- I am a first language speaker of Acholi,
- As an Acholi speaking Luo, I have a good understanding of the Acholi culture. This enabled me to appreciate some deeper meanings that are inherent in the Acholi dialect better than any other Luo dialect and all other languages like Kiswahili.
- Most (73 per cent, that is 35 out of 48) of the key informants were Luo speaking people and of these 49 per cent (17 out of 35) were Acholi speaking people. The remaining 18 were a combination of Lango, Palwo, and Alur speaking Luo. The Acholi speakers were the majority in the sample because they are also the majority in the population. This does not mean that I used proportionate representation to select the sample. It only means the Acholi, by virtue of their large number in the area, had a higher chance of being selected than other language groups.
- Most of the literacy events I observed, involved the use of the Acholi dialect.

The advantages listed above, helped me to understand how the Acholi speaking people represent literacy in their language and how that representation reflects the underlying meanings informing the perception and use of literacy in their everyday life.

³⁸ These are not the only Luo dialects. There are many more spoken in southern Sudan, parts of North Eastern and Eastern Uganda, and Western Kenya.

My analysis of how the Acholi speakers represent ‘literacy’ was done by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts supported by what I had internalised from one year of listening to interviews, recorded local folk songs about literacy and development, informal conversations, and my personal experience, knowledge and understanding of the Acholi. I used these different sources to put together what literacy means to an Acholi speaker and later used this to understand how they use literacy in their everyday life.

In Acholi, the word for ‘literacy’ and related concepts is ‘*kwan*’. How this word is used in talking about literacy reveals how the Acholi speaking people understand ‘literacy’, and how the concept of literacy is interwoven with different concepts like education, reading, and counting (numeracy). The way the word ‘*kwan*’ is used, is a product of the history of literacy and education among the Acholi and other communities in Uganda, and the way literacy is predominantly manifested in rural community life. This history is similar to the history of literacy in Uganda (see Chapter Four for detail).

Like many other words in Acholi, the word ‘*kwan*’ means different things at different times depending on how it is used³⁹. How the Acholi people understand the word ‘*kwan*’ therefore depends on the context within which it is used. This was very evident during the interviews I conducted because the related concepts (education, literacy, reading and numeracy) represented by this word were important for this study. This is not simply one word used to mean different things, but rather it shows that the Acholi people conceptualise these concepts as inter-related. This is not unique to the Acholi speaking people, because the world over literacy and education have always been conflated (see Aikman, 2001; Erguig, 2005; Mace, 1998; Street, 1995; Street & Street, 1991).

In the following excerpts, I show how the word, ‘*kwan*’ was used differently with different meanings. The first excerpt relates to the use of the word ‘*kwan*’ to mean schooling or education. The local language is included in this particular excerpt to show how I used the word ‘*kwan*’, how the participants interpreted it and how they too used the word ‘*kwan*’ to express their different ideas about literacy. The English translations are in brackets. The word ‘***kwan***’ is bolded to make it easy to identify it in the Acholi version of the excerpt.

Interviewer: *Ma in itenyo kwede **kwan** ni igik I class adi? (In which class did you leave school?)*

³⁹ Although different, an extreme example of such use is the word ‘*gwok*’, which means a dog, a mystery, or take care depending on the intonation used to pronounce it. To demonstrate this complexity, linguists use this word to construct a sentence that runs as “*Gwok, gwok, gwok, gwok.*” This full sentence differentiates the meaning of each word using high and low intonation. It means, “Take care of dogs, dogs are a mystery.” A similar pattern of language use in which words identical in form, but different in meaning and distinguished by intonation was noticed among the Shilluk of Southern Sudan by Murray (1921).

Okere: *Atenyo kwan i P.7 (I left school in P.7).*

(Interview with Okere, conducted in Luo: Wednesday 25th May 2005)

In the above excerpt, the word 'kwan' is given meaning by the subject of the discussion, which was education/leaving school, and the other accompanying words like, "ma itenyo", "When you left," and "which class" limit interpretation to education and not literacy or reading because you cannot leave literacy in a class. A participant correctly interpreted this as requiring information about his education and responded accordingly.

In the same interview, the participant used the word 'kwan' again, but with a different meaning from the one above:

Interviewer: *Oh yeah (This is an English interjection which is normal in Acholi these days), meno coc, kwan kono? (That was writing, what about reading.)*

Okere: *Kwan? (Reading?)*

Interviewer: *Yeah mapat ki kwan-o gin ma nongo in aye icoyo. (Yes, which is different from reading something you wrote?).*

Okere: *Bible a kwan-o (I read the bible)*

NOTE: (the 'o' at the end of 'kwan' changes it to a verb).

(Interview with Okere conducted on Wednesday 25th May 2005).

In the above excerpt, both Okere and I use the word 'kwan' to refer to reading. The statement, "That was writing" in my question qualified the word to be referring to reading and not education as in the above case. Accordingly, the participant supplied the expected response, translated as "I read the bible".

In the interview below, a participant did not understand whether I was referring to counting (numeracy) or reading. I was of course referring to reading materials like books. If there was such confusion, I would make further clarification or provide a direct correction of the question by giving examples that were more explicit for the participant to understand. Below is our exchange:

Interviewer: *Jami a-kwan-a aa a-kwan-a ango ma itye kwede (What kind of readable things do you have?).*

Kweya: *Jami macaloo lee lee? (Things like animals)⁴⁰*

Interviewer: *Kuu atye kwaco Jami ma in ikwano calo buks gi ni (No, I meant things which you can read like books, that you have at home).*

Kweya: *Itye ki buks SST ma yam akwano kwede... (I have SST books, which I used while I was still going to school. They are the ones I use for reminding myself).*

(Interview with Kweya, conducted in Luo on Saturday, 9th July 2005)

⁴⁰ Counting in Luo culture is mostly related to how many animals you have. Human beings are not supposed to be counted - only wizards do that.

Sometimes, this distinction between education and literacy becomes complex, for example, when the meaning of the word ‘*kwan*’ changes in a single sentence. A good example of this usage is in a local folk song (see Appendix 4 for the full song) about the benefits of development that include literacy and education among others. In the second sentence below, the word, ‘*kwan*’ refers first to education, while the second use relates to reading.

- *Enoba dongo lobo ber wai* (There it is, development is truly good).
- *Omio kwan bene oweko dong angyo kwan* (It (development) gave education, that is why I now know how to read).

(See Appendix 4, line 11 and 12 for the full lyrics of the song).

Another line (21) says, “*Okonyo kwan bene ineno dong angyo yoo,*” (It helped with education; you can see I now know it really). In this sentence, one word ‘*kwan*’ is used to mean both education and the ability to read and write. The word is mentioned once and referred to once. The first mention of the word *means* education, but in the second part of the sentence when the same word is referred to it means, knowing how to read and write. (See line 21 of the full lyric of the song in Appendix 4).

Coc, which means writing, is not used very often when talking about literacy. People emphasize it less than ‘*kwan*’. There are two reasons that I think explain why *kwan* is more used than *coc*. First, *kwan* is a more complex concept which relates to a number of things such as education, counting and reading. This gives it more opportunity for use in daily life. Secondly, *kwan* became more popular because of the way the local people perceived the activities of missionary education, which emphasised reading more than writing. During interviews, many participants talked more about ‘*kwan*’ than ‘*coc*’. For example, during the interviews with Paullina, she only talked about reading (*kwan*) and not writing (*coc*) when relating her experience of learning how to read and write as an Anglican catechumen. In the interview below,⁴¹ the sections where the word ‘*kwan*’ was used are translated into Acholi in brackets

- Interviewer: *When you were being prepared for baptism (in the Anglican Church), were you taught how to read and write?*
- Paullina: *Yes, we were taught*
- Interviewer: *Were you taught using books?*
- Paullina: *Yes, we all were taught with the Bible. Mr. Lam was the one who baptized us. ... When we were learning (wa kwan), Mr. Lam was very tough with us. That teacher was tough. You put your hands like this (demonstrates with her hands an open book in front of her face), then you*

⁴¹ This interview was again used in section 6.6.2 below to illustrate the historical difference in the literacy practices between Catholics and Anglicans.

read (ikwano) the book, then you closed the book like this (closes her hands to demonstrate the closing of a book), then you had to say what you had read (ikwano) without hesitation. See this line, verses number this.... and you all had to read (ikwan) without hesitation, and we would read (wakwano) without hesitation. Now I cannot do that. My eyes are now dim and I am not able to read (akwan) now.

Interviewer: *But were you able to read (ikwano) by the time you were baptised?*

Paullina: *Yes, we were able to read (wakwan) without hesitation because if you did not answer all his questions you could not pass. Mr. Lam was a tough teacher.*

(Interview with Paullina, conducted in Luo on 21st May 2005).

Note that her hand demonstration indicates that she was talking about reading and not writing or education.

Apart from conflating literacy, reading, and education in the use of the term *kwan*, English literacy was another factor that also featured in talk about literacy. To be literate was seen by some participants as being able to read and write in English. This was evident in the interview with Kumakech, a non-literate who sees the ability to read and write as equal to formal education, and the ability to read and write in English.

Interviewer: *What else do you think you would need to learn **writing and reading (coc ki kwan)** for?*

Kumakech: *What makes me say being **literate, (kwan)** is good is because there is a lot of manual work that comes around in which the skill of **literacy (kwan)** is required. There are also other works that may not require the use of hands (manual work) and require some knowledge of **literacy (kwan)**, which you may need to go and do. For such work, if you are not **educated**⁴² (**ikwano**), it becomes impossible for you to do them.*

Interviewer: *Like which kind of work?*

Kumakech: *For example, if someone say comes and tells you, “Come and do some work for me,” or “Come and do this for me”. If you are not **educated (ikwano)** and they bring a note **written (kicoyo)** in **English (I leb munu)** that says, “Come and construct this house for me like this”, **written (kicoyo)** in **English (I leb munu)** and you cannot **read (kwanone)**... Even if it is in Acholi, you still cannot **read (kwanone)** it. There are even lots of **writing (coc)** done on the house plans that you will need to read for yourself, that this one is like this and that one is like that, we cannot **read (kwanone)** it*

(Interview with Kumakech conducted in Luo on 27th May 2005).

Generally when talking about literacy Acholi speaker use one word ‘*kwan*’ to refer to literacy reading, counting/numeracy, and education. The way people talk about something offers insight into their understanding of that thing. In the following section, I explore the

⁴² I interpreted the use of the word ‘*Kwan*’ as education here and decided to ask more questions to get clarification on that particular statement.

key informants' understanding of literacy drawing largely from how it was represented during the interviews.

6.3 The conception of literacy

What the Acholi people think about literacy is discussed in this section. This is drawn from how literacy is represented in Acholi as discussed in section 6.2 above. It also provides a deeper reflection with a deeper level of analysis. Section 6.14 deals with values attributed to literacy as reflected in how people talk about literacy. This includes feelings and attitudes people have about literacy and its effects in everyday life. Pointing out this nuance is not easy.

The conception of literacy is what people think literacy is, the ideas they have about it and the behaviours they associate with literacy (Lankshear, 1999). This is often revealed from how people talk about literacy. When investigating literacy as social practice, it is important to understand not only what people do with literacy, but also “what they make of what they do, the value they place on it, and the ideologies that surround it” (Baynham, 1995, p. 1). This local understanding of literacy provides insight into how literacy is used in a particular context (see Gee, 1990). This was possible through listening to people talking about their literacy experiences, as already presented in detail in section 6.2.

In the above section, three concepts were shown to be freely associated with each other when the Acholi people talk about literacy. These concepts were so closely related that only one word is used to represent them. These are literacy, education/schooling, reading and counting. In Bweyale, as in other parts of Uganda and the world, these three concepts relate to one social institution, the school. The influence of school on people's conception of literacy is strong because most people learn how to read and write from school, and they see education as an activity that takes place at schools. In Uganda English is the language of instruction in schools. In the thinking of people, this connection is simple. English is the language of literacy and it requires school education to acquire it.

Muhammad, a non-literate participant who works as a security guard in a tobacco firm, concluded that without school knowledge, it is not possible to be able to read and write in any meaningful way (Interview with Muhammad conducted in Luo on 20th May 2005). This powerful position of school education and English in society will be discussed later in section 6.5.

The conflation of these three ideas is not unique to Bweyale or Uganda alone because Aikman (2001) noted a similar articulation of schooling and Spanish literacy in Peruvian Amazonia. In Morocco, too, Erguig (2005) in his study of the changing conceptions of

literacy from the 1960s to 1990s (in Morocco), also noted, among other things, that literacy was confused with schooling. Mace (1998, p. 13) refers to this idea “that literacy is the same as schooling” as a misconception of literacy that needs to be dropped.

Literacy outside of schooling, education, or English literacy, for example the reading and writing skills learnt informally outside school or the limited local language literacy is often not associated with being literate. In the interview below with Mr. Sometimes who never went to school, he presented himself throughout the interview as someone who is not able to read and write. However, during the course of the interview he talked about receiving and reading letters from his children who are well educated and are now living in Kampala. I noted this and reminded him that he had already told me that he is not able to read and write. To which he responded as follows:

Reading like these ones here (local language reading) is not difficult, “Yes, yes, yes” (referring to English literacy) is what I do not know. If it is in Kinyoro⁴³ (the language of the Banyoro people) and these others (Palwo language) I know all.

(Interview with Mr. Sometimes conducted in Luo on 20th June 2005).

The local people also see literacy as a symbol of progress and development. A local folk singer was very clear about this relationship of literacy and development in his song about development in which literacy is seen as a sign of development. To him, being literate was a sign of development. This reflects the social value of literacy in this community. Literacy is one of the exotic ways of life in the community hence a song of that nature. The song reflects what people think about literacy in relation to their life. Folk singers always sing about people’s everyday life.

In this song, development is the important factor that is responsible for many of the changes that take place in society, including literacy. This Acholi conception of literacy is very similar to the dominant traditional view of the relationship between literacy and development (Rogers, 2001).

The conflation of literacy, education and English literacy presented some difficulties in analysing the data for this study, because it makes it difficult to know if the values and benefits attributed to literacy are specific to literacy or are because the participants were thinking about education, knowledge, or the ability to speak, read and write well in English. For example, when talking about literacy, Mohammed, a non-literate man who works as a security guard and supervisor in a tobacco store in the village, argues that,

⁴³ Mr. Sometime is a Paluo, but because they are a minority group in Bunyoro, the older generation of Paluo had to learn how to read and write in Kinyoro. This is interesting, because although Mr. Sometime never attended school he still learnt how to read and write in Kinyoro which was the dominant local language of his region. It shows how much the school influences how people think about the knowledge and skills that originate from school.

“There is no difference between literacy and education, because to me anybody who is literate is educated”.

From my analysis of the data related to the conception of literacy, I concluded that the conception of literacy in rural community life is closely related to school education because it is the most influential literate and literacy institution. This is what Street and Street (1995, p. 106) describe as ‘the pedagogization of literacy’ in which literacy is associated with teaching and learning and what teachers and pupils do in school. Through their influences, schools impose that perception of literacy on the community in ways that define literacy for members of the community (see also Rogers & Uddin, 2005).

6.4 Livelihood and community literacy practices

One area where literacy in rural community life is increasingly prominent and visible is in livelihoods. In this study, livelihood is taken to mean any activity that people do to earn a living, or for the purposes of survival. Examples of these activities include: handicraft skills, casual employment, agriculture, operating bars, restaurants, shops, and what the majority of people in Bweyale do to earn their living (see Oxenham et al., 2002). I refer to some of these activities as commercial or business activities. These activities provide contexts for the use of literacy in rural community life (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). There are different ways and reasons for the use of reading and writing in different livelihood practices. They include, monitoring and controlling transactions, reminders/schedules, and advertising products. In this section, these different ways and reasons are presented and discussed.

People were secretive about records of their livelihood finances. They were not very willing to show me the full detail of their business records because they did not trust me. I think this is because of a number of fears of tax, competition, or thieves. Opige, one of the traders I interviewed said:

It is difficult for me to give you my business records and information because I do not know what you will do with that information. You could be coming from the office of the revenue⁴⁴ people or spying on us since we are not from this place.

(Interview with Opige conducted in Luo on 9th July 2005).

However, in spite of that limitation, I was able to obtain some data by observing how people use reading and writing in their livelihood activities. I also used the limited access, like looking at only a couple of pages and taking photographs of them. They were not willing to allow me to photocopy their current records books. However, one

⁴⁴ Uganda Revenue Authority is the organisation that assesses incomes in Uganda for determining the tax an individual must pay.

businessperson agreed to give me a page of her record book after distorting the entries before handing it to me. Some surrendered to me what they thought were old, less sensitive and useless copies of their records. This shows how people see literacy as something that transfers information about their activities in ways that could endanger their livelihood activities. Where a trader is not comfortable with me looking at their business records, I did not insist, I thanked them and moved on to those who were willing to cooperate.

With this limited access, I was able to identify the different ways and reasons of using literacy in some livelihood activities. This included names of shops on signboards to identify and distinguish them from others, recording the day's transactions, noting earnings, listing the names of people who take items on credit, and the items taken. While the activities were similar across the different livelihood activities, there seems to be no standard format that was common to all. For example, each shopkeeper or restaurant owner appears to create their own individual method and format of record keeping or ways of using reading and writing.

In the following section, the literacy practices related to some livelihood activities are presented. The activities are presented in two different categories: those that take place in the trading centre and those that take place outside the trading centre. In the trading centre are activities like selling in bars, restaurants, shops, the market, providing accommodation facilities for travellers (lodges), and *Bodaboda* riding. These are mostly commercial livelihood activities, which constitute the largest areas, where literacy is increasingly being used in livelihood. The only livelihood activity in which reading and writing is involved outside the trading centre is farming.

Although these activities are presented and discussed separately, they are interconnected in many ways. For example, farmers bring their farm produce like maize to sell in the market that is located in the trading centre, and thus get involved in commercial literacy practices (Street, 1984) related to selling in the market. Therefore, a description of the literacy practices of a farmer will include of some aspects of commercial literacy in the market. To try to avoid this overlapping, I have attempted to identify some obvious areas in which the overlapping exists and present them as common literacy practices that cut across most livelihood activities. These are of course not the only areas where literacy overlaps across the different livelihood practices.

6.4.1 Common literacy practices in livelihood activities

Some ways of using reading and writing are common to most commercial activities. For example, putting up signboards to advertise, paying taxes, paying licences, and writing receipts. Although these are common across most commercial livelihood activities, there are some noticeable individual differences between them. These differences are pointed out as the practices are described below.

6.4.1.1 Advertising

By advertising or adverts, their other meanings notwithstanding, I am referring to signs, signboards, signposts, notices and any written information put up in the public domain for the purpose of drawing public attention to goods and services. I include them all, whether they are handwritten or printed showing directions, identifying, naming, guiding, printed on wood, cloth, brick walls or any material on which a piece of written information can be displayed, and no matter where they are displayed on newspapers, shop walls, road junctions or on trees. These adverts, whether they are read by their intended targets or not, are evidence of literacy use in the community, and it is for that reason that I present, analyse, and discuss them in this section.

Commercial activities are a key area where literacy is evidently used in rural community life. One of the most visible evidences of literacy use in commercial livelihood activities is where the traders or sellers of products and services put up public notices to market their products or services. This involves printing and displaying information on signboards that are posted by those selling their product or services in strategic public places like shop fronts or road junctions. Although trade is as old as humanity, the use of reading and writing in marketing a product or produce is only as old as when writing was introduced to Uganda. Traders also use literacy to market their products. The traders use signboards on which they generally write information such as the names of their business, what they sell, the prices, and the location or address of the shop or business activities.

From my observation, photographs, interviews and analysis of the data collected during my fieldwork, I identified three important groups of literacy-related activities associated with putting up signboards. The first involves the entrepreneur deciding what should be written or painted on the signboard, the language to be used, and where it should be posted. The second involves the painter, who paints or prints the signboard. The third is the customer to whom the signboard is addressed. This may involve some other forms of writing for example the entrepreneur drafting what they think can attract customers and help to identify their business. The draft is then given to a sign writer to print on a signboard in ways that should be attractive to the customers. In both the drafting and

painting, the customer is the focus. These activities constitute the practice of writing signboards. Although the adverts are written to attract, how customer respond to them is a different matter and does not disqualify or contradict the practice of using signboards as a literacy activity in which people engage as part of their livelihood activities.

Different livelihood practices use advertising differently, for example, people with permanent locations for their livelihood activities like bars, restaurant, and shops print their adverts on wooden signboards that are fixed on trees, or painted/mounted on the walls of the business premises or in busy locations in the trading centre. Those who do not have permanent locations like the *Bodaboda* riders, itinerant traders, and market sellers depend on one general signboard that identifies a place as designated for a particular commercial activity, or paint them on their bicycles or motorcycle as the *Bodaboda* riders do. There are also some adverts that are not permanent. For example, adverts written and posted on trees and those written on chalkboards are temporary because they communicate time-bounded messages.

Whichever style is used, literacy has a clear role in advertising commercial livelihood activities, and this is to inform the public about the availability of a particular service or product in a particular location. In this case, literacy has a very important and direct role in people's economic activities. It helps them to market their products and earn more money from increased sales. The value of literacy being exploited in signboard advertising is its ability to communicate to whoever is able to read and understand it. This use is functional, just in the sense of UNESCO functional literacy defined as literacy for accomplishing a particular function or purpose like advertising (see Holme, 2004; Levine, 1986; Thomas, 2001). Figure 16 below shows photos of three different examples of public commercial writing in Bweyale trading centre.

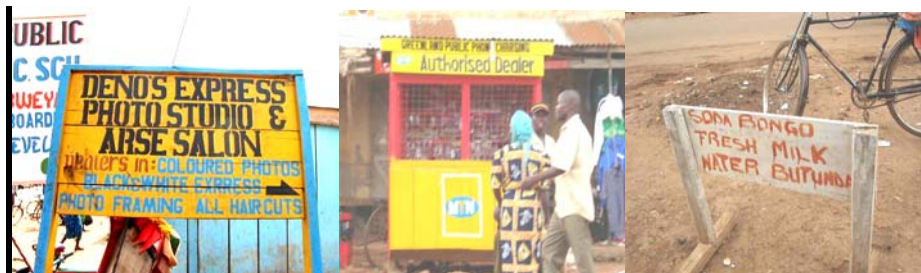


Figure 16: Three adverts for a photo studio, a phone dealer, and milk seller.

Those who provide services that vary from time to time like video entertainment and food in restaurants use chalkboards to advertise their services. They use chalkboards because it

is easy to change the advert to match with what is on offer at a particular time. Figure 17 below shows a chalkboard advertising a video show.



Figure 17: Chalkboard announcing the next film show and schoolchildren reading it.

In the above display, some writing like the name of the enterprise, “Big Sound Enterprise” written on top of the chalkboard does not change. A section of the board is designed to display the video cover of the films showing during the day. Therefore, two different types of writing are displayed on the board: those that are printed on the cover of the video tapes, and those that are handwritten with chalk on the chalkboard. All the written information displayed on the chalkboard is in English but the talks around the text were in Acholi (see Field notes below). This creates a mixed language literacy event that is more complex because of the involvement of two different languages involved in making sense of the information being communicated on the chalkboard.

This chalkboard is one of the adverts that I noticed people reading regularly. Most of the people who came to read the chalkboard were young males.

The different people paying attention to the board spent different amounts of times. Some took a short time while other would take a longer time. Schoolchildren took the longest time and they would even make comments excitedly about what they were reading,

(Field observation note: Tuesday, 8th February 2005).

To explain these different behaviours I needed to interview the people reading the chalkboard. However, I thought this would be disruptive so decided to learn as much as possible from their actions. By paying attention to their actions, I was able to notice that schoolchildren usually came in groups of over three people to read what is on the chalkboard and discuss it amongst themselves. They were also interested in the pictures that were on the displayed cover of the film covers and moved closer to the display to take a good look (See Figure 17 above). This could explain why they were spending more time than the older people who came alone to read what is on the board. Older people, including *Bodaboda* riders, took a shorter time than the schoolchildren, to look at the

display and moved on after taking only a glance. I did not stop them to ask them what they could have read when they looked at the information on the chalkboard.

Between the two types of adverts, the permanent signboards and the chalkboards bearing time-bound information, it was only the information that was written on the chalkboards that was noticeably read by people, while very little attention was given to the more permanent signboards. This could be because the chalkboard advertising always has new information that needs to be consulted if a person is to know what is on offer and at a particular time. Chalkboards advertising football shows attracted the most attention, and generated a lot of discussion including arguments and betting which team would win the game.

The ever-changing notices for entertainment and menus in restaurants make writing and reading their notices very important for both the clients and the service providers. On the other hand, signboards containing unchanging information tend to attract less attention from the local people. The signboards are used to advertise specialised shops (Figure 17 above) whose services or products are the same all the time. For that reason, they do not need to keep changing the information they have displayed on the chalkboards.

Literacy is used to identify commercial spaces like a market, for example Bweyale Main Market (see Figure 18 below). In this market, anybody is allowed to sell his or her produce or products on payment of a small fee to the local authorities.



Figure 18: A signboard identifying Bweyale main market.

Writing commercial adverts on signboards is a specialized skill all over the world. Therefore, the people who need to put up signboards often hire the service of sign writers regardless of their literacy status. The role of the person ordering the signboard is to supply the words or information to be written and this is very much like the use of scribes in ancient Greece reported by Thomas (2001). Two concepts: literacy mediation and social networks in the social practices theory of literacy explain such literacy practices. In this case, the sign writer is a literacy mediator whose skill is available in a community

network of social interdependency. In this network both literate and non-literate people use the services of the sign writer e.g. a literate person going to a lawyer in the community to explain a legal document (See Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Barton & Padmore, 1991; Baynam, 1995). Figure 19 below shows a sign writer at work.



Figure 19: A signwriter working on a signboard of a secondary school.

Although the target audiences for these adverts are not English speaking, but largely a Luo and Kiswahili speaking community, and English is not the dominant language of communication, most commercial signboards in Bweyale trading centre are written in English.

Although advertising is seen by traders and people generally, as a practice associated with the use of English, the signboards announcing the services of traditional healers and medicine were written in Kiswahili or Luo, the dominant languages in the community. On the advertising boards shown below, one of the signboards (Figure 20) is written in Kiswahili and the other (Figure 21) is written in Luo. The translations of the signboards are provided below each:



Figure 20: A Kiswahili signboard advertising the services of a traditional healer.

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MENINGITIS, PROTECTION OF THE HOMESTEAD
POST OFFICE BOX 447 TANGA TANZANIA TEL: 078332032

Many interesting observations can be made about this signboard. Firstly, although the list on the signboards refers to sicknesses, some items are not sicknesses. These are business, court case, thieves, and protection of homestead. These are social problems. This means the literal meaning and accuracy of the information on the board is not the important point. Instead, it is the entire signboard: the language used, the enormosity of the board and its colour, which are the important features that give meaning to the message publicised on it.

Secondly, although the signboard is written in Kiswahili, there are English medical words like CLINIC, DR, and TB. These words play the role of appealing to the local and modern ideas of where people seek medical services and give the service of the healer some status in a modern society. This is in spite of the fact that they deal with more problems than medical conditions.

As discussed later in this chapter, the use of local languages is based on the local perception and history of traditional medicine and divining. An indigenous African language is seen as the best medium for conveying information about practices that are rooted in African history and tradition (see Herbert & Robinson, 2001 for related arguments). While the writers are appealing to African tradition using local languages to sell their products and services, they at the same time tap into modern ideas of medical practice to drive their point home.

In Figure 20, a Tanzanian address is provided, with a Ugandan telephone number and an arrow directing people to a local location in the trading centre. According to mainstream logic⁴⁵, this is a contradictory and confusing message. It is illogical because the author provides a postal address based in another country when he or she is only 100m away from the signboard and an arrow on the same signboard is showing the direction to his/her place. However, logic is not the basis of this communication. The Tanzanian address is not for the purpose of enabling clients to contact the healer in Tanzania but to inform them that this particular healer and diviner comes from Tanzania, the home of very powerful diviners and traditional medicine from the bottom of the Indian ocean. Therefore, the message is playing to the local myth and discourse about quality,

⁴⁵ By mainstream logic/rationality, I mean the way of thinking and reasoning of people who have been to school or are of middle-class background. These are the types of thinking acquired from school.

traditional medicine and effective divine powers⁴⁶. This local discourse has it that diviners and traditional medicine from Tanzania are much more powerful than local discourse.

Following in Figure 21 is a similar signboard written in Luo, which is based on the local discourse of a powerful diviner and healers from far off Tanzania, just like the one in Figure 20 above.



Figure 21: A Luo signboard, advertising the services of a traditional healer.

DR MULUNGU LUNGU
FROM TANZANIA
A TRADITIONAL DIVINER WITH TRADITIONAL MEDICINE,
HE IS ABLE TO SEE YOUR PROBLEM FROM WATER AND
MIRROR WITHOUT YOU SAYING IT.
HE CURES MANY SICKNESSES. SO COME AND LET HIM HELP
YOU.

I asked my guide, Alex, why these two signboards are written in Kiswahili and Luo while all the others are in English.

These signboards are dealing with traditional things, and the right language for that is our traditional language and not the language of the Europeans, who know nothing about traditional medicine

(Conversation with Bakayeka in English on 19th February 2005).

By implication, Bakayeka was saying that the other activities that are being advertised in English are of European or foreign origin. On the two signboards, Figure 20 and 21, literacy is contextualised by the practice for which they are being used, thus making the message to appear illogical to readers who may not be part of the discourse practices of

⁴⁶ I obtained this information through listening and participation in informal conversation about traditional healers with the community members. This community is awash with stories of people who have become rich after getting medicine from the bottom of the sea with a lot of evil powers. Since I seemed to have emerged from nowhere and started getting very friendly with the local people, buying drinks for anybody and driving a big car, I became the target of a rumour of a person who got his wealth from under the sea with mischief in his mind. One of my guides had politely advised me to stop using my car anywhere near his village. When I asked him why, he just repeated his position in affirmative terms that I should not use my car if I want to continue working with him. It was one of my relatives who eventually told me the whole story. I got the message and parked the vehicle at a police station, choosing to use a bicycle instead.

using traditional medicine from traditional diviners, or belong to mainstream/middle class ways of thinking.

Not all traditional healers use the local languages. Some use English to appeal to a different consciousness of modern traditional medicinal practices. This discourse elicits the use of English but against a background and medium that is seen as traditional. In this way again the entire set-up that includes texts is used to communicate a message that appeals to a particular group of people who can make sense of it (see Figure 22 below).



Figure 22: Traditional healer advertising in English.

The above advert says:

DR. HAJI SALONGO

EAST AFRICAN NATIONAL TRADITIONAL MEDICINE RESEARCHER

Unlike in Figures 20 and 21 above, in this advert English is used. A critical examination of the advert reveals the use of non-standard concepts, spelling and English. For example, East Africa is not a Nation but a region. Therefore, the word National is used in a non-standard way. Again, according to mainstream thinking the information on this advert is misleading, because the activity that goes on in the hut pictured is not research but healing with local medicine and divination. The traditional healer is simply trying to package his information with both modern and traditional ideas of medical practices. The round thatched hut and papyrus reed fencing and shade relates to tradition, and the use of English and the title “DR” Haji Salongo and “medicinal researcher” relate to modern ideas of medical and health practices. The writing says nothing about his services. As in Figures 20 and 21 above, the message communicated is not based on what is actually written, but the entire set-up is used to communicate the intended information of what goes on inside the hut. This message was very clear even to me and I understood it as, “Here lives a powerful traditional healer and diviner who can cure sickness and solve social problems using traditional medicine and divination.” I was able to make sense of

the information because I am familiar with them since I have been seeing very many such messages in Bweyale and other places like Gulu and Kampala.

As shown above, the way literacy is used in advertising among the traditional healers is based on similar discourses but different presentations. Notably they do not all base their information on the literal meaning and function of the words but play on the local people's imagination of traditional healers. Literacy is only part of the configuration used to communicate very specific information to an understanding public. This, in my view, confirms the social practices theory of literacy since the words that are used on the adverts have different meanings and they are based on a different logic altogether. The messages are very meaningful when read in the contexts within which they have been posted. It is contrary to the fundamental arguments advanced by Havelock (cited in Grabill, 2001) that literacy is an objective representation of reality because words have meaning, which are independent of contexts. Outside of its context, the traditional healers' adverts are meaningless

On the other hand, although the signboards are put up to guide or inform the public about the availability of goods and services, from my careful observations of some of them, I noticed that, with the exceptions of the ones written on chalkboards, the signboards do not attract much attention from the local people. Instead, people use other significant features in the community, like a big tree or a bigger building, to locate some shops. For example, when I asked how I could locate the home of the traditional healer whose signboard was so well displayed in the trading centre, I was shown a huge tree that was about 100m away from the main road as the position where his home was located. On another occasion, and although not related to livelihoods, I asked for directions to the office of the Local Council 1 (LC 1), my guide directed me to, "*Go opposite the petrol station,*" without referring to the signpost that I later discovered was placed right in front of the LC office. It could even be seen from where I was asking for directions to this office. Instead, a significant physical landmark in terms of visibility, 'The petrol station,' was used to identify a rather obscure and difficult to notice place, the office of the LC Chairperson.

It is also possible that the location of most business places and other commercial establishments identified by the signboards was already internalised by the local people, thus rendering the signboards less important for locating the place or directing people to the place, or giving information about goods and services. During an interview, I asked Jane if she uses the many signboards in the trading centre to find directions to the different shops and other commercial establishments when she goes to the trading centre.

She told me that she does not use them because she is able to get to those places without having to read the signboards, she also knows where to buy the kind of things she needs without looking at the signboards. Other people are also willing to tell her where to go if you need to buy a particular item in case she does not know the place. This reduces the values of the signboards as a medium for guiding people and giving information about available goods and services. The use of signs to look for products to buy is not part of the cultural practices of the local people who prefer to ask other people just as I did when looking for the location of the LC 1 office in Bweyale.

Furthermore, the trading centre, in which most signboards are placed, is not a very complex location. This simplicity does not warrant the use of a map or a signpost to find directions to any place in and around the trading centre. This is in agreement with Thomas (2001) who argues, with reference to the development in literacy in Ancient Greece, that the use of literacy increases as society becomes more complex, not only structurally but also in its social and economic functioning.

It is also difficult to claim that this mode of accessing information can be explained by the concept of literacy mediators and social networks in the social practices theory of literacy (Barton, 1994), because, although there is written information, it is not part of the interaction in locating a place or looking for things to buy. Both the person looking for direction and the one directing does not refer to the signpost unless it is a very significant feature in the community like the petrol station.

In summary using literacy to advertise and give directions to shops and other livelihood establishments leaves plenty of evidence of literacy use in the community (see Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Heath, 1983 for discussions of literacy events).

6.4.1.2 Acquiring trading and road licenses

The second common area of literacy use in livelihood activities relates to fulfilling government tax obligations. Operators of shops, restaurants, bars, lodges, *Bodaboda* cycles, and any other commercial enterprise are required by law to pay for a trading or road licence. This payment is made to the Local Government or the Uganda Revenue Authority, which issues the trading and road licences with documents authorising them to operate their businesses, or vehicles for a specified period. Literacy is very centrally involved in this process. In this section, I present and discuss some examples of how people who are involved use reading and writing in this process, that is, the literacy practices related to acquiring a trading or road licence.

Paying for a trading licence

In paying for trading licences, the traders have limited involvement with the actual coding and decoding of texts because it is the local government officials who come to the trading centre, moving from shop to shop collecting taxes from the shopkeepers and issuing them with trading licences, who do all the reading and writing related to tax collection. The traders are only expected to pay and confirm that the trading licence has been properly written in their names or the names of their businesses and to display the licences in a visible position in their shops. The local government bureaucrat does all the writing required in issuing trading licences to a trader, and the trader only confirms and hangs it up in his shop. This is similar to the findings of Malan (1996) in South Africa in relation to the writing done at the magistrate's offices and on pension day.

The trading licence is a form with pre-written text in English, indicating what should be filled in in the different sections of the licence (see Figure 23 below).

Figure 23: A trading licence.

Paying for road licences

Like the trading licence, a road licence is a tax levied on all motor vehicles to allow them to be used for a specified period. It is the responsibility of the vehicle owners to pay for a road licence. Unlike the trading licences, the process of paying for road licences is more complex. It involves filling in an application form supplied by the Uganda Revenue Authority Office. This form has eight different sections requiring different responses from the person filling it in.

The first section of this form, at the top of the page, is the identity of the form given as, “TR II form 2” and the name of the issuing authority, The Republic of Uganda. The person filling in the form has little to do with this section except recognising it. The second section requires personal information about the owner of the vehicle: names, district, county, town and Tax Identification Number, written only as “TIN” on the form.

The third section of the form relates to the road licence: duration, number of months and ending dates. The fourth section requires information about the vehicle for which the road licence is paid. The fifth is information about the insurance status of the vehicle. The sixth is a pre-printed declaration to be signed by the vehicle owner about alterations made on the vehicle, if any, during the year, and other documents to be attached to the form. Section 7 and 8 are for official purposes.

Two sources of information: self and the motor vehicle registration book are used when filling in this form. Information required to fill in the first and the second sections comes from the owner of the vehicle. Information about the motor vehicle is in the vehicle registration book (a document containing the vehicle's specifications. This document is issued by the Uganda Revenue Authority at the time of registering the vehicle for use in Uganda). The person paying the road licences must have this vehicle's registration book, and the insurance certificate that are handed over to the revenue officer to verify and enter the duration of the road licences on it. When filling in the form, the vehicle information is transferred from the registration book to the application form. This is not a very simple process because it requires the ability to identify the different types of information from one source to be transferred to a particular section of the form. In addition to this complexity, the forms are always written in English without any translation for those who are not able to understand English. Because of the complexity of the form, the revenue officers fill in the forms for their clients and some clients think that is the normal procedure when it is not. For example Ocan, with 11 years of education (Senior 4 in Uganda), who is literate and able to speak and read English, said that he is helped with his forms while at the revenue office. His question to me, "*Do you fill the forms yourself?*" (Interview with Ocan conducted in Luo on Sunday the 9th July 2005) shows that he was not aware that the road licence form could be filled in by the person paying for the road licence. However, it is also possible that he could have not been to the revenue office, but was only trying to present himself as someone who owns a motorcycle, a very prestigious possession for a person like him who works as a *Bodaboda* rider.

Whatever the case, the literacy practices of filling in the road licence form are not easy. For that reason, the revenue officers at Masindi Revenue Office do help some of their clients by filling in the forms for them (unrecorded interview and observation at Masindi District Revenue Office, Monday, 15th August 2005).

The basic skills required to deal with these forms are the ability to read the pre-printed instructions and to identify the information demanded in each section, filling it in and

confirming that the information filled in has been done correctly. This is similar to other form filling practices. To do this, both the person filling in the information and the person reading it should have a common understanding of the form. This common understanding helps them to come to a common interpretation of the information required in the form both ways. In other words, they should both belong to the same discourse practice.

The power relation in this process of filling in forms is based on the knowledge and authority the people involved with the form have about the form. The person with less knowledge is rendered illiterate in spite of their ability to read and write, like the case of Ocan the *Bodaboda* rider. Ocan is disempowered twice, firstly by his lack of knowledge about the discourse practices of the Uganda Revenue Office and maybe his lack of experience with form filling. Secondly, his position in relation to the Uganda Revenue Office is that of a taxpayer who must comply with the tax laws of the country. In his relationship with the institution of the Uganda Revenue Authority, his continued use of the motorcycle is dependant on his compliance with the requirement of the organisation. He is therefore in a subordinate position in this literacy transaction (see Fawns & Ivanič, 2001). I have only used Ocan as an example but the same power relations also apply to those paying for trading licences.

However, the structures of many forms, and how information is filled in them, are similar to other forms. Therefore, a person with sufficient knowledge and general experience with filling in forms should be able to comprehend them quickly, that is to learn the specific discourse practices related to the particular forms and to fill in the form. Learning the discourse practice related to the form can come in the form of minimum assistance from a mediator, who can help with institution specific discourses.

Furthermore, there could be some idiosyncratic approaches to form filling depending on the individual's experience with particular forms. For example, first timers may read a form carefully to make sense of its different parts before filling it in or confirming what is on the form, while more experienced people may just take a glance to confirm or fill in the vital information (see Fawns & Ivanič, 2001). These differences are not significant to make form filling and reading practices to be significantly different in different institutions.

The findings presented in this section reveal that ways of using reading and writing, which are common to most livelihood activities, are those that relate to informing the public about the services available or being offered by each livelihood initiative. The second area relates to dealing with public institutions to meet National and Local

Government's tax obligations. This shows that if the activities are similar across different livelihood activities, then the literacy practices related to those activities will also be similar. That is, the specific activities shape the literacy practices related to them.

6.4.2 Specific literacy practices in different livelihood activities

The different livelihood activities in Bweyale generate different ways of using reading and writing. In other words, there are different literacy practices for the different livelihood activities. There are also very many livelihood activities in Bweyale and it is not possible to discuss all of them in this work. Therefore, I have selected a few examples of literacy in some major livelihood activities to present and discuss in this section. These major categories are those providing hospitality services, artisans, those selling merchandise, and farmers.

6.4.2.1 Literacy in bars, restaurants, and lodges

Bars, restaurants and lodges are business activities that sell beer, other alcoholic drinks, food, and offer accommodation facilities for travellers. The three are in most cases run as one establishment, and I have described literacy in them as such. The data on literacy use in bars, restaurant and lodges were collected largely through a series of casual and recorded observations of work procedures in different bars, restaurants and lodges. There were interviews conducted to seek clarification on some of the things being observed.

Bars, restaurants, and lodges employ many waiters, usually more than two to serve many customers and patrons, sometimes five at the same time. This is unlike in shops where the customers wait to be served one at a time and by only one or two shop attendants. This has implication for literacy in managing bars, restaurants, and lodges. The situation of many workers and customers being served at the same time creates the need for proper record keeping to ease monitoring the many transactions going on between the many customers and waiters at once. The complexity of the activities motivates the need for writing. As Thomas (2001) argues, improvement in the literacy environment is a consequence of social life becoming more complex. She observes that writing was instituted to control the complex procedures that were encountered in trade. This means the more complex an activity, the more demands it placed on its participants to use reading and writing to coordinate and control the different information generated during the activity. This would then lead to increased use of literacy.

Because of the complex transactions, many types of records are generated when selling drinks, and food in bars, restaurants and lodges. These relate to:

- opening and closing stock;

- transactions between waiters and customers;
- debtors (regular customers who have not paid for their orders);
- guests who have booked the rooms;
- expenditure/costs incurred during the day (for example money used to buy ingredients for cooking food);
- supplies received during the day

With the exception of suppliers' records that are designed by the suppliers themselves, and the pre-printed receipt books bought from stationary shops, all the other records are designed by the owners or managers of those commercial establishments based on their understanding of their business operations, and how it is monitored and controlled. In other words, the activity that goes on in the organisation determines how the records used within it are designed. I noticed this in one of my field observation notes:

I enter a restaurant, which also provides bar and lodging services to travellers, to have breakfast. Kabatoro, the owner of this business establishment, is sitting on one of the reception tables busy drawing lines in a counter notebook and on some large sheets of plain Manila paper. As a regular customer, I decide to go and greet her and engage her in some informal conversation as usual. She knows I am doing some studies about reading and writing. Therefore, I ask her, "What are you working on so seriously this morning?" She laughs shyly and tells me, "We prepare them here (the record books/cards) in our own way, (repeats) our way." I am looking at what she is drawing and noting that she is drawing columns in a counter notebook and labelling each column with the names of different brands of drinks in her bar and restaurant. She explains to me that the books will be used to enter the number of drinks or plates of food sold during the day.

(Field notes: Friday 18th March 2005).

When I asked her how the workers learn how to use the recording format she was designing, she informed me that she always holds meetings during which she explains in the local language how her workers should use the different record books she has designed in English. They also hold meetings during which they review their records. She added, "*I am telling you, I try to do these things (gesturing to her records) but dealing with people who do this...* (She presses her thumb downward, which is a commonly used sign for representing people who are not able to read and write or have never been to school)... *they just cannot understand anything you tell them*" (18th March 2005 conversation with Kabatoro). She was referring to two of her female workers who were not able to read and write.

On a different note, a lot can be read from the gesture. The gesture shows the negative attitude many literate people have towards non-literate people. They are presented as

people who cannot comprehend explanations/instructions. This reveals peoples' perception of literacy as something that improves peoples' comprehension. This closely relates to the perception of literacy as something that leads to positive cognitive development in individuals (Goody & Watt, 1968). Underlying this perception is the conflation of the effect of literacy on cognition. This perception was disproved by Scribner and Cole (1981) who found that it was schooling that was responsible for developing people's ability to comprehend and approach cognitive tasks in school related ways of thinking.

On another day, I talked with Peter, the manager of Kabatoro's restaurant, bar and lodge. I asked him how they use the records that are designed by their employer, and how many types of records they keep in their day-to-day operations. He confirmed that when the recording systems are developed, they hold meetings during which the workers are taught how to enter information about their sales, income, and expenditure as soon as they are transacted. He added that there are many reasons why they keep records. Some of the most important reasons are to help them monitor the progress of the business, to know how much they have sold, how much they have spent, and what is left as closing stock at the end of the day. To obtain this information, they record most of their transactions.

Peter explained that:

Food and drinks are the most difficult items to deal with in a bar and restaurant business because there are usually many workers and customers involved in the process. Food is difficult because if you are not careful, you can make losses without even knowing it my friend. For example, some costs such as the amount of ingredients used to prepare a particular food may not be easy to determine because not everything is used. Therefore, by keeping detailed records of all the expenditure that went into food preparation we are able to find out if we are losing or gaining from the sale of food.

(Interview conducted with Peter in English on Tuesday 22nd March 2005).

On the same day, I interviewed Lamaro, a counter waiter/receptionist in another bar and restaurant, who explained to me that drinks are difficult to deal with because of the many workers, customers, and bottles involved:

If you are not careful, you can be cheated by either the workers or the customers. The workers may pocket some money or the customer may leave without paying for some drinks especially when they are getting drunk. In that case, we keep the records of the drinks according to the different brands served by each waiter and their group of customers. This is ticked off after receiving payments. If there is a shortage, the waiter will be asked to explain or she will be made to pay for that shortage

(Interview conducted with Lamaro on 22nd March 2005).

An old record book I collected from a bar managed by Awor provides an insight into the literacy practices involved in selling drinks (beer, liquor, and soft drinks) (see Figure 24 for an example of a self-made bar record book). The page contains sales records of four

he or she is ordering. A careful study of the record book shows that the '*Cash*' columns were not being used, while the '*Balance*' columns are used to record customers' debts. The reason for this could be that the seller is more concerned with orders that have not been paid for.

The practice of handling customers' payments differs from one bar/restaurant to the other. Some bars and restaurants issue receipts that also serve as invoices to inform customers of the money they must pay. This practice is common in bars and restaurants with organised management. Bars and restaurants serving largely more regular and known customers (patrons) tend to inform their patrons of what they are expected to pay orally, unless the customer specifically asks for an invoice. Customers who ask for receipts/invoices especially in bars are those who are suspicious of the waiters and would like to confirm, by studying the receipt carefully, if what they are being asked to pay for is what they actually ordered. If they have doubts, they will call the waiter to come and explain the difference. This behaviour shows that literacy is often involved when there is little trust between the people involved in a transaction. With higher levels of trust, the use of reading and writing is limited. A similar practice of using written records to prevent fraud was noted in ancient Greece (Thomas, 2001).

Most of the receipt books I saw, even for the better-managed bars/restaurants, were not written with a carbon copy. This suggests that receipts are only used as invoices for informing customers of their bills. The customers, on the other hand, leave the receipts on the table or throw away the receipt after confirming and paying their bills. For the sellers and customers, the receipt loses value as soon as the transaction is completed. This suggests that literacy is used to reinforce memory in what should have been an oral transaction. The bar/restaurant sellers do not use the receipts to monitor their sales. Instead, they use other records. The customers too, do not need the receipts to account for their use of money. There is no big difference between the bars/restaurants in relation to using receipts. When I asked Lamaro why they do not keep a carbon copy of the receipts they give out, she gave me a look of surprise and instead asked me, "*What for?*" I said, "*To determine how much has been sold and earned during the day,*" (conversation with Lamaro 22 March 2005) upon which she showed me another record book, with pages similar to the one shown in Figure 24 above, but, instead of the names of customers she had the names of the waiters. When I asked her to give me one of her old record books, she advised me to talk to Opige the manager. Opige informed me that they do not keep old or used up record books once they are filled and all the debts in them paid up or transferred to a new book. Here again the written records are temporary. Opige said,

“Once the day’s business is complete and closing stock and income for the day assessed, the record of that day ceases to be important, and we will only continue to use the record book if it still has some unused pages”. (Conversation with Opige in Luo on 9th July 2005).

Even before all the pages of the record book are used up, some pages are torn off for other purposes like writing down telephone numbers or making other calculations. The records are therefore used to keep track of complicated transactions for as long as such transactions will last. Once the transaction is complete, the record loses its value. The role of literacy in that case is simply to aid memory in the context of a complex business transaction.

To dispense with these complicated transactions, some bar owners ask for payment up front by displaying one written notice to that effect and positioning it in a visible place in their shops like on a counter (see Figure 25 below).



Figure 25: Notice to customers in a bar.

In this bar, all transactions are in cash. Counting the money and identifying the beer brand⁴⁷ may be the literacy involved in transaction of selling drinks. There are no receipts or short-term record keeping in use. In cash transactions, there is no extended time between orders and payment to be bridged by a written record. However, regular patrons who are known to the seller and owner of the business as people of integrity are exempted from such conditions of payment. This suggests that mutual trust, personal knowledge, and easy contact, reduce the need for using records to keep track of transactions. It also suggests that a closely-knit community with a high sense of interpersonal trust could exhibit limited use of reading and writing as the community depends on their mutual trust to settle deals between them.

⁴⁷ Drinks are branded differently using different colors and symbols. These can also be used to identify a brand without having to read the name of the beer. I did not establish which method was used by waiters in bars.

While records are generally used to control and monitor transactions, the profitability and sales of the day are determined by using other procedures, as Peter explains:

Before the start of the day, we confirm the number of bottles, and other stock in the morning. We do this by counting all the bottles of drinks according to the different brands and record them. During the day, every brand sold is recorded separately: Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Nile or Bell Beers and so on. In the evening, we again count the number of bottles not sold and subtract that from the opening stock to determine the amount of stock sold during that day. We then use that information to determine how much money we should be having from the day's sales after subtracting the day's expenditure from total sales. That will give us the earning of the day, which we then confirm by counting the money in the till. If there is some difference between our calculation and the actual money in the till, we go back to the record books to find out where the shortage could be coming from and sorting it out with the workers. This process involves many written calculations at the close of each business day.

(Interview with Peter conducted in English on 22nd March 2005).

A close study of the record books shows that such calculations are done on the back of the record book or any available free page. The driving force behind this is control and accountability, and once that has been done, the record loses value. The use of reading and writing is to complement memory due to the very complex nature of trade or business transactions.

In addition to the records used for controlling the sales of drinks and food, many other records such as the guest register listing the guests booked into the lodges are also kept. Like those used for selling food and drinks, the visitors' register is also designed with columns and rows. The visitors sign in their names and enter their personal details in a row against their names under columns headed: occupation, number of days they will be spending in the lodge, room number, the place they are coming from, and their destination after checking out of the lodge. All these are written in English. Those who are not able to read and write or are not interested in writing are assisted by the receptionist. This visitor's register is normally kept at the reception desk. This book, according to Peter, is useful for both security purposes and knowing how many guests are booked into the lodges. The owner or manager of the lodge can use the register to conduct a spot check to ensure that all the rooms occupied have been reported accurately for purposes of accountability and minimising fraud by workers who do not report all the guests booked in the lodge in order to pocket some money. Once again, trust and the need to monitor and control staff are the primary motivations for keeping records, hence the use of literacy.

In conclusion, literacy in bars, restaurants and lodges plays a role in capturing and holding information relating to the transactions between the staff, customers, and management. The flow of transactions between these three is a very complex process that is difficult to retain mentally. For that reason, literacy is integrated into selling and buying

activities that occur in bars, restaurants and lodges. Once the transactions are complete, the written information generated during this process becomes irrelevant. Therefore, the functional value of literacy is high, while its archival or long-term value seems to be low. Most of the records generated only retain their usefulness for the duration of the transaction.

6.4.2.2 Literacy in *Bodaboda* riding

Some youths in Bweyale earn their living through offering transport services for people and luggage using bicycles or motorcycles. They are known as *Bodaboda* riders. They normally park in strategic locations like road junctions, entrances to busy public places like the market, taxi and bus stops, and other places where they expect to get customers. The services of *Bodaboda* riders are used by people who are moving in and around Bweyale trading centre and the surrounding villages (see Figure 26 below):



Figure 26: A bicycle carrier popularly known as *Bodaboda* in Uganda.

I interviewed three different *Bodaboda* riders with different levels of education, Ocan reported that he completed Senior 4 (11 years of school education from primary one in Uganda), Kweya, one of the most active *Bodaboda* riders, said he completed Primary 7 (P.7) (7 years of school education in Uganda); and Wadri who was a secondary school dropout. From my observation in Bweyale and other parts of Uganda, the *Bodaboda* riders are mainly young males (I have never seen a female *Bodaboda* rider) between the ages of 17 to 30 years old. In Bweyale, there are more *Bodaboda* bicycles than motorcycles. The bicycles are often fitted with decorated cushioned carrier seats fixed behind the riding seat (see Figure 26 above).

The *Bodaboda* riders use literacy in their everyday work in many ways. They write and read for fun, for self-motivation, to advertise their services, keep records of their transactions, sign deals with cycle owners, and run their association. Some of their writing is painted on the carrier seats of their bicycle (See Figure 27). I grouped this kind

of writing as writing for fun although it is used to amuse and attract customers. It reads, “CAM NONO BER KI WINYO” translated to English on the backside of the same seat as, “FREE FOOD IS GOOD FOR BIRDS”. I was personally amused by the writing and asked the rider of the bicycle in the picture, why he wrote it? He said, “I just wrote it for fun”. This writing could also serve as decoration for the *Bodaboda* bikes



Figure 27: Writing on the passenger seat of a *Bodaboda* bicycle.

I first saw the phrase written on a kiosk in the trading centre before this particular *Bodaboda* rider wrote it on his bicycles (see Figure 28 below). I failed to get the meaning of this phrase because when I asked the *Bodaboda* rider to tell me he said he just wrote it for fun.



Figure 28: Similar writing on the wall of a kiosk.

There is other written information that relates to the transport industry to which the *Bodaboda* riders see themselves as belonging like, “*ANYBODY EXPRESS*”. They get these ideas from reading what is written on buses that pass via Bweyale like, “*GULU EXPRESS*.” I also saw motivational statements like, “*WE TRY OTHERS CRY*” written on the rear mudguard of a *Bodaboda* motorcycle, and, “*Bedo dit tek, oweko atute,*” (Being a grown up is difficult, it makes me try). When I asked the owner of the bicycle on which this information was posted why he wrote that expression, he replied with another similar expression common among the Acholi people, which says, “*Kite eno*” (that is its character). The full expression, “*Kita kwo eno*” translates as, “That is the character of life.” Others religious statements like, “*I love Jesus,*” are painted on the cushioned seats of the *Bodaboda* bicycles. The *Bodaboda* riders could be writing these motivational

expressions to help them take up the challenge of life. It could be a conventional practice in *Bodaboda* riding.

There is also some reading and writing that is directly related to the day-to-day operations of a *Bodaboda* rider. Kweya for examples said, “*Writing during working hours is the problem of the chairperson; he is the person who should be writing because he is the leader of the group*” (Interview with Kweya conducted in Luo on 9th July 2005). Details of what the chairperson writes are discussed later in this section.

After work, these *Bodaboda* riders keep records of their finances. This involves counting the money earned during the day and deciding how much should be saved. Numeracy is very important in that exercise. Kweya said, “*I budget the money that I should be saving from home after leaving work*” (Interview with Kweya conducted in Luo: 9th July 2005).

There are three types of *Bodaboda* riders. The first are those who own their bicycles or motorcycles; the second group are those who rent, and the third are those who are employed to ride. Those who rent or are employed usually sign agreements with bicycle or motorcycle owners, thus making signing agreements another important area of literacy use in the work of *Bodaboda* riders. This practice of written agreement, although informal, is based on the knowledge that the act of signing a piece of paper is binding and commits people to what has been agreed, and that such written agreements can be used to resolve disputes between the people involved in the agreement. They also know that the document they are signing can be used as evidence in courts of law in Uganda in case of disagreement. Both parties who agree to sign such agreements have this shared knowledge and it empowers them to participate in signing the agreement. Therefore, the act of writing the agreement is institutionally guaranteed. The institutions that guarantee such actions are the people themselves, the Local Council systems (elective local political leadership at the village levels), the police and Uganda’s judiciary. These institutions are also effective if the people recognise and respect them. This is exactly what Elwert (2001) pointed out, that the development of a literate society or a literate culture, requires the following social transformation to exist beforehand: “Respect and control of social norms including respect of the laws, rules of associations, and contracts; this is most important especially in the sector of a market economy where contracts have to be respected” (Elwert, 2001, p. 54).

In case one party in the agreement, especially the *Bodaboda* rider, is not literate, he relies on a witness⁴⁸ of his choice to mediate the process of signing the agreement on his behalf. Again, this use of a witness is based on the knowledge of court practice where witnesses are very important in court decisions. Ocan, the chairperson of the *Bodaboda* riders, said,

The person who writes the agreement will stand as a witness between you and the owner of the motorcycle, stating that these people wrote that on this date, they agreed that payment should be made at this rate per week. They will also be talking during the process of writing the agreement, so that even if you are not able to read and write you will still understand.

(Interview with Ocan conducted in Luo on 9th July 2005).

Those who rent bicycles have a lot more writing to do because they have to account for the money they have collected during the day to the owners of the bicycles. For that reason, the records of payments made are kept by both the owner of the cycle and its user. The objective of keeping this record is to confirm that each party in the agreement is committed to what was agreed between them. If one party is not literate, the service of a literacy mediator in the form of a witness will be used to confirm that the payments are made and recorded properly by the owner of the cycle. As might be expected, the use of witness when making payment is not something used by non-literate people only, because it is a normal practice to have a witness in anything that involves a written agreement as I discuss later in this chapter. The chairperson of the *Bodaboda* riders explains how this is done:

Therefore, if you work and it comes to Saturday you take the money agreed upon to the person. If it says twenty thousand, it is twenty thousand. If it says ten thousand, it is ten thousand. While there, the person has a book in which he records what this week has brought. If you are not able to read and write, you may inform your witness after remitting the money or you go with him when you are taking the money to your rich man. You do not give the money to the witness because the duty of the witness is only to see what is taking place.

(Interview with Ocan conducted in Luo on 9th July 2005)

Although the *Bodaboda* riders do not have much to write while at work, they encounter some instances that require reading, as Ocan explains:

Sometimes customers can bring a letter for you and tell you to take it to the place addressed on the letter. You can also see written information like in front of some shops like, "Ma lubanga Omio" (the one which God has given), or Can Rom (Poverty is the same). They will tell you to take a letter to such a place and the name of the place is written on the letter. Sometimes they can send you with a note to go and collect something. If you are not able to read, and after getting such a note, you take it to another person who knows how to read to help you read. It is not good. Now if you are the owner of the letter, you have given it to me, and you again see me giving it to another person,

⁴⁸ Note that witnesses are expected to be there in all cases of signing agreements even when all the parties involved are literate.

you may not like it. If the person to whom the letter was transferred goes to collect whatever was written on the note and he disappears with it, you will have to come and arrest me, because you had given it to me. Those who are not literate face this problem.

(Interview with Ocan conducted in Luo on 9th July 2005).

While the chairperson's explanation may sound hypothetical, I noticed that people who pass via Bweyale in buses often give letters or written notes to *Bodaboda* riders to deliver to some people in Bweyale.

The *Bodaboda* riders in Bweyale have an association that they formed to regulate their activities and control the behaviour of members. Literacy is used in running this organisation, and as stated by Kweya in the interview reported above, it is the responsibility of the chairperson as leader of the group to do the writing relating to this association.

This includes registering new members (riders), bicycles, and motorcycles. In registering a new member, Ocan said:

What I like doing is..., like if you come to the road (i.e. if you come to join the groups as a Bodaboda rider), I know that if you have come (to join Bodaboda riding), I must write down your name, the place you are staying, your LC (Local Council), and your tribe in our record book. Because if I write that this person is an Acholi who stays in this place under this Local Council, when something happens at least they can come and ask (me) that such a Bodaboda boy did this and that. Registering Bodaboda riders is important because it can help to track any rider, motorcycle or bicycle. If people are looking for a particular Bodaboda rider, I will simply check in the record book, and be able to identify the person and the motorcycle he is using including its registration number.

(Interview with Ocan conducted in Luo on 9th July 2005).

The chairperson of the *Bodaboda* Association also registers new bicycles and motorcycles. He said:

If you have brought a bicycle or motorcycle, what type of motorcycle, what is the frame number of the bicycle, what colour, what registration number...? I keep this information in my record book"

(Interview with Ocan conducted in Luo on 9th July 2005).

According to the chairperson, the registration of members is used to ensure that the new people joining the group are reliable people who will not cause problems for the group and to be able to follow up members who misbehave and need to be disciplined by the group. Literacy is therefore used to control members by collecting personal information about them.

In addition to registering their members, the *Bodaboda* riders engage in activities that are brought about by their institutionalised existence as an association. These include holding regular meetings. During these meetings, discussions are held and decisions are made and

recorded as minutes in English. There are very strong reasons for writing these minutes in English. Meetings and minutes are practices that are associated with modern institutions and organisations. The language of these modern institutions and organisations is English. The use of English therefore gives formality and status to the meeting of the *Bodaboda* riders. The files containing these minutes are kept by the chairperson or the secretary of the group, both of whom are able to read and write according to Ocan. Ocan said, “*We hold our meetings once a month... to discuss such complaints from customers*”. (Interview with Ocan conducted in Luo on 9th July 2005).

6.4.2.3 Literacy in tailoring

One of my key observation points was a tailoring shop that specialises in making and selling women’s dresses. In this shop, there are two tailors, Anena and Lamunu, working together. Although they work in the same shop, they operate independently. I did not treat them as one entity, but as two different tailors with two different ways of recording their business transactions and dealing with their customers. These tailors were trained at two different tailoring schools. Anena was trained in Masindi Tailoring School and Lamunu in Flora Tailoring School in Gulu. They are both women who dropped out of secondary school. They were both literate by the time they went to tailoring school. Okere was my third tailor. He operates from under a mango tree at his home, which is made up of two grass-thatched huts. He stopped School in Primary 7, and he was literate by the time he decided to learn tailoring informally from another experienced tailor. All three tailors learnt the literacy practices of tailors either formally for Anena and Lamunu or informally for Okere.

The literacy practices related to tailoring differ from those of shopkeeping, bar selling, and selling food in the restaurants. All three tailors work with recorded measurements. Some write the measurement on the piece of cloth, others on the wall of their shops and other in school exercise books. One of the record books was labelled, “Measurement record,” written in the area marked, “Subject”. In this record book, Lamunu recorded measurements she obtained by measuring her customers with a tape measure. Therefore, knowledge of how to use a tape measure, what to measure, and how to read and record the measurements are important in this process, and constitute the main literacy practices of tailors. Although there was a common literacy practice amongst the tailors, there were some idiosyncratic differences between different tailors. As I will discuss later, one tailor may even record their measurements in different formats at different times.

These measurements are taken of different parts of the body (shoulder, waist, length and so on), and they are recorded accordingly using idiosyncratic shorthand letters such as L for length, H for height, W for waist, B for breast, Sh. for shoulder and so on (see Figure 29 below). These measurements are recorded into the record book under the customer's name. This is followed by measuring the cloth, sewing and cutting it into different patterns. When the dress item is completed and the customer has paid for and taken it, the record is ticked off and it ceases to be useful. The book will continue to be used if it still has some free pages in it and once full, it is thrown away. That is why Lamunu had no problem surrendering her used up record book to me (See Figure 29).

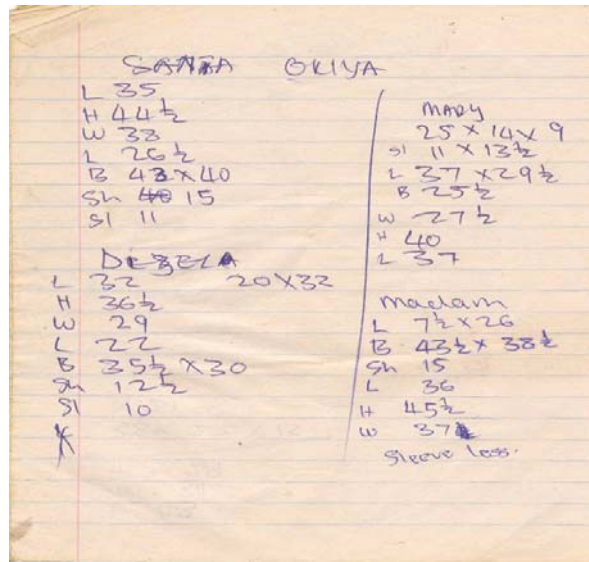


Figure 29: One page from Lamunu's record book.

I concluded that the writing in tailoring was somewhat idiosyncratic because Anena was not able to read Lamunu's shorthand for shoulder 'Sh'. When Lamunu overheard our discussion, she said it meant, 'Shoulder'. Lamunu herself was also not consistent in recording her measurements. For example, Figures 29 and 30 are different recording formats written by Lamunu. Figure 30 had no shorthand labels like 'L,' 'Sh,' 'W,' or 'B'. The principle in this format, according to Lamunu, is writing the measurements in a specific order that is, the first figure is Length, the second is Shoulder, and the third is Waist and so on. With this order, you can leave out the shorthand letters if you have many customers like school pupils to deal with. This shows that the circumstances or volume of work change the way the measurements are recorded by tailors. It also shows that there is a lot of flexibility in recording the measurements depending on the individual creativity of

each tailor and his or her working conditions. However, some basic things like the body measurements do not change and this is what guides all tailors' literacy practices.

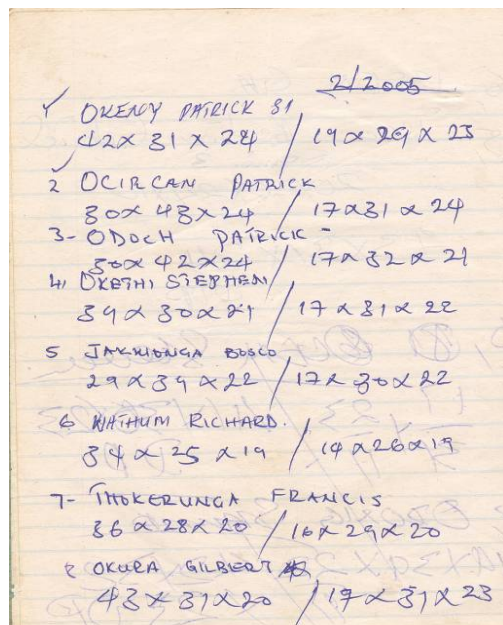


Figure 30: A different recording format by Lamunu, a tailor.

In Figure 30 above, for example, the measurements are written without indicating whether they are in centimetres, or inches. Furthermore, the use of multiplication symbol “X” like in 42 X 31 X 24 has a different meaning from the actual multiplication. This looks different although the underlying format that informs tailors literacy practices remains the same as I stated above in this section.

Some tailors do not record their measurements in books. Anena, for example, did not have any record book. When I asked Anena to show me her record book, it was Lamunu who answered, “Anena does not use books she sometimes writes on the wall (directs my attention to the wall of their shop, on which there are some figures written in chalk) or uses her memory”. Anena herself confirmed this when she said, “I can simply look at a person, and determine the size of cloth that can fit them” (Observation field notes: 22nd February 2005). However, even though she does not take and record customers’ actual measurements, she has, from her experience, some idea about the different measurements required to make a dress for a customer. Okere related a similar experience of writing his measurements on any surface including the pieces of cloth he is working on or the wooden surfaces of his sewing machines. When I asked him about his records, this is what he said, “Books..., books..., in most cases I write on the cloth itself, times I write

even on wood, because I will be using the information immediately”(Interview with Okere was conducted in Luo on Wednesday 25th May 2005).

Whatever the case, literacy has an important role in tailoring, and some knowledge of tailoring is required for a person to understand the literacy practices of tailors. This knowledge includes knowing how to read and write measurements and cutting the patterns according to the measurements. This knowledge can be learnt informally, non-formally through apprenticeships and close association with a tailor or formally. Both Lamunu and Anena learnt tailoring through formal training programs organized by tailoring schools. In the tailoring schools, they learnt what to measure, how to record such measurements and use it to make clothes. All these processes involve reading a tape measure and writing measurements in a book or on any other materials that can hold the written information in a readable form until the clothing is made.

All the three tailors learnt the literacy practices of tailors as part of their training or learning experiences. As Anena puts it, *“There are no special lessons for learning how to read and write as tailors, we simple learnt tailoring and this includes what tailors read and write as part of their work”* (Field notes: 21st February 2005). In other words, they learnt the literacy practices of tailoring by immersion in it during both training and practice.

In spite of their individual differences, like Anena writing on walls, Okere writing on any surface including the cloth materials he is tailoring, and Lamunu using a school exercise book, the literacy practices of tailors are similar, and constitute a distinct practice within the livelihood literacy practices. Even a tailor like Anena who does not record her measurements, has a mental framework of what she could have recorded, and she use this mental picture to cut the fabric accordingly. Cutting the fabric also involves using a tape measure. The tape measure that is very important in tailoring (and always hangs around the tailor’s neck) is like their trademark. The literacy practices of tailors are learnt as part of the process of acquiring the knowledge of tailoring.

The basic function of literacy in a tailoring shop is to capture information such as the clients’ names and measurements. Literacy is integrated into the tailoring process, although some tailors may work without the use of a written record, except reading a tape measure that is integral to their work.

6.4.2.4 Literacy in shops

Another important livelihood activity is running a shop. Most shops sell manufactured goods that are bought in bulk from Kampala and retailed in Bweyale. In all the shops, a

shop attendant serves customers over a shop counter, unlike in supermarkets, where customers look for what they need and take it to the cashier to pay for it (See Figure 6 above). The shop merchandise is displayed on shelves constructed behind the counter, with a few goods displayed in front of the shop to attract customers. Being served by a shop attendant helps customers who are not able to read, because they identify what the customer wants and hand it over to them. In developed countries like Canada and the United States, supermarkets are common problematic sites of literacy for non-literate adults because the ability to read is required for identifying and understanding the different products displayed on self-service shelves, locating the shelf position for different products and many other shopping activities (see Belzer, 2006; Klassen, 1991).

Shops only employ a few workers and serve one customer at a time. Furthermore, customers are expected to pay for their items as soon as they have been served. For these reasons, shopkeepers who sell non-durable commodities do not generally issue receipts or record their cash transactions that are across the counter. They do record the names of customers who have taken goods on credit. In the evening, literacy is used when counting money collected during the day and subtracting costs incurred during the day, for example paying porters who offload merchandise from suppliers. Reading and writing is also important when dealing with suppliers of merchandise, making shopping lists of the items which need to be restocked, making list of debtors, writing receipts and records of total sales made each day. These are discussed in detail later in this section.

Shops that sell durable items like radios and bicycles issue receipts for such items. This is because receipts for durable items are used as proof of ownership. For example, the police require receipts in order for a person to reclaim lost, found and stolen property that is in their custody. The value of receipts for durable items is known to some members or all the local community as this field notes confirms:

There is a group of men examining a new radio. One them asks the buyer of the radio, "Did you get the receipt for this radio?" "No," the buyer replied. He then informs the buyer about the value of a receipt. He explains that, "Receipts are good for identifying the person who sold something to you and it can also help to identify you as the owner of the radio because thieves cannot steal receipts. Therefore, if the radio is recovered, you can use the receipt to go and reclaim your radio"

(Field notes: Friday, 20th May 2005).

Since receipts are important for durable items, the details entered on such receipts are intended to facilitate the identification of that item. This type of receipt use gives attaches a long time value to them. In one of my field observations, I recorded the process of writing such a bicycle receipt.

I am in the trading centre in the morning, thinking about buying a bicycle to help me move around the village. I am shopping for a good bargain. I visit the first shop and check the bicycles on display. They do not satisfy me, and I decide to check the next bicycle shop. I decide to buy from the next shop because it has better bicycles on display. I chose one bicycle from among those on display in front of the shop. I go to the shopkeeper sitting inside the shop to ask him the price of the bicycle I select. He tells me the price and I pay him the money. The shopkeeper goes to the bicycle with a piece of scrap paper on which he copies the serial number of the bicycle written on the frame below the seat of the bicycle and instructs his bicycle repairer to tighten the nuts of the bicycle. He enters his shop and starts filling in the details of the bicycle on one of the receipts in a receipt book placed on his counter.

(Observation field notes: Tuesday 8th February 2005).

Qty	Particulars	Rate	Amount
	ROADMASTER KING BICYCLE		95000
	SIZE 22		
	No. 5792393		
	PAID		
	TAKEN		
	Thank		
	TOTAL		95000

Figure 31: A receipt for a bicycle.

I was the buyer of this bicycle and the outcome of this literacy event was the receipt shown in Figure 31. Note that the purpose of writing the receipt and the uses to which it is put are different from receipts written in bars and restaurants. In this case, the receipt is important because it is evidence of purchase and therefore ownership of a particular property. The receipt is used like a legal document that can be presented as evidence of ownership in case of doubt. Since the receipt is useful for identifying me as the owner of the bicycle, my name is clearly written on the receipt. The characteristic of writing exploited here is its ability to convey information across time and distance, making it available to whoever is able to read it.

The way information is arranged on the receipt is determined by the pre-printed format of the receipt itself. Other information such as, *paid*, *taken*, and *thank you*, which were not printed on the receipt was imposed by the writer based on his knowledge, understanding and the practice of writing bicycle receipts. On this receipt, some pieces of information were simply entered in what should have been a wrong place according to the dictates of the pre-printing. For example, in the receipt (Figure 31), the size of the bicycle ‘22’ was entered in the column labelled “Rate”. This could be misleading for a naïve reader who ignores the word “Size” against which the ‘22’ was written in the column labelled

“Particulars”. A person with good knowledge of bicycles would know that the ‘22’ refers to the size of the bicycle and not the rates. By overriding the format and imposing their own structure when filling in the pre-printed receipt, the bicycle sellers are exerting their own authority and knowledge on what is expected for a bicycle receipt.



Figure 32: Similar receipts from different commercial establishments.

The format and use of pre-printed cash sales receipts used by both the shopkeepers and the bar managers are similar, as shown in Figure 32 above. All the receipts are pre-designed, printed in English, and sold by printers in Kampala to stationary shops located in most trading centres and major towns in Uganda. Shopkeepers who can afford it can print their cash sale receipts with the names of their enterprises on them using a similar format. The pre-designed formats determine the kind of information entered and where specific information is written. The similar formats of these cash sale receipts unify the practice of writing cash sale receipts in all the different livelihood initiatives where receipts are used. Knowledge of English and the ability to identify the different sections of the receipts are required to be able to write out the receipts. Although the format or structure of the receipts is generally similar, there are some minor variations in their designs. Some shops use stamps to distinguish their receipts, others write the name of their establishment (see Figure 32 above). The main difference is in the use of the receipts.

From a different perspective, while the shopkeepers use receipts during transactions with their customers, they too are issued with receipts by wholesalers from whom they buy their stock. They keep such receipts and use them to add up the cost of stock, or as proof that they are not buying and selling stolen goods or contraband. They also use the receipt to determine the retail price for their merchandise and to calculate their profits. Ibra explained this during an interview, when he said, “We have receipts, which we normally keep. After buying our stock, we come back and calculate the capital cost we have used to help us determine our profits. Ok minus all other expenses, then we deduct, then we get

the profit and we put it down. Put it down, we keep it". (Interview with Ibra conducted in English on May 16th 2005). By "putting it down," Ibra meant recording their profit for future reference.

Apart from issuing receipts, some shopkeepers keep records of their daily income in exercise books. Figure 33 below is an example of such a record of daily income. This record was used by Opira, a shop assistant, to inform the shopkeeper⁴⁹ of the day's cash collection. In this particular record, the total income of the day is entered as a single entry after writing the date. In this case, literacy is used to account to the owner how much was collected during the day. To obtain the daily total income, Opira explains, "*I count all the money that is in the shop that day and subtract expenditure of any*" (conversation with Opira conducted on Nov 12th 2005).

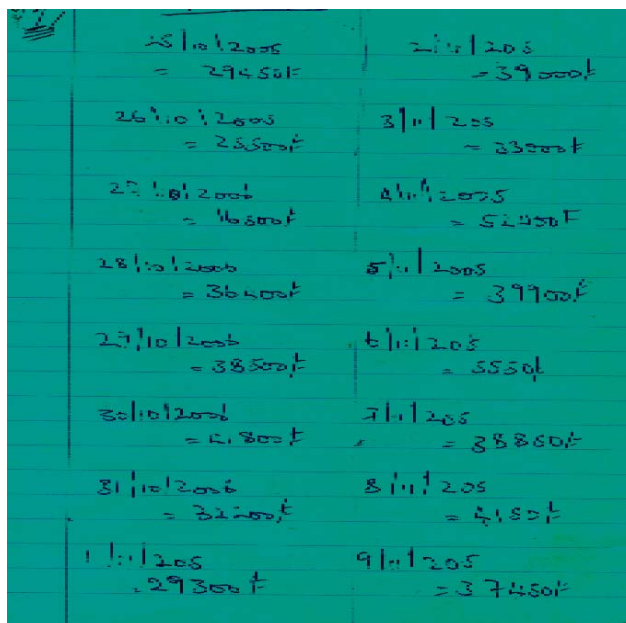


Figure 33: Page of a shop's income record book.

Some shopkeepers record the names of their debtors, as shown in Figure 34. This record is used to follow up those who have obtained items on credit. This record is kept until the debtors pay for the item(s). After payments, the shopkeeper (see Figure 34 below) ticks off the entry. Once all the debtors listed in a particular record book have all paid up their debts, the book is discarded. This means that records only remain valuable when the information is still required as a reference for a pending debt. This list of debtors consists

⁴⁹ In this study 'shopkeeper' refers to people who own and manage shops, while shop assistants are the people who are employed by the shopkeepers to run the shops on a daily basis.

of the dates of entries, the names, or a description of the person and the amount they owe the shop.

Record books are also used for working out calculations relating to the business (See Figure 34).

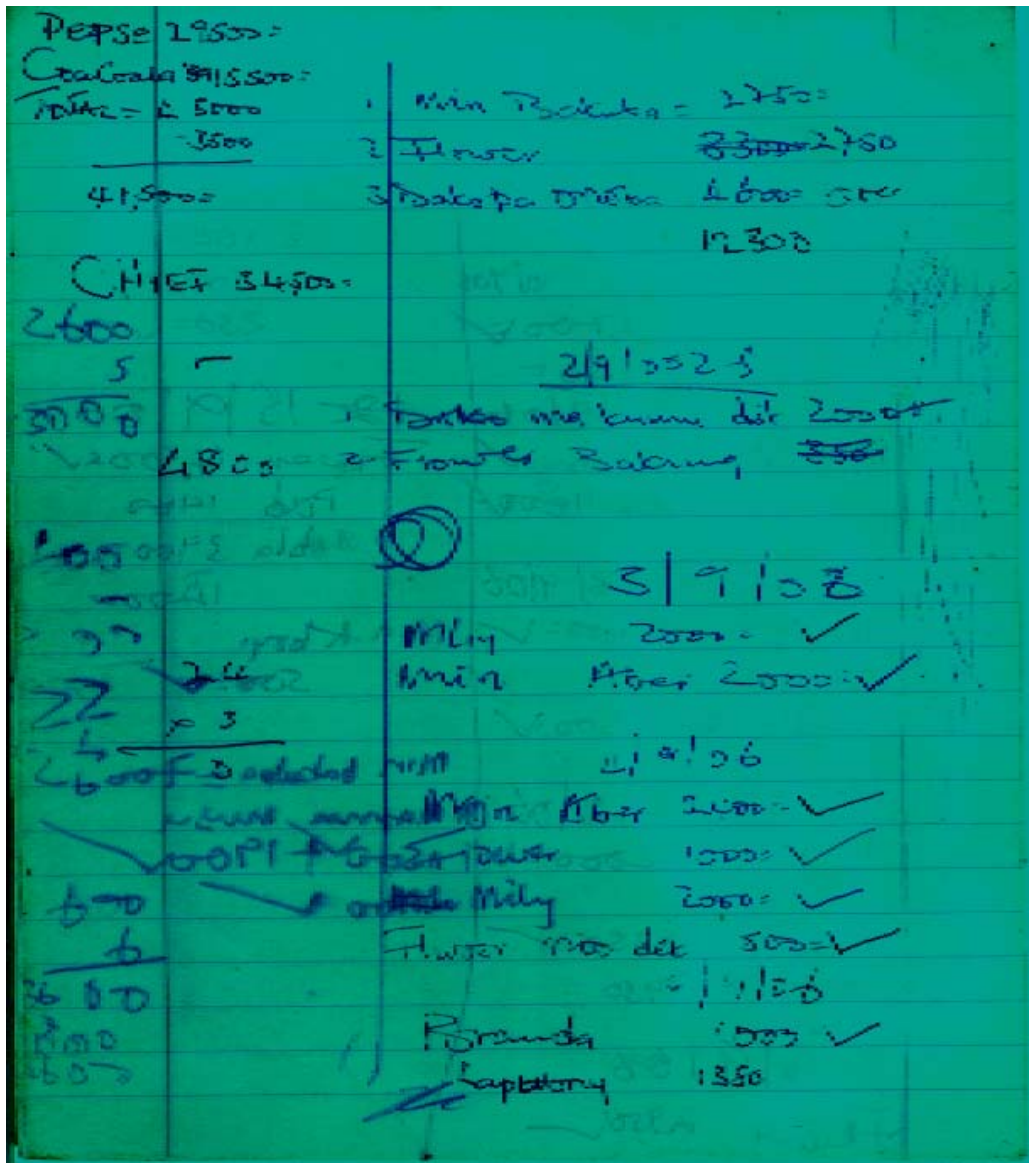


Figure 34: Record of debtors.

What follows is a clearer copy of this record. The unlabelled sum could be expenditure incurred when buying the Pepsi and Coca-Cola.

Pepsi	29,500/=
Coca-Cola, (written as CoaCoala)	15,500/=
TOTAL	45,000/=
Unlabelled sum	-3,500/=
	41,500/=

This is not a standard business record book and recording procedure, but it is what Opira created and uses to keep track of his transactions and debtors. The list contains the names of the debtor, for example Min Aber 2000. Once the debt is paid, the name of the person is ticked off.

Shopkeepers in Bweyale use their literacy skills to organize their businesses in terms of planning to restock their shops. They do this by making a list of all the items that need to be restocked. This list normally consists of the names of items, quantity, and the estimated cost of a stated quantity of a particular item. Once in Kampala, the list is used to shop for the listed merchandise, and the items are ticked off once they have been bought and loaded onto the vehicle. When loading the merchandise onto a lorry in Kampala and off the lorry in Bweyale, the list is again used to ensure that all the merchandise is loaded and offloaded respectively. Once the goods are in the shop stores, the list becomes useless.

Shopkeepers in Bweyale generally do not keep formal books of accounts, involving complicated accounts like trial balance, bank reconciliation statements and other difficult accounting records. According to Ibra, their scale of business operation is too small for such accounting procedures.

That one, as per this business, we have not gone so far. What we do is calculate other expenses; the money used for buying and subtract the cost. What is left is what we write down. Aahhh that is what we write down here, and I normally do like this, if it is one hundred and fifty thousand profit, I write seventy five, I assume that the 75 will go for credit (expenses). My assumption is like that.

(Interview with Ibra conducted in English on 16th May 2005).

There are also those who keep records that can help them to monitor the profits that they are making on different items. The record shown in Figure 35, is the record of a shopkeeper (who doubles as a tailor) selling manufactured clothes. This person records the “Cost price”, “Qty” (which stands for quantity) and the “Selling price” and uses that information to calculate her profit. This particular shopkeeper (tailor) was buying what

they call, “Ready made dresses” from Kampala for reselling in Bweyale. Note the other calculations that have been done on the same page.

	Cost Price	Qty	Selling Price	Profit
shut boys	27500	6	14500	3
big dresses	40000	6	19500	2
babu shut	23000	12	13500	4
Shirts	30000	6	12000	2
mid shut	14000	6	4500	1
bande dress	27500	6	6000	1
Thruer	st victor 6			
Thruer dresses	100500	6	13000	
dresses	16500	6	5000	1
dresses	19000	6	10000	2
shirts ad	29000	6		

4000	X
2500	4
8000	
7500	
15500	

Figure 35: Cost and selling price record used for determining profit.

Inside the shops too, there are printed texts on or inside the packaging of some items on display. These are mostly instructions on how to use a product, the ingredients used in making the product, the country where the products were made, the manufacturing and expiry dates. Most of the writing on products is in English. Only products made within East Africa, especially Kenya have some information translated into Kiswahili (Field note: Sunday 8th January 2006).

Although the products have a lot of writing on them, the writing itself does not seem to attract the attention of the customers who just come to buy them. In one of my observations, I noted that:

Most customers coming into the shop are not reading what is written on the products they are buying. They simply ask the shopkeeper to give them what they have come to buy,

pay for it, and go away. Sometimes the shopkeeper asks the customer to specify the brand they are interested in if there is a variety of that particular product and they mention their preference right away. They seem to know what they have come to buy

(Field note: Sunday 8th January 2006).

From other similar observations, I noted that buyers mostly come to buy what they already know. It was, therefore, difficult to determine from such behaviour which customers were literate or not. I also noted that there are many ways of obtaining information about different products. Firstly, products are sometimes promoted in the trading centre by marketers from different manufacturing companies. The promoters use big loudspeakers mounted on top of lorries to talk about their products. They talk in Luo dialects, Kiswahili and Lunyoro. They display the products and give free samples of their products to people who come to attend the promotion. Through such promotions, I think, even non-literate people are able to obtain information about the different products that are available on the market.

Secondly, the one-to-one nature of shops' services provides the opportunity for shopkeepers to inform a customer about new products, so the customer does not have to read the information on products for themselves like it is done in supermarkets. In a similar way, non-literate shopkeepers, as I will discuss later in this section, obtain information about the different products from the wholesaler or interaction with fellow traders and pass such information on to their customers orally.

Thirdly, consumers too make recommendations or seek information about new products from friends and relatives, and explain how good such products are. For example, literate as I am, I had to seek advice on what type of bicycle to buy from a *Bodaboda* rider, who told me, "*All bicycles are good depending on how you use and keep them. However, if you have the money and really like a strong bicycle then buy a Roadmaster, and fix Diamond tyres instead of the ones sold with the bicycle because they are very weak*".

(Conversation with Bishop in Luo on 8th February 2005).

Through such interactions, information about different products is shared in the community.

Apart from English and Kiswahili, some instruction manuals are written in a variety of other international languages that are even difficult to identify. I observed this during the same literacy event of reading a new radio instruction manual and talking about the value of receipts reported earlier in this section. One of the things that attracted their attention was the instruction manual that was inside the radio packaging:

Inside the packing box of the new radio, there is another information sheet attached. I ask the buyer what that could be, thus drawing his attention to it. He pulls it out of the package, opens the wrapping, and unfolds it. For a moment the attention of all those who are looking at the new radio is directed to this new piece of paper opened by the buyer of the radio. The information sheet is written in a language we all did not understand. We are guessing what the language that could be. Somebody in the group suggests that it could be an Indian language since the radio was bought from an Indian trader. Another person says it must be a Congolese language. I try to read it aloud and suggest it sound like Italian. We discuss the Italian language briefly and the whole group loses interest in the paper and turns their attention back to the radio.

(Field notes: Friday, 20th May 2005).

This literacy event shows how literacy pervades all aspects of everyday human life. It also shows the force with which English language literacy is imposed on people. This is because the radio was not manufactured in Uganda and it came with an instruction manual written in English. This makes English an unavoidable language of literacy even in rural community life.

There is a lot of reading and writing that takes place in shops. Sometimes this is not very visible because it is deliberately hidden and kept secret. Some is messy, crude and sometimes difficult to comprehend by another person other than the author, and some is integrated into some shop transactions. In whatever forms these literacy practices manifest themselves they require learning. For example, Ibra informally learnt the literacy practices from his father as he participated in the family business. Now he is the manager of the shop. *'The business, I was also taught by the (sic) father... As I said as being also a peasant, I could go to school, come and dig and at times, I am selling, like that. So slowly, by slowly, I developed the skills.* (Interview with Ibra conducted in English on 16th May 2005).

Not all shopkeepers are literate. Okellowange is the only shopkeeper I interviewed who is not able to read and write at all. However, in spite of that, Okellowange owns and runs a shop. His basic strength and confidence lies in his numeracy, which enables him to calculate his gains. Without much hesitation, he tells me how he knows that he is not making losses from his shop operation:

This is how I get to know, you see like this salt. We buy it at Ushs⁵⁰ 2,500; we will get a profit Ushs 500. The big type of salt, we buy it at Ushs 15,000 or 14,500. We will earn a profit of Ushs 2,600. That juice we buy at Ushs 6000 and we earn a profit of 1,500 from it. Sugar is priced at Ushs 80,000 a bag. They tell us that the price of sugar is getting better now. We were selling half a kilogramme at 800, so one kilo will be at Ushs 1,600. Then that box of biscuits we get it at Ushs 20,000 and we have a profit of Ushs 4000, from it.

(Interview with Okellowange conducted in Luo on 22nd September 2005).

⁵⁰ Ushs means Uganda Shillings.

I was able to note two things during the interview with Okellowange. Firstly, he uses a lot of mental arithmetic to calculate his profits. For every item he buys, he decides what he should earn from it, and charges the price accordingly. Secondly, he differentiates similar products by their packaging or size. For example, “*The big type of salt*”, that “*Box of big juice*”. Sometimes he also uses the actual names of the products like, “*Biscuit Max, Glucose, and Cheers.*” He learns the names of these products from his fellow traders. When I asked him how he learns the names of his products, he said, “*I talk with fellow trader. There is no law that stops you from asking. What is in this box? Then the trader will tell you and all you do is to commit it to memory.*” (Interview with Okellowange conducted in Luo on 22nd September 2005).

When he goes to buy his merchandise, he does not declare himself as non-literate for fear of being cheated. Instead, he uses his well-developed mental ability to calculate what he should be paying for his purchases, and quietly reconciles his totals with the wholesalers’ totals. For example, he explains that:

When I go into a wholesaler’s shop for example, I will ask, ‘How much is a carton of that type of bar soap?’ Then he will say, ‘Ushs 13,000’. I will then buy a bottle of soda to give me time to work out mentally how much I have to pay for the four boxes I have planned to buy. I will mentally calculate it like this: If one box is Ushs, 13,000 how much will two boxes cost. After working out the figure for the two boxes, I will double it to get what I have to pay for four boxes, and give my orders for them. I will then ask the wholesaler to calculate the total cost of the four boxes using his calculator. If he comes up with a different figure from the one I have already worked out mentally, I will say, ‘That is not correct, looks like there is some cheating there.’ I will then ask him to work it out again until I am convinced that his figures are correct. Then I can pay for what I ordered.

(Interview with Okellowange conducted in Luo on 22nd September 2005).

To deal with the literacy tasks in his life, Okellowange depends on other people, whom he uses as his literacy mediators (Barton, 1994; Malan, 1996). He uses other people to read for him without letting them know that he is not able to do so himself. For example, he says, “*The people who normally come searching for stolen items are people who are educated and able to read, so I give them the receipts one at a time and ask them to read it for themselves. If they read it, I will then show them the item as displayed in my shop.*” He explains that he makes it look like his interest is to let them read the receipts themselves. The purpose of doing all that, according to him, is to avoid being cheated. In spite of his ability to sell in a shop without the skill of reading and writing Okellowange is still very keen to learn how to read and write in the expectation that it will make him improve his ability to manage his shop and thus improve his income and status in the community. This shows that there are many reasons for which people would want to learn how to read and write (see also Gibson, 1996; Papen, 2005b)

In shops, literacy use is geared much more towards stock management and auditing, validating customer purchases of durable goods like bicycles, keeping track of debtors, and in cases where a shop assistant is employed, records of daily income. The other available printed information in shops is that written on products, which is not of much use other than for identification purposes if the packaging is not distinctive enough. The structure of the shops is such that the transaction between the customer and the shopkeeper is oral across the counter, and through such interactions the customer gets information on the product orally from the shopkeeper. Just like in the bars, restaurants and lodges, the immediate functional value of literacy is high.

6.4.2.5 Literacy in drug shops

Running a drug shop is another of the livelihood activities in Bweyale where literacy is evident. “In Uganda..., drug shops are important sources of drugs for the majority of the population. In addition to selling drugs, these outlets often serve as primary sources of information about illness and drug therapy” (Tumwikirize et al., 2004, p. S25). Drug shops are usually run by people with some medical training like clinical officers, nurses, and pharmacists. As trained medical officers, the people who run drug shops are able to read medical prescriptions from clinics in Bweyale and any hospital in the country.

There are different types of written information involved in the process of buying medication from drug shops. These pieces of written information come from both the buyers and the sellers of the drugs. According to Okello, a drug shop attendant:

Some people who come to buy medication from us come with medical prescription notes from clinics; we would read the prescription notes and sell the drugs prescribed. Others come with ailments and ask for particular medication that they have been using before for that particular ailment. Some people, especially children, come with small chits with the name of a drug written on it.

(Interview with Okello conducted in Luo on Thursday 5th May 2005).

Figure 36 shows examples of chits with names of drugs written on them brought to one of the drug shops I visited:

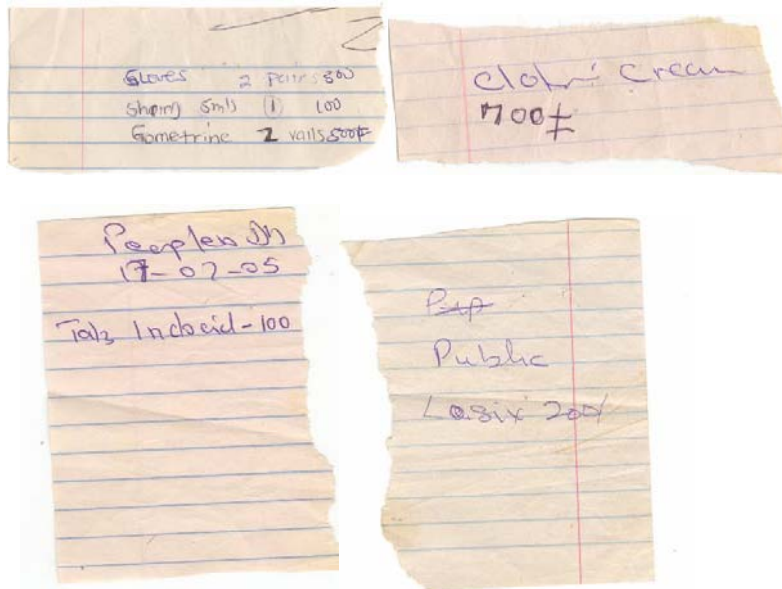


Figure 36: Chits brought by customers to buy medicine from a drug shop.

The drug shop attendants issue their drugs in conical paper wrapping or small envelopes on which they write the names and dosages of the drugs they dispense to their customers (see Figure 37). Writing the dosage on the envelopes or other form of wrappings, according to Okello, is a legal requirement that anybody selling drugs must abide by or risk having their drug-selling licence revoked. After writing the dosage, Okello explains, “*We are by law required to explain to the buyer how the medicine should be administered.*” The explanation is to make sure that the customer understands the dosage as written on the wrapping or back of the envelopes containing the medicine. For example, the writing in Figure 37 below means that the person should take two tablets three times a day. This is a typical medical shorthand form of writing which is normally not easy to understand. Therefore, the explanation that comes with this shorthand helps to explain how the shorthand should be read by other non-medical people.

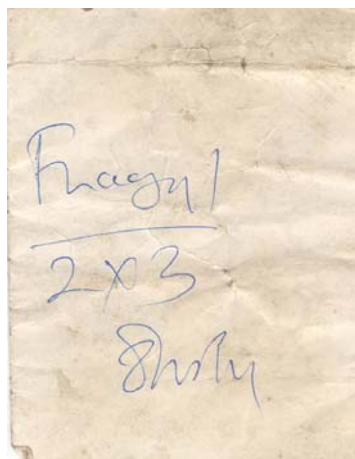


Figure 37: Packet for medicine with dosage written on it.

The inside walls of the drug shops are decorated with posters such as those showing the life cycle of a mosquito and malaria, and symptoms of other diseases that afflict people in the community. There are also similar informative posters in veterinary (animal) drug shops⁵¹. The posters show different types of medicine and the diseases they cure. See Figure 38 below:



Figure 38: Posters inside a veterinary drug shop.

Although these charts are extensively displayed in most drug shops, I did not see anybody, either the attendants or the buyers, referring to them. A few people would look at the posters with some inquisitive interest. I personally asked to buy a medicine that was advertised on one of the posters, and I was told it was not in stock. From that, I concluded that the posters were more decorative and only meant to distinguish drug shops from other shops.

⁵¹ Veterinary drug shops selling animal drugs and human drug shops are two different establishments run by different people with different training.

6.4.2.6 Literacy in the market

Bweyale has a daily market with special market days on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Literacy is involved in selling and buying in the market:

I am sitting in a section of the market where fish is sold. Women are the ones who sell fish in this part of the market. I can see a woman selling fish with a folded exercise book in which she records the names of her debtors. I notice a man holding an exercise book. He is moving around distributing packets of polythene bags to the market women. Wherever he gives a packet of polythene bags, he writes something in his notebook. From the conversation that is going on between him and my host, I figure out that he could be recording the names of the people to whom he is supplying packets of polythene bags. In a short while, the person who collects market dues⁵² for the local government, under whose jurisdiction the market falls, is also moving around with a receipt book collecting market dues, from the people selling in the market and writing out receipts for the market sellers who are paying.

(Field notes: 24th December 2005)

The actual process of selling items also involves a lot of writing. For example, Jane, who sells cooked food in the market, explained to me how she goes about her work in the market. She was very familiar with her figures as she explained to me how she calculates her profits from selling cooked chicken. Jane was not specific about whether she calculates her profit mentally or on paper. The way she was explaining it suggests the use of mental rather than written calculation. However, when I asked her, she said she has to record all her expenditure to help her calculate her profits. This was how she explained it:

It is like this..., or let us put it this way, if you slaughter a chicken, or you slaughter two or three chickens and each can be cut into five pieces, and each piece goes for Ushs 2000. From each chicken, you expect to earn Ushs 5000, (hesitates and changes to) Ushs 10,000. Now on that Ushs 10,000 which you are expecting from each chicken, you would have bought a chicken at Ushs 4000, and you should also estimate, your efforts, and how much money you spend for ingredients like tomatoes, onions, and charcoal. If you are frying it, the cooking oil. After deducting all costs, what you are left with is your profit. Remember you also have to include the flour, which goes with that food. When you deduct all costs, you may be left with three thousands only or sometimes even less as your net profit from each chicken.

(Interview with Jane conducted in Luo on 25th May 2005).

When I asked her to show me her record books, she said her husband took the book away. I was not sure about the truth of that information. From my other observations in the market and the trading centre, most of the calculations Jane was talking about are done on scrap paper and discarded once the calculations are complete (cf. Maddox 2001).

Jane says she does most of her writing during work and that outside of work, there is little to write. When I asked her about her farming activities, she said the amount of money used for paying her farm workers is too small to warrant recording or written calculations.

⁵² This is a fixed amount of money paid by all those who sell their products in the market. This market due is collected by the local authority. Part of this due is used to maintain the market.

This means that writing only comes in for complicated activities whose transactions cannot be handled mentally. This was similar to what Ibra said above about keeping proper accounts books.

Another non-literate market woman, Aryek, recounted her experience with literacy while selling in the market. She says:

I sell with my inborn knowledge. Even totalling I know all, because, they can send fish worth Ushs 200,000/=, 300,000/=. All, I will total them up and keep it in my head (memory). Sometimes this person when they are counting the fish, they count in bundles of 10 each. If they want for Ushs 1500 like that, I must add it up all and it will be Ushs 15,000 if he takes 10 bundles of fish.

(Interview with Aryek conducted in Luo on 22nd September 2005).

With this ‘inborn knowledge’, she is able to sell fish in the market including paying market dues:

If they give me the receipt, I keep it with me. The person who is writing the receipt is the one who will tell me what to pay, and then I will get the money and pay. If I give him 5000/= and he writes Ushs 2000/= only, then, he must give me back Ushs 3000/=

(Interview with Aryek conducted in Luo on 22nd September 2005).

Again, numeracy is important and Aryek, in spite of not having been to school and not being able to read and write, is able to calculate and sell fish in the market. Because oral communication accompanies written communication, she relies only on the oral aspect of the communication to understand the written. This means she can be cheated if a person deliberately misinforms her and writes different information. This confirms Gibson’s (1996) study in South Africa in two ways. Firstly, the use of what Aryek calls “inborn knowledge” is similar to Lutterell’s (1989, p. 39, cited in Gibson, 1996, p. 59) ‘working intelligence’ or ‘natural intelligence’. Secondly, it shows Aryek’s dependence on mental calculations to handle her market calculations.

6.4.2.7 Literacy in farming

Bweyale has three different types of farming. The first type of farming is subsistence farming where the biggest proportions of the crops are grown for family consumption only. The second type of farming is growing food crops like maize, groundnuts, and cassava in large quantities for sale in the local market and to intermediaries coming from main towns like Masindi, Gulu, and Kampala. The family may consume a small proportion of these food crops. The third type of farming is growing cash crops like cotton and tobacco that are purely grown for sale to manufacturing companies or cooperatives that promote the growing of such crops and buy them as inputs for their factories. There are very limited uses for raw cotton and tobacco at the family level.

In the first and second types of farming, farmers use traditional methods of farming for which they do not receive any form of guidance or support from agricultural extension officers or other organisations. The farmers mostly use traditional farming methods based on their unwritten traditional knowledge passed down from generation to generation through word of mouth and practice, and what Ocitti (1988, p. 347) calls, “methods of African indigenous pedagogy”. Consequently, reading and writing is not involved in the whole process of traditional agricultural practices and consumption. The farmers know what and when to plant, tend, and harvest traditional crops that are grown according to traditional methods and knowledge.

In the second type of farming, although the traditional food crops are grown using traditional methods of farming, literacy is involved when selling the farm harvest to intermediaries coming from the big towns. These literacies involve the issuing of receipts after paying market dues, registering as a supplier (getting your names and quantity of the crops you are selling on the list of the big buyers from Kampala and other towns), counting money, and labelling their bags of crops. This literacy practice is very similar to the one Street (Street, 1984) noticed with the fruits traders in Iran.

Although literacy is involved in selling farm products, the farmers are not directly involved in writing, for example the receipts issued to the farmer after paying market dues are not written by the farmers, but by the people who collect them. The lists made when farmers bring their products to sell are drawn up by the people who organise the sale of the different crops. This could be one of the farmers or the people buying the farm products. The reading that the farmers do involves counting their money and confirming their names on the list of the intermediary traders from Kamala, reading the labels on the sacks of their crops. Their writing includes labelling their products to make it easy to distinguish them from those of other farmers.

The third type of farming requires the use of specialised knowledge and the crops grown are non-traditional. The farmers do not have culturally embedded knowledge required for growing these crops. For that reason, they depend on external sources of knowledge handed out to them in the form of printed leaflets and extension services. The use of externally generated knowledge involves reading and writing throughout the process of growing and selling the crops. The companies promoting the growing of some of these crops supervise this process through their extension/field officers. In some cases, like the growing of tobacco, they also regulate how much an individual farmer should produce in a year. As Mr. Sometimes, a farmer explained, “*You have to state how much you are able*

to cultivate. If you are able to cultivate three hectares, then they will allow you to cultivate three hectares.” (Interview with Mr. Sometimes conducted on 20th June 2005).

The extension officers use a range of methods including leaflets that are written in English that are meant to inform farmers when and how to grow the crops in order to secure a good yield. The leaflets are given out to farmers during meetings convened by agents employed by companies promoting the growing of particular cash crops. During such meetings, the agents or extension officers go through the leaflet together with the farmers, practically demonstrating what is written on the leaflet (See Figure 39).

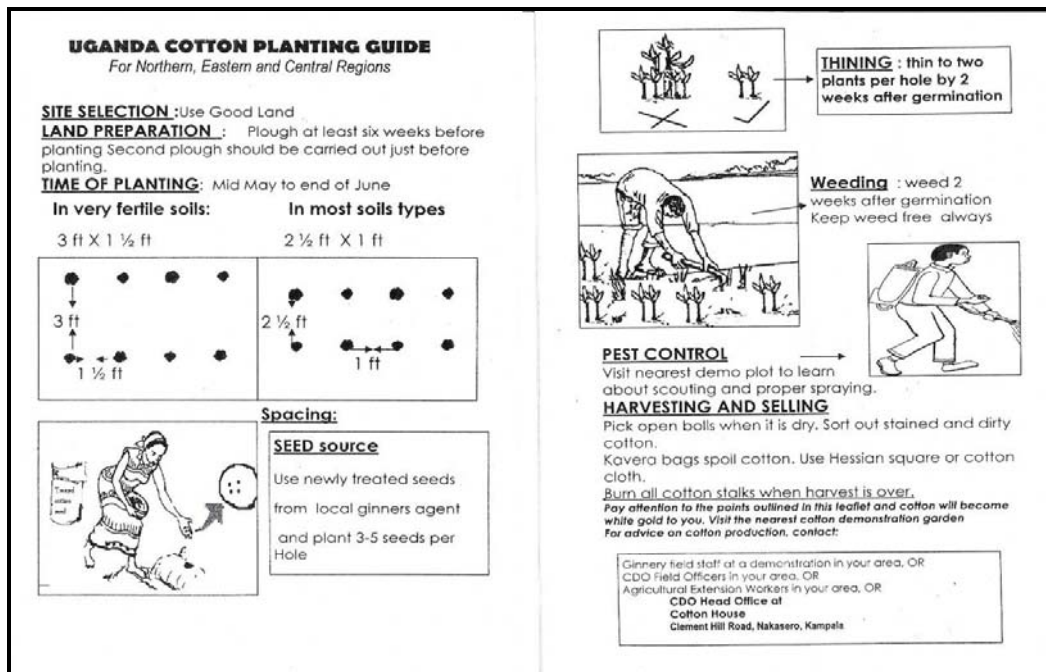


Figure 39: Cotton growing leaflet handed out to farmers.

Therefore, because there is reading and writing involved in cash crop growing, the farmers who are not able to read English are at a great disadvantage because they are not able to access the information that is contained in the leaflet for them, since the leaflets are written in English. For example, Mr. Sometimes, who was one of my key informants, did not have sufficient schooling or literacy education to enable him to understand English (see Figure 39). Depending on the Agricultural Extension staff, this creates a power imbalance between the farmers and the extension staff and the company that employs them. It would be better if the leaflets were written in the local languages that would be accessible to farmers who are able to read in their local languages. This could reduce the farmers' dependency on the extension staff. This would also reduce the workload of the extension officer and maximise the production of such crops. Therefore,

in producing the leaflets in English, the companies that are promoting the growing of such crops are doing themselves and the farmers a disservice.

The use of English forces the extension staff to act as literacy mediators to farmers who are not able to read English. The extension staff do all the reading and writing on behalf of the farmers. They also use practical demonstrations in the field to show farmers what they should do with the crops. Since the information on the leaflets was very scanty and does not cover all that is expected of the farmers to grow a good crop (see Figure 39 above), the extension officers also monitor the progress of each farmer, closely supervising and advising the farmer at every stage of growing the crop. This includes supervising the administration of chemicals like insecticides as required. This close supervision means that the extension officers are the primary source of information available to the farmers. This arrangement limits the value of literacy in contributing to improved agricultural production through reduced cost and reinforces the farmers' feelings of inadequacy and vulnerability. If the farmers were able to access information about the growing of such non-traditional crops for themselves, they would not need to be so closely supervised thus reducing the cost that comes with close supervision and monitoring by the extension officer.

Mr. Sometimes, a farmer, explains how this supervision is done:

Yes, they come and teach us in the field. The Agricultural Extension Officer comes every morning and evening, to show us how to grow tobacco. They tell us when we should start working on them, when we should transfer them from the seedbeds to the fields, when to start pruning the leaves, and what you should be doing in the field all the time

(Interview with Mr. Sometimes conducted in Luo on 20th June 2005).

The farmers on their part believe, and closely follow, what the extension officers are telling them because they are equally anxious to secure a good yield, and not make mistakes that may lead to losses. As Mr. Sometimes explains:

They know that this cotton should be planted like this. You must not exceed the "sazi"⁵³ (size) they have told you, because if you exceed the "sazi", they will say, "We told this fellow, why did he not follow?" If you plant according to the "sazi", which is not theirs then "you are lost". If you follow their "sazi", you will get something. Some people collected the information and they were taught that when you are planting, you should not plant cotton with very large gaps between each plant. Because you will find that you have planted your cotton and the cotton field is empty. Now, you can go back and make holes with a distance of one foot between them in a field ploughed by a tractor (a big field) then you will see the cotton coming up with many leaves, and that one is a lost.

(Interview with Mr. Sometimes conducted in Luo on 20th June 2005).

⁵³ The words in quotation were the actual words mentioned by the farmer during the interview.

In this arrangement, the farmers remain vulnerable and dependent on the extension staff of the companies. The companies too pay more in terms of paying and maintaining the extension staff which could be avoided if they were able to pass on the information about the growing of their crops to the farmers through more detailed written information in the language the farmers are able to access.

During the time of selling the harvest, the records of each farmer; including the names and the weight of the cash crops they have brought for selling, are recorded by the purchasing officers who are buying the crops on behalf of the companies. The farmers wait for their names to be read out to take their turn in bringing their load of harvest for weighing or to receive payment for what they have supplied. Well performing farmers are awarded certificates of recognition by some companies like the British American Tobacco Company.

Another activity involving farmers in literacy is related to loans. The companies promoting a particular cash crop normally give loans to their farmers to help them meet their production costs. This includes buying chemicals, paying for seedlings or seeds, clearing the field, and building storage and curing barns:

The loans are given like this: if you are a farmer, they will come and give you a loan, for example, they can give you a loan in the form of pipes, building a tobacco-curing barn for you. Then when you go selling your tobacco harvest, they deduct their loan first and give you the balance of what you have earned from the sale of your harvest to them,

(Interview with Mr. Sometimes conducted in Luo on 20th June 2005).

In that arrangement, the company agents keep the records of the expenditure and they recover the money from the farmer. The non-literate farmers are only informed of what will be done verbally and made to sign documents that they do not fully comprehend, because the documents are written in English. Mr. Sometimes was suspicious of this arrangement, “*So if they are translating for you into Lunyoro you cannot know if they are doing it right. They do not give you all the information you need*”. If the forms were written in Lunyoro, he would be able to read them because as he explains he has problems with reading English, “*This reading like this one in the local language, is not difficult, it is the “yes, yes” (English), which I do not know, but this one of Kinyoro and others all I can read them all*”. (Interview with Mr. Sometimes conducted in Luo on 20th June 2005).

There are a lot of reading and writing requirements in farming. Unfortunately, the use of English incapacitates the farmers’ participation in the whole process and makes them dependent on other people; something that puts the farmers in a very vulnerable situation. The farmers are uncomfortable and suspicious of this dependency on extension officers

and company agents. They would be happier and more comfortable if they were equal participants in the whole process. The farmers need to be provided with the opportunity to gain access to information that would enable them to work more independently. This is especially true for the growing of exotic cash crops that require technical knowledge like spacing, pruning, spraying, and curing temperatures. This information could be packaged for the farmer in an easy-to-read local language book, talking about the growing of specific cash crops. The cost of producing such material would be offset by the cost of maintaining overworked extension/field staffs.

6.4.3 Conclusion

As presented in this section, it is very evident that, although there are some common patterns of literacy like in advertising, largely there are different literacy practices related to different livelihood activities. What is apparent from these findings is that the different livelihood activities do influence the ways reading and writing is used within them, and different livelihood activities provide different reasons for using reading and writing. Some of these are in the interest of the customer while others are in the interest of the owners of the business. It is also evident that literacy in most livelihood activities serves some kind of transitional functional purpose, and once the activities are over, the records are rendered useless. One glaring absence is the use of reading and writing for seeking information on improved livelihood practices that is the central thesis of most literacy practitioners. With the exception of the farmers who are brought materials that would help them improve their productivity, most people do not read information that could help them improve their livelihood practices or help them to perform better. This could be due to lack of these materials, or the material may simply not be there because nobody is showing an interest in them.

6.5 Schools and community literacy practices

Another significant area of literacy use in rural community life in Bweyale is in the link between school education and everyday community life. In presenting, analysing and discussing this link, I examine school and community relations through school homework, school reports, textbooks, direct communication with families, and parents' participation in school management functions. This includes other school related activities in the home like private study, and attending school on a daily basis. These activities are what link the school to most households in the communities. The activities generate regular literacy events in the community, particularly at the family level. For example, homework is brought from school to be done at home and the process of doing homework generates a literacy event within the home domain. Finally, I looked at how learning to

read and write at school influences people's perception of and use of literacy in everyday life, and how the community's use of school facilities influences the organisation of social activities in the community and consequently how literacy is used in those activities.

This focus differs from the majority of studies which have been concerned with linking schools and community literacy practices (Brown, 1998; Gadsden et al., 2004; Heath, 1983; McCarthy, 1997; Purcell-Gates et al., 2002; Rogers, 2003; Street, 2005). The primary concerns of some of these studies are to facilitate children's literacy learning (Brown, 1998; Gadsden et al., 2004; McCarthy, 1997, Street, 2005). It also differs from studies that were concerned with showing how school literacy practices and classroom literacy instruction/pedagogies privilege some groups in the community, while disadvantaging others (Heath, 1983; Rogers, 2003). The population of this study, as already described in Chapters Four and Five, is homogenous and thus equally disadvantaged by a school system that is not based on the local community's way of life and culture or the way of life and culture of any one group in the community. It also differs from the studies that focused on finding out how adult literacy pedagogies relate to community/home/individual literacy practices (See Purcell-Gates et al., 2002; Rogers, 2003b). In this study, I was concerned with describing how schools, as a dominant literate institution in rural community life, generate literate activities in the community and influence how people think about and use reading and writing in their everyday life. This became an important area of study because the analysis of the initial data collected on literacy use in the community revealed school education as a major influence on the community's everyday reading and writing activities. Household literacy artefacts, how people talk about reading and writing and the language of literacy all had something to do with school and school education, in addition to the fact that the majority of the people learnt how to read and write at school. Therefore, it was from the community that I moved to the school unlike other studies, already cited above which move from the schools to the community.

Therefore, there were many reasons why I did not focus on school or classroom literacy practices. Firstly, my primary focus in this study was the literacy practices that occur in the community and not in the schools. Secondly, there are already many studies (see the reference cited in the above paragraph) including in Uganda (see works edited by Parry, 2000b), that have already been conducted on school and classroom literacy practices. Thirdly, school or classroom literacy practices are a very wide field of literacy study and it would be very unrealistic for me to combine it with a study of community literacy

practices which is itself a very wide field. Nevertheless, since some aspects of home literacy practice, according to my findings, relate to school education it can only be presented, analysed and discussed in relation to the links that the community has with the schools. Therefore, only those aspects of school literacy that link with the home, are considered in this study.

Although I took a different perspective on investigating and describing the relationship between school education and the community's use of reading and writing, the parameters within which my investigation was set are the same as those of other studies in terms of what happens at home that relates to school literacy practices.

6.5.1 Schools and community cultures

Schools, especially primary schools (because many secondary schools are located in urban areas), are well established in most rural communities in Uganda. According to the findings of this study, schools as literate institutions, have a significant influence on the literacy practices of the local communities within which they are located. Schools in Africa are largely designed to transform the existing social and economic norms of the communities around them rather than reinforce and improve the existing social and cultural practices of the communities (Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, 1993). Since the establishment of schools in Uganda from the late 19th Century, the culture, values, and language promoted through school education were always different from that of the surrounding communities in which they are located. These cultures, values and language are seen as socially superior to the local cultures, values and language by people in Uganda generally and the local communities in which the schools are established particularly. For that reason, every parent, and the government aspire to send and keep children in school, and the schools are expected to shape community life in a direction defined by the values and culture promoted by the schools (see Government of Uganda, 1995; Ssekamwa, 2000).

The whole community on their part has very positive perceptions of schools and school education. They see them as symbols of development and modernization. There is, in the imagination of the communities, a close association between being successful in school and living a good life with high paying jobs. This perception seems to be continuing in spite of the high rates of university graduate unemployment in Uganda (Muhumuza, 2007). Because of these positive perceptions, every family tries to associate with schools in ways that they expect would enhance the lives of their children at school. The efforts people put into meeting the values and standards of the school, for the benefit of their

children's success in education, enhance the values and practices promoted by schools. Successful school grades in Uganda, like in other parts of the world, are celebrated and it is a cause of much joy and excitement in families for all stages of education including Primary Leaving Examinations (see Muzaale et al., 2007; Wandera et al., 2007)

Those who have not been to, or were not successful in school and therefore not literate look at themselves as people doomed to a low-income life. According to Muhammad, (a 43 years old male who was not successful in his school education) even if they (people who have not been to school) are to be taught how to read and write, it will not be as good as those who have learnt from school. Muhammad stopped his school education after only four years of primary school education. At the time of the interview, he was working as a night watchman at a village tobacco store. Muhammad's comments reflect his perceptions of himself as a person who was not successful in school education and how much he has missed the good life bestowed by school education. Muhammad's comment reflects the positive perceptions people have of school. Because if Muhammad thinks that he has missed a lot by not being successful in school education, it means school is seen by the society of which he is a member as a good social institution that bestows good life for the people who go through it successfully. According to Muhammad,

The type of knowledge, which we (people who have not been successful in school and therefore are not literate) have, comes from the type of thinking which we have developed. So for us (as in the 'we' above) that is what we do not think about, we only think, if God could help me to get some small work to do then it will be good, we don't think about anything else. Yes, because the kind of life we live cannot let us have many ideas. You surely know that having many ideas come from your, "gauge" (actual English word used to mean, level) of education. ...but like us, all we think about is, if we are to be taught, then all we need to know is, if so and so writes you a letter this is how you can read letters,...? (Repeats) If so and so writes to you a letter this is how you can read it. This person bought my duck and we can write, "Agreement" (actual English word used) like this. That is all we want. However, "up there" (higher life), there is nothing we want from it. (Repeats), there is nothing we want from "up there". All we need to know is how to write, 'Duck.' This is a tailoring machine that is what we would like to learn, because there is nothing else. (Words underlined indicate speaker's emphasis.)

(Interview with Muhammad conducted in Luo on 20th May 2005)

My interpretation of what Muhammad was saying is that, for people who have not been to school, even if they were to learn how to read and write now, it would not be very useful because they have already lost the ability to learn the knowledge required for using the skill of reading and writing by not succeeding in education. This is because it is school education that gives value to literacy as it enables you to live a meaningful life and earn high income from a good employment. This also has to do with imagination, which is being able to imagine a much more expansive life; it is not only about income.

It is this positive attitude toward school education and the hope of a life “up there” in Muhammad’s words, that motivates all parents to endeavour to send and keep their children in schools, and do all they can to make school work for their children. This is a big preoccupation in everyday community and family life. For these reasons, and the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Uganda in 1996⁵⁴ (see also Aguti, 2002; Ndeezi, 2000), many children are in school and many families have at least one child attending school on a regular basis, or a family member who has been to school. This means almost all families have a daily link with a school, and through this daily link, the schools radiate their literate and social influences to the community as a whole. These schools, as Ssekamwa (2000) describes them (see section 6.2 above), rely heavily on reading and writing, to the extent that reading and writing is seen as a school thing. Associating with school, therefore, means having something to do with reading and writing on a daily basis. It is for this reason that the school and school education seems to have become a powerful influence on the literacy practices of the communities that surround them.

6.5.2 Schools in Bweyale

Bweyale has one public and three private primary schools, and three private secondary schools. All the schools are day schools, to which children commute from home. This aspect of commuting to schools, as already noted above, links the schools and homes on a daily basis and for most part of the year. It is through these links that schools shape the literacy practices that occur in the community, particularly at family level. This influence comes in the form of constant direct and indirect communication between the school and the community through the children and their school related activities, and materials. Other influences come from the fact that most people in Uganda learn how to read and write at schools (see Ssekamwa, 2000). This is true for Bweyale village as well because, with the exception of Kiryadongo refugee camp, there has never been any adult literacy programme organised to a level that has enabled people to learn how to read and write outside the school system. Earlier efforts by local government in the 1960s were not successful as reported during an interview with Agustino Mujumbi (4th October 2005). Furthermore, all the literate people I interviewed, except one old grandmother, reported learning how to read and write at school.

⁵⁴ Uganda’s Universal Primary Education (UPE), began in 1996. Under this programme, the Government of Uganda abolished the payment of school fees to ensure that all children of primary school age must be in school, giving people from disadvantaged backgrounds the highest priority.

Out of the seven schools, I visited two schools: one primary school with over two thousand pupils and one newly established secondary school. The primary school I visited was one of the most populated public schools in Masindi district. At the time of my visit, this school had a student population of over 2,500 pupils in less than 20 classrooms, and 30 teachers. This was the best primary and of course, the biggest school in the village and the district as a whole. From my observation of the general community life conducted during the entire period of my stay in Bweyale, I was able to note that:

This large population of the pupils is very evident when children are leaving or coming to school, and during break time when they come out of their classroom to play out in the compound

(Field notes: 13th September 2005).

When I visited the school:

The school is made up of about 20 classrooms arranged in a flat bottom U shape. The opening part of the U shape is facing the main road linking northern Uganda and Kampala the capital city of Uganda. The office of the head teacher is located at the extreme right hand side of this structure as you enter the school's U shaped structure. In the middle of the school is a very big mango tree under which there are some desks for teacher to work during fair weather days. At the time of my visit, children are out playing in the school compound, I hear them speaking in the local Acholi dialect of the Luo language.

(Field notes: 13th September 2005).

The majority of these pupils come from parents or guardians who were displaced by a twenty-year long war raging in Gulu, Pader, and Kitgum districts. As a result, most parents in those unstable districts have moved with their children to Bweyale, thus overcrowding the school. All the classes were overcrowded with over 120 pupils in each (See also Nyeko, 2005). This school is built along the main road passing through Bweyale and linking the major towns in Northern Uganda with Kampala city in central Uganda. The secondary school I visited was a small private secondary school with a low student population (70 students according to the head teacher) and four teachers in three classrooms.

This was a new school and had only been running for less than two years. It was housed in one of the unfinished shop buildings in the trading centre. From their rented shop building, they were able to create three classrooms, one staffroom, and the head teacher's office, that also acted as the school store. They had no playground for the students. During break time, students were seen sitting under the veranda of the only school building. The teachers were mostly secondary school dropouts teaching Senior One (S.1) to Senior Four (S.4) I could see that the school was lacking not only teachers but also many facilities like classroom furniture and books. It would be unreasonable to include laboratory equipment on the list of things lacking because it was obviously way beyond

the school's means. This meant lack of both space and money to indulge in such 'school luxuries'. I could only see less than 20 students around the school. This state of affairs is giving the director (proprietor) of the school some difficult times negotiating with the district education officer based in Masindi town who was threatening to close the school. They actually put up some radio announcements ordering the school to close until they could put right all that was required for running a secondary school. At some point, the director asked me to help him to negotiate with the district education officers to give him some more time to reorganise himself. What can be adduced from this is that the yearning for education is such that people are willing to inhabit any sort of facility, and join any sort of arrangement purporting to provide education, in order to fulfil that yearning. This goes to show the value people have for education and hence its influence on their worldview and the use of literacy in their life.

As stated in Chapter Three, English is the language of instruction in schools from after three years of education to Primary Seven (P.7) class. All the school textbooks are in English. A combination of the local language and English is used to teach P.1 and P.2 classes. Opio, a seven-year-old P.2 pupil of Bweyale Primary school explained how English is used in combination with the local language. He says, "*The teacher first reads the most difficult one in English then he will translate to Acholi* (Interview with Opio conducted in Luo on 17th Jan 2006). This could be due to lack of textbooks for teaching in vernacular. English books are most easily available. Therefore, the only alternative is for the teachers to resort to translating the books into vernacular. It is also possible that the teachers are keen to develop the English language ability of the children from an early age because all the national examinations come in English and the children are expected to write them in English too.

In the schools, while playing in the compound, children use a variety of local languages that are spoken in their homes. The head teacher confirmed that the most dominant language in the school compound, like in the general community, is Luo, particularly the Acholi dialect. The children who speak other languages also learn to speak the Acholi dialect in addition to their own languages.

6.5.3 Schools and community literacy interaction

Schools interact with home/family/community in many ways. Most of these are through school to home communications, the children, and the fact that most people have learnt how to read and write at school. Through these interactions, the schools influence the literacy practice that occurs in families and the community at large.

According to Laher (1998), there are three forms of written communication between school and family. These are letters, school reports, and homework books. In addition to these categories, I identified two more areas of interaction between school and community in which writing is involved. These are parent's participation in school management activities, and the community's use of school facilities/premises for their social functions. Some of these areas may overlap in one way or the other. For example, schools may write letters to invite or inform parents about parent/teachers meetings. This is an overlap between letters and parents' participation in school management activities. This school – home communication/interactions are some of the obvious ways through which schools influence home/community literacy practices. For example, parents receive and read communications from school at home as noted later in the section dealing with home literacy practice.

6.5.3.1 School homework

Homework originates from school and constitutes a major literacy activity in the home literacy domain. Parents, especially mothers, literate or not, are involved and concerned about their children's (especially the young ones) homework (see Ames, 2005; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Rogers, 2003b). Children do their homework in exercise books and may need some parental support (Ames, 2005). Dealing with homework is therefore an important part of the home everyday literacy practice. Given the value of education, homework is a very important literacy activity because it contributes to the success of the child at school. Since parents' involvement in homework is intended to enhance their children's performance at school, they always follow the standards set by the school system. Although there could be some difference between parents' understanding of how the homework should be done with what the school expects, the parents often think they are complying with the schools' requirement, and even model their behaviour to that of the school teacher during school homework time (see Ames, 2005; Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Whatever the case, this desire to help their children meet the schools' standard makes schools the dominant partner in this school-home literacy relationship through homework. In that way, schools exert a significant influence on the literacy practice that goes on within the home literacy domain in favour of school literacy practices. This school dominance needs to be questioned, other ways of learning that are most common within the community, in the homes, and shops need to be recognised in the schools too. Gladys, a 32-year-old mother of three, says she teaches her young children. She dropped out of school in P.6 (six years of school education), and got married. She lives with her three young children, all of whom were still in the lower primary school, in one of the

huts in a household with three huts. She uses this hut as both her kitchen and sleeping place with her children. At the time of the interview, her husband was at college doing a course to become a teacher. The interview was conducted at her home under a mango tree in the homestead. The way she explained and dramatised how she supports her children's learning, shows that when helping her children, some elements of the school's classroom literacy practices are re-enacted within the home sphere, as she would be attempting to model teachers' behaviours when supporting their pupils' learning. This process of helping her children with their homework is a home literacy event that is based on work coming from school, and it shows how the school influences the literacy practices within the home domain through school homework. This is what she said about helping her children with their schoolwork. *"Sometimes I take the children's book and I try to show them, if it's simple English, I will take their books and show them that this is written like this. I check their books so much that I even do not miss, and if one of them had made a mistake it's me who will inform them that here you did it wrongly"*. (Interview with Gladys conducted in Luo on 25th June 2005).

After the interview, I asked Gladys to bring me the books she uses to teach her children. She instructed one child to bring the two schoolbooks and they did. The schoolbooks were for English and mathematics, the subjects she had been referring to most during the interview. This confirms Barton and Hamilton's (1998) finding in Lancaster in which the subjects in which parent gave the most help were reading and mathematics. In Bweyale, it is not only reading but also reading in English, which makes it English and mathematics. It is learning how to read English and learning English all at once. This shows the double efforts of foreign language literacy which both parents and children have to deal with in order to succeed in a school based on such foreign cultures.

I interviewed Min Richard (the mother of Richard), a 32-year-old, non-literate mother of four. Her home consists of two huts (one serving as a kitchen and the other as food store) with one two-roomed iron sheet roof redbrick building. One room serves as the sitting room and the other serves as the bedroom. Surprisingly, Min Richard claims that she is not sure if she ever attended school, saying if she ever stepped in school then it must have been for only two years, and she claims not to be literate, and she is known as such even by the school administration who identified her for me. I identified Min Richard through the Bweyale Primary School. I had requested the head teacher of the school to identify four parents for me, two literate and two non-literate parents so that I could interview them about how they handle information or communication that comes from the school like homework, school reports and letters. Out of the four parents, I was only able to visit

three: two non-literates and one literate parent. All three were women. In each case the pupils, (two girls and one boy) whose parents were selected for me by the school headmaster, led me to the home. In spite of Min Richard's inability to read and write, she says that she looks at her children's schoolwork when her children come back from school to check their day's work (which she did when her children came home). When looking at their books, she would ask them to explain to her what they had learnt at school that day. In doing that, she gets involved in the school literacy practices, to the extent that she was able to learn and understand how teachers mark school pupils' books, when assessing children's work. This made her able to recognise when her children are not doing well at school including knowing the subject. According to her, too many wrong marks would mean a particular child was not performing well, and that would be enough for her to get concerned. She also checks if the child is doing school exercises or not by looking for freshly written pages and the dates of the work. Her older son Richard who is already in P.7 handles the difficult parts. As she explains, "*For the young ones I look through their books and if I see wrong (actual word used by the participant) then I know they have failed, if I see ticks then I know they have it right. I do not understand the other things now*" (Interview with Min Richard conducted in Luo on 19th September 2005). Children who are not performing well are reported to her husband when he comes home for leave since he works in another part of the country.

The argument here is that school literacy is so important that parents, regardless of their literacy status, participate in their children's education to the level where their abilities cannot permit participation as in the case of Richard who was in P.7. In that way, the literacy practices in the home domain is shaped by school education. This shows further how school education influences the literacy practices in the home domain and it is one of the strong factors motivating reading and writing in a rural community.

Schools too make deliberate efforts to teach parents, both literate and non-literate, how to understand schools' literacy practices, especially how to interpret teachers' marking. They do so to enable parents to monitor their children's progress. This was explained to me during an interview conducted with the head teacher of Bweyale Primary School in her office at the school:

Sometimes we invite parents per class and we try to sensitise them how to interpret the report cards and how they can look at their children's work even if one is illiterate. How do you know that this child really did some work that very day? Because you can look at the signs on that day, then you should be able to see changes on that day. Have they added on some signs? Are these the very things I show yesterday, or are these different? We also sensitise them on the meanings of the ticks, then these linings (we do in children's books). If you find something like this (shows the sign of a cross with her hand

movements), *you should know that this child is not getting it correctly. If you find something* (shows the sign of a tick with her hand movement), *like that in red then it means this child got it correct. Therefore, we try to sensitise them during these meetings.*

(Interview with Atugonza conducted in English on 13th September 2005).

According to Atugonza, this effort by the school administration to teach parents how to understand what teachers write in children's exercise books and how to monitor their children's work progress has had a positive impact:

Because some parents have come here to express concerns, you find a parent is illiterate but he expresses concern that, "my child has not been writing for the last one week". Therefore, that proves that that parent understand although he or she cannot read or write. She understands that the child is not really doing well heh (their) work because there is no consistency in the (exercise) book.

(Interview with Atugonza conducted in English on 13th September 2005).

Teaching parents to understand how teachers mark their children's books supports and reinforces school literacy practice within the home domain.

Children in the upper classes from P.5 to P.7 in primary and senior secondary schools, in addition to their homework, do a lot of private reading especially toward exam times. These reading activities are regular literacy events in most homes and the community at large. Parents have the responsibility to ensure that such studying takes place meaningfully so that the child does not waste time and, indirectly, money paid as school fees for them to attend school. It is common to hear parents admonishing their children to pay attention to their schoolwork instead of wasting time playing around. In a home I visited, the children in the upper classes use their sleeping space for such private study activities:

Two smaller huts are used as separate sleeping rooms by older girls and boys. They also use the same huts for keeping their schoolbooks and doing their private study with Kerosene lamps

(Field notes: 13th October 2006).

These school related activities, as I have explained above, take place at home and they are part of the home literacy practices. The Barton and Hamilton (1998) study in Lancaster also discussed these school-home works and others as part of the home literacy practices.

6.5.3.2 Reporting children's school performance

It is a normal school practice to report children's performance at the end of every term time. This is done by schools issuing report cards to parents with details of a child's performance in the different subjects. Report cards are important information that originates from the school to the community. Although some parents, especially the fathers, may not have the time and interest of looking at their children's daily schoolwork,

they will certainly make an effort to read the report cards because they know it contains information about the performance of their children at school. As an important document, the school administration makes an effort to explain to parents how they can understand the reports that their children take to them. Atugonza explain that:

Most parents, especially those deep, deep in the villages⁵⁵ fail to interpret the report cards. So we tried in our general PTA meetings to sensitise them how to interpret these reports ...and what we have done is sometimes to invite parents per class, and then we discuss with them the details. How they can interpret the report cards.

(Interview with Atugonza conducted in English on 13th September 2005).

At home, school reports for all the children are well kept. Min Richard explains this:

Interviewer: *What do you do with the report cards?*

Min Richard: *Since I do not know how to read the reports well, I keep them for their father to come and read them himself.*

Interviewer: *Where do you keep them?*

Min Richard: *Richard can you go and bring the file for the teacher (me) to see.*

Description: Richard goes to another room and comes back holding a file. I looked through the file containing school report cards of the children while asking, which one belongs to whom, and she would point out the child.

(Interview with Min Richard conducted in Luo on 19th September 2005).

School report cards are very important documents in rural community life and the information in them is shared because a child's performance in school is a concern for all the family members including relatives and friends. In cases where one parent (usually the mother) is not literate, the father reads the report and explains it to the rest of the family members. Good performances are lauded and poor performances are reprimanded. Aryek is a 36-year-old mother of four children. At the time of the interview, the eldest child, a daughter in P.7 at Bweyale Primary school was preparing for the Primary Leaving Examinations. The interview was conducted at her home in the evening shade of one of her two huts. At the time of the interview, her husband who is literate, having stopped in Senior 2, was not yet back home from work, and this was a very serious concern for Aryek because her husband is responsible for such school related issues. This is because I identified Aryek through the school and her daughter who was a pupil at the school directed me to her home. Aryek was the second non-literate parent that I interviewed. I asked her how she deals with her daughter's school report, *"Their father is the one who*

⁵⁵ I interpreted this to be referring to remote areas that are very far away from the trading centres which are seen by most as centres of modern life and development as opposed to those far away villages which are seen as areas of backwardness and traditional lifestyles. People with little or no formal school education, the head teacher was assuming, reside in such places, hence their inability to understand report cards. This is the discourse people have about village life in Uganda and most parts of Africa.

looks at it...then sometimes he tells me that here she did well, because he has been to school” (Interview with Aryek conducted in Luo 22nd September 2005).

6.5.3.3 School books and related activities

School textbooks too are a major channel through which schools influence the home literacy environment and practices. In addition to the bible, school textbooks are the most common books in most homes. The two bookshops in the trading centre sell more schoolbooks than any other books.

Given the value of education in Uganda, school textbooks of all levels are valuable assets in most homes and some families guard them jealously. The books are handed down from one generation of schoolchildren in a family to the next. Each generation of schoolchildren shared the same collection of books. Josephine a senior five (12 years of education in Uganda) school dropout explained the importance of schoolbooks in their home:

In this home, the most important book is the bible, then the other books that we used for going to schools, because we have some small children who take over these books like that. We do not spoil them, (repeats) we do not spoil them. Like some other text, (this was the actual word used) which we used for going to school we leave them for the young ones, even me I inherited them from the older people. They are being handed down like that and they have been piled (actually used the word piling) up together, and there are some which have been left in Kampala.

(Interview with Josephine conducted in Luo on 21st May 2005)

In most homes I visited, school textbooks were the most visible printed materials that could be seen around the home. When I mentioned to Atugonza the head teacher that most homes have primary school textbooks this is what she had to say about schoolbooks existing in most homes and she said, “*We have been lending out these books to children. Sometimes we lend them out when they are going for holidays so that they can use them during their free time.*” (Interview with Atugonza conducted in English on 13th September 2005). The textbooks lent out by schools come with clear instructions that influence the home literacy practices in a direction that favour school literacy practices. According to Atugonza, the purpose of giving out books is firstly to enable parents to help their children to learn how to keep the books they have, secondly to help them get time to read the books and then thirdly, to help children in (doing) the work in the book (Interview with Atugonza conducted in English on 13th September 2005).

In addition to textbooks, children’s exercise books are equally visible in most homes, and parents are concerned with ensuring that children take good care of their books. Children are responsible for securing their books at home.

Written school materials in the home and community are so dominant that almost any piece of paper you see being blown by wind around the village is, apart from newspapers and magazine pages, a torn page of a schoolbook, or a child's exercise book, or some other printed school related matter like past exam papers. In one of my field visits, I got curious and decided to pull out some papers that were stuck up on the cross reeds of a grass thatched hut:

In the cross-reeds holding the grass thatch roof are folded pieces of papers stuffed in the grass roof. I pulled the paper out and unfolded it to see the contents. Most of them were single pages of schoolchildren's exercise books.

(Field notes: 13th October 2006).

School Geography charts are seen hanging from the ceilings of some huts. These charts are bought and placed in the house as learning resources that schoolchildren could use to facilitate their school learning while at home as well as decorating the house (see Figure 40 below). The presence of these materials in a home is a sign of hope, and evidence that the family values education and has children who go to school.

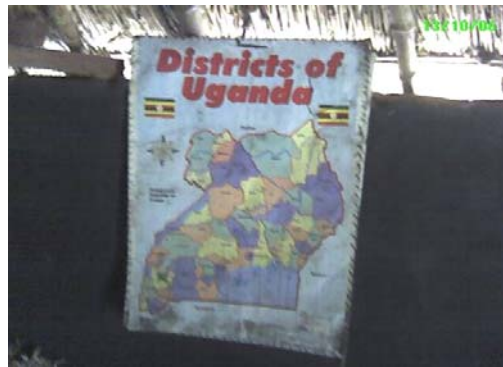


Figure 40: School Geography chart hanging off the roof of a hut.

Note the effort that went into framing this chart with pieces of reed sticks so that it can hang well without folding up.

School is so important and so emphasised by both teachers at school and parents at home that schoolchildren do not actually read non-school related materials. One of the school pupils explains this, *I only read schoolbooks* (Interview with Acan on 22nd September 2005). Reading schoolbooks is associated with being a good child who is serious about his or her education and has a better chance of making it through education to secure the good life in future. However it is also possible that non-school related books are also not easily available for the children to read.

6.5.3.4 School-home communication

The school administration often communicates with parents, some of which is written communication. Barton and Hamilton (1998) provide a similar description of home and school communication in Lancaster. One notable difference between Lancaster and Bweyale is that while parents in Lancaster drop their children at the school gate, children in Bweyale walk to school on their own daily except on the first day of school, if there are no older siblings to lead new or young ones to school.

In Bweyale, head teachers always try to inform and involve parents in the education of their children. There are many methods head teachers use to communicate with parents. The head teacher, Atugonza, outlines them as follows:

Communication here in Bweyale Primary School is in various ways. In most cases, we communicate to parents through their children. It is verbal communications. We talk to the children. We tell them the information we want to go down to the parents, then the children take the message to their parents, that is one way. Secondly, we also communicate to our parents through letters. We write letter and send these letters through the children to the parents. Then thirdly, we also use mass media, our radio stations around. We put announcements on the radios and we inform the parents on whatever we want to communicate to them.

(Interview with Atugonza conducted in English on 13th September 2005).

Although letters are some of the channels through which the school communicates with parents, it is a less favoured channel of communication. According to Atugonza the head teacher, it is unreliable because some parents do not read the letters sent to them or sometimes the children lose the letters on their way to home or they do not give it to their parents directly. Some parents prefer oral communication instead of letters: Atugonza said, *“Some letters do not reach their destination. Others reach and (they) are not read because the child took the letter and throw it on the table, and did not inform the parents about the letter, and other parents have no time to read the what...the letter, and other parents can’t read the what?.....the letters.* (Interview with Atugonza conducted in English on 13th September 2005).

Atugonza, the head teacher, says most parents prefer oral communication. Therefore, *“In most cases when we are writing letters, we at the same time inform the children of the detail of the information in the letter. That is how most of these parents get information”*. The oral, *“is more effective in our situation here because we have communicated orally and parents have actually come”*. However, *“others feel they should be given written information. ‘But you should write letters for the purpose of records’”*. She says such parents need the letters for purpose of future reference.

This means even though literacy is already a known method of conveying information in much of the world (Barton, 1994), including Bweyale, the oral mode of communication is still the most dominant and most favoured channel of communication. Written information is only preferred for the purpose of future reference by some parents as mentioned above, that is to aid memory. This is the same reasons for which minutes are written during meetings. Parents also communicate with the school when they come to enquire about the performance or the attendance of their children at school. Below I discuss some school literacy events in which members of the community as parents participate in their own different ways.

Children themselves are a daily link between school and the community and this process involves the family members in literacy related activities on a daily basis. For example, the process of going to school in the morning generates many school related literacy activities in homes in which school-going children sort their schoolbooks and place them in their school bags or pile them together ready to leave for school. The parents, especially mothers, regardless of their literacy levels (see also Rogers, 2003b), supervise this process. Everybody picks up their schoolbooks and heads for school.

Children seem to know where they keep their books. Each is picking their books, getting out of the hut, and heading to school. Both younger and older children are doing the same. The younger children have exercise books, the older ones in Primary 7 and those in secondary schools are carrying files of notes and past examination papers.

(Field notes 13th October 2006).

This exercise is repeated in the evening when children come back from school. While I was still at the home of Min Richard:

Schoolchildren are arriving entering the house holding their school exercise books in their hands, they enter the house and greet their mother who responds and asks them how their day at school had been. The young ones give their exercise books to their mother who is sitting near the entrance to the house, and she looks at their exercise books asking the children to show her the work they did today, and the children, flips through the pages of their exercise book to show her their new school exercises. She asks them why there are no red pen marks on their exercise books. The child explains that, "Sir" (sic) said he would mark it the following day when they go back to school.

(Field notes: 19th September 2005)

The scenario of school children in their school uniforms streaming to school in the morning, and in the afternoon going back home holding their books in their hands or carrying them in their school bags is spectacular evidence of literacy in children's education for those who stay near schools. Some children in examination classes carry a large collection of notes and books with which they proudly move back and forth from home to school along the village paths. The large pile of notes stacked up in file folders

are their evidence of a serious commitment to succeed in their education and secure a good life in the future. It is a very hopeful sight for all to enjoy.

6.5.3.5 Parents' participation in school management meetings

Schools invite parents to come and participate in school Parents/Teachers Association meetings. This involves a lot of interaction with reading and writing. Parents, literate or not, respond positively to these invitations, and go to participate in the school meetings.

The meetings are conducted in English, Kiswahili and Luo. All the writing done during the meeting, and written materials brought for the meeting are in English. Even the agenda on the chalkboard is written in English. Although minutes are written during the meetings, they are not distributed to those who have attended the meeting. *"We normally do not type out the minutes⁵⁶. However, when they (the parents) come for meetings we read the minutes. The minutes are always recorded in English but there is always a translator during the meetings of parents. We only issue out documents only during executive committee meetings, and not the general PTA meeting."* (Interview with Atugonza conducted in English on 13th September 2005).

The use of English for writing sometimes creates difficulties for some parents during meetings, including those who are literate in the local language only or have limited understanding of English. If something comes up during the meeting that is not very clear because of English, the affected parent seeks support from the other parents to clear their confusion and continue with their participation in the meeting. To overcome the problem of parents who are not able to understand or speak English, the school conducts meetings in Luo, English and Kiswahili. The non-literate and non-English speaking parents then take advantage of the Kiswahili to participate in the meeting. *"If I go for school meetings, I will hear what they are talking about, because they talk in both English and Kiswahili. I understand what people are talking and I get it in my head"*. (Interview with Min Richard conducted in Luo on 19th September 2005). When they do not understand something well in English, *"You go near a friend who is sitting next to you during the meeting. You go near him and ask, 'What is this? What about that? Can you read this section for me?' Then, if you have understood it well, you then ask your question"* (Interview with Kweya conducted in Luo on 9th July 2005).

The way in which the school meetings are conducted enables parents, regardless of their literacy status, to in one way or the other encounter and work with written information.

⁵⁶ This could mean the minutes are handwritten because the school does not even have a typewriter and duplicating machine for typing the minutes.

Although the non-literate parents are able to participate in these meetings, the use of English literacy and their inability to read and write puts them at a considerable disadvantage. However, through their involvement in school meetings, they often get to learn the discourse of school management and are able to follow discussions during meetings. This means that if they learn how to read and write they should be able to participate fully in the school's meetings (Baynham, 1995).

6.5.4 School influence on local literacy practices

One of the strong influences of school education on local literacies is through its influence on people's conception of literacy (see Mpoyiya & Prinsloo, 1996; Street, 1995; Street & Street, 1991). This is because the initial literacy that people acquire in Uganda is school literacy. This, as mentioned earlier, is strengthened by the fact that in most local languages in Uganda the word for schooling is the same as reading. The evidence of school literacy's influence was revealed when I asked people who are literate what they read and write in their everyday life. This is what Peko, an 18-year-old man who dropped out of school in Senior 2 said, *"I read some books and I try to cram⁵⁷ what is in the book, because I have the idea of going back to school."* When I insisted that he tells me the things he reads and/or writes that are not related to his plans for going back to school he said, *"Other things which are not related to school are also there, some other less important things like for curriculum (sic) activities⁵⁸ (extra-curricula activities) like playing football. We write the game plans,"* (Interview with Peko conducted in Luo on 21st May 2005). This may sound out of school but it is still related as I explain in the footnotes.

Peko left school two years before the interview, but he still reads and thinks of reading in terms of school reading practices. Similarly, Owot a 27 year old school drop out, who was earning his living as a trader selling saucepans, said this when I asked him what he likes reading .

Normally, several kinds that I like to read, however, there are types that I cannot find, especially here, novels are limited. So here maybe, it does not apply, because there are some interesting parts in that novel. You know from my 'O' level, I did literature for three years. So there are some important things, even if you say, you pick something there that you will find helpful for your education even, that is why I like reading.

⁵⁷ Cramming, which is studying intensively before an exam, is a practice which students commonly use in most Ugandan schools to pass their examinations.

⁵⁸ Here Peko used the actual words "curriculum activities" which I understood to mean 'extra-curricula activities' because after that word he talked about football which in the Ugandan school curriculum is defined as such.

(Interview with Owot conducted in English on 24th September 2005)⁵⁹.

The point here is that, in explaining his reading, Owot attributes his reading to the subject he did while at school. This to me was very clear evidence of school's influence on his reading. Even his choice of books to read is based on the secondary school literature set books he studied while still a student. In his own words, Owot says, "*Of course, after dropping out of school, I just continued reading, and when you read, you forget everything. You know ... because from 'O' level I did literature, it is very educative like when I go back to Chinua Achebe's writing, "No Longer at Ease"* (Interview with Owot conducted in English on 24th September 2005).

A careful reading of Owot's response reveals a clear influence of school education on his choice of books. For example, he says, "*Like when I go back to Chinua Achebe's writings "No Longer at Ease."* This is the title of one of the set books used in Uganda for teaching literature at secondary schools, "Ordinary level". In another interview, I asked Kweya what kind of reading materials he has at home, he said, "*I have SST (School Social Studies), which I used while I was at school. I use it for reminding myself what we studied at school"* (Interview with Kweya conducted in Luo on 9th July 2005).

This shows that school education influences people's choice of what to read in rural community life after they have left school. This could be because after school there is nothing powerful enough to replace the school reading experiences in terms of reading, or that is all people know and think there is about reading, which still goes back to lack of new, out of school reading experience other than the newspaper and the bible and other bible related literature. It is also possible that people simply do not have any access to other reading materials other than what they used at school.

Not only do schools create a school literacy mentality that continues to linger on in peoples' thinking long after they have left school, but it also influences the volume of written communications in the community. According to the postmaster at Bweyale Post Office, "*The volume of mail goes up during school term time*" (telephone interview with the postmaster conducted on 28th Nov 2006). This shows that the letter writing activities of the students significantly change the volume of letters that are handled through the post office. Students write and receive many letters. They communicate with their friends in other schools, and parents back at home. From my own personal experience, receiving a

⁵⁹ This interview was conducted in English, therefore what is written here are the actual words mentioned by the participant during the interview. I have written them as said with very little modification of the English.

letter was a big privilege in school. Some students have been known to write, and post letters to themselves so that they too can be seen receiving letters by their peers at school assemblies. In this case, school life motivates letter writing as it gives more value to people who receive letters

In conclusion, as the interviews above show, people tend to talk about their reading and writing in terms of their school experiences even when they have left school many years before. For example, Owot had been out of school for over seven years by the time of the interview. Schools also encourage actual letter writing by students and in some cases act as channels for receiving posted mail for some members of the community who use the postal address of the nearest school to receive their letters.

6.5.5 Community use of school facilities

Members of the community also use the school facilities like classrooms, chalkboards and desks to hold their community meetings. This process influences the literacy practices of the community, in favour of school literacy practices since they use facilities like the chalkboards that are in the classroom or borrow the portable school chalkboard to display their agendas for all the members who are attending the meeting to see (see Figure 41 below). This use of the school chalkboard is structurally imposed because of the community's use of the classrooms that are fitted with those chalkboards, and the availability of the chalkboard as a cheaper alternative of enabling people to read and follow the agenda of the meeting. Secondly, the use of the chalkboards reduces the need for printing many copies of the agenda to distribute to members during the meeting. The use of a chalkboard is a school literacy practice.

6.5.6 Conclusion

From the foregoing presentation, interpretation and discussion, it is clear that schools have a very strong influence on the literacy perception and practices that go on in the community in a number of ways (Street, 1995; Street & Street, 1991). These influences are channelled through the many links and interactions that schools have with the community. Therefore, in spite of the negative scholarship about school literacy, it is not about to go away as long as the school remains a powerful social institution in society and continues to maintain its hold on society as a dominant available technology of education. Therefore, instead of condemning it as responsible for standardized and non-contextualised literacy learning, we may need to think of ways to de-standardise and re-contextualise school literacy within out of school literacy contexts like everyday community life. I would like to add a word of caution though, that although the school seems to wield a powerful influence over community literacy practices, it does not mean

that the literacy practices that go on in the school and the community are consistent in African rural community life. The discourse practice of the school is significantly different from that of the community and the family as a social unit in the community.

6.6 Christianity and community literacy practices⁶⁰

The Christian religion is one of the major areas in which literacy use in rural community life in Bweyale is very significant. The other areas are education and livelihoods that have already been discussed above. In this section, I present Christianity (only Catholic and Anglican religious denominations) as an important domain of literacy in Bweyale. I have selected only the Catholic and Anglican faiths because they are the most dominant religious groups in Bweyale as well as Uganda. Religion is very important because it has taken root in Africa and it shapes people's identity and perception of the world (Mpoyiya & Prinsloo, 1996).

6.6.1 Historical differences

Although they are Christians, Catholics and the Anglicans have some noticeable differences in their religious literacy practices. This difference is based on the historical and doctrinal perception each has toward texts. These differences are very clear evidence of the influence of religion on the everyday literacy practices in the community.

Interviews with two primary respondents, Paullina and Sarah, confirmed the different dispositions of the two Christian missionary groups toward literacy. Paullina, a woman in her 80s, interviewed in her home, proudly related her childhood experience of catechism in the Anglican Church in Gulu, but after being displaced from her home in Gulu to Bweyale, her new home was located 300 meters away from the Catholic Church. As an old and frail woman, the Catholic nuns and priest regularly visited her at her home. This proximity and attention provided to her by the Catholic establishment convinced her to convert to Catholicism. During the interview, she related her two experiences of attending catechism, first in the Anglican Church as a child and later in the Catholic Church as an adult.

Paullina: *Even here, Sister taught us for about two, three months*

Interviewer: *I see, so even here you had to be taught again to become a Catholic.*

Paullina: *Yes, here the sisters were teaching us. They kept coming for me for about two or three months. Then we were baptized.*

Interviewer: *Did they teach you how to read and write using books during the catechism?*

Paullina: *Here there were no books; they were only talking to us*

⁶⁰ The findings from this section of the report were published in the Journal of Research in Reading (Openjuru & Lyster, 2007).

Interviewer: *They were only talking.*

Paullina: *Yes, they were only talking.*

(Interview with Paullina conducted in Luo on 21st May 2005).

The other woman, Sarah, who is about 60 years old and attended catechism in the Catholic Church as a child, said that they were never taught how to read and write. They only learnt how to recite prayers, church doctrines and sing hymns.

6.6.2 Christianity and local literacy practices today

Literacy is an integral part of practicing the Christian faith: in Sunday church services which also serve as a channel for community announcements; in church meetings; choir practices; bible study meetings and individual activities like reading the bible and other religious texts.

6.6.2.1 Sunday church services

Differences between Anglicans and Catholics in the direct use of texts are evident during their Sunday church services. The main difference relates to the reading of the bible and other religious texts by members of the congregation. During the Anglican Church service, selected verses are read aloud directly from the bible by the priest, and individual members of the congregation are often invited by the priest to read verses from the bible during the sermon. This unpredictable bible reading makes individual literacy skills necessary for full participation in the Sunday services. As a result, most members of the Anglican Church take their own bibles to the Sunday service. In addition, hymn and prayer books are provided for use in the church. In one of the Anglican Sunday services:

The preacher asks a member of the congregation to stand up and read from her bible, Matthew 8 (1-10). The person stands up as requested, repeats the verse for other members, and announces the version of her bible as the New King James Version. She reads the verses while other members of the congregation follow from their own copies of the bible

(Field notes: Bweyale during the Anglican Church Sunday mass on Sunday 19th June 2005).

On the other hand, in the Catholic Church services:

The reading is being done from the Sunday missal, the main Catholic prayer book. During the sermon, the priest preaches from his own prepared text and the congregation is listening. Some members of the congregation have their own copies of the Sunday missal. The choir members have printed sheets of paper from which they are singing hymns. Most members of the congregation have no books, and do not interact with the text directly

(Field notes: Bweyale Catholic Sunday Mass on Sunday 26th June 2005).

Regular attendance at a number of church services during the period of the fieldwork showed that the procedures in the Catholic Sunday service were more ritualised, routine and predictable than in the Anglican Church. This reduces the need for individual members of the congregation to read directly from a text to guide the process, as they seem to learn the various responses required for participation in the Sunday mass by heart. The Catholic Church services are therefore more orally based.

Whatever differences exist in the Catholic and Anglican literacy practices, both churches use printed texts to guide their proceedings and inform their behaviour. What differs is how these printed texts are used. This confirms Parry's observation that religious literacy is deeply embedded in community life (Parry, 2000a).

6.6.2.2 The role of mediators in joint literacy events

Although literacy is important in practicing the Christian faith, non-literate members of the church are not excluded from participation. The priest and other literate members of the church always enable the whole community and congregation to participate in the joint Christian religious literacy practices (See Barton, 1994; Baynham, 1995 for concept of literacy mediator). For example, during the Sunday service, a few literate members of the congregation facilitate the process through reading aloud while the non-literate members learn through recitation every Sunday or during church choir practices and bible study time. Eventually, all church members both literate and non-literate internalise and memorise the repetitive part of the Sunday service procedures and songs that enable the participation of all church members. This continues until changes are introduced either in the prayers or in the songs. Sarah, a non-literate Catholic, explained this:

I know there are books in the Sunday service, for me I just listen to how they are starting it, and then I respond, and sing too. For those I do not understand then it is just like that... I will keep quiet like a deaf person. If it reaches where I understand I will respond again. Like the rosary, I know to pray with it. If the teacher initiates a song that I know, I will also join in

(Interview with Sarah conducted in Luo on 17th Jan 2006).

Both the preaching and readings enable the non-literate members of the church to access the bible teaching, memorise some verses and even refer to them during their conversations with fellow Christians. Over the years, some committed, non-literate Christians eventually acquire some rudimentary bible literacy skills. This is a coping strategy used by non-literate people to participate in literate social practices of Christian life. It also demonstrates that, because Christianity is embedded in African rural community life, it is an important factor in literacy use for both literate and non-literate alike.

Another form of literacy practice associated with the Sunday church service is its use as a channel for public communication through church announcements. These announcements are read aloud after most Sunday services. Through these announcements, written communications are passed on through word of mouth to other members of the community who have not come to church. However, because those who act as mediators for these announcements are those with school literacy backgrounds, these announcements are often written in English and orally translated into Kiswahili and Luo. A similar practice was noticed by Glanz (2001b) in Buganda located in the central region of Uganda

6.6.2.3 Other church-related literacy activities

Other church-related activities such as participation in the church choir practice and church meetings also involve a range of different literacy practices:

Choir practice involves reading and copying songs from the few available printed songbooks onto the chalkboard to be copied by the choir members into their notebooks. Some members are having difficulty in copying the songs into their notebooks. There is a lot of reading and writing taking place in this church choir practice. It appears that everybody is reading. Because they are all looking in front, it is difficult to tell if they are looking at the choirmaster or reading the song written on the chalkboard and they are actively participating in the practice sessions. Those who are copying the songs into their note books from the chalk board in front of them are looking up to read the songs from the chalk board and bending down to copy them into their note books. They write with their note books placed on the bench on which they are sitting. Some people do not have notebooks or the printed songbook but they are still able to follow the rehearsal from the choirmaster who is leading the session. He sings a stanza and asks the members to sing after him until the tune is right. Then they all sing together. Through that process, the non-literate people are also participating in the choir practices. The songs are in English, Kiswahili, and Luo

(Field notes: Bweyale Catholic church on Friday 20th May 2005).

A church meeting was convened to discuss how to raise funds for completing the construction of a new church building.

As in most meetings, literacy has a central role. It is being used to register attendance, and record minutes. Some people are writing their names on the attendance list being passed around; others request their names to be written for them by the person sitting next to them or the one passing the list around. It is difficult to tell, just by looking if those doing so are not literate. Most of those asking for their names to be written for them are women, and some are carrying babies on their laps.

Generally, this meeting is like any other meeting with an agenda, a chairperson, and a secretary who is recording the proceedings. The meeting is being conducted in Luo with English and Kiswahili use by the non-Luo speakers at the meeting. Participants orally use any of the three languages, while two other people translate their contribution into the other two remaining languages. Luo is the main language of the meeting because it is spoken by most people in the meeting. English is mainly used by educated non-Luo speakers, and Kiswahili, by uneducated non-Luo speakers. All documents, except the attendance list, are being written in English.

(Field notes in Bweyale Church of Uganda Parish: Sunday 12th June 2005).

What Figure 41 below shows is an example of the English agenda displayed on a chalkboard placed before the members:

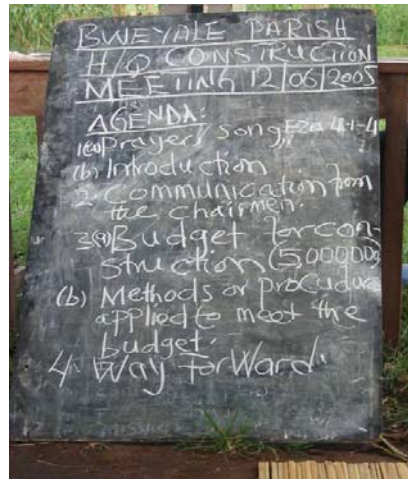


Figure 41: Agenda for a church meeting.

Records of such village meetings are kept in files and exercise books like the one shown below.



Figure 42: Record books on a worn out bible.

School exercise books are used as personal and official record books. The book on the top of the pile is a “*RECORDING BOOKS*” kept by the secretary of a village religious group. The language used on this book is an innovative creation of the writer mixing two foreign languages: English and Kiswahili. It reads “*The Books ya Division*” (the non-English word in this construction is the Kiswahili word “*ya*” which seem to be substituting the English word “*of*”). The next line of writing is the name of the officer and his title “*securtary,*” (Aguti). In Standard English, this could be ‘The secretary’s record book of the division’. This shows that in spite of often-limited ability to write in English, this rural

community in Uganda still insists on conducting official and public writing in English. In contrast, the second notebook in the photograph, which was a personal bible study notebook and contained personal notes taken during the same meeting, was written in Luo. These personal notes are used to guide personal participation in meetings by referring to them regarding decisions made in previous meetings. The official minutes in the secretary's record book are not given to the members due to the problem of reproduction.

The fact that English is the primary mode of written communication in meetings despite the fact that Luo is the predominant oral language illustrates the dominance of English and the way in which it is associated with record-keeping, education and status (see Sentumbwe, 2001, 2002). This is particularly interesting given that some church services are conducted in Luo and the bible and Catholic missal are written in Luo. This confirms Papen's findings in Namibia, where she found that, although much of the reading and writing done in the bible study groups to which Emma belonged were in the local language, English was still important in the religious identity of the learners (Papen, 2005b).

6.6.2.4 Personal religious literacy practices

The private reading of religious texts is a central focus of personal literacy practices. This was confirmed by a range of interviews and observations. On one of my regular visits to key informants, I went to visit Jane one evening,

.... Jane is sitting on a mat outside her hut enjoying the evening reading a book. She is not expecting me. She welcomes me to her home and invites me into her house. Before entering, I decide to look at what she is reading. Therefore, I bend over (to) check out what kind of book it is. The checking reveals a Catholic prayer book written in the Luo language.

(Field notes: Bweyale on Sunday 3rd May 2005).

Josephine, an Anglican talked very passionately about the position of the bible in her home:

The most important of all the books in this home is the Bible.

(Interview with Josephine conducted in Luo on 21st May 2005).

In many of the homes visited during fieldwork, the bible is the most frequently used book as the photographs below show:



Figure 43: Worn out English and Luo language bibles and two pages of underlined texts.

The worn bible with underlined texts reveals that it is frequently used. The fact that sections of the text are underlined is evidence that the book is not only read regularly but also read attentively for a purpose. This differs from Kulick and Stroud’s finding in Papua New Guinea where they found that printed matter in Gapun was only looked at, and that, “Nobody ever actually reads the bible” (Kulick & Stroud, 1993, p. 36). In most homes, which were visited, with the exception of children’s schoolbooks, the bible was the most prominent book in the house and was one of only a few books in the house that was visible.

As one of the most available texts in rural life, some people read the bible for what they claim to be good teachings that are found in it:

Well I also observed that you could get good teachings there. Normally before my prayers I reserve some twenty minutes, I first of all get some Chapters or some verses and read them, then pray for about twenty minutes and do other things later.

(Interview with Dagupazi conducted in English on 17th November 2005).

From field observations and participation in private conversation, another feature of bible use is its symbolisation of Christian life and identity. Zealous Christians often carry around their bible and use it both as reference during their everyday Christian conversations and preaching activities that are punctuated by frequent reference to the bible as a symbol of their Christian identity. I asked my old friend Onek (not his real name) what had been happening in his life since we last met many years ago:

With a lot of delight and aura of wellbeing, he shows me the bible he is holding in his hand as evidence of the positive changes that have taken place in his life since we last met, and he confirms that by saying, “I am now a believer as you can also see”

(Field notes 15th July 2005).

Other members of the community refer to such a person, who always carries the bible and reads it often outside the Sunday Mass and private bible reading, as a “*Morokole*” or “*dano ma olare*” (Luo meaning, ‘an overzealous Christians’ or ‘saved person’)

respectively). The bible in this case serves the purpose of signifying the status of people who carry it around as “*Morokole*”, which is also a label of trustworthiness and very respectable social standing in the community.

In addition to the bible, other religious texts are commonly available in Bweyale in both English and the local languages, because different religious organisations like the Jehovah’s Witness distribute religious leaflets and books free of charge or sell them very cheaply. These religious texts are the reading materials most available for rural people to read, even for leisure:

Sitting inside a hut built in front of a restaurant to serve as a cool shade for its customers, a man who is well known to me is busy reading a book. As I enter the hut to join him, he stops his reading to recognise my presence, and I decide to ask him what he is reading, and take a seat next to him thus being able to see the book he was reading. He abandons his reading and gives me the book to see what kind of book he was reading. The book is a Jehovah’s Witness’s book, “The Greatest Man who ever lived”

(Field notes: 12th June 2005).

Other religious texts are visible in the form of calendars and charts that adorn the inside walls of most houses or huts. The one below is a religious calendar for 2004 from a Catholic primary school in Gulu Diocese:



Figure 44: A Catholic calendar inside a hut.

Apart from schoolbooks, religious texts are one of the most dominant and common texts in Bweyale. It is clear that these texts are central to the identity of many rural Ugandans. This reflects and confirms the findings in other developing countries such as Papua New Guinea where “of the eighty-four specimens, all but two were connected with Christianity,” that is 98% of texts in households were religious texts (Kulick & Stroud, 1993, p. 36).

6.6.3 Conclusion

Christianity is a major impetus for the use of reading and writing in rural community life in a variety of contexts: formal church services, church meetings, choir practice, Bible

study groups and family and individual Bible reading and prayers. These Christian literacy practices illuminate the complex ways in which literacy operates in relation to orality, choice of language in a multilingual context, and the role of literacy mediators in joint religious literacy events. Christian religious literacy materials are also easily available and accessible to most community members.

6.7 Bureaucratic institutions and community literacy practices

Bureaucratic institutions exist or extend their control or influence in every part of the country, and they shape people's lives in many ways. Bureaucratic institutions are some of the main areas in which literacy is used in rural community life. By bureaucratic institutions, I mean the institutional structures that are set up by government or the people themselves to regulate community life. These institutions influence the use of reading and writing in people's everyday lives. These are what Barton and Hamilton (1998, p. 229) call "bureaucratic and technical literacies". They are the literacy demands that originated from public organisations in society. Examples of these literacies include those involved in processing identification documents, travel permits, making statements at the police stations and many other such official documents and activities related to official documents. The literacy use or the paperwork involved in processing these documents constitutes part of rural community literacy practices. The organisations that I identified as bureaucratic institutions in Bweyale are those that are visible and active in rural community life. However, this does not mean that every individual in the community interacts with them on a daily basis. These organisations are the police service, clinics/health centres, the LC Offices⁶¹, The Uganda Revenue Authority/Government tax offices, banking/credit organisations and development NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) that operate and may have offices or officers operating in rural areas. Schools are also bureaucratic institutions but since they constitute such a major literacy influence in local community literacy practices, they have been discussed separately. These organisations deal with a number of community issues in which literacy has a central and very important role.

The issues presented in this section may overlap with other sections already discussed above. This is because bureaucratic literacy practices or literacies relate to activities like record keeping, form filling, meetings, signing contracts or agreements and fulfilling

⁶¹ The official definition of bureaucracies excludes organisations like the local councils because they are elected institutions in the community. The standard definition of bureaucracies is "a government that is administered primarily by bureaus that are staffed with non-elective officials" (Wordweb, 2005, electronic dictionary). Local councils are elective officials. I have decided to use a much wider definition to include the local council because they work together with the non-elective institutions like the police.

government tax obligations that are in one way or the other related to the three major domains of school education, livelihood, and religious practices already discussed above. For example, religious activities that motivate a lot of reading and writing in rural community life are institutionally based activities, and the institutions certainly create some bureaucratic procedures involving the use of literacy. Where such overlap exists, reference is made back to that particular section, and organisations that have not been discussed above are presented in detail.

6.7.1 The police services

The police station is one of the most conspicuous and powerful bureaucratic institutions in the community. The police station is located in the trading centre and like all other police stations has the responsibility of keeping law and order in society. This involves a lot of reading and writing, which takes place at the police station. It is at the police station that most (not all) cases are reported and this is done at the charge office, or the front counter (police reception office). Dealing with cases involves a lot of reading and writing like recording statements from the people involved. This is done because all cases brought before the police have to be properly documented and in detail because such information may be required for use in a court of law. In preparing documents that can be understood and used in a court of law, the police are under the institutional influence of the judiciary, which has a different format and language for presenting information on paper. This distinct format and language constitutes the police's and legal literacy practices that are not accessible to the ordinary people. The whole process of dealing with the police involves a lot of reading and writing regardless of the literacy status of the people involved. Not only do they do their reading and writing in English but in difficult bureaucratic literacies with the use of unfamiliar police and legal jargon. Odong, who is a police officer with over ten years experience, explained this complicated use of reading and writing to me, which provides evidence of a unique literacy practice in rural community life.

Reading and writing is used when the community leaders refer cases to the local police station. Odong explains this process of how introductory letters are forwarded to the police by the LC (Local Council) officials.

.... The LC writes a letter. When they come with the letter, the first thing (we do with that letter) is...to read the letter, and see (find out) where he coming from. It is an introductory letter to the police. After getting the point (in the letter) that is when you interview the complainant to find out what happen exactly. That is when after explaining to you, you as a trained Police Officer you have to get the offence committed. After getting the offence, that is when you what, you put it in what we call the SD (Station Diary) book.

(Interview with Odong conducted in English on 22nd December 2005).

This letter is written by the LC officials and brought to the police station by the complainant or one of the LC officials. While at the police station, there is some more reading and writing that takes place, what Odong refers to as “*we put it down*”. The writing that takes place at the police station follows a particular format that is not accessible to ordinary members of the community including the person who has brought the letter, and the police do this writing (‘writing for another’) even when the complainant is able to read and write (see Malan. 1996). This is what Odong says about police writing.

Yes, we have a format, we start with the number, you come to the date, then after the date you put the hour, that time of reporting. After recording in the station diary book, we extract it. (That is when) we have to take the information from the book to a ...paper that is (to start) developing a file now. We have to take that information to another first information paper, then we attach the letter of the what, of the LC then the statement of the complainant, then we forward it to the office of the OC (Officer in Charge). That is when the OC will what, read through. After reading through the OC will dispatch it out either to the CID because we have departments. There is the department of CID (Criminal Investigation Departments) and then there is one of MCD (Minor Cases Department) CID deal with these serious cases like burglary and theft, robbery, murder, defilement. There is a section of MCD where by we deal with assault or some other minor cases like domestic quarrels where a wife and a what, husband quarrel, taking properties after a small dispute. Yeah that is MCD.

(Interview with Odong conducted in English on 22nd December 2005)

There is also a format for writing a statement, which if a literate person would like to write his or her own statement, must first be shown how to do that before they are allowed to do that.

Yes, we always give them a format at least. Sometimes when we say you write your statement, we normally use some formats for writing statements. For example, like if I am making your statement, I have to put your full names, your sex, age, tribe, and social class or if you are a peasant or you are doing business, you have to put it clearly. That is when I go again to your place of residence. From there I place your residence, even before reaching your residence at time when you are staying here but you are working in Kigumba. I have to put your working place so that you can easily be what... traced. So I put your working place I go to your place of residence, even if you have two different places like others you have women who are more than two. So we have to say residence of maybe for example Kichwabugingo/Pucheng village. So there when we go to trace you, we shall ask the chairpersons and then they reveal (where) you are.

(Interview with Odong conducted in English on 22nd December 2005)

According to Odong, a police officer, “*in serious case that is what we do. It is called charge and caution statement. That is in ‘B’ capital offences like defilement. Charge and caution statement is done by an officer from the rank of AIP (Assistant Inspector of Police) and above.*” (Interview with Odong conducted in English on 22nd December 2005).

The “charge and caution statement” is a police statement recording very serious crimes. Because of the nature of the crime, the person who writes such a statement must be a person with sufficient experience and knowledge to do it. The person is assumed by virtue of their position to have the experience and knowledge that enables them to communicate in writing on issues related to very serious crimes. In this case, it’s not only the ability to read and write which is important but the knowledge and experience in the discourse practice of the police service as explained by the social practices model of literacy.

Another important observation was the use of language. While the police are by convention expected to write their statements in English, they make all efforts to have as many police officers who are able to speak all the different languages as possible. Therefore, in situations where a person is not able to understand English, an arrangement is made to have a person who understands that person to take his/her statements. In such a case the person will orally give their statement in their language, the police will listen to it, translate and write it in English, read it back to the person in the local language and ask them to sign the English version. I felt this was one of the biggest ironies of the police literacy practice. This is because a person is made to sign or thumbprint a document written in a language that they do not understand. It is serious statements like the “charge and caution statement” that are written in both English and the language of the accused person. As Odong says:

The good part of this statement is that the one who is taking the statement should be sharing the language with that one whose statement is being taken. Now if I am a Munyoro then they have to look for somebody who understands Kinyoro very well. Then I explain to you then you write in the language that I understand that is Kinyoro. If I am an Alur you have to do the same, you bring an Alur to write the statement. Then after that, you have to translate it into what, into English. Then he will only sign that one of Kinyoro.

(Interview with Odong conducted in English on 22nd December 2005).

Since the accused person only signs the one written in the local language, it will be the binding statement before a court of law. However, this is only for serious offences.

Members of the community who are not able to read and write still face problems although all the writing is done by the police. Odong explains,

Yeah we always get problems in signing of statements, because after writing your statement, and reading it back to you, then you are asked to what, to sign. That is where we get this weakness. Because somebody can speak very well but now he is suppose to write his full names, and make a signature, but again you will get somebody saying I don't know how to what? To write, that is how we come to know that this one does not know how to what, to write. That is when we use what? Thumbprints

(Interview with Odong conducted in English on 22nd December 2005).

Apart from dealing with offences, the police also use reading and writing to educate the community about criminal activities and other unacceptable behaviour in the community. They have charts depicting how different types of crimes are handled by the LC and Police. They call this activity 'crime prevention.' I saw these charts hanging on the wall of the Police Office and most of them were written in English.

The police involve many issues relating to literacy, and the use of English is clearly prominent. There are clear cases of literacy mediation by police officers at the police stations (Baynham, 1995; Malan, 1996). If a literate person decides to write his or her statements, he or she must do so according to the acceptable format provided to them by the police. This is obviously problematic even for literate people. The entire process, including the language used, is very intimidating and disempowering at the same time. The literacy is not tailored to meet or serve the interests of the person who comes to seek service at the police station but to facilitate their bureaucratic system. It is a heavily institutionalized literacy practice, which is accessible only to the people who work in the system. As Ammon and Robins (1996) commented about bureaucratic literacy in South Africa, no amount of literacy teaching outside this institution, not even school literacy teaching, can prepare a person for effective participation in this literacy practice. It is clearly evident that the police bureaucratic literacy even rendered illiterate, not only people with unrecognised literacy skills like Tsotso, (Kell, 1996) but people who are highly literate in other domains of literacy use. This also defeats the arguments advanced for functional literacy (see Chapter Two for the explanation of this concept) (Holme, 2004). Such a literacy programme would most likely take forever if it were to include teaching the skills needed for participation in police literacy practices. Acquiring this literacy would need to be done through apprenticeship learning (Morphet, 1996; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996a) in the process of interacting with the institution of the police and the judiciary department. This is what the LC officials seem to be doing because they work together with the police.

6.7.2 The Local Council I administration

A detailed explanation of what a Local Council 1 (LC 1) Office is, was provided in Chapter Five. Literacy use is very prominent and important in running the affairs of the LC offices. The LC 1 use reading and writing when conducting community meetings. They do this by posting invitation letters on trees or walls to inform members of the community of meetings that are to be held. During the meetings, the General Secretary of the LC 1 records minutes. In all of these, English is the language of reading and writing. This confirms how strongly English is entrenched as a language of literacy in Bweyale

and I believe in Uganda as a whole. It also shows the dominant role of English in bureaucratic contexts. Odoki, who is a General Secretary for LC 1 Nyakadote, explains how English is used when dealing with LC business, especially when writing minutes.

I record the minutes in English, and when reading it back, I read in English and, then there is an assistant secretary who translates it to Luo and then we have elders who translate it into the various languages if they want Kiswahili, they want what. First, we ask the masses, "You want it to be translated into what languages?" If they want Kiswahili, fine, I read in English the other one translates to Kiswahili.

(Interview with Odoki conducted in English on 21st December 2005).

Even the agenda of the meeting is written in English, although the meeting is conducted in Luo as Odoki explains,

In conducting the meeting generally, our agenda must be in English properly, and when the chairman is talking in Luo, I personally as the secretary, those who want to understand in English, must translate to English and the other one to Kiswahili, the same, because we are mixture of people up here.

(Interview with Odoki conducted in English on 21st December 2005).

The reason, they write in English is,

Not only because of the many languages, but because copies must be submitted to the office of the LC III or LC II ...The reasons why we cannot write in the local language because there are so many languages, we have about 57 tribes sincerely speaking. We have 57 tribes here and the office is not well equipped, not well facilitated, so we have to minimise to about two or three languages"

(Interview with Odoki conducted in English on 21st December 2005).

Here again, in spite of the existence of the dominant Luo language, English is still the preferred language. Although Odoki argues that they prefer to use English because of the multilingual nature of the community, Kiswahili is a widely spoken alternative language that is not used for writing. Therefore, the choice of English is because it is a national language as mentioned by Ibra above, the influence of school literacy education where English is the language of instruction in Uganda, political reasons like putting all groups at an equal disadvantage, and national communication and unity. The use of any one local language is seen as making that particular group dominant over the other groups whose languages are not being used. Whatever the case, Kiswahili is still a non-indigenous language that is widely spoken by most members of the community but not written. Yet the LC is a local, social, political organisation based in the community.

The LC is also involved in solving disputes that arise in the community. The General Secretary Odoki said, "*Majorly (sic) here we deal with civil cases. Then when it comes to criminal we refer that to the police.*" (Interview with Odoki conducted in English on 12th December 2005). The process of forwarding cases to the police involves writing a letter

of introduction to the police as already explained by Odong in section 6.7.1. When referring cases to the police, it is not just writing which is important, but the question of who has the authority to do that, that is also important in this practice. Not just anybody is allowed to communicate with the police according to Odong, “The *General Secretary writes the letters then it is supposed to be endorsed by the chairperson of the village, to make it legal*” (Interview with Odong conducted in English on 22nd December 2005). This institutionally imposed requirement makes the process very bureaucratic.

In the process of dealing with the police, the LC 1 learns police ways of writing, which enables them to communicate with the police. For example, the General Secretary, Mr. Odoki whom I interviewed above, uses the police language of civil and criminal cases comfortably because he is a retired police officer. In the process of using such language, his colleagues in the office, like the chairperson and the chairperson for youth, learnt the ways of talking about the police from him, and that enables them to communicate with the police.

This quasi-legal function of the LC 1 also means that they preside over contractual documents that are generated when people sell pieces of land in the community. This activity is very common in Bweyale because large numbers of people have moved from other districts to come and settle in Bweyale (see Chapter Five). Contracts are drawn up between land seller and buyer. The process of drawing up such agreements involves the LC of the area where the land is located with some witnesses from both the seller’s and the buyer’s sides, all of whom sign the contract which is signed and stamped by the LC. In cases where one party in the agreement is not able to read and write, the people who come as witnesses will read the contract for such a person and they would put their thumb marks on the document. In this the role of literacy is what Brandt (2001, p. 47) calls facilitating “mutual exchange and obligations”. It is important to add that such activity in which literacy is involved is only possible in a society where there is respect for a common law which guarantees such private activities (Elwert, 2001). This confirms the argument that the development of social and economic behaviours and institutions that depend on written information guarantee the development of a literate society, because it imposes the use of literacy on the people (see Olson & Torrance, 2001).

The other documents that the LC writes for members of their communities include introduction/identification documents to another LC in another location where a particular person is going. They call such letters, “*To whom it may concern*”. According to Mr. Odoki, this letter is written and read to the person who has come for it, and then it is

signed and sealed by the chairperson of the village in which the person is resident. The practice of reading a letter to the person for whom the letter has been written is the same as the police practice of writing statements and reading them back to the individual and asking them to sign them with their own signature. In their offices, they have many charts similar to the ones that I saw at the Police station hanging from their office walls (see Figure 58). The posters are about different types of offences and procedures for dealing with them. The posters, as the General Secretary Mr. Odoki explains, are used to educate those who come to their office with complaints. There are also other files in which they keep their official documents. The office also has what they call a daily report book in which they record the day's events. In the LC office in Bweyale, this letter writing dealing with social problems in the community makes the LC offices look just like a police station:

People who have come to report cases line up in front of the office. Some are sitting on a bench waiting to be served, letters are being composed to summon people against whom complaints are being raised to come to the office. In the office itself, there are piles of files sitting in one corner. Some people including myself have come with introduction letters. My letter was written by the National Council of Science and Research giving me authority to do research in the areas of Bweyale. I brought a copy of the letter to the office that is read and I the person reading it welcomed me to the community.

(Field notes: 21st February 2005)

From this observation, the role of literacy in organising or running the affairs of the community was evident, and this role flows through the system, subconsciously and consciously influencing people's lives in its wake. It is used by the LC to organise, control and order society. For example, the use of letters helps to concretise the authority of the LC in a form that can be transported and presented to a third party. In this case, an offending party can be summoned with evidence of power in the form of a letter. Therefore, the letter is not only conveying summons to the offending defendant, but also the power of the LC chairperson who signs and stamps them with his seal of authority. The language of community order is adopted from the institution of orders and sanctions in the community, which is the police service. Failure to respond or honour the letter is equal to an act of defiance against the social and political power wielded by the LC of the area. The basis of this power is itself a written law that instituted the LC systems as a political administrative set-up for the community. As Casmier-Paz (2000) argues, this written law secures the power of the LC while at the same time ensuring submission from the community. One aspect to note is that, literacy is involved in every aspect of this function in terms of the law, and it affects the community's lives regardless of the literacy status of the individuals within community. This could also explain why most participants

in this research would insist that literacy is important without being able to articulate its value in their everyday life. They were in effect conscious of this value of literacy in their everyday life.

6.7.3 Medical services

Another area where rural people encounter and interact with reading and writing is in clinics when they go to seek medical services. Clinics are modern medical establishments run by groups of trained medical specialists. These clinics, unlike government hospitals, provide medical services to the local community for a fee. Because the nearest government hospital in Kiryadongo is over 15 kilometres away from Bweyale, people depend on clinics established in the trading centre. I did not count the number of clinics established in Bweyale, but I was able to note that there are many of them in addition to drug shops discussed in section 6.4.2.5 above under literacy and community livelihoods. Most of the information used in this section was obtained from the clinic locals consider to be the best in the area. I visited this clinic many times during my fieldwork, and interacted with and interviewed both the administrative and medical staff of this clinic.

Clinics are institutions within which the use of reading and writing is inherent, and they directly connect with the everyday life of the community as people go to seek medical services. In this section, I discuss how rural people participate in literacy practices related to medical care.

When members of the community go to seek medical services for the first time, they are issued with medical forms containing the details of their diagnosis, treatment, and the medication they have been given. This medical form is issued by medical staff who are the only ones who write on it and usually the only ones who read it, although it is kept by the patient, as Lumumba, a clinical officer working in a medical centre in Bweyale, explains.

Sometimes the medical form is given to the patient so that they can go with it, so that if the person starts suffering from the same condition somewhere, he usually goes with that medical form, because sometimes they do not come back. We also encourage them to keep the forms and come with them in their next visit.

(Interview with Lumumba conducted in English on 24th September 2005).

If they are going to another medical facility, they have to take the 'Medical form 5,' as they call it, with them and present it to the new medical establishment before they can be served. *"However, when they come with medical forms from where maybe they have been having some treatment. I read them (the medical forms) and try to see what kind of health problems they could be having and we may issue them with our own medical forms, after*

doing investigations and then we go ahead to treat them” (Interview with Lumumba conducted in English on 24th September 2005). This is because the medical form is written in a format and style that cannot be understood by non-medical personnel.

When they come with or without the medical form:

Sometimes we ask in certain worrying conditions because some of these patients could be coming from Mulago (the national referral hospital in Uganda) or from where or from Lacor (a good missionary hospital in Gulu). Therefore, we always ask them for the old medical form if it is available; so that we can determine the disease they are suffering from, and find out if an old one that is relapsing or it is a new. If it is a new one then we start a new treatment.

(Interview with Lumumba conducted in English on 24th September 2005).

According to Lumumba, although some patients complain that they do not understand what is written on the medical form, they do this partly to protect the patient

We tell them that for the sake of our moral standard (as) medical worker we do not have to say all what a patient is suffering from. It is not deliberately done, you know some of these patients when they respond to a certain drug, and they start suffering from a certain conditions, they may just go with that card and say give me this medicine not knowing that they are again suffering from a different condition. Therefore, when they go with these medical forms to the drug sellers and these drug sellers are just after money, they just issue the drug. Moreover, the patient does not understand, when they never respond to the drug. You find that, that one is also causing many unnecessary problems.

(Interview with Lumumba conducted in English on 24th September 2005).

This shows that in the provision of medical services, access to written personal medical information is denied in the interest of protecting the patients who may misuse the information. This is very interesting because it is contrary to popular thinking that it is good to provide information. In this case, access to information is denied because it is seen as dangerous. This also comes from the awareness that the patient, even though they are literate, does not have the knowledge to enable them to understand what has been written on the medical form. Therefore, in agreement with the social practices perspective on literacy, it is not enough to simply be able to read and write because you also need the authority and knowledge of certain practices to be able to access information from such fields.

Because of their difficult manner of writing medical information, in cases where the patient is expected to take part in his treatment, the written information on the medical form is explained orally to the patients, “*Sometimes we just write, in the medical form, then we advise them to not take certain type of food maybe reduce salt intake.*” (Interview with Lumumba conducted in English on 24th September 2005). This is a clear example of literacy mediation (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996a; Malan, 1996).

Two general conclusions can be drawn from this. Firstly, the provision of modern medical services involves rural people in medical literacy practices. Secondly, when interacting with texts in clinics, the role of the person seeking medical services is to receive and look after the medical form well. They are also expected to come back with it on their next visits and hand it over to the medical officer who is able to read it and act on it or explain what they are expected to do as part of their treatment written on the medical form. So just like the police statements, referral and identification letters from the LC, the individual does not get involved in the actual reading and or writing of the information concerning them, which they also keep with them.

6.7.4 Development NGOs working in rural areas

Some development NGOs working in rural communities, like churches, have motivated the use of reading and writing in rural community life in a number of ways. In addition to these NGOs, there are credit organisations that give loans to women's groups in the community to help them establish small business activities. In this section, I present and discuss one NGO and one credit and savings organisation to illustrate how the activities of these economic development institutions have motivated the use of literacy in rural community life.

The most active development organisation in Bweyale is the Christian Children's Fund (CCF). This organisation provides support to poor and orphaned children in the community who are not able to go to school, by linking them with sponsors abroad, normally in developed countries in Europe. In this process, the NGO creates a link between the child and a sponsor who has accepted to assist the child. To get a sponsor for a child, CCF takes photographs of the children and sends them to potential sponsors who select a child or two to support and the selected child is personally linked to its sponsor through mail. The child or their guardians are requested by CCF to write a letter to the sponsor. According to Kinyera, who works with this organisation, staff of CCF is not allowed to write letters on behalf of the children. In cases where the child is too young to read and write for him- or herself and the parents too are not able to read or write, then another member of the family (a relative) or any member of the community will be asked to write on behalf of the child. Kinyera says some children are able to copy letters, "*So what we do, we draft it for them, and they copy*" (Interview with Kinyera conducted in English on 17th September 2005). The idea is that the letter must go in the child's own handwriting.

This is a unique kind of literacy support brought about by the need to enable the child to have personal contact with their sponsors abroad through their own handwriting. This is similar to endorsing a letter with personal signatures. The child's handwriting is like their signature that gives the letter genuineness. It also personifies the child before the sponsors. It is something that the sponsor can relate to from the child. As Kinyera puts it, "*The sponsors are happy to read letters in the child's handwriting*" (Interview with Kinyera conducted in English on 17th September 2005). This means the content of the letter may not be as important as the entire letter. That is, the value of the letter as an artefact is much greater than its communicative values because it serves to link two people who are in different parts of the world. This literacy relationship is created and maintained by CCF, the organisation facilitating this communication. Whatever the case, this requirement generates a lot of reading and writing activities as the sponsors also write their replies back to the children. In this, literacy has a very important role in facilitating personal communication between people who need help and those who are willing to provide.

The only difficulties with these letter writing activities that are brought about by the activities of the NGOs in the community are that the letters are written "*strictly in English*" according to Kinyera. The reason for using English is to enable communication with sponsors abroad. Nevertheless, this does not remove the complication involved with the use of English for a population for whom reading and writing is already a problem. Therefore, letter writing outside the community's boundary naturally imposes the use of English on the people and reinforces the hegemonic position of English and literacy in the community. This hegemonic position of English is that literacy in the local language is meaningless since it will not enable you to communicate outside the boundaries of your culture. Communicating outside the community's boundary is itself one of the reasons for which rural people see literacy as valuable (see section 6.11).

To facilitate community participation in this the CCF asked the community to organise themselves into Parish Parent's Committees. This formal organisational formation creates systems within which reading and writing must be used, because the committees hold community meetings during which minutes are written and read and written reports and other information are presented. Kinyera says, "*At the time of mobilisation, we write to the Parish committees calling them for meetings*". The letters and minutes relating to the activities of the NGO in the community are written in English. However, meetings are conducted in a myriad of languages: Kiswahili, Luo, Lunyoro and many others in the area.

Apart from CCF, SOMED, a credit organisation, gives loans to women's credit and savings societies. These women's groups take short-term loans in groups and hold regular meetings to collect contributions from members to pay back the loans. In these meetings, reading and writing has an important role. It is employed to record contributions to the loan repayment and the balance is carried forward to the next meeting. The amount of money paid by each member, and the balance owing to each woman is recorded against their name. These records are made in exercise books. Figure 45 shows one page of this book in which a record of two meetings held on 27th September 2004 and 4th October 2004 are shown. The collections towards loan repayments in those two days were Ushs 99,440 and 106,200 respectively. There is a lot of knowledge that informs the entries made on the page in Figure 45. For example, what is recorded, why it is recorded that way, how it is to be understood and why it must be interpreted in that way. What is obvious from this single page is that each woman is required to pay a particular amount of money each meeting day. For example, Ocan Lucy pays Ushs 33,150 every meeting day. Why each woman pays a different amount, depends on information that is not immediately available on the page but informs what is written and is useful for drawing meaning from the page.

Meeting Date	Name	Amount (Ushs)
27/9/04	1 Ochan Lucy	33,150
	2 Ayaa Florence	0
	3 Aciba Grace	33,150
	4 Kabahuma Anna	6,650
	5 Onenu Susan	26,600
27/9/04	Total	99,550
	By Prance G.	
4/10/2004	1 Ochan Lucy	33,150
	2 Ayaa Florence	0
	3 Aciba Grace	33,150
	4 Kabahuma Anna	13,300
	5 Onenu Susan	26,600
4/10/2004	Total	106,200
	By Prance G.	

Figure 45: A single page of a credit and savings group record book.

In this section, I have shown that literacy use in rural community life is also motivated by participation in the activities of some bureaucratic organisations like NGOs, for example CCF and SOMED. These organisations generate different patterns of literacy use. This is interesting because it shows that it is not only organisations teaching reading and writing in rural communities that promote literacy. As this study has shown, the activities of some NGOs that are not concerned with literacy promote literacy in rural community life.

6.7.5 Political processes

During fieldwork, Uganda was preparing for presidential, parliamentary, and LC elections that were held in early 2006. The Electoral Commission of Uganda voter registration was going on at the time and all members of the community of voting age were expected to register and get registration cards. This process of preparing the population for election was an activity that involved reading and writing. The registration process involved updating one's own details in the voter register and pointing out the names of people who were not members of a particular polling station. During this process members of the community were also expected to point out the names of people who had moved out of the district (migrated) and point out the names of those people who had died so that these names could also be removed from the voting register. This process was called the "Display of voter register", and it was done to update the voter register before the voter cards are issued in preparation for election. I witnessed this process and recorded it in my notebook as follows:

The person in charge of the voter display is sitting under the shade of one of the uncompleted shop buildings in the next trading centre to Bweyale. In front of him is a small table on which he places about two or three pages of people's names with their personal details like date of birth and place of residence. Some member of the community would come to him and mention their name and he would search for their names from the list of names before him and tick against their names. Today was the second day of displaying the voter register.

(Field notes: 3rd May 2005).

The voter updating was followed by the registration of party members that was conducted by the different parties contesting the election. This was the most interesting because there were rumours flying around about people who would not register with the ruling party being made to miss some state benefits or being punished if they did not hold the ruling party membership card. To avoid this problem, some members of the community registered with all the parties coming to register members, and received various membership cards. In the words of Okere, who is a tailor and member of the village, "*We do this to be on the safe side all the time*" (Interview with Okere conducted on 25th May 2005).

After the display of the voter register was completed, the staff of the Uganda Electoral Commission started issuing what they called the, “Voter’s personal ID” on which all the details of the voter were printed: names, age, date of birth, sex, and place of registration. The most interesting thing about this ID (Identity Document) is that it introduces literacy or printed information on a small plastic card, which was not common in the community. To get this card, a person goes to the issuing officer and gives them his or her names. The issuing officer looks for their card and ticks off their names from the list.

In this process, like all others under this section of bureaucracy and literacies, the involvement of community members in actual reading and writing was limited because the people manning the process were the ones responsible for identifying the names from the voter register and updating the information, and identifying the card and handing it over to the owner. This is done regardless of the literacy status of the person. I find it difficult to call them literacy mediators because their literacy services were not being solicited, neither were they doing so to help those who were not able to read and write. However, as members of the community, their literacy activities in the process of issuing out the card are part of the literacy use in the community. Rather it was the arrangement that does not require the personal use of literacy skills by those involved except signing and confirming if their names have been written correctly on the cards that were being issued. The people who were employed in these different processes were all trained for this exercise. So they were introduced to the literacy practices required to perform those tasks.

6.7.6 Conclusion

The evidence in this section shows how bureaucratic institutions are sites where literacy is used in rural community life. However, while community participation in bureaucratic institutions makes them participate in many literacy events, the participation rarely includes the actual reading and writing. This is because the literacy practices of bureaucratic institutions are unique in ways that require learning the use of jargon, format, and different symbols or ways of writing like in medical literacy. These practices are inaccessible and limit the participation of ordinary people in literacy events related to those institutions. It also disempowers people, including literate ones. This was similar to the finding of Brandt in the United States of America, in which bureaucratic institutions and documentary procedures were described as “enforced linguistic structures” (Smith, 1974, p. 265 cited in Brandt, 2001, p. 48).

6.8 Literacy practices in rural households.

The literacy practices of rural homes in Bweyale are presented in this section inspired by the work of Barton and Hamilton (1998) in Lancaster. In their work, the home domain is approached as a rich collection of literacy practices that go on in other literacy domains in the community. Citing Gee (1990) they refer to such literacy practices as “borderlands” between home and the other domains of literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 188). Pitt (2000) identifies the different literacy domains as the home (private) literacy practices, school education, and the work place (livelihood). This was the same with the findings of Barton and Hamilton (1998) in their study of community literacy practices in Lancaster. Of course, this does not mean that the literacy practices that go on in rural homes in Bweyale are the same as those in Lancaster’s neighbourhood communities. The richness of home literacy practices makes the home an interesting site in the study of community literacy practices. Because of this diversity in terms of literacy practices related to other domains of literacy, there are some overlaps between this and earlier sections because of the nature of literacy practices within the home domain. To avoid this, the literacy practices that have already been presented and discussed in earlier sections that are part of the home literacy practices are not discussed in much detail.

A detailed description of a typical home in Bweyale is provided in Chapter Five above. This description includes the activities that take place within rural homes and how people spend their time while in their homes. Like in all other domains, the literacy practices that take place in homes depend on the activities in which people are engaged in their daily home life. Examples of these activities include preparing children for school; going to the farm or market to do some farming or sell/buy some products respectively; laundry and cleaning up; cooking the family meals; church and church related activities like bible reading and family prayers; writing and receiving personal communications; reading the local newspaper.

Those involved in some local community organisations may keep documents related to the activities of such organisations in their homes. Writing (drafting) and keeping local land sale agreements are some of the literacies that take place in the home sphere but are related to or supported by institutions outside the home. A critical examination of these activities reveals a strong influence of the institutions from which these literacies originate, for example school homework (see Ames, 2005). The activities involving the use of reading and writing are brought into the home domain from other domains of literacy (school education, the church/religion, and work/public institutions), and are in most cases related to activities which are non-traditional in nature. The typical lifestyles

in African rural homes like in Bweyale are such that the use of reading and writing outside education and religion are limited. This is because in general homes in rural community life are still based on non-literate traditional ways of life and knowledge that does not require the use of reading and writing skills.

To critically examine and analyse literacy practices in the home domain, I grouped the different activities in which literacy is involved into two major categories. The first category was based on the use of literacy in the different activities⁶². The second category was based on the origin of these activities in which literacy is involved within the home domain or the literacy evidence (artefacts) that are found at home. These categories are not independent or distinct categories. They are simply different ways of arranging the same information to present different perspectives on literacy practices in rural homes; for example, Klassen (1991) used different categories to present the same information. This analysis helps to identify the different activities that make rural people read and write while in their homes and those that do not and why.

In the first category, I identified three groups of activities in which reading and writing is used differently in rural homes. The first group consisted of activities in which reading and writing is intrinsic, for example school homework. The second group consisted of activities in which reading and writing is intrinsic but not necessary for participation in such activity, for example practising the Christian faith. The third and last group consisted of activities in which reading and writing is not intrinsic but could be useful, for example subsistence production of food from the family fields. Using the second category, the same information was regrouped into internal and external activities. For example, school homework is an activity that originates from school (external), while cooking the family meal or subsistence farming is a home based activity (internal).

Among the activities in which reading and writing is intrinsic, school education has already been discussed in detail in section 6.5, which deals with school education and community literacy practices. Literacy is inherent in school education because anything to do with school in the home like helping school children with their school homework, checking school progress reports, participation in parents' school meetings must in one way or the other involve reading or writing regardless of the literacy status of the person.

⁶² Activity in this section refers to any identifiable things people do in which reading or writing may or may not be involved. If reading or writing has a role in any such activity, then that particular activity becomes a describable literacy event for as long as it lasts. For example, prayer is an activity that may or may not involve reading and writing.

Sending and receiving personal letters is another example of a home-based activity in which literacy is inherent. It is not possible to send and receive a letter without reading or writing in one way or the other. Although letter writing is not an exclusively home based literacy activity, most people keep personal letters at home thus making personal letter writing a home-based activity. Therefore, even if letter writing is taking place in a post office, I classify it as a home-based literacy practice, just like reading a bible in a restaurant remains a religious literacy practice. Personal letter writing is an activity for which both literate and non-literate people give value to literacy. For example, Muhammad, a non-literate man said, *“If you are able to read and write all you need to do is decide that today I would like to write a letter to Okere (name of a person) and you just do it”*. So, *“If we are to be taught how to read and write all we need to learn is to be able to read and write our own letters”* (Interview with Muhammad conducted in Luo on 20th May 2005). Muhammad would therefore like to learn how to read and write so that he can read and write his own letters. Letters are personal documents that are not good to have someone else read for you because that person would be having access to your personal and sometimes intimate information. Consequently, the high social value people place on being able to personally read and write one’s letters gives value to literacy (the ability to read and write). This is not different from the findings of Barton and Hamilton’s (1998) study in a more developed community in Lancaster.

Letters are even more important because ordinary people have acculturated letters as a means of communicating sensitive and important personal information. This could include information like the organisation of last funeral rites and marriages, dealing with marital disharmonies (See interview with Kweya and field note dated 21st June 2005 in the next paragraphs), application for jobs and letters to distant relatives asking for financial support. This shows that although other quicker means of communication like the phone exist, letter writing is still regarded as a more serious method of communication. Writing and dispatching a letter is certainly much more difficult than dialling a phone and it is these efforts, I think, which give value to the message and influence a considerate recipient to think twice about the message. The decision to write a letter is therefore much more than communicating a particular piece of information across space but also of giving social value or weight to the message with the intention of influencing the behaviour of the recipient in favour of giving serious attention to the message in the letter. This is a social process that mediates interpersonal relations between the sender and the recipient in relation to the message contained in a letter (Hodge, 2003). These issues motivate letter writing differently.

Most participants in the interviews said they do not receive or write letters often. This is because personal social issues that motivate letter writing are not so frequent. Therefore, people like Kweya, a *Bodaboda* rider, who are only motivated to write by the occurrence of such serious social issues, do not have much to write about frequently.

Interviewer: *Do you receive letter regularly?*

Kweya: *There are no people to write to me.*

Interviewer: *What about you, do you, do you write letters yourself?*

Kweya: *I do write to communicate important messages.*

Interviewer: *What kind of important messages are these?*

Kweya: *Like if a person dies, you need to inform other people that such and such a person has died in a particular place.*

Interviewer: *What kind of letter did you last write?*

Kweya: *I wrote a letter to my in- laws.*

Interviewer: *What made you to write the letter?*

Kweya: *I had some disagreement with my wife.*

(Interview with Kweya conducted in Luo on 9th July 2005).

Jane, a home maker, gives a different reason , *“These days the (mobile) telephone has spoiled everything since most people now don’t like writing letters”* (Interview with Jane conducted in Luo on 25th May 2005). Although she says letter writing is not popular, she once received a letter from her husband who works in another district. She did not want to talk about the letter. Another participant, Josephine had this to say about receiving letters, although she talked in a rather confusing and even contradictory way:

Interviewer: *Do you get letters?*

Josephine: *What kind of letters?*

Interviewer: *Any type of letter that you can read or write.*

Josephine: *There are no letters, unless someone I know writes to me.*

(Interview with Josephine conducted in Luo on 21st May 2005).

On one of my home visits, I was involved in a literacy event involving a letter that had been written to Sarah, a key informant. In this literacy event, Sarah brought me a letter written by her son in-law who was not very happy with his wife’s behaviour:

We are talking about reading and writing, which reminds her of a bad letter she received in January 2005 from her son-in-law. She complains that the letter was written in a very disrespectful manner. To confirm her statements, Sarah decided to show me the letter saying, *“Let me show you this letter so that you too can see it with your own eyes and judge for yourself the kind of letter this man has written to me”*. She goes behind the curtain and comes back with a black handbag. She searches through a mass of other documents she keeps in her bag. She gets the letter and brings it to me to read. I get the letter and start reading it silently. The letter is dated 29th January 2005. It was written to

her by her son-in-law. According to Sarah, “*You cannot write such a letter to your mother-in-law.*”

I continue to read the letter silently noting the language and confirming that the letter was indeed disrespectful because he is addressing his mother-in-law with all her names and on some occasion calling her “mother-in-law” which is still disrespectful because the normal way to do that is to call her “mother”. The letter was written in the local Luo language, and therefore read and interpreted within the milieu of its culture.

(Field note: 21st June 2005).

The letter revealed the mood of the writer, who took the opportunity to express his displeasure with his wife to his mother-in-law in a manner that implicates her as well as well as to annoy her. In doing that, he deliberately disregarded the cultural etiquette expected of him to address his mother-in-law as ‘mother’ in both oral and written communication, and not ‘my mother-in-law’ whom she actually is but it is seen as culturally inappropriate to address her as such. His objective was to annoy his mother-in-law and accuse her for whatever wrongs her daughter committed. In his South African study, Robin (1996) explored how letters are used to deliver messages in different styles that are meant to achieve certain effects on the reader. The mother-in-law was not happy with him (her son-in-law) and decided to let me see her point of view. She maintained that she has no responsibility for the bad relationship he (her son-in-law) has with his wife and he should accordingly not treat her as if she is part of their problem. In taking that view, she sees herself as entitled to the respect due to her from her son-in-law in spite of their disagreement. This is what Hodge (2003) observed about letters mediating social relationships between senders and recipients. In this case, letter writing seems to be governed by the rules of oral communication, which determines what is appropriate or not when writing.

Drawing from this behaviour, I would like to argue that, in assuming that the same rules of appropriate communication applied to both oral and written communication, Sarah sees no difference between oral and written communication. Not being able to read and write, she receives the letter in its oral form and judges it by the same rules that are used for oral communication. This was particularly true for her since the letter was in the local language. In that case, the rules of communication reside in the language and not the medium (oral and written) of communication. Drawing from this, I can argue that reading and writing has been ascribed equal status since they are both subject to the same rule. I did not encounter any situation in which English was used for personal communications, however, I think her reaction would have been different if it had been in English.

Extrapolating from this local perspective on literacy, I can extend this argument by stating that literacy is simply a technology of communication that is given meaning by the rules

that govern communication in a particular culture. This subjection of reading and writing to a particular culture that governs how meaning should be drawn from any piece of written information is what makes literacy a social practice.

Although most of those who had something to say about letters said they do not write or receive many letters, the Postmaster of Bweyale Post Office said his office handles a large volume of mail compared to similar Post Offices located in other villages. According to the Postmaster, on average he handles between 25–40 outgoing letters and 35–50 incoming letters per day. He says that sometimes there are special arrangements during which over 1000 letters are delivered. The flow of mail is heaviest between January and June, he said. Most letters come from Sudanese refugees settled in Kiryadongo refugee camp for over 10 years now. The refugees correspond a lot with their relatives who are in the US and UK. The refugees' letters are organised through the local Catholic Church that operates in the camp (the refugees were not part of my study population).

Apart from the refugees, two social institutions in the community, schools and churches, seem to be conduits through which the local community receive their posted mail, because these institutions maintain postal addresses. Likewise, most of the letters that come through the Post Office are for churches and schools. There are two possible explanations for this. Firstly, community members use the Post Office mailbox/ postal addresses of the school and church that are nearest to them to receive their personal mail. Secondly, although it is not possible to know what the letters are about, it is possible that the churches, especially the local Pentecostal churches, could be linking their Christian believers to sponsors abroad. As the Post Master explained, most of the letters that go through the church come from overseas and the posted ones are destined to the same overseas countries.

Outside the Post Office, passengers and staff of vehicles and buses that pass daily through the trading centre of this village drop off letters. I was not able to determine the number of letters that were brought in or taken out by vehicles that originate from or pass via Bweyale. However, I was able to note that not every vehicle that passed dropped a letter, and in a single day, I think, not more than 10 letters were brought in and taken out of Bweyale by vehicles passing through the trading centre.

Medical care is another activity in which reading and writing is intrinsic and connects with the home domain because people keep their medical documents in their homes, especially when they still need them for further medical attention. These medical

documents are issued by medical personnel in hospitals⁶³, clinics and drug shops. These documents come in the form of medical prescription forms and dosages written on packets containing medication (see Figure 37 above). They are expected to go back with their medical prescription forms on their follow-up visits to the clinic (see section 6.7.3 for details). Apart from the dosages, other information on the medical forms cannot be read by the people keeping them, because they are written in medical symbols and styles that are incomprehensible to non-medical people. Therefore, while at home, only the dosages are read when administering the medication. When going back for further medical attention, the medical forms are identified from among other family documents such as schoolchildren's reports, personal letters and carried back for use in clinics, hospitals or drug shops. This process involves limited reading of names and dates on the medical prescription forms. Those who are not able to read and write, like Sarah, identify documents by their form. These medical documents are kept as part of the family's cache of important documents and they constitute part of the family literacy practice.

The keeping and use of personal documents is a very important literacy activity inherent in the home domain. I have already stated above that personal letters and medical prescription forms are always kept at home. There are other equally important documents like personal certificates; contract letters; voter's cards; personal identity documents; the year's calendar, and personal information like telephone numbers of contacts written on small pieces of papers which are kept in most homes. Such documents are kept in file folders or handbags in the case of women. In the same home visit during which I was given a letter to read by one of my non-literate participants, Sarah, a homemaker, the process of locating the letter revealed other personal documents that attracted my attention:

I became inquisitive to look at the very personal and private letter. I am a close relative of this participant and she had no problem showing me her personal documents (I later learned from her that she was not able to read them herself hence the reason for letting me have a look at the letter). I ask to look at the other remaining papers, as well, which she gladly grants and I peruse through them quickly looking at all the papers to identify their contents and purpose and classify them into specific category. I notice that most of the papers are containing telephone numbers, some with names while others are without names. Others are documents that relate to voting and elections (voter cards, old registration cards), letters of identification from the LC of her previous village, medical forms, poll tax tickets, land purchase agreements, and receipts of items bought. I ask her whose telephone numbers are written on the pieces of papers she in her bag. She looks at the paper and gives the names the person

(Field note: 21st June 2005).

⁶³ There are no hospitals in Bweyale, however the local people travel long distances like to Gulu, Lira or Kiryadongo to get medical attention and come back home with written medical diagnoses and prescriptions.

This confirms the finding of Salomon and Apaza (2006) who discovered a similar collection of documents kept within the domestic domain among rural community people in Peru.

During another meeting after the above observation, Sarah asked me to call one of her correspondents to contact her son to come and attend to family issues relating to his sister (her daughter whose husband wrote the bad letter described above) who was having some disagreement with her husband. She brought out the same bag, shuffled through the bag to look for the chit containing the number, and gave it to me to dial a person she named. The chit only had the telephone number but not the name of the person. I dialled the person and he was the one, so I handed over the phone to her to talk to this person. When she informed me during an interview that she is not able to read and write, I asked her how she was able to identify the telephone numbers of the different people she keeps in her handbag. She said, *“Once I am given a piece of paper with a telephone number I keep it in a particular place where I can find it when I want to use that number or fold it differently to make it easy for me to identify them from among the other papers that this was for so and so”*. (Interview with Sarah conducted in Luo on 17th January 2006)

The proliferation of the mobile phone, while discouraging letter writing to some extent, has also brought in another dimension of literacy use. Mobile phones do not only cause people to record and keep mobile phone numbers, which from my examinations of many chits and pieces of paper in the community, is the most common after financial calculations, but also forces them (both literate and non-literate) to interact with the phone’s alphanumeric keypad and digital screen in the process of phoning or texting. This interaction forces people to learn informally some elements of phone literacy (Hamilton, 2006). Min Richard dials her husband using the quick dial function, coded for her at number 1 on the phone keypad. Pressing number 1 involves the identification of number 1 on the keypad. In a preliminary study I conducted in preparation for this study, one participant reported matching the number written on a piece of paper with those on the keypad in the order they have been written for her (Openjuru, Forthcoming).

The second category identified by me involves activities in which reading and writing is inherent but not necessary for participation in an event. Examples of these activities are practising the Christian faith through family prayers before all meals, going to bed, or leaving home for work or a trip. These may or may not involve reading/the use of written materials. Some families, especially Catholics, use books to conduct prayers. Anglicans, as already noted in section 6.6.1, emphasise personal reading of the bible, as much as they

emphasise personal creativity in prayer, like during meals. They are not like Catholics who follow prescribed prayers in prayer books. The Catholics' use of prescriptive prayers does not mean that they always read their prayers from prayer books, because routine reading of the same prayer leads to memorisation of the prayers and the eventual discarding of the prayer book in favour of oral recitation of the same prayers. According to the social practices view of literacy, any instance of recitation is a literacy event involving the use of textual information that is not available in the event (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Heath, 1983). This still leaves the use of prayer books an optional practice for Catholics. In one of my home visits to an Anglican, I witnessed the Anglicans' creative prayer because I was part of the prayer:

I was offered a cup of tea with some boiled maize. Before we could start taking the tea, my host invites me to a short prayer asking God to bless the meal before us. His prayer is spontaneous including asking God to ensure that the meal provides me with energy to continue doing my work in the community to a successful conclusion.

(Field notes: 5th May 2005).

This and other findings already discussed in the section 6.6 dealing with Christianity and community literacy practices show how religious practices motivate the use of reading and writing within the community especially in the homes.

The third and last category consists of activities in which reading and writing is not inherent but could be useful in organising such activities. The greatest proportion of activities in rural homes falls under this category and these are cultivating and harvesting food crops for family sustenance, preparing the family meals, entertaining visitors, and the general day to day life in the homes. As already pointed out in Chapter Five, people cultivate their own food supply. Cultivation of food crops for domestic consumption is a home-based activity in which there is no use of reading and writing in rural life, even when labour is hired. According to local people, the money used for hiring extra labour is small and not worth recording.

Interviewer: *Do you record the money you use for paying the people you hire to work in your crop fields?*

Jane: *No, with these small crop fields involving little money I do not record the expenditure. However, if I am giving the money to another person to use for opening up the field then I may record.*

(Interview with Jane conducted in Luo on 25th May 2005).

This is because the local people in this community think that reading and writing should be for big and well-organised activities operating at a scale whose information cannot be handled mentally. Domestic activities, such as cultivating food for family consumption, are small and do not justify record keeping, because the size of this transaction (activity)

means that every aspect of it could be handled mentally, based on the community's interpersonal social values of trust between a few people. This still goes to prove that the single most important use of literacy is to aid memory and ensure that contracts are correctly written and thereby binding. The other area is that of accountability in situations where a third party is involved. This is a situation where the mutual trust becomes difficult to sustain, and it is like entering the public domain. In that case, the need for recording is brought about by the existence of the third party who may need to be monitored or asked to account for the money that was given to them.

The use of literacy is also restricted by culturally based information. For example, cultivating and harvesting food crops for domestic consumption is based on traditional knowledge that is handed down from one generation to the next through word of mouth. This is an unwritten knowledge that is not stored in the form of texts in books but in the form of cultural practices and ways of life. Recourse to this knowledge base does not require literacy.

Preparing the family meal is also based on the local culturally accumulated and learnt methods of cooking. That is, the process of preparing a meal for the family is based on traditional knowledge of cooking passed down from one generation to the other through word of mouth and practice. Therefore, literacy practices related to cooking like using a recipe are non-existent. This is unlike in 'modern' society where the exercise of cooking involves reading written recipes and labels (relating to storage etc.) on foodstuff bought from the supermarkets (see Barton & Hamilton, 1998). The Acholi, to the best of my knowledge, have a variety of cooking methods that, if written down, would yield a whole cookbook. However, this vital cooking information is yet to be written down. It is all written and read from cultural practices of the people (see Prinsloo, 2005 for this concept of literacy).

This provides insight into how the persistence of orally based cultural practices in most aspects of rural community life restricts the use of reading and writing in everyday community life. Dependence on culturally based knowledge that depends on oral modes of transmission and memory reduces the usefulness of reading and writing in everyday rural community life. This is made worse by the fact that cultural knowledge has been kept out of the school system that could have encouraged their documentation and transmission through literate means. That would change the knowledge base from oral cultural practices and modes of transmission that depend on the use of memory to written cultural practices based on the use of books.

There is no practice of recording when a particular crop field is planted, weeded, or how much of a particular crop was harvested during the year. All these practices that could be good for monitoring crop growth and ensuring good yields through proper record management are foreign to the tradition of subsistence farming common in rural life in Bweyale. On the other hand, the planting of non-traditional crops like cabbage involves some printed information. These written instructions are printed on the sachet containing the seeds. However, in spite of the written information, planting of cabbages and eggplants has become common knowledge over the years. Therefore, even though the seeds come in sachets with printed information on them, people no longer refer to them, and they are now passing this information on to the next generation through oral means and practice. (See Figure 46 below):



Figure 46: A nursery bed of eggplants near a swamp.

This shows that literacy is only used to obtain new information that is not yet well internalised and disseminated in the community. Once a piece of knowledge has been internalised, people resort to oral and practical methods of transferring such knowledge from one group to the next.

The greatest proportion of the family food is harvested from family fields and stored in family granaries and does not require the use of a 'harvesting/granary list,' as it were. This is unlike in the developed world or urban areas in Uganda where most families buy their food stock from the supermarket or market. Buying food from the market in rural community life is a supplementary activity involving one or two items, like a kilo of meat or three pieces of fish, required to support or break the monotony of the domestic food supply from the family crop fields. Likewise, because the family food supply is grown and harvested by the family from the fields, they do not come with detailed cooking instructions and other information like expiry dates to be checked as in Lancaster (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) or Canada (Klassen, 1991). What this reveals is that part of the

domestic lifestyle in rural life in developing countries does not call for the use of literacy in the same way as it does with communities living in developed countries or urban areas in Uganda. To explain it differently, it is like having two cultures in a home with one side literate and the other non-literate. This argument is supported by Mace (1998, p. 12) who argues that to become literate, “means to achieve a place within a literate culture”. Therefore if the culture is not literate then becoming literate would be difficult since it will be unsupported.

6.9 Personal reading and writing for pleasure and leisure

Personal literacy here refers to what a person reads and writes during their own free time out of their own motivation and not because of some outside and extrinsic motivation like religious practices or participation in livelihoods. I created this category to enable me to consider the other things that people read and write in rural community life that are not related to the major domains of literacy discussed above.

There are times when people simply read or write for other reasons that are not related to their work, religion, education and personal communication needs. These reasons include reading to pass the time: as Tumuboine, a shopkeeper said, *“I read to pass time,”* and to tell stories to friends, *“That is why people come here they just want stories from me. I tell them this has happened this and this and this”* (Interview with Tumuboine conducted in English on 24th September 2005). Odong, the police officer, reads to keep up to date with current affairs. He said, *“When you have a coin, you can buy newspapers and read to know what is going on in the country”* (Interview with Odong conducted in English on 22nd December 2005). Bakayeka, a secondary school teacher, reads to get inspiration. *“What I have discovered is that books contain a lot of stories. Others can give you good ways of life, others can give you advice, and tell you the stories of other people and how they are doing the things in their lives and how they are going through all the problems they were facing in life. So that one gives me real dignity and confidence”* (Interview with Bakayeka conducted in English on 8th January 2006). Dagupazi, a secondary school teacher, said he reads, *“To know how to live in this environment”* (Interview with Dagupazi conducted in English on 17th November 2005).

Although people generally complained about the difficulties of obtaining reading materials, what they read most to pass time, keep up to date with current affairs, and gain inspiration from includes newspapers, novels (storybooks), old magazines and the bible.

Aside from religious texts and schoolbooks, newspapers were the most read and the most readily available reading materials in this community. In a casual conversation with

Okello, the newspaper vendor, he told me that 25 copies of the New Vision, 20 copies of the Daily Monitor, and 10 copies of Rupiny (this is a Luo language newspaper) are delivered to Bweyale every morning from Kampala. These newspapers cover national and international news on politics, sport and entertainment. The news in the country includes what they call regional news for example news from Northern Uganda or Western Uganda.



Figure 47: One of the national newspapers read in Bweyale.

The number of newspapers that are delivered to Bweyale is low compared to the relatively large population. This means that only a few people and institutions like the police station buy and share newspapers with friends and colleagues. Some people keep up with the news by reading older copies that they can borrow from their friends or buy cheaply. Others simply come and browse the news headlines on the paper when it is still on the newsstand. Owot, a school dropout who loves to read, pays a small fee to be allowed to read the newspaper and leave it there. This is, “*Because I don’t have money to buy newspapers, very early in the morning I come here with 200/=.* You have to read what is there and leave it there”⁶⁴ (Interview with Owot conducted in English on 24th September 2005). Some people like the one Bakayeka, a secondary school teacher, said, “*I only buy newspapers occasionally when I have some money or I have seen an interesting topic*” (Interview with Bakayeka conducted in English on 8th January 2006). The problem of money limits people, including institutions like the local Police, from buying newspaper. “*The problem is....the office is not able to purchase newspapers. However, it is now what? You personally, when you have a coin you can buy and read to know what is going on in the country*” (Interview with Odong conducted in English on

⁶⁴ This is a common practice that people who cannot afford to buy and keep a newspaper use to get access to newspapers. Sometimes they buy old copies at a cheaper rate

22nd December 2005). This confirms what Glanz (2001a) identified as one of the factors that restrict literacy use in a community. Figure 48 shows the local news-stands with people browsing through the pages of the newspaper for pleasure and following up on news.



Figure 48: People browsing newspapers at a newsstand and a newspaper vendor.

Only a few participants in this study read storybooks or novels to pass time, and get inspiration. To find them I used “snowball sampling” (Bryman, 2001, p. 98) (See section 3.5.7 above for details of this sampling method). I first asked Lolyong, the bookseller, to identify two people whom he knew read storybooks for leisure. He identified Owot, who then identified Tumuboine, a shopkeeper, as another person who reads for leisure. During his interview, Tumuboine, a shopkeeper, said, “*I read any book I come across*”. The books he had read during the year included, “*In God’s name*”, “*The day of the Jackal*” and “*The mustard seed*”. As a shopkeeper, Tumuboine reads his books in-between serving customers who come to his shop, and at times, he reads at night, (Interview with Tumuboine conducted in English on 24th September 2005). Odong, a police officer, reported reading “*Mine boy*”, and books by West African writers. Lolyong, the bookseller, said that he sometimes gives people opportunities to read some of the magazines he is selling. In front of his bookshop, he has a bench where people sit and read as much as they would like to read, and buy the ones that they would like to take with them. Most of the reading materials Lolyong sells are school textbooks and magazines (see Figure 5 and 7 above).

Getting storybooks is not easy for these rural community leisure readers. For example, although Tumuboine, a shopkeeper, is interested in reading non-work or religious materials, he said he has problems getting materials to read. If he goes to Hoima town, which is about 120 kilometres from Bweyale, then he can take that opportunity to look for books or borrow from friends with whom he shares the few available storybooks.

Almost nobody writes for pleasure in Bweyale. For the one year I spent in Bweyale, I only chanced across one person, Otim who writes for pleasure. Otim is a secondary

school leaver, working as an untrained part-time primary school music teacher. He is only hired when there is preparation for music competitions. I chanced on his work when I saw some books on a table in a restaurant. I asked the receptionist who the owner of the books was and I was given his name. I then requested to meet him. He even buys exercise books for his writing. He has a unique format for writing, which consists of drawing circles in his exercise book and writing his stories in the middle of the circles. When I read his work, they looked like poems to me but when I asked him, he told me they were songs that he is composing. He also wrote short stories of some events that have taken place in his life, like journal writing (see Figure 49 below).

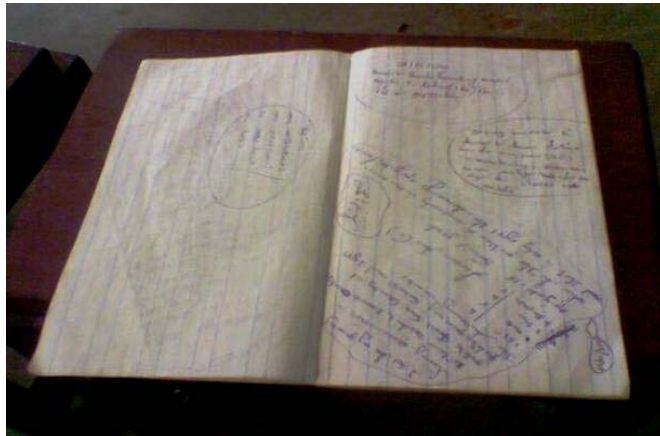


Figure 49: The book of a writer with writing in a unique format.

Some people kept personal notebooks that they would not let me see. However, Mijumbi (a peasant farmer) who was willing to tell me what he records in his personal notebook, which he keeps in his shirt pocket, said this, “*Like you have come to visit me now, I note it down that Okere has come to visit me with his friend on this date and he came to do this. That is what I note down in my book. If somebody has died, I also record that so and so died on this day*” (Interview with Mijumbi conducted in Luo on 4th October 2005).

An examination of a scrap piece of notebook that had already been thrown away by an unknown owner, revealed some of the things people write in their personal notebooks. The notebook was written in both English and Kinyankole (one of the local languages spoken in Bweyale). Most of what was written in this notebook was names and addresses of people and telephone numbers. Some calculations were done on a few pages (I think the person was calculating money). A careful examination of this notebook shows that the owner was a cattle seller, because the English statement had something to do with selling cows (See Figure 50 below).

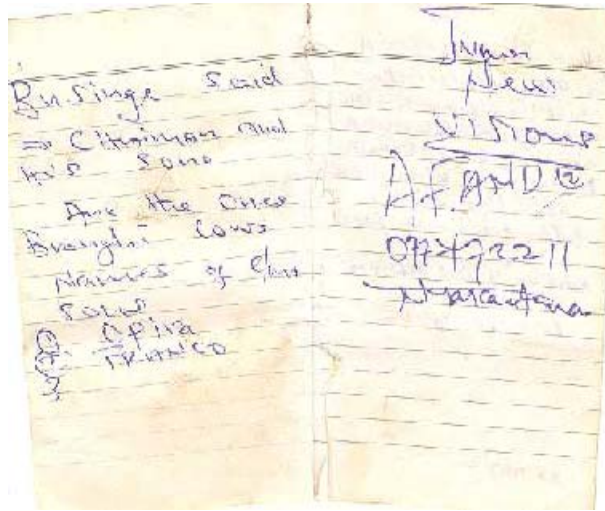


Figure 50: A page from a personal notebook.

What is written in this notebook is, “Busingye said Chairman and his sons are the ones brought cows: Names of chairman’s sons Opira and Franco”. On the other page, the name of a newspaper, ‘New Vision’, is written with the word *AFANDE* this is how a soldier of a lower rank addresses a soldier of higher rank in Uganda. It is the equivalent of ‘Sir’ or ‘Ma’am’ used in the military. This is followed by a telephone number. The rest of the notebook contained names of people, their addresses and telephone numbers, and calculations related to money matters.

From these two personal notebooks, including Sarah’s chits of paper, and other pieces of paper that I collected around the community, I concluded that generally people record three things in their life: telephone numbers, social events and thirdly, financial calculations relating to the money that they are earning or spending in their life.

6.10 The literacy practices of non-literate people

Although a number of references have already been made to the literacy practices of non-literate people, in this section I focus on and give significance to the ways people who are not able to read and write access texts or written information. This is because how non-literate people deal with texts is completely different from how the literate people interact with texts.

There are many ways in which non-literate people deal with situations involving literacy in their everyday lives (see Gibson, 1996). As Levine (1986) argues, print is a supportive feature of many social situations and there are many replacements and ways of avoiding or dealing with it. Similarly, Fingeret (1983) acknowledges that non-literate people see reading and writing as only two of the skills and knowledge resources that they need for

their everyday life. Klassen, who investigated this behaviour of non-literate people amongst the poorly educated Latin American newcomers in Canada, termed this “print managing practices” (1991, p. 45). What follows are the different everyday print managing strategies of non-literate adults.

One of the ways non-literate adults deal with print in their everyday life is by ignoring it. When I asked Jane, a non-literate homemaker, if she reads the signboards and signposts when she goes to the trading centre this is what she said, “*I don’t read them because I know most places in the trading centre. Even if I don’t know the place, there are many people whom I can ask and they can give me directions to any place and once I have known a particular place I will not need to be directed again*” (Interview with Jane conducted in Luo on 27th March 2005). This confirms what Levine (1986) states above that non-literate people have many ways of dealing with texts including avoiding them.

Okellowange used different tactics that included disguising his inability to read and write. However, in spite of that, Okellowange owns and runs a shop. His basic strength and confidence lies in his numeracy, which enables him to calculate his gains mentally. Without much hesitation, he told me how he knows that he is not making loss from his shop operation:

This is how I get to know, you see like this salt. We buy it at Ushs 2,500; we will get a profit of Ushs 500. The big type of salt, we buy it at Ushs 15,000 or 14,500, we will earn a profit of Ushs 2,600. That juice we buy at Ushs 6000 and we earn a profit of 1,500 from it. Sugar is priced at Ushs 80,000 a bag. They tell us that the price of sugar is getting better now. We were selling half a kilogramme at 800, so one kilo will be at Ushs 1,600. Then that box of biscuits we get it at Ushs 20,000 and we have a profit of Ushs 4000, from it.

(Interview with Okellowange conducted in Luo on 22nd September 2005).

I was able to note two things during the interview with Okellowange. Firstly, he uses a lot of mental memory to calculate his profit. It looks as though for every item he buys, he just decides what he should earn from it, and charges the price accordingly. This study confirms Klassen’s (1991) study in Toronto, where he discovered that the non-literate adults in his study depended on their memory to master street names. Secondly, Okellowange differentiates similar products by their packaging or size. For example, “*The big type of salt*” that, “*Box of big juice*”. Sometimes he also uses the actual names of the products like, “*‘Biscuit Max’, ‘Glucose’, and ‘Cheers’.*” When I asked him how he learns the names of his products, he said:

Interviewer: *How do you know that this biscuit is called Max?*

Okellowange: *I talk with fellow traders. There is no law that stops you from asking, what is in this box? Then the trader will tell you and all you do is to commit it to memory.*

(Interview with Okellowange conducted in Luo on 22nd September 2005).

This is similar to what Klassen (1991) explains in his findings, i.e. that for print that cannot be ignored, the non-literate research participants in his study used personal memory codes like mnemonics, logos, and format recognition to deal with them. This enables the non-literate persons to notice forms as in the case of Okellowange. Klassen calls this the “formulaic nature,” of literacy (Klassen, 1991, p. 46). These are the perceptual structures of the words and sentences in print. It is like recognising photographs. This finding also confirms those of Gibson (1996) on three South African farms in the Western Cape. One of the workers in the study admitted to committing most of his information to memory, and like Okellowange in my study, the worker was able to undertake all his responsibilities well in spite of his practical inability to personally read and write.

When he goes to buy his merchandise, Okellowange does not declare himself as non-literate for fear of being cheated. Instead, he uses his well-developed mental ability to calculate what he should be paying for his purchases and quietly reconciles his totals with the wholesalers’ totals. For example, he explains that:

When I go into a wholesaler’s shop for example, I will ask, ‘How much is a carton of that type of bar soap?’ Then he will say, ‘Ushs 13,000’. I will then buy a bottle of soda to give me time to work out mentally how much I have to pay for the four boxes I have planned to buy. I will mentally calculate it like this, ‘if one box is Ushs, 13,000 how much will two boxes cost’. After working out the figure for the two boxes, I will double it to get what I have to pay for four boxes, and give my orders for them. I will then ask the wholesaler to calculate the total cost of the four boxes using his calculator. If he comes up with a different figure from the one I have already worked out mentally, I will say, ‘That is not correct, looks like there is some cheating there.’ I will then ask him to work it out again until I am convinced that his figures are correct. Then I can pay for what I ordered.

(Interview with Okellowange conducted in Luo on 22nd September 2005).

To deal with the literacy tasks in his life, Okellowange depends on other people, whom he uses as his literacy mediators (Barton, 1994, Malan, 1996). He uses other people to read for him without letting them know that he is not able to do so himself. For example, he says, “*The people who normally come searching for stolen items are people who are educated and able to read, so I give them the receipts one at a time and ask them to read it for themselves. If they read it, I will then show them the item as displayed in my shop.*” He explains that he makes it look as though his interest is to let them read the receipt themselves. The purpose of doing all that, according to him, is to avoid being cheated.

Much of the reading and writing non-literate people do, using their formulaic literacy skills, requires being able to identify and master the formats and forms of the different documents that they regularly use, locating where similar information should be recorded, copying from one paper to the other and identifying where they should place their personal marks or 'signature'. The last task will be recognising where the completed form or document is to be delivered and the expected response after handing it in. Some of Klassen's research participants used these skills to deal with bureaucratic literacies in their everyday life (Klassen, 1991). These are not conventional strategies but personal and individually developed strategies. However, it is interesting to note that non-literate people in Bweyale and Canada employ similar skills to deal with the literacy tasks that they encounter in their life. I think this shows that literacy has some common properties that evoke similar patterns of behaviour and responses in people with similar problems related to literacy, across different cultures. This realisation is a challenge to the context-based model of literacy.

The use of social networks and literacy mediators is another strategy used by non-literate people to manage print-mediated situations. Social networks and literacy mediation have already been discussed above in Chapter Two under concepts in the social practices theory of literacy. However, what needs to be added is that the persons that are recruited as literacy mediators must be judged by the non-literate people as trustworthy, understanding, and willing to help and thus become part of the non-literate person's network of support. In Bweyale, Sarah recruited my services to confirm a bad letter written by her son-in-law because I am a relative and perceived to be trustworthy (see field note in section 6.8). From his study, Klassen (1991) gave the example of one of his research participants using only one bank teller to handle his/her banking transactions. In most cases, people who are recruited as literacy mediators or as members of social networks are close friends, family members and trusted professionals. On some occasions however, help is specifically solicited from strangers (unbiased) who are carefully selected from personal impressions or who are seen to be available.

6.11 Access to reading materials

Apart from the signboards, and the reading and writing related to livelihoods, religion, and school education, accessing other reading materials is very difficult in Bweyale for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is no public library from which books can be borrowed in Bweyale. None of the schools has libraries. The only school with a library is in the Sudanese refugee camp and is far from Bweyale. The nearest public library is in Masindi town, which is about 60 kilometres away from Bweyale. Tumuboine, the shopkeeper,

said, he cannot read as many books as he would love to because, *“It depends because at times you don’t find them. You may read a book, you finish it and you don’t get another one”*. Sometimes he gets his books from Hoima that is 120 kilometres away from Bweyale. He does that when he goes to visit his family. This absence of a public library could be one of the factors that makes it seem that people are not interested in reading for leisure. However, whatever books they get, those who like reading like Owot (the school dropout), Tumuboine (the shopkeeper) and Odong (the police officer), lend it amongst themselves to their friends.

Secondly, there are also only two bookshops selling mostly school textbooks and old magazines (See Figures 5, 7 above and 51 below). A person like Lolyong, a bookseller, in a bid to motivate people to buy his books sometimes uses his bookshop as a kind of library. He said, *“Others come, they pick a book and I give them a place. They sit down to read the books. I allow them to read freely. I don’t ask for money, I tell them if they are interested they can pick and sit down to read...”* (Interview with Lolyong conducted in English on 23rd September 2005).



Figure 51: Display of reading materials on sale in the open market.

Books, newspapers, and magazines are displayed outside the bookshops on market days for people to come and buy. The people who buy these materials use them for a number of other purposes in addition to those who actually buy them to read. Some people buy them for wrapping. Those with good pictures are used as decorative wallpaper.

Thirdly, people do not have enough money to buy even newspapers. Lyolyong, the bookseller,” said, *“What I would say is that people in Bweyale are generally lacking money to buy books”* (Interview with Lolyong conducted in English on 23rd September 2005). Because of lack of money, they are not able to buy books. Therefore, poverty is

one of the reasons why people are not able to access reading materials in rural community life.

Fourthly, there are no local language storybooks in Bweyale because local language writing is not common in Uganda outside Buganda. Most of the available materials are in English and according to Lolyong, some of his customers, although they come wanting to buy some of the cheap books, find difficulties speaking English and this discourages them from buying the books that are largely written in English. He said, “*When I try to talk to them in English, the way they speak their English is not very good*” (Interview with Lolyong conducted in English on 23rd September 2005). Therefore, the fact that most books are in English limits the access to written information for those who are not able to speak English.

With all these problems of accessing materials it is difficult to say that rural people are not interested in reading for pleasure/leisure. It would be interesting to find out how rural people would respond if the right kinds of material were made available to rural people at a place and price that is affordable.

6.12 Literacy for leisure activities

People also use literacy for leisure activities like recording the scores of a game of cards, played with a minimum of two people. Literacy is also used for organising participation in the game. This was the most common game played around in the villages and in the trading centres. This game is generally played by young men between the ages of 15 and 30. The game itself involves reading numbers and letters on cards. At the start of this game, the card is distributed to the players randomly and they are expected to play all the cards in their hand. The one who plays all the cards in his hand first is the winner. The winner is awarded the highest score of Zero the loser is the player who remains with the highest total sum of all the cards. The whole game involves both adding up totals and reading cards with different values attached to them. It is a very complex literacy practice. Literacy is also involved in recording the score of the game as shown in Figure 52 below.

KK	OJ	OK	OC	NY	OI	JO	OR	KK	OG
34	54	70	-	49	20	60	50	62	
88	88	90	46	195	196	187	50	141	
155	155	307	51	248	196	177	175	234	
102	249	107	307	90	291	252	221	284	
170	283	228	307	90	291	252	221	284	
175	332	255	247	150	341	362	241	269	
237	377	329	247	174	364	384	300	274	
241	409	329	297	174	390	349	325	399	
286	409	352	408	373	410	375	432	393	
370	469	352	Out	357	462	401	452	416	
410	469	400	436	Out	401	494	435	416	
421	409	418	430	401	499	Out	416	416	
421	428	440	493	401	Out	416	416	416	
431	428	494	493	444	416	416	416	416	
Out	King	Out	492	416	416	416	416	416	
OJ	KK	IO	493	416	416	416	416	416	

Figure 52: Record of game of cards.

In Figure 52 above, the record of each player is entered in a column labelled with the initials of their names like KK, OJ, and OK as seen on top of the page. I only got access to these records so I do not know the names that the initials stand for and it is that which makes this record a literacy practice. To enter this score a person needs to know how the scores are calculated and how the winner is determined. This requires a person to have knowledge of the value of the different cards especially those that are provided with negotiated values like ‘A’ ‘J’ and ‘Q’. The scores for each round of the game are recorded in a row under the name of each player, while the record of each player is recorded in a column labelled with the player’s initials. The score for each round of the game is added on to the previous score. The player with the lowest score is the winner while a player with the largest score is the loser who is eliminated. This elimination goes on until only two people are left and the person who wins that last contest is declared the overall winner, and the game starts all over again. Other games, like darts, also use literacy in a similar way to record the scores and control participation in the game.

6.13 Other evidence of literacy in pictures

Part of my data collection methods included what is described as documentary photography (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Harper, 1994). In this section, I present more evidence of literacy use in the community in selected pictures. Note the use of English in public notices.

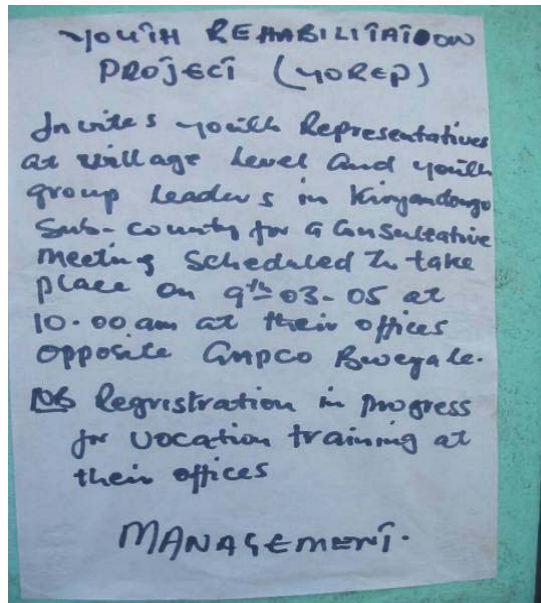


Figure 53: A letter inviting youth representatives for a meeting.

Figure 53 is a photo of a letter written in English posted in public to invite youth representative for a meeting. This show how literacy is used for official public communication and organising social and economic activities in rural community life.



Figure 54: Literacy in organising social events in the community.

The two photos in Figure 54 were taken at one event to show evidence of literacy use during a social function in the community (note the visible pen and papers in both photos). During this social event, literacy was used in a variety of other ways including delivering public speeches and scheduling activities. The activities being scheduled included dances and the presentation of gifts by different social and economic groups in the community.



Figure 55: Writing to identify group and oneself during a social event.

The different social and economic groups presenting their dances to entertain the guests during this social event also used literacy to identify themselves in relation to other groups. They did this by wearing T-shirts with their names printed on them, and wrote their group names on their dancing headgear (see Figure 55 above) and on flags. They were happy to be photographed hoping to appear in the national media with the intention of broadcasting their presence in the social event and the community at large.



Figure 56: Literacy use in labelling gift for a royal visitor.

Figure 56 shows a unique blend of literacy use. The sheep is a gift to a Paramount Chief who was visiting. The wrapping of the sheep with a piece of cloth is to symbolise it as a gift and show respect for the Chief. The leopard skin is to symbolise the sheep as royal gift and the writing on a piece of paper hanging from the side of the sheep is bearing the name of the group giving the sheep to the Paramount Chief of the Acholi People. In this, literacy is part of many other symbolic signs put together to communicate a message relating to giving a royal gift. The most interesting distinction in this combination of

symbols is that literacy is appearing in English. This confirms the findings of Fishman (1991) among the Amish in North America who use literacy in ways that are specific to their culture as Amish people.

Generally, most of the pictures above in this section 6.13 were taken during a community function organised to welcome a traditional Paramount Chief of the Acholi people who came from Gulu to visit his people in Bweyale. On that day, there were a lot of speeches, and gifts being handed over to the Paramount chief who had come from Gulu to visit the Acholi who have taken refuge in Bweyale.

Other evidence of literacy not related to the function above includes photos of graffiti on the walls of their grass-thatched huts written for pleasure by children and young people (See Figure 57 below). One of the examples of graffiti seems to have been motivated by the Independence Day's mood. (The photo was taken 4 days after the celebration of Uganda's Independence Day that is marked on October 9th every year). Below the statement of "INDIPENDENT DAY" is another motivation, religion, it reads, "I LOVE YOU GOD". This shows two powerful forces in the rural community's life, politics and religion.



Figure 57: Graffiti on the outside walls of two different huts.

In both cases, English is used and it confirms the hegemony and dominance of English as the language of literacy in people's perception of reading and writing. Note the spelling of independent. In Standard English this should read, "Independence day".

Literacy is used in rural community life in organising social and economic activities in the community and by both children and adults in many ways. One notable in all these forms of literacy use is the choice of English as the language of literacy.

6.14 The value of literacy

The value of literacy refers to the perceived benefits that people have about literacy and the importance people attach to literacy, the power, pleasure and difficulties of writing (Barton, 1994; Barton & Padmore, 1991). This includes the attitude and behaviours

people associate with literacy (Lankshear, 1999). Following Klassen's (1991) classifications, these values can be positive or negative ideology people hold about literacy. Negative or positive values come from the negative or positive experiences relating to literacy respectively. An example of a negative experience could be embarrassing failure or ridicule of performance at school relating to reading and writing. When people talk about literacy, they express ideas that reflect the value they hold for literacy. In this study, determining the value of literacy was possible through a careful analysis of what people said about literacy during the interviews.

Generally, all the participants, both literate and non-literate, had positive attitudes towards and placed high value on literacy. They see literacy as something that is important and beneficial in their lives in terms of its functional benefits like managing everyday life, communication, being informed and being able to socialise with friends. However, both groups expressed sentiments about literacy based on their personal experiences. Those who are not literate experience literacy-related difficulties in their life including quiet stigmatisation by sections of the community because of their inability to read and write. In this section, I explore the values people hold about literacy in their talk about literacy. In discussing the values of literacy, I was conscious that literacy is often conflated with education in people's thinking and this makes it difficult to distinguish if the value attributed to literacy is not coming from what they think about education. I will start with the positive values before moving on to the negative ones.

Starting with the positive values related to literacy, Bakayeka, a secondary school teacher, has a very positive view about literacy. He sees it as something that enables him to do his work and communicate widely with the community at large.

I put them (adverts) on the walls, I put them on signboards, I can put them on trees, just like that and there are some people who want, I just give them direct, they go with it to their places. This is how I communicate to the community around, and that one works perfectly to advertise my school. So writing is very, very, important. So writing and reading is very important, and if you go to school and you don't like to read and write my friend you are nothing. It helps you to make decision.

(Interview with Bakayeka conducted in English on 8th January 2006).

According to Ibra, literacy is important because it makes doing business easier. That is, it makes its easier for one to engage in the livelihood activities of their life. *"I would face many difficulties, a lot of difficulties, and I am seeing the value of knowing how to read and write in the business as per now"* (Interview with Ibra conducted in English on 16th May 2005). According to Ibra, literacy enables a person to understand many things better:

Yes, it is very important. I have colleagues who have money but they have not gone to school, but in case of anything, you find they call, they have to call me to stand in them for them and if somebody comes here even those who bring things, they first come here because they want somebody who can understand very fast.

(Interview with Ibra conducted in English on 16th May 2005).

Literacy and understanding very fast (better cognitive process) has a contestable relationship as the literature shows. As I have stated in section 6.3 above, going to school is seen as synonymous with learning how to read and write. Likewise developing better understanding takes place in schools too. Therefore, in that case, I am not aware if Ibra was thinking about education or literacy. This is an example of the kind of difficulties that come up when making distinctions between the benefits of literacy and education. Therefore, in the above case, its not clear if this ability to “*understand very fast*” relates to education or literacy. However, when I asked him if what he learnt at school is the same as what he is doing in his business, he says:

“No, they are not the same, they are different, however, it’s the same knowledge transferred, and I am using the same knowledge, applying it in writing here. The one I got from school, I am applying it”

(Interview with Ibra was conducted in English on 16th May 2005).

It is not very clear what kind of knowledge Ibra is referring to, but certainly, it should be the knowledge of reading and writing since we were talking about literacy. It is also possible that Ibra is referring to a well-developed mental capacity, in terms of the skills of reasoning and being able to “*understand very quickly,*” which he associates with going to school and sees that as the same as being able to read and write. Ibra’s statement can be interpreted to mean better cognitive development. This is the contested benefit that Goody (1968a) and Ong (1982) attribute to literacy, and what Scribner and Cole (1981) attribute to schooling. This can be interpreted as evidence of the dominant perception of literacy in rural thinking of literacy. It confirms the discussion in 6.5.3 above about how knowledge, school and literacy are so embedded in each other that it is difficult to distinguish the nuances between them (see also conclusion in section 6.5.6 above).

Another perceived value of being able to read and write is that it saves time, because you will not waste a lot of time looking for a person to help you read your personal documents for you. Kweya, a *Bodaboda* rider said,

Being literate is important because you will not waste much time looking for a friend to help you read your documents. Sometimes what is written is your personal secret, which if you take to your friend he will get to know about that personal secret.. Therefore, you should be able to read, write, and have knowledge to know that this thing is like this.

(Interview with Kweya conducted in Luo on 9th July 2005).

There is a lot in this statement in addition to saving time, like independence, and being able to keep personal secrets that I will deal with later. Therefore, in relation to time, people who are not able to read and write see people who are literate as able to do more in situations that demands reading and writing. The statement also reveals that situations that demand easy and quick access to information are important enough for Kweya to have mentioned them. While this is a positive attribute of literacy it is a source of negative sentiment for those who are not able to read and write because they get frustrated and embarrassed having to look for support and experience unnecessary delays. Similar findings were also noted by Barton and Padmore (1991) in Britain and Klassen (1991) in North America.

Whatever he meant, Kweya's statement is revealing when he says, "*You should be able to read and write, and have knowledge to know that this thing is like this.*" Could he be saying that, it was not enough just to know how to read and write without knowing something to read and write about? I interpreted this as an important addition that could be coming from his experience as a person with limited literacy skill. This is because most reading and writing like that, which occurs in hospitals or at the police station or the revenue office, in his case, are based on different ways of knowing or Discourses (Gee, 1990), which are not accessible without the "*knowledge to know that this thing is like this.*" Alternatively, connecting this statement with what Mohammed told me about the value of reading and writing and school knowledge (see, section 6.3 above), and Ibra's "*understand very fast*" (section 6.11), I conclude that Kweya, like Mohammed and Ibra, was referring to well-developed mental capabilities or school based ways of thinking, which he associates with literacy. This could be saying that it is only literacy with a sound knowledge base that is valuable. Although these two are different, according to Scribner and Cole (1981), the strong link between literacy and school in people's perception makes it difficult to make the distinction.

Kweya also talked about keeping personal secrets as what makes the ability to read and write important. "*Literacy is important because.... sometimes what are written are your personal secrets, which if you take to your friend he will get to know about that personal secret*". Therefore, literacy helps you to safeguard your personal secrets. Stated in a different way this value of literacy is that it enables direct access to information without having to go through a third party. This is based on the argument that, if you are able to read, you will not need to go to another person with your personal documents. In doing that, people will not be able to get access to your personal information and details. That

will then protect you from being exposed and becoming vulnerable. This confirms Klassen's (1991) findings in Canada.

People also value literacy because it facilitates personal communication at a distance with friends who can help you when you are in some difficulties. Peko said, *"You can get into problems and if the person who is to help you is staying in another place, if you are not able to read and write you will not be able to reach such a person for help"* (Interview with Peko conducted in Luo on 21st May 2005). The other angle to this understanding of literacy is that literacy can enable you to put your ideas in writing and present it to other people who can provide you with support to address your problems. Therefore being able to read and write helps to mobilise people wherever they may be to help you with your problems.

People also express negative experience about lack of literacy skills. For example, according to Okere, who is a literate tailor, literacy *"is important because if you don't know (how to read and write) it is the same as a person who is blind ...It's very painful if you are not literate"*. This is because people who are not able to read and write are not able to "see" all the written information that is in the environment like writing on signposts and counting money:

For example, if money is changed abruptly, they will not be able to tell how much a particular bank note is worth. They cannot do that; they must take time to learn or it should be someone else to come and tell them that this shilling is worth this much. Even a small child who is able to read and write can do that, that this is one thousand shilling, this is five hundred that is when they will get it into their head because for those people God has given them very good brains that cannot forget information.

(Interview with Okere conducted in Luo on 25th May 2005).

The value of literacy is also seen in terms of the opportunities to use it. Josephine, who is an 'A' level school dropout, said literacy is *"important, only that since I am not able to get anything to do with it, I can see it as something which is not very important to me, because there is nothing which I can do with it. Nevertheless, to me, as I had planned it, I find it very important"* (Interview with Josephine conducted in Luo on 21st May 2005).

Although still maintaining that being literate is valuable, Josephine sees the value of literacy in terms of what it can do for her. She is therefore disappointed that she is not able to use her reading and writing capabilities because of limited reading and writing opportunities in the village. Josephine has very high expectations for the use of her reading and writing skills. She sees it as a waste that she is able to read and write and yet cannot read and write as much as she would have expected to do. These negative values are felt by people who are sufficiently literate, when they are not able to experience the expectation they had for being able to read and write. This works differently when

compared to Klassen's findings in which he maintains that the painful disadvantage associated with lack of literacy is the lack of "access to socially acceptable employment" (Klassen, 1991, p. 50). In this case, the lack of socially acceptable employment causes negative sentiments for those who are literate. The point is, they are unemployed although they are literate.

Kumakech, a non-literate man, said he lost his business because he was not able to detect that his business partner was cheating him. He himself could not cope with the high speed needed in dealing with customers when they were selling their products because he could not work out quickly the balance to be given out. In the process, they would lose money when selling their products. He lamented, *"If I was able to read and write, I would be doing business now, I would be working, and I would not be like this now, if some one gave me Ushs. 20,000, what balance should I give back, you cannot know that"* (Interview with Kumakech conducted in Luo on 27th May 2005).

There is nothing radically new in this finding because lack of literacy is known world wide as making non-literate people susceptible to being cheated (see Klassen, 1991). However, when you analyse Kumakech's perception of literacy against Josephine's above, it provides a very interesting revelation of how different statuses of literacy reflect on people's perception of the condition of their life. Put simply, Kumakech sees his joblessness and inability to be successful as due to his lack of literacy, just like the participants in Klassen's (1991) study. Compare this to Josephine who blames unemployment for making her enhanced capabilities useless. For Josephine being literate has not helped her at all. In her case, literacy is only valuable if you have a socially acceptable job. Everyday use of literacy is of low value to her according to her expectation. She could be conflating literacy and education.

There were also emotional and psychological values associated with literacy, like low self-esteem through lack of access to diverse ways of expressing oneself. People, who are not literate, see themselves as people who are of lower grades. Muhammad, a non-literate security guard, said, *"What makes you a person is if you are able to do all that a normal person is expected to do"*. Part of this quotation was cited in section 6.5.1. (Interview with Muhammad conducted in Luo on 20th May 2005). Although Muhammad did not mention literacy, we were talking about literacy and what he meant was literacy because that is what he lacked and he thought that made him less of human being since, using his words again, he was not able to do all that a human being was expected to do. Of course, Muhammad was talking figuratively when he said not being literate makes a person less

of a human being. As Klassen (1991) argues, this kind of attitude to literacy comes about because of having internalised pejorative standards that are used to refer to non-literate people in society as people who are not functional. The same mentality drives functional literacy in Uganda.

In conclusion, all participants in this study, both literate and non-literate, agreed about the importance, value, and benefit of literacy in human life even if it is not immediately relevant. They see literacy as a necessary, personal skill, which enables a person to obtain work. However, it is not clear, because of the conflation of literacy and education, if the benefits attributed to literacy are because it is closely associated with education that people see as the key to modern life. Even when literacy is not immediately useful in one's everyday life, it is still seen as important because of the hope and confidence it provides. The comment from Mohammed summed it up well when he said, "*being able to read and write makes you a complete person*" (Interview with Mohammed conducted in Luo on 20th May 2005).

6.15 The use of English

One puzzling factor in literacy use in rural communities is the predominant use of English in all literacy domains. This was evident in almost all the sections of this presentation of findings. However, I have decided to pull out some examples, especially from the police, to illustrate some of the key arguments that are advanced for the use of English in rural community literacy. I would like to state upfront that it is not only at the police that the use of English is common. Evidence of using English as the language of literacy was presented in almost all the sections of this chapter. For example, farmers' literacy use in section 6.4.2.7, children writing graffiti on the walls of their village grass thatched huts (see Figure 57 above) and English was used on almost all the signboards except those of the traditional healer in section 6.4.1.1.

Notably, most writing is in English, I cannot talk of reading because reading is dictated by the language in which the materials are written. However, there are also instances when people have chosen to read in English rather than in the local language. For example, the reason for using English could plausibly be the multilingual nature of this community. However, the reasons some participants gave to explain this phenomenon is, in my opinion, simplistic. For example, Ibra, a trader, said, "*I use English because it is the official language of Uganda*" (Interview with Ibra conducted in English on 16th May 2005). The LC Leader of one of the villages said, "*I write to the police in English because the Officer in Charge is educated*" (Interview with Toodia conducted on 12th

December 2005). These observations are certainly simplistic because the intention of the adverts is providing information to the local population and not certifying the use of English as the official language, just as writing to the police officer is not to recognise his education but to communicate particular information. With the exception of public offices and official public documents, there is no law enforcing the use of English in Uganda. It is therefore at the writers' discretion to choose to use a particular language. I would not like to argue that the choice to use English is a deliberate and a conscious choice because it may be a false consciousness written in people's perception of reading and writing at the time of learning how to read and write in school. Therefore, there is much more to people's choice of English that needs to be understood through more focused research on the use of English in rural community literacy practices. This is what Herbert and Robinson (2001) recommended after their study of literacy and language choice in Northern Ghana that found English to be a dominant and powerful language for literacy. There are a number of reasons that could be adduced to explain the use of English even when its potential to serve a particular purpose is low. Firstly, I did not register any complaint from any interviewees about the use of English. According to my understanding the use of English is taken for granted and seen as the right and normal thing to do when writing. This is because literacy and English are so connected in people's perceptions that they see the two as one. This could be because most people who learn how to read and write do so from school where the language of instruction is English. Therefore, they come out of school thinking that writing should be done in English. Secondly, selling in shops and the like and advertising are seen as modern ways of earning a living with no history in the tradition of the local people. Likewise, English (in Uganda) is a modern language. Therefore, the two are seen as things that work together in the local imagination. English as a language of power and status also bestows status and power on its users or the contexts in which they are used. This perception is confirmed by its unchallenged existence in a community where its use is very limited in everyday oral communications. The multilingual nature of the Bweyale community could also motivate the use of English. It is also possible that people are simply copying official public communications and adverts by big companies that are often in English. Such use of English could be embedding it as a language for public written communication, which they copy unquestioningly. This partly agrees with Herbert and Robinson's (2001) findings in Northern Ghana, which concluded that the choice of language for use in an event depends on a number of factors such as the history of that event and the power of the language in relation to that event.

In communicating with the police, although it is not a requirement that they do so, the LC officials prefer to write in English even when all police stations in the country have arrangements in place to deal with letters written in local languages. They do that in spite of the difficulties they face when writing in English. This is how Odong, a police officer, explains this phenomenon:

They always try to communicate in English but at times with many difficulties because most of those people are not learned so much. So you get the English itself is not standard. Nevertheless, they always write in English. There is no rule for that, which is why police have very many tribes. They (are) free to write even in their local language, they are free to write in Kiswahili, but here (Bweyale) I always see them writing in English. However, in Kigumba and other places like Kampala where I have been working, they even write in Kiganda (Luganda). That is why we have a Muganda, we have an Alur, Lugbara all tribes (at a) Police station, to enable us what..., interpret those different languages.

(Interview with Odong conducted in English on 22nd December 2005).

On the contrary, the police are expected to write all their documents in English. This is because the Police Office (station) is a public office and they are by law expected to use the official language especially when writing. This is what Odong said,

For us we communicate in English. It is necessary that we should write in English because it is the official language. It is the language used in the country, and for easy communication to other bosses elsewhere. As we have bosses, to whom we channel files. From here, we channel files to Kiryadongo. Kiryadongo have to channel it to Masindi. It is necessary for us to use English, even in court, we testify in English. (Interpreters are for) other parties but for us strictly we speak in English... magistrate is supposed to put what ... his writing also in English, no any other language.

(Interview with Odong conducted in English on 22nd December 2005).

This requirement of using English is so emphasised that those who cannot read and write in English are disempowered and forced into dependency on translations by a third party.

When we are making your statement, we make it in English, you talk your language but I have to write it in English. Then explaining to you what I have written, if I do not understand Kinyoro, I have to call somebody who understands what, Kinyoro. Then he will read it for you then you have to get it in Kinyoro then you sign.

(Interview with Odong conducted in English on 22nd December 2005).

It would be understandable if the use of English in official circles were because written communication is intended to serve official purposes like court procedures. For example, as Odong explained, “*For easy communication to other bosses elsewhere, like we have bosses from here we channel files to Kiryadongo, Kiryadongo have to channel it to Masindi*”. However, this argument is contradicted by the use of English in charts that are intended for teaching the community (see Figure 58 below).



Figure 58: Police community education charts written in English.

The explanation of Odong provided for the use of English in community education posters was now different. He said:

Those charts are written in English because translation to all those languages it is not very easy, but Police is trying to put them generally, in Luo, in Kiganda they are putting them. Where they are few, you can get some few in Luo and some few in Kiganda. Yes, they are trying but you can see it has not yet reach all tribes because it is costly and other things. It has not they have not manage to finish all the tribe in Uganda. Nevertheless, they are trying.

(Interview with Odong conducted in English on 22nd December 2005).

The use of English is notably a very powerful phenomenon to reckon with when dealing with literacy in rural community life.

6.16 General conclusion

In summary, the findings of this study revealed that the linguistic conception of literacy is conflated with education as in many other languages of the world. This shows the powerful influence that school education wields in shaping people's perceptions of literacy. This influence is because school is the institution where most people learn how to read and write, and other reasons discussed in section 6.5 above. This influence will continue as long as school remains the only literacy institution that propagates the skill of reading and writing and giving people hope of good life. After leaving school, people continue to learn the literacy practices in other domains where the skill of reading and writing is required.

The study also revealed that literacy in everyday life in Bweyale is predominantly related to livelihoods, school education, religions, bureaucracy, households, and personal leisure and pleasure. It also revealed that the majority of these categories of literacy are influenced by social institutions that are well established in rural community life. These are institutionally enforced literacy practices the participants have no option but to

comply with if they are to survive in those institutions (see also Grabill, 2001). These institutions influence how rural people use their reading and writing skills and they give meaning and value to literacy. To promote literacy will therefore require an identification of institutionally-based literacy practices, because they are the literacy practices that are supported and to some extent enforced in everyday life.

Some institutions, like the police, use literacy to control social behaviour in the community, and the literacy practices within the police station are very disempowering. However, participants also learn to subvert the power that these institutions wield over them. For example, they do this by denying the police recorded statements in court and destroying or hiding business records to subvert the tax assessment process by the Uganda Revenue Authority. On the other hand, some institutions like development NGOs use literacy to facilitate support for disadvantaged children. This use is empowering except that it is based on a discourse and language that is unfamiliar to its participants. Knowing how to read and write and learning the discourse practices of some of these institutions can enhance the power of local people in relating to these institutions that dominate their everyday literacy life. Although the domains of literacy use are similar to those of other communities in which everyday literacy has been studied, the practices that go on within these domains vary according to the lifestyles people live based on their level of development. For example, in Lancaster, household literacy involves handling a lot of junk mail that comes in through the letter box in front of the homes. In Bweyale this is non-existent (see Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Klassen, 1991). This may call for a cross-cultural literacy study to find out how and why literacy use within specific domains differs.

Literacy related to institutions is generally functional in the sense of accomplishing everyday life and work-related tasks. Examples of these tasks include, attending church/prayers, selling farm produce in the market, keeping bar records of transactions, monitoring children's schoolwork, organising and participating in public meetings, organising community social events, reading and writing personal letters and notes to organise ones daily life, and knowing what is happening through reading newspapers. Literacy for learning new skills is limited. The only instance of such literacy was with the farmers. Whatever the case, almost every aspect of literacy is evident in this community although in varying proportions, with literacy in managing activities in different livelihood practices being more prominent than literacy for learning or leisure .

The findings also show that, although the home is the hub of most literacy activities in the community, there is very limited reading and writing that is specific to home life because the traditional way of life that still predominates in the home environment is not dependant on reading and writing. In the same way, most of the activities in which reading and writing is used in the community generally tend to be those activities which are non-traditional to the local people, and very complex to manage mentally.

As evident in this chapter, most of the reading and writing done in the community is in English regardless of people's ability to speak, read or write well in English. This, as I have already stated, reveals the hegemonic nature of English literacy that seems to be a carry forward of the school literacy practices where most people who are literate have learnt how to read and write. National policies also enforce the use of English in people's perceptions. English is also seen as the language of opportunities, as it enables access to information at a global level.

English as a language is obviously based on a very different culture, which means the use of literacy in this rural community, is not based on the local culture of the people because of their insistence on the use of English. Consequently, the use of reading and writing or the literacy practices in this community are not modelled on the oral communicative experience of the local people. This, in my view has a restraining effect on the free use of literacy in the community because not many people in this community speak English. Becoming literate in this community is a double effort of learning to read and write as well as learning a new language and the culture required to sustain that literacy. In the next section, the major conclusions and implications of these findings for the organisation of adult literacy education are teased out.

Finally, this study was more expository than conclusive. It has helped to open up a wide area for further investigation into community literacy practices. Each of the major areas for literacy identified in this study requires further investigation independently.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusions, implications, recommendations and limitations of the study

7.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to provide the major conclusions, implications, and recommendations from this study. This will include brief summaries of the key themes that have been dealt with in this study in broad terms and not on a chapter-by-chapter basis. These broad themes are the different theories of literacy that are crucial for making sense of this study and its findings. This is followed by a summary discussion of the major findings responding to the key questions of the study. From this summary, I draw out the implications for adult literacy education in Uganda and other similar developing countries. That should also show the contribution of this study to adult literacy education. In all, this chapter brings together discussions from theories of literacy and the findings of this study in relation to adult literacy education provision and literacy in Uganda.

To present the conclusions, implication and recommendations, I start with a general conclusion of the study, followed by an overview of the whole study based on the three major strings of arguments developed from Chapter Two to show how the conclusions, implications, and the recommendations have been derived. These three streams of arguments are:

- how different theories inform different understandings of literacy (see Chapter Two)
- how the theories are applied in developing adult literacy education policies and programmes in Uganda (see Chapter Four)
- how literacy is used in everyday rural community life (see Chapter Six)

Tying all these streams of discussion together shows why it is important for adult literacy education policies and programmes, to know the everyday literacy practices of rural people.

The overview of the major streams of arguments in this study shows how the current adult literacy education programmes sidestep rural community literacy practices in favour of communicating development and health information to rural communities. This is followed by a delineation of what this study contributes to adult literacy education programmes' development process and content, showing how this new proposal should narrow the gap between adult literacy education programmes and literacy use in rural communities' everyday lives. This delineation consists of proposing new models of adult literacy education content and provision that overcome the existing differences between

literacy programmes and everyday literacy practices in rural community life. This approach should create consistency between literacy programmes and literacy use for rural people.

7.2 General conclusion

This was a study of rural community literacy practices using the social practices theory of literacy. The purpose of this study was to investigate and document the everyday local literacy practices of the rural people in Bweyale, with a view to finding out how information about everyday use of literacy in rural community life can be used to improve adult literacy education for them. This purpose was refined through objectives focusing on the conception of literacy among rural people, identifying the most prominent domains and describing the observable ways reading and writing is used in the identified domains of literacy in rural community life. In addition, the study looked at how non-literate people cope with text-mediated activities in their everyday lives.

The study found that the conception of literacy that rural people in Bweyale have is similar to the dominant view held by people about literacy in other parts of the world. The study also found that rural people use reading and writing in many different ways and different domains of literacy use, and that literacy use in these domains was driven by the dominant institutions that are well established in rural community life. Literacy uses in these domains were generally related to activities that people do in their day to day lives. The study also found that the non-literate people in Bweyale use a number of strategies to cope with the literacy demands of their lives. In this study, I also realised that rural people use reading and writing in a number of ways that are often not recognised by them. A critical study of the adult literacy education curriculum also reveals that adult literacy education planners too do not notice the vernacular literacies that predominate in rural community life. My findings confirm many studies that have come up with similar results, which differ from the popularly held view that rural people are illiterate and do not know how to use texts in their lives (Prinsloo & Breier 1996; Kell, 1996; McEwan & Malan, 1996; Malan, 1996; Maddox, 2001; Glanz, 2001a; Salomon & Apaza, 2006). Highlights and conclusions based on these findings are presented in the following paragraphs

7.3 Theories of literacy

Grabill's (2001) taxonomy of literacy theories was very useful in summarising the major theories of literacy that were considered necessary for discussion in this study (see Chapter Two). The theoretical classification of literacy theories by Street (1984) into the

autonomous and ideological models of literacy was particularly important for articulating the social practices theory of literacy that was used in this study of rural community literacy practices in Bweyale. This was because the dominant model of literacy, which is the autonomous model, sometimes referred to as the cognitive or “Great Divide” theory of literacy, informs the thinking behind current adult literacy education programmes and programme development processes in Uganda and other similar developing countries (see Lind & Johnston, 1990). The social practices theory of literacy emerged as a challenge to this dominant model of literacy. Therefore, an understanding of the autonomous model of literacy is important for understanding the social practices approach to literacy.

FAL was discussed as a literacy approach informed by ideas defined by the autonomous model of literacy. This was because, the main emphasis in adult literacy education based on functional literacy is to teach literacy with the expectation that it will contribute to cognitive and economic development, and to poverty eradication, employability, improved productivity and other related economic benefits.

The ideological model that is presented as an alternative to the autonomous model is still taking shape and finding relevance for literacy education. This new perspective on literacy has led to the questioning of the existing conventional understanding of literacy and its benefits. This has consequently led to researching literacy from this social practices theoretical perspective. Following this perspective, which is also popularised as New Literacy Studies (NLS), I selected and reviewed some major research that applied the social practices approach to understanding literacy in everyday community life in Africa, North America, Australia and Britain. Some of these studies tried to relate their findings to adult literacy education policies and practices. Most of these studies propose a pedagogy that recognises the local literacy practices of the community for whom literacy programmes are organised (see Prinsloo & Breier, 1996b; Purcell-Gates, Degener, Jacobson, & Soler, 2000, 2002; Street, 2001, 2005; Street & Street, 1991).

7.4 The methodology

I used ethnographic methods to collect data on local literacy practices in Bweyale. Ethnographic methods are still the best way known for studying everyday lives. Using this multi-method approach I conducted extensive and intensive key informant interviews (Biographical methods), and participant observations of various literacy events that were unfolding in the community’s everyday life. I also collected and analysed documentary evidence of literacy events and adult literacy education programmes in Uganda. In doing this I obtained information that was useful for understanding and representing the

different ways people in Bweyale use their reading and writing skills (See Castaldi, 1991). This method had already been used in a number of similar studies of literacy in Uganda, Africa, Britain, Canada and USA (see work edited by Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Barton, Hamilton & Ivanič, 2000; Glanz, 2001a; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996b).

7.5 Highlights of adult literacy education programmes in Uganda

Adult literacy education programmes in Uganda are largely based on the dominant functional model of literacy (see Chapter Three). The most important feature of this model is its emphasis on functional skills meant to enable an individual to function well in the social and economic arena of their community life (Holme, 2004). This emphasis is evident in both policy and practice.

In line with the functional model of literacy, adult education policies in Uganda emphasise development and poverty eradication (see Chapter Three). These are expressed in several patchy policy statements about adult literacy education contributing to the eradication of rural poverty. This policy does not give value or legitimacy to local literacy practices in rural community life. The express intention of the policy is economic change in the assumed poor life of rural people through the teaching of adult literacy.

At the practice level, the teaching and learning materials are developed in response to these policy statements emphasising development concerns. The primers of the government FAL programme exhibit a strong focus on conveying developmental and health-related information that is assumed relevant for stimulating positive economic and social change in rural community life (see Chapter Three for details and Appendix 5 for sample pages of two primers). In the REFLECT literacy programmes, the tools for community analysis: the health matrix, the seasonal calendars and others are also designed with the intention of economically and socially changing rural community life, through improved agricultural productivity, income and better health (Openjuru, 2004b). Both government and NGO adult literacy education programmes share this rural community development focus. Issues of development are of fundamental importance in the daily life of rural people, so it is correct for adult literacy education programmes to focus on rural community development objectives. However, as this study shows, this focus should also include equally important areas of literacy use in rural community life such as practicing one's religion and the literacy related to the everyday life of the communities, selling in the market, shops, and accessing news from newspapers.

A critical examination of the adult literacy education curriculum used in Uganda reveals that in their focus on issues of development and health, the programme is preoccupied

with communicating development ideas or teaching something about development and ignoring the actual literacy practices that are required for participation in such development activities as advocated by the programme. In other words, the programme does not teach the literacy (reading and writing) in agriculture and health practices, instead it teaches people the value of good agricultural practices and disseminates development messages to create community awareness of the value of engaging in developmental/income generating activities and proper health and sanitation practices. This is a different programme emphasis based on the school mentality of teaching something (a subject), and not teaching how (a practice) to read and write. This deviation in adult literacy education needs to be corrected through giving significance to literacy by advocating for an ethnographic approach to designing adult literacy education programmes. This is summarised in the following sections.

7.6 Highlights of the findings

Rural people in Bweyale use literacy in many ways and in different domains of everyday life. This finding is contrary to popularly held views that see “rural areas (as) ‘deprived’ of literacy and rural people as mainly non-literate” (Ames, 2005, p. 70). In presenting the conclusions from the findings, different uses of literacy have been grouped under the major themes/categories identified from analysing data related to these different literacy practices in rural community life. These themes define the literacy domains of different literacy practices. Within each domain, there were smaller sub-themes or categories that were noted and analysed. In the following paragraphs, I summarise the findings under the different domains and conceptions of literacy identified in this study.

7.6.1 The conception of literacy

The finding on local conceptions of literacy shows that it is informed by the dominant conception that sees literacy as equal to schooling (Mace, 1998; Mpoyiya & Prinsloo, 1996; Gibson, 1996). This finding confirms that “prior experiences with literacy in school construct the meaning of literacy (for) many adult learners” (Gillespie, 2001, p. 10). This was also similarly noted by Rogers and Uddin (2005, p. 241) who said that, “Many adult learners ... seem to know what ‘school’ should be, even when they have never been to schools themselves.” This knowledge influences their understanding of what should constitute literacy and literacy learning in a way that reproduces the dominant school model of literacy learning. This conception of literacy, as shown in Chapter Six, influences how literacy is talked about in Bweyale even by people who have never stepped in any school. This also shows the pervasiveness of the dominant ideas of literacy.

However, this local conception of literacy does not relate to how people use literacy in their everyday life. In other words, it influences what they think about literacy or how they see their reading and writing and not how they use literacy. For example, some people do not identify themselves as literate if they are not literate in English and have not learnt how to read and write at school. In that case, they see their ability to read and write as not literacy. Therefore, a local community literacy learning needs assessment that is based on the assumption that rural non-literate people know what they need would most likely end up reproducing the dominant school model of literacy education that does not support the literacy practices that exist in the community's everyday life experiences. And as Rogers and Uddin noted, this can be further reinforced by the literacy facilitators who unconsciously adopt the identity and role of the schoolteacher in adult literacy classes (Rogers & Uddin, 2005). To sidestep this pervading dominant conception of literacy (see Street, 1995), this study recommends an ethnographic approach to adult literacy programme design to facilitate an examination of the way people use literacy in their daily life, instead of what they think about literacy.

7.6.2 Everyday literacy practices in rural community life

I identified five different domains of literacy in the rural community's everyday life. These domains of literacy (see Chapter Two for a discussion of literacy domains) are livelihoods (what Barton and Hamilton (1998, p. 42) refer to as, "Commercial literacy practices,"), religion, school education, bureaucracy, and households. The other category of personal literacy is not a domain. I created it to cater for leisure reading and personal notes. These are the most visible domains of literacy that are shaped by different literate institutions that are well established in rural community life. These institutions give significance and meaning to how literacy is used in different literacy domains (see Grabill, 2001), and consequently how literacy is used in this community's everyday life. Within each literacy domain, there are different sub-groups of literacy that can be identified. The identification of these domains is important for developing adult literacy education policies and programmes that can be based on the existing community literacy practices and for seeking new ways of promoting literacy to support those activities with limited but potential uses of literacy.

These literacy domains are not unique categories because other studies that have been conducted in other parts of the world have also grouped their findings under similar domains of literacy. However, although the domains are similar, the literature review shows that the way literacy is used in developed countries is not the same as how literacy is used in Bweyale. For example, communities in the developed world have well

developed home literacy practices that do not relate to other domains outside the home e.g. cooking the family meal using a recipe, which is non-existent in Bweyale (see Aikman, 2001; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Fishman, 1991; Glanz, 2001a; Klassen, 1991; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996b).

In this study, I noted that literacy practices in the different literacy domains vary not only in terms of format, purpose and values, but also in how people participate in literacy and where their motivation for participation is coming from. These differences are that in some literacy domains literacy is significant, frequent, and highly visible, while in others it is invisible, infrequent, controlled and indirect through literacy mediators who have the power, knowledge, and authority to write on behalf of other people. Details of these conclusions are developed in the following three paragraphs.

In literacy domains where literacy is significant, frequent and highly visible, literacy is inherent (I define these as activities that cannot be undertaken adequately without involving the use of reading or writing). In the activities that go on in them, people are more directly/personally involved in the reading, writing or looking at the texts related to the literacy events in those domains. Literacy in such domains is difficult to avoid. For example in livelihoods, people are involved in writing or receiving receipts, recording transactions in bars and restaurants, counting money, and other such activities. I am not saying livelihood is the only domain where literacy is more direct and free of controls. I am only giving it as an example to back up my conclusion on this aspect of literacy in rural community life. In domains where literacy is direct, there are many sub-varieties based on each activity and sometimes people in related activities write differently, for example the tailors. This is because there are no sanctions on how people can read or write. They are free to invent their own formats based on their own understanding of what they are reading or writing and sometimes even their reading and writing conditions of the moment. They are free to authoritatively induct other people, through explanation, into their ways or formats of writing and create a community of practice (Gee, 1998, Wenger, 1998) based on their own formulations. These were evident in bars, restaurants and lodges where recording formats were being generated by the owners, depending on their own understanding of their business operations. They therefore had power and control over what and how they read and write in relation to such literacy use.

In other domains, literacy is peripheral, insignificant, infrequent and optional. This is because the activities in these domains do not demand much reading and writing for their accomplishment or they are less complex and thus easy to coordinate mentally. The

household or home domain is a good example of these domains. There are limited activities that are specific to the home domain in which literacy is inherent. There are also activities in which literacy could be of significance but it is not being applied because of the traditional knowledge base of such activities. These activities have the potential to benefit from the use of literacy. These are the activities where I say literacy is optional. Literacy practices in rural households were motivated by activities that originate from outside the home. For example, homework originates from the school domain, although it is a legitimate part of the home literacy practices. In spite of this nature of literacy in the home, it is still a very important domain in which all literacy activities from other domains converge and intermingle at the same level (see Barton & Hamilton, 1998). It is therefore a very significant area of literacy in rural community life.

There are domains in which literacy is intensive, but participation is limited due to the complicated literacy practices and the power that those institutions impose on literacy use in them. In these domains, literacy is restricted to those who know the format and language and have been professionally trained or inducted for reading and writing in such domains. These “domain specific literacy experts” are the ones who mediate the participation of the people who interact with texts within the contexts of such institutions. Examples are writing medical prescriptions at the clinics or police statements at the Police Stations. In these institutions, a person’s participation is mediated regardless of their literacy status and it is the responsibility of the official ‘experts’ to fit it into the discourse practices of the institution. This is a very disempowering practice because individuals have very little to do with the reading and writing that concerns them, they become dependant and vulnerable to the service providers. Even where involvement is direct, like with the NGO facilitated child sponsorship, the language is imposed by the desire to communicate in an internationally acceptable language. This requirement restricts choice, and limits freedom of expression.

Identifying these different degrees of literacy in different domains facilitates coming up with strategies that can encourage literacy in activities with potential but limited uses of reading and writing. For example, I think, introducing and encouraging the writing up, and use of recipes between different cultural groups to encourage the appreciation of the different cooking styles from different cultures could be a very exciting practice. This has two advantages, one of sharing cooking recipes between different cultures in which literacy has a vital role, and generating interest in documenting and sharing information on the different varieties of traditional cooking styles that are not yet documented. This would involve coming up with strategies that improve those activities in which literacy is

limited by investigating how literacy can be improved in ways that can enhance such activities. This argument is anchored on the assumption that documenting life is good for both the organisation of the present system and for posterity. For those activities in which literacy is prominent, it will be easy to identify them and use them to facilitate literacy learning in the community.

7.6.3 Literacy in livelihoods

The key conclusions drawn from the findings related to literacy in livelihoods are presented in this section. There are different forms of literacy in different livelihood practices investigated during this study. These uses relate to organising life and communicating ideas according to one of Barton and Hamilton's (1998, pp. 247-250) six areas of literacy, which are: organising life, communications, private leisure, documenting life, sense making, and social participation. Communicating ideas can be broken down further into communicating to the public and internal communication between staff in the same organisation.

Communication to the public spheres is used to relay information to the public about products or a commercial establishment. These are commercial adverts located in strategic spots, for example, signboards are some of the common sources of evidence of literacy in the public sphere of livelihood practices. There is similar evidence of literacy noticed in Lancaster, UK (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) and in Toronto, Canada (Klassen, 1991). While this visible evidence of literacy bears similar description and purposes for which they are displayed, they are different in their design. Based on this observation, I can argue that, although Bweyale is a small rural community with a small trading centre, it exhibits similar commercial literacy practices in public domains as big cities in the UK and Canada. The differences are only related to resources or materials used to make the signboards etc. This means that certain similar activities generate or motivate similar patterns of literacy wherever they occur. In this case, advertising generates similar patterns of literacy in Bweyale, Toronto and Lancaster.

Literacy use in organising and recording business transactions was evident in the different livelihood activities. However, the ways of recording and organising were different across the different livelihood activities I observed. For example, the purpose and ways of writing receipts was not the same between bars and shops (see Chapter Six). Some livelihood/commercial activities were very complex and required capturing information by writing it down and using the information to coordinate different activities over long periods, like in restaurants. Others only needed temporary use of reading and writing like

in shops where they sell merchandise across the counter. In such commercial activities with complicated activities, writing was used as an aid for short-term memory to capture information needed to coordinate different transactions that are going on at the same time.

Another noticeable difference between different commercial activities in using literacy was in organising livelihood activities. There were different formats used to record the different commercial transactions. The differences were the product of the owners' creativity based on their own understanding and desire to control and manage their commercial enterprises. I was not able to determine how the different entrepreneurs came up with the designs they used to control their commercial enterprises; that is, the kind of information or knowledge that guided them in developing their individual recording systems. This needed another separate investigation. Even the pre-printed receipts were used differently with different kinds of information entered on them depending on the nature of the business or products and the different purposes. This was in spite of the standard/similar format of the pre-printed receipts. This means different conceptualisations or 'settings-up' of similar activities like selling beer generate different patterns of literacy.

The quality of literacy exploited in tasks related to organising or managing commercial activities was its ability to fix information or meaning across time for the purpose of use at a later date or time. This according to the social practices theory of literacy is a literacy feature that is emphasised by the autonomous model of literacy (Street, 1984). However, this use of fixing information across time employs the understanding of literacy according to both the autonomous and ideological model of literacy. As I have already pointed out above, different formats are used to record transactions across the different livelihoods that I observed. However, the quality or value of literacy being exploited in all the different cases is the same. In this case, both theories of literacy are useful for understanding literacy use in specific contexts. This means within specific contexts some form of standards practice exists to ease communication among members active in that particular context. This context may be as small as one shop or as large as the whole world, so long as they generate a shared discourse (Baynham, 1995; Gee, 1990).

Literacy in livelihood activities or in the trading centre where commercial activities are concentrated is evidently significant. This concentration of literacy changes visibly, especially the concentration of the public commercial adverts, as a person moves away from the trading centre to the surrounding villages. Naturally, the trading centre is a place of intensive social and economic activities, and it is not surprising to have more reading

and writing going on in it. In comparison to the trading centre, there is relatively limited use of reading and writing in the villages. For example, the literacy practices related to livelihood activities that take place outside the trading centre are those in cash crop farming or those that have been brought home from the trading centre or schools. This does not mean that the people who are staying in the villages are more illiterate but rather that the activities in which literacy is use is required are limited. This shows that literacy depends on activities that require the use of literacy to accomplish those activities that people associate with literacy, for example school education. According to my findings, these activities are complex and difficult to co-ordinate mentally, without the information fixing properties of literacy. Those that are less complex, like traditional farming, tend to have less reading and writing compared to selling in a restaurant.

7.6.4 Religions and rural community literacy practices

Another significant area of literacy in rural community life was religion. Under this theme, reading and writing is very important for participation in the Sunday church services, prayers, singing hymns, and listening to and conducting sermons that are punctuated by regular reference to the bible. The commitment of Christians to their faith makes them read and write or use their religious text to access religious information. Religion also motivates the use of reading and writing within the home or households, and personal private reading of the bible (see Papen, 2005b).

Christianity as a social institution brings together a large number of people who work together to serve their collective interest of worship. In worshipping together, there are certain activities that require collective decision and effort. This collective decision-making can be achieved in meetings that bring people together. In these meetings, reading and writing has an inherent role in recording the discussions and decisions that have been agreed.

Religious institutions are well-established literate institutions in Bweyale as they are in many other rural communities in Uganda, and some religious organisations like the Jehovah's Witness make cheap reading materials available for rural people to read. In Uganda, religion is one area of literacy that is conspicuously missing in adult literacy education curriculum and learning materials. This suggests that the incorporation of religious literacy practices into literacy programmes could utilise the widely available religious reading materials for those learning how to read and write. This could be done along the lines suggested by Purcell-Gates et al (2000, p. i), in this case, religious

practices and printed materials could be used as the authentic “activities and texts employed in literacy (sic) learning.”

7.6.5 Schools and rural community literacy practices

Schools and school education are influential institutions and institutional practices respectively in rural community life. Schools play a significant role in literacy use. This is because rural people in Bweyale, like most people in the country and other parts of the world, value education and endeavour to send all their children to school. Schools are both literate and literacy institutions that are well established in most rural communities in Uganda. They are literate institutions because reading and writing is inherent in the activities that go on in them and they are literacy institutions because they provide instruction in literacy (see Grabill, 2001, p. 11). This combination gives them power that enables them to shape what people think about literacy and how they realise its use in everyday life. This finding corroborates the finding of Mpoyiya and Prinsloo (1996, p. 187) in South Africa, where they were interested in “the relationship between the literacies of school and later life”.

Since schools are literate institutions, activities that relate to school involve interaction with written materials or reading and writing in different ways. As parents support their children’s school education, they engage with school-related texts, through homework, school report forms and school textbooks. The other forms of interaction parents have with schools are through their participation in school parents’ meetings. In these meetings, parents, regardless of their literacy status, interact with texts. There is also a lot of written information that flows between schools and families like invitations for meetings, parents’ open day activities, and other affairs of the school in which parents need to know and participate.

In this relationship, the school is the dominant partner, as parents tend to comply with the school’s requirements in the interest of ensuring the success of their children through the school system. This compliance with school’s ways reinforces and extends the literate influence of schools as the right way. Non-literate parents who have not experienced school ways have difficulties with complying with school ways and in the process learn informally to cope with school literacy practices like recognising a tick and the meanings these marks have about the performance of their children at school. They also learn to identify freshly written pages to monitor progress in schoolwork.

7.6.6 Bureaucracies and rural community literacy practices

Bureaucracies are some of the institutions that motivate reading and writing in rural community life. However, with the exception of one development NGO, people's direct involvement with actual reading and writing in bureaucratic institutions is limited. People do not write for themselves in most bureaucratic establishments that are active in rural areas. Nonetheless, there is a high degree of interaction with texts in such institutions through the third party or literacy mediators with the knowledge, authority and power to participate in the literacy practices associated with bureaucratic institutions, like the police and the LC offices.

7.6.7 Household literacy practices

The home domain was another important theme in literacy. It brought together all the literacy practices from other domains. While that was true, the home domain did not have a wealth of literacies in it, because most of the literate activities originate from other domains and are mainly only brought home for safekeeping. For example, medical forms, LC letters, and election materials are some of the documents that are brought home for safekeeping. The rural home domain in itself has many activities with potential uses of reading and writing that are now not being applied. These activities are not very complex and they are based on the traditional knowledge base of the people as written in their culture (See Prinsloo, 2005 for concept of culture as literacy).

Because of the many sources of literacies brought to the home domain, the literacy practices in the home domain can also be grouped into religious literature, educational, and livelihood activities. This confirms Fishman's (1991) findings in North America, and Mpoyiya and Prinsloo's (1996) findings in South Africa. The only differences with Fishman's findings are the absence of materials for leisure reading, home management and household paperwork such as electricity bills, home mortgages or home insurance papers, and welfare documents and forms to deal with. These facilities are the privileges and responsibilities for people who live in developed countries. They are practically non-existent in rural community life in Bweyale. Although this is difficult to justify, what is mainly read for leisure in Bweyale are the available religious material and newspapers. Very few people have access to storybooks either because they do not have the extra money to buy the books or because the books are simply not available. The few who get access to storybooks mainly get them from outside Bweyale. The few people I interviewed showed interest in reading story books only if they could easily get access to them. One person showed interest in writing only if he could get sponsors to help him publish his writing.

7.6.8 Personal literacy practices

At the personal level, people read and write things that relate to their everyday life, leisure and private activities. This includes reading novels to pass time, and newspapers to know what is happening in the country. Sometimes people read the bible and other religious books to pass time. Recording telephone numbers of their contacts, and important events in their lives (date of death or sickness, important visitors to the home, writing personal letters etc.) in their small pocket books was a noticeable personal use of reading and writing with a few individuals. It is important to add that personal literacy is trivialised by rural people, that is, they do not see it as serious reading or writing. Yet personal uses of reading and writing is one area where people have freedom to write as they like without fear of sanctions from standard conventions of writing certain information. For the reason of privacy and the fear of judgement, people do not permit access to information recorded in their personal pocket books. People also carry personal identification documents that they do not read or write but keep with them.

7.6.9 English and rural community literacy practices

The use of English was a noticeable factor in rural community literacy practices in Bweyale. English literacy was very dominant and it restricts the use of reading and writing in most aspects of community life where it is involved. This is a very difficult phenomenon to deal with in rural community literacy practice because of its hegemonic influence on people's perception of reading and writing. There is no opposition to or negative sentiment about English. In fact, there is overwhelming support for the use of English literacy in spite of the fact that it is a big drawback in people's access to and use of the available written information. Non-English literacy is trivialised by rural people and a person who is not literate in English does not see their ability to read and write as worth anything to identify themselves as, because in the local conception of literacy, to be literate is to be able to read and write in English.

7.6.10 Conclusion

There is ample evidence of literacy in Bweyale. Literacy is involved in most aspects of daily life. These include organising businesses, advertising products, selling in shops, growing and selling cash crops, participating in their Christian faith and personal spiritual development, participating in the education of their children, accessing information from newspapers, communicating important personal information to relatives, storing information for use at a future time, and organising and participating in community social functions.

Generally, in terms of categories and domains of literacy, these findings are similar to themes developed by Glanz (2001a) in Uganda, Prinsloo and Breier (1996b) in South Africa, Fishman (1991) in North America, Klassen (1991) in Canada and Barton and Hamilton (1998) in Lancaster regarding the way people use reading and writing in their everyday lives. However, in Bweyale, literacy is not yet fully incorporated into most aspects of life compared to those countries (and regions of Uganda), especially those that are based on traditional knowledge and cultural practices. The nature of everyday life is such that it does not exert a lot of reading and writing demands on the individuals. Outside commercial livelihood practices, church, and school activities, getting on without reading and writing for weeks is common. Note that all the three literacy-demanding activities are non-indigenous. Like literacy, they originate from outside the traditional culture of the local people. Whatever the case, as already stated above, this finding runs contrary to the dominant discourses that construct rural areas as deprived or rural people as non-literate (Ames, 2005; Maddox, 2001). What implication does this have for adult literacy education curricula for rural communities in Uganda?

7.7 Implications

These findings have many implications for adult literacy education policies and practices. The implications of this study for adult literacy education in Uganda were derived through a critical examination of the existing Uganda government FAL curriculum in light of these findings. From this analysis, I point out the difference between the existing adult literacy education curriculum, and literacy used in rural community life as identified in this study. I then proceed to propose a new adult literacy education curriculum that could reconcile the difference between the current curriculum and everyday literacy in rural community life. However, this innovative approach to curriculum development can be developed further by studying the relationship between literacy teaching and change in literacy use by adult literacy learners. This is the kind of study undertaken by Purcell-Gates et al (2000) in the US. This study found that classes that used more authentic learning materials (materials that are closely related to or the same as those encountered by the learners in their everyday lives), had more effect on the learners' use of reading and writing than the use of less authentic materials.

However, I would like to acknowledge that there are some difficulties and tensions in discussing and demarcating clearly the distinction between the social practices model of literacy and functional literacy. These difficulties also extend to all attempts that are being made to apply the social practices approach in developing adult literacy education curriculum and programmes (see Papen, 2005a). The major difference, in my opinion,

relates to attention to contexts of literacy use. That is, under the functional literacy approach, literacy is seen as an individual skill that is uniformly applicable to all contexts of literacy use. Under the social practices approach to literacy it is seen as specific to its context of use (Papen, 2005c). The slippage between the concept of functional literacy and the social practices model can be seen when Baynham (1995, p.8 cited also in Papen, 2005c, p.9) describes functional literacy as “a powerful construct in defining literacy in terms of its social purposes, the demands made on the individuals within a given society, to function within that society, to participate and to achieve their own goal.” This simply shows that the language used in describing functional literacy is sometimes very similar to that used in discussing the social practices view of literacy. It is therefore sometimes very difficult to talk about one without sounding like talking about the other. This becomes even more difficult when discussing the implications of the social practices model for adult literacy education (curriculum development).

7.7.1 The difference between local literacy practices and the adult literacy education curriculum

A comparison of the findings of this study with what is in the adult literacy education curriculum of the government FAL programme reveals a significant difference between the two. In this section, I summarise and conclude my critique of the existing adult literacy education curriculum and the documented policies in light of the findings of this study, and point out what I call the gap between literacy education policy, curriculum/content, and use in Uganda.

A careful examination of the adult literacy education policy (see Chapter Four) shows that it is not only unspecific but also limited in scope. The policy does not pay attention to, recognise, or give value to local literacy practices in key areas of literacy in rural community life. It emphasises issues of community or national development concerns and not literacy. Similar studies of everyday literacy in some South African communities also identified this gap between adult literacy education policies and everyday literacy in different communities. They argue that the policies are based on the assumption that rural people, and especially non-literate people, have nothing to do with texts in their life while their findings points to something different (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996b).

The adult literacy education curriculum and primers were designed in response to a policy formulation that emphasised development. The curriculum and primers all aim at sensitising rural people to the value and importance of engaging in certain development and health issues like improved agricultural practices and productivity, proper gender relations, and good health practices, and not literacy for everyday community life as

already discussed earlier in this chapter. This development information is given more prominence, with no attention to how people use literacy in their everyday life. For example, “Co-operation brings strength”, “Dirt brings diarrhoea” (These are translations of the 1st and 7th lessons of the Luo primer (see Appendix 5 for lesson 1) (Acaye & Omara-Akaca, 2003). In other words, the selection of content is not focused on how people actually read and write, but what programme designers assume people need to know to improve their condition of life in rural areas.

Even though the primer contains content that is relevant to rural community life like improved agriculture and cooperatives, the lessons, for example, do not help the farmer to learn the reading and writing related to farming, but instead tell the farmer the benefit of, for example, growing sesame. In the end, learners are not taught to participate in the literacy practices of their local communities including those related to their livelihood practices. This is what I see as a gap between what is in the adult literacy education curriculum/primers and literacy practices in rural community life. This gap needs to be attended to by coming up with broader policy statements that can guide a more inclusive curriculum and materials development process. This analysis was based on the curriculum and learning materials for the government FAL programme only, although this may not be different for other programmes that are using more progressive methods of teaching adult literacy like REFLECT (see Archer & Cottingham, 1996; Okech et al, 1999).

While it is appropriate to base adult literacy education programmes on issues which are expected to improve rural community life, the reading and writing that is taught in the class should also be relevant to and encourage the use of reading and writing in those activities. In view of that, in the following section I have pointed out how adult literacy education policies and programmes could be adjusted to take account of all areas of literacy in rural community life.

7.7.2 Implications for policy, curriculum content and learning materials

The implication of this study is that adult literacy education programmes should focus on enabling adults to learn the literacy related to the activities of their everyday life. I would also state that adult literacy education programmes should encourage or promote the use of reading and writing in the community by consolidating existing literacy practices and exploring new areas of literacy in rural community life to promote. These new areas are those where the introduction of reading and writing could lead to better outcomes.

Additionally, both primer and curriculum, as well as the REFLECT tools (Acaye & Omara-Akaca, 2003; Archer & Cottingham, 1996; Department of Community

Development, 1993), should focus on first promoting the existing literacy practices in the community instead of teaching them development ideas or how they should solve their income problems. It is good to base literacy programmes on existing literacy practices of the community because they are developed as a response to the available resources already supporting or motivating the existing uses of literacy in the community. An attempt to introduce another literacy practice will certainly not work because they may not be supported by the available community resources or the existing ways of life in the community. I am advocating this as the best starting point for any literacy programme that can later be extended to cover areas of life that can be made better by promoting the use of reading and writing in them, see the example I gave earlier about encouraging the use of recipes in traditional cooking. That is what I mean by extending literacy use into new areas of community life after starting with the existing literacy practices.

7.8 Recommendations

To bridge the gap between the current adult literacy education programmes and the local literacy practices in rural communities, I recommend a new curriculum and learning materials development framework for adult literacy education for rural communities in Uganda. This new framework will take into account the existing social and economic uses of literacy in rural community life. In this new approach, the learners will be encouraged to identify ways of using reading and writing in their everyday life that can be developed through non-formal literacy learning programmes, or to explore all aspects of their lives where reading and writing can be used with good effect (see Hamilton, Hillier, & Tett, 2006; Rogers, 1999).

7.8.1 The new programme design process.

This new curriculum and learning materials development process should include the use of ethnographic research processes to collect data on the existing everyday uses of reading and writing in the community where adult literacy education programmes are to be organised. The programme development process should recognise that adults, literate or not, are active members of the community who are already engaging with a variety of texts in their everyday life in the community. Therefore, literacy programme designers should start by recognising that reading and writing is part of community's everyday life for both literate and non-literate people. They should also recognise that reading and writing is incorporated in many activities that people do in their everyday life, and the objective of the literacy programme should be to consolidate and then improve the people's use of reading and writing in those activities of their lives (Kell, 1996).

The programme design process should take advantage of the informal learning opportunities that occur when both literate and non-literate peoples participate or become immersed in new activities of their life. This is what Gee (1990) calls informal learning or acquisition, Ames (2005, p. 78) calls it, “Other ways of learning” in her study of literacy learning by children at home and in a multi-grade school in the Peruvian Amazon, Hamilton (2006, p. 125) refers to this as the ‘just do it’ literacy learning. This learning is not graded into levels or stages of attainment and both literate and non-literate members of the community participate in these informal learning processes as equals. These are what literacy programmes should take advantage of. This can be done by incorporating the literacy practices related to real activities into the programme or by using what Hamilton, Hillier and Tett (2006, p. 2) call the “social practice approach” to literacy, or Rogers (1999) the “real literacy approach”.

For example, materials generated as part of the literacy practices in those activities could be used to teach reading and writing in literacy programmes.

Adult literacy education programme development processes should not only focus on enabling individuals to learn how to read and write but also encouraging existing reading and writing practices through improving access to reading materials for the community. This is about finding out how the communities’ literacy environments can be positively changed in favour of increased reading and writing for those who are literate. Reading materials or books that are popular in a particular community could be made available for those who need them. This requires the creation of rural libraries and book production presses. Books that are of interest to the local community could be written to motivate this aspect of literacy. For example, the findings show that people like reading newspapers, even old copies, to know what is happening in the country. Such libraries could also stock books on improved farming.

People also seem to read what is available in their environment. Therefore, by introducing libraries with books, people may be motivated to read the available books in the library. Therefore, a literacy programme of this nature can promote both reading and writing while at the same time motivating people to learn how to read and write, as they get interested in reading for themselves the available books in the community library. This process can improve community literacy as a whole. It will be a more comprehensive literacy programme with something for everybody hence limiting the identity of stigma that non-literate people have to sit through as they attend adult literacy learning programmes that do not focus on the whole community.

7.8.2 The new programme modes

In this programme, literacy learning could be grafted onto the activities in which reading and writing is used in the community. For example, according to this study and specifically for groups in Bweyale, the adult literacy education curriculum could include the following:

- livelihood literacies:
 - adverts
 - drafting for signboards
 - reading notices
 - reading adverts
 - paying taxes
 - filling tax forms
 - paying tax in the bank
 - buying and selling in shop, bar and restaurant
 - writing and reading receipts
 - monitoring sales
 - stocktaking records
 - drawing restocking list
 - daily accounts
 - names of products
 - keeping sales records
 - managing debtors records
 - counting money
 - selling in the market
 - managing group loan accounts
 - repaying group loans
 - keeping records of sales
 - keeping records of debtors
 - paying market fees
 - counting money
 - giving and getting balance and change in cash transactions
 - *Bodaboda* riding
 - paying tax (licences)
 - reading a maintenance manual
 - writing minutes
 - keeping records of daily income and expenditure accounts

- agreements
 - tailoring
 - reading the tape measure
 - writing measurements
 - keeping customer records
 - farming
 - reading names of chemicals and their doses
 - following planting specifications from a leaflet
 - following loan documents
 - keeping records of expenditure on inputs and income from sales
 - keeping farm records
- Religious literacy practices:
 - Church Sunday service,
 - reading the bible in church
 - noting points during sermons
 - following the Sunday missal
 - Bible study group and personal bible reading,
 - home prayers,
 - church meeting
 - reading and writing minutes
 - taking notes during meetings
 - choir practice
 - following songs from paper or chalkboard
 - copying songs into personal notebooks
- School/home literacies:
 - supervision of school homework,
 - monitoring the child's progress
 - reading and understanding teachers' marks
 - school performance reports
 - letters to and from school
 - parent teachers' meetings
 - identifying school text books
 - school calendars
- Bureaucracies:
 - letters from the Local Council
 - letters of introduction
 - referral letters to the police station

- drafting and signing land sale agreements
- writing statements at the police station
- reading and following medical prescriptions and dosages
- writing official letters
- reading and understanding political campaign documents
- Personal writing and reading:
 - writing and reading personal letters
 - keeping a personal diary
 - reading the newspaper
 - reading public notices and sign posts
 - reading storybooks
 - writing and reading telephone numbers
 - dialling a mobile phone and sending and receiving SMSs

This list is to show what this programme content could look like. A well-developed programme would contain a lot more details of how reading and writing is part of each activity. This could be provided as the curriculum of one adult literacy programme for the people of Bweyale. In that case, different sections of the curriculum content would appeal to different interest groups.

Alternatively, another model of teaching and learning can be proposed based on a different organisational set up with the same content areas offered differently. In this model, each major content area is developed and offered to the groups for whom the content is most relevant, for example farmers, shopkeepers or market women. Such specialised programme provision should be comprehensive enough to cover as many different ways of using reading and writing in an activity. In this model, all the people participating in the group constitute a learning cohort. This should bring together people with similar or common literacy practices to learn together. This mode of provision could exploit the already existing economic groups that are active in the community. Examples of these groups are the women's credit and savings society, and the Bweyale *Bodaboda* Association.

This second model, although more focused and with room for providing detailed content, is artificial because it is not based on the everyday literacy realities of the individual who, for example, is a farmer and the same time active in church activities and sells his produce in the market or runs a shop at the trading centre. However, this problem of parochialism could be overcome by offering all the relevant adult literacy programme content for a particular community with flexible participation. In that case, different

literacy learning interest groups could be organised around their common reading and writing needs. A learner would then be free to choose and participate in all the literacy-learning programmes that meet their different literacy demands in life, e.g. a person who sells in the market, and has children whose homework she supervises, participates in credit society meetings and in church activities, would participate in all the programmes focusing on those activities. This is certainly a very complex programme to organise in practical terms.

In following these models, it is possible for literacy programmes to support the informal learning or acquisition that takes place as people participate in the everyday activities of their life. This is because what they learn in class will be relevant to the activities that they are involved in as part of their life. To link these two learning processes, the learners could be encouraged to come with their day's literacy difficulties to be dealt with in class if such difficulties are not very sensitive. This model would enable the learner to learn how to read and write as they continue doing the things in which they need to read and write. In this way, the conflict between learning and working could be reduced and participation in literacy learning could be enhanced, as people may be coming to have their genuine, self-identified and relevant reading and writing problems addressed within the context of the non-formal literacy learning programmes and continue to learn informally as they do their work. This model could eliminate the mismatch between literacy learning and everyday literacy practices; this is similar to Kell's (1996) suggestions.

Participation in these literacy classes should be open and not restricted only to those who are not able to read and write, because literacy is a social practice and people learn with each other. This would facilitate learning the local literacy discourses from others who are already participating fully since they were able to read and write. Therefore, any member of the community willing to participate in the programme should be allowed to participate as a learner. For example, they could learn better recording formats developed by another shopkeeper or restaurant owner. Such a setting could replicate, in a way, how literacy is used in the community at large. In that way, those who are literate will help those who are not able to read and write in meeting their literacy demands. The classes could, therefore, consist of both literate and non-literate members of the community. This bringing together of people of different literacy status could facilitate the learning of literacy by non-literate people from significant others whom they would be modelling. It would provide the opportunity for those who are already active in the existing literacies in the

community to bring this practice in the literacy-learning context through their participation.

Additionally, while the focus would be learning how to read and write, it could also include improving the reading and writing practices related to that particular activity in which a learning group is active. For example, a learning group consisting of people selling in the market could include learning reading and writing as well as improving how to keep records of debtors by learning new formats of recording and how to record expenditure on stock (fish for example) and calculate the profits from selling fish. Indirectly the literacy programme could also help the non-literate people selling in the market to improve their business skills.

To promote all aspects of literacy in the community through a programme that attempts to make access to materials available, the literacy programmes should consist of the establishment of rural community libraries and presses for publishing easy readers for beginner readers from adult literacy education programmes. Local writers should be encouraged to write stories based on the local social and economic life of the people, to be published for local readership. Therefore, literacy programmes should also include a writer's programme in which people are trained and encouraged to write.

7.8.3 The literacy materials

The learning materials should be brought in by the learner based on their everyday reading and writing needs. For example, a mother concerned with understanding what her children are learning at school could bring in her children's exercise books. The shopkeeper could bring a shopping list they use for buying their merchandise from Kampala. Others could come with the local language newspaper if that is what they would like to learn how to read. These are what Purcell-Gates et al. (2000) refer to as authentic materials. Such materials could contextualise the literacy learning experiences of the learners making the material immediately relevant and motivating to the learners. If teaching materials are to be developed, they should be kept as close as possible to the real community reading and writing interests. This will make it easy for the learner to make the connection between their classroom learning and their everyday life.

The title of the books to be stocked in the rural libraries should be carefully selected. This could include books with content that is meaningful to the daily life of the community, for example, books on farming, poultry keeping, piggery, shop keeping etc. African Writers' Series could be stocked for those who love to continue enjoying the kinds of books they read while at school. Different kind of novels could be stocked for people who love to

read them, for example, *“In Gods Name,”* for the likes of Owot and Tumuboine who desperately look for such books to read. There are obviously others readers who are just as frustrated due to the lack of books to read. Such readers would come to enjoy the variety of books that are available in the rural library. New and old newspapers and magazines could be part of the library collection of reading materials. Such rural libraries could be made part of the schools or churches and any other institutions that are similarly well established among communities. All this should constitute part of a comprehensive adult literacy education programme.

7.8.4 English the language of literacy

In Bweyale, different languages are used for different purposes. This makes the language in which literacy is to be taught a tricky question because of the known pedagogical value of learning how to read and write in the learners’ first language against the hegemonic dominance of English language literacy (See Herbert & Robinson, 2001). The dominant literate environment in Uganda including Bweyale is in English. This makes teaching local language literacy unpopular with the learners, because learning how to read and write in the local language could leave them unable to read and write in the predominantly English literacy environment in Uganda. I call this a double jeopardy for African literacy practitioners, because the benefits of teaching literacy in the first language are well known. I would have loved to leave this question of the language of literacy learning unanswered but that would also leave the question of literacy information brought in by the learners unresolved. For this reason, I recommend that the language of literacy learners should be shaped by the interests of the learners, based on the kind of material they bring to class, as long as they are materials that they encounter in their life. If such materials are in English, they should be guided accordingly. How this can be done, would need another separate study.

7.9 The limitations of the study

This study was theoretically limited to an examination of everyday literacy in rural community life in Bweyale from the social practices theoretical perspective. It was a study of how rural people use the skill of reading and writing in their everyday life.

The study only covered three villages: Kichwabugingo, Nyakadote and Bweyale. All these villages were collectively referred to as Bweyale. In Bweyale, the conception of literacy was investigated from the perspective of the Luo speaking people only. The conceptions of literacy by non-Luo groups: Lugbara, Kakwa, Banyoro, Baruli and

Banyarwanda were not investigated. The neighbouring Kiryadongo refugee camp was not included.

The focus of this study was literacy use outside of school education. Therefore, consideration of school in this study was restricted to its influence on the literacy practices of the rural communities in which they are located.

Although the findings of this study are to be used in improving the provision of adult literacy education, this study did not include an investigation of any adult literacy education instruction. Only the documentary analysis of the existing adult literacy education curriculum and literacy primers of the government FAL programme was included.

This study was also limited by time. This was because, in spite of my familiarity with the culture and language of the community under investigation, ethnographic studies generally require a longer time exceeding one year of interaction with the people under investigation. This is expected to enable a deeper understanding of the local cultural practices of the people in relation to the phenomena under investigation. For example, the non-Luo groups in the community were not sufficiently investigated yet they were members of the same community whose existence would be shaping the literacy practices in the community. It would have been even more interesting to find out how the other groups are experiencing literacy in a situation dominated for them by two other languages: English and Luo. The dynamics of having to deal with three different languages could bring a completely different dimension of literacy practices and conception of literacy not examined by this study. I am assuming that a much longer study involving all the linguistic groups that are in Bweyale could have been appropriate for accessing all the different aspects of literacy in Bweyale that may not have been visible to me as researcher because of my linguistic and cultural limitations.

Additionally, the mix of languages in Bweyale makes it a unique rural community. For example, this linguistic diversity could be reinforcing the dominant use of English literacy in the community. For that reason, the findings of this study in terms of the literacy practices of the local people may not be easily generalised to other rural communities outside Bweyale.

Distance between South Africa as the report was compiled and the site of data collection imposed some limitations on this study. For example, I was not able to follow up some issues that were emerging from the comprehensive data analysis conducted while I was in South Africa. For example, I needed to get more information on letter writing in the

community. One of these issues was schools and community letter writing through the post.

Generalisation of the findings of this study beyond Bweyale needs to be made with caution because this was a qualitative study of literacy within a socially and economically restricted context of use. The number of people interviewed, 48, was also small compared to the entire population of about 40,000 people. Even though they were carefully selected to represent as many aspects of life in Bweyale as possible, they may not be fully representative enough to claim that the findings of this study constitute a thorough enough description of literacy in rural community life to warrant the use of the information outside Bweyale. Even within Bweyale, generalisation of the conception of literacy to other linguistic groups should be made with caution, the universality of this conception of literacy notwithstanding (see Chapter Six for detailed discussion of this aspect).

Finally, this study unearthed an enormous amount of data and concepts. It was not possible to deal with all in sufficient detail in the attempt to provide an overview of the dominant and visible literacy practices in Bweyale. Therefore, it was not possible to provide an in-depth analysis of some aspects of the data.

7.10 Areas for further studies

Due to the limitations discussed above, the following areas for further studies are proposed. This was a community-wide study of rural literacy practices. The study revealed a number of ways in which literacy is used that could not be investigated in depth because of the above limitations.

What this study is revealing about local literacies in rural community life seems to be the tip of an iceberg. This calls for a much longer ethnographic study of local literacies in rural community life in Africa. This study could include a focus on the factors that promote or discourage literacy use in rural community life.

There is a need for an in-depth study of each of the identified domains of local literacy practices in rural community life. These areas are literacy use in rural community livelihood practices, in religion, households and bureaucracies.

The relationship between schools and community literacy practices in rural community life and the relationship between people's level of education and literacy use in rural community literacy practices need to be investigated further. What elements of school literacy are transferred to everyday literacy after leaving school?

There is a need too for a detailed study of how rural people use language when it comes to written information. What are the factors promoting the use of English as a language of literacy? Is it the predominance of the English language printed material and the unavailability of local language books, the language policy of the country, or the influence of school education since most people learn how to read and write in school? These questions need to be investigated if we are to understand the dynamics of literacy use in rural community life.

Since this study only focused on the Luo language, similar studies could be done focusing on the other languages in multilingual communities like Bweyale to find out how they perceive and represent literacy in their everyday life.

This study did not include a literacy programme and there is a need to investigate the relationship between literacy instruction methods and materials used in literacy classes and everyday literacy practices in rural community life.

7.11 General conclusion

This study revealed that literacy pervades most aspects of rural community life making rural people use literacy in a number of rich and very creative ways. Of course, there are some activities in which literacy use still needs to be promoted. Most people, regardless of their literacy status, participate in local literacy practices.

The most prominent areas of literacy use in rural community life relate to livelihood practices, the education of their children, the practice of their religion, leisure and engaging with the administrative structures and institutions in the community. All that needs to be done to support these literacy practices is to introduce adult literacy education programmes that start by promoting the existing local literacy practices before moving on to new areas of literacy use in the life of rural people. Such literacy programmes should also focus on enabling rural people to gain access to the reading materials that they are interested in reading.

With this rich use of literacy in everyday rural community life, we as adult literacy education practitioners do not need to introduce literacy to rural people. All we need to do is to support what is already there and develop from that point in directions that are relevant to rural community life. More ethnographic studies of literacy use need to be done to promote and appreciate local literacy practices in rural community life.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Sources of data

1.1 List of people interviewed

Note: All names are pseudonyms.

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Occupation	General focus of interview	Date of interview
Acaye, Joseph	M	25	Teacher	Writing for pleasure	23 rd Nov 2005
Adokorach, Doreen	F	30	Nurse	Literacy practices in a health facility	24 th Sept 2005
Ajogi, Sarafina	F	59	Home maker	Personal literacy practices of a non-literate in the home	17 th Jan 2006
Akuma, Godfrey	M	23	Casual labourer	Personal literacy practices	27 th March 2005
Amono, Moni	F	22	Tailor	Literacy practices in a tailoring shop and tailoring	Observation over many days
Angeyo, Gladys	F	32	Homemaker	Mother of school children, home literacy practices	25 th June 2005
Anywal, Josephine	F	28	Homemaker	Personal and household literacy practices	21 st May 2005
Aryek, Lucy	F	36	Market woman	Non-literate mother, selling fish in market place	22 nd Sept 2005
Atugonza, Mary	F	37	Head teacher	School home communication/ links	13 th Sept 2005
Ayoli Opoka, Michael	M	53	Administrator	Literacy practices in a medical facility	22 nd Sept 2005
Bakayeka, Moses	M	37	Teacher	Personal literacy practices and literacy use in teaching	8 th Jan 2006

Dagupazi, Data	M	25	Secondary School teacher	Personal literacy practices of a school teacher	17 th Nov 2005
Drama, Herbert	M	22	Secondary School teacher	Personal Literacy practices of a school teacher	13 th Sept 2005
Kaba, Anena	F	21	Tailor	Literacy practices in a tailoring shop	Observation over many days
Kabatoro, Alice	F	56	Business woman	Literacy practices in a restaurant	Observation over many days
Kinyera, Godfrey	M	32	Community development worker	NGO and literacy use in the community	17 th Sept 2005
Kweya, Charles	M	24	<i>Bodaboda</i> rider	Literacy practices in <i>Bodaboda</i> work	9 th July 2005
Ladaah, Yowana	M	80	Retired teacher	History of education in Bweyale	25 th April 2005
Ladur, Vento	F	65	Homemaker	History of literacy and home literacy practice	20 th Sept 2005
Lafur, Sometimes	M	65	Farmer	The literacy practices of a farmer	20 th June 2005
Laloyo, Jane	F	42	Homemaker	Personal and household literacy practices	27 th March 2005
Lamaro, Christine	F	22	Cashier/receptionist	Literacy practices in bar, lodges and restaurant	Observation over many days
Larubi, Peter	M	27	Manager	Literacy practices in a restaurant bar and lodges	Observation over many days
Lolyong, Tabu	M	27	Book seller	Book most sold in Bweyale	23 rd Sept 2005
Lumumba, Patrick	M	37	Clinical officer	Literacy practices in a health facility	24 th Sept 2005

Mijumbi, Alex	M	58	Peasant farmer	History of Bweyale and personal literacy practices	4 th Oct 2005
Minkalulu, Stella	F	56	Homemaker	History and household literacy practices	20 th Sept 2005
Ocan, David	M	25	<i>Bodaboda</i> rider	Literacy practices in <i>Bodaboda</i> riding	9 th July 2005
Ocen, Jacobs	M	28	Casual labourer	Personal literacy practices	20 th May 2005
Odoki, Sabino Otoo, Albertino Palenga, Milton	M M M	40 37 30	Local council officials	Information about literacy use in the local council office	21 st Dec 2005
Odong, James	M	38	Police officer	The police and literacy in the community	22 nd Dec 2005
Ogala, Ibra	M	25	Shopkeeper	Literacy use in the shop	16 th May 2005
Ojara, Lawrence	M	60	Businessman	History of Bweyale	25 th April 2005
Ojwiya, Vincent	M	60	Peasant farmer	History of Bweyale	15 th May 2005
Okellowange, Peter	M	26	Trader	The literacy practices of a non-literate trader	22 nd Sept 2005
Okere, Jackson	M	49	Tailor	Personal and literacy use in tailoring	25 th May 2005
Okumu, Martin	M	7	Pupil	Literacy learning in primary school and book selling	17 th Jan 2006
Olango, Willy Rev.	M	48	Reverend	The church and literacy practices in the community	12 th Sept 2005
Omali, Mohammed	M	43	Casual labourer	Personal literacy practices	27 th March 2005

Otim, Anthony	M	38	Police officer	Police literacy practices	15 th June 2005
Owot, Michael	M	28	Trader/leisure reader	Somebody who loves buying and reading books	24 th Sept 2005
Mego, Paullina	F	80	Grandmother	History of literacy teaching	21 st May 2005
Peko, Andréa	M	18	School dropout / casual labourer	Personal literacy practices	21 st May 2005
Richard, Min	F	32	Homemaker	Non-literate mother of primary kids	19 th Sept 2005
Tumuboine, Gerald	M	35	Trader	Somebody who likes buying and reading books	24 th Sept 2005
Wanadi, Angelo	M	23	<i>Bodaboda</i> rider	Personal literacy practices of <i>Bodaboda</i> riders	9 th July 2005

1.2 Specific observation sites

1. The trading centre generally
2. The Bweyale Market
3. Walking around the villages
4. The home of Okere, the tailor
5. The home of Sarafina
6. The home of Laloyo, Jane
7. Two restaurants/bars
 - a) Trevors Angle
 - b) Bweyale Sunset Hotel
8. Bweyale Primary school.

Appendix 2: Brief summaries on the research participants

Acaye, Joseph (writer in the community) interview conducted in Luo on 23rd November 2005

Acaye is a 25-year-old man who writes for pleasure. Acaye is not married. He is a secondary school leaver, working as an untrained part-time primary school music teacher. He is only hired when there is preparation for music competitions. The focus of the interview with Acaye was to find out what motivates him to write and why he writes in the format he does.

Adokorach, Doreen (nurse) interview conducted in English on 23rd September 2005

Adokorach is a 30-year-old nurse working in one of the best medical clinics in Bweyale. She is not yet married and she has no children. She is not staying with her family. At the time of the interview, she had only been in Bweyale for a few weeks. She trained as a nurse at Lacor Nurse's training school. She speaks Lango and is able to read and write in both Lango and English. I interviewed her in English. She prefers to read and write in English. The focus of this interview with Adokorach was the literacy practices related to the provision of health services.

All the writing she does is in relation to her everyday work as a nurse at the clinic. This includes registering incoming patients in their record book, issuing them with the medical form five for writing prescriptions and diagnosis on. She also reads the medical forms brought in by the returning patients, or those brought from other medical establishments.

Ajogi, Sarafina (homemaker) interview conducted in Luo on 17th January 2006

Sarafina is a 59-year-old widowed mother of two grown up children, one son and one daughter, who are both married and having children of their own. One of her granddaughters stays with her and goes to one of the nearby primary schools in the village. Her homestead consists of two grass-thatched huts.

I interviewed her at her home in Acholi, which is the only language she speaks. The focus of the interview was how the non-literate people in the community cope with the literacy demands in their lives. She goes to church but not regularly. She spends most of her time growing food crops to feed herself and grandchild. She also sells her surplus crops at a small roadside market to get some money to buy other life's necessities like soap and salt.

Sarafina has never been to school and she is not able to read and write. However, she is involved with different literacies in a number of ways. For example, she keeps telephone numbers of people who can pass information to her children and other people with whom she has dealings. She has a land purchase agreement and she receives letters from her son-in-law concerning marital problems between him and her daughter. She uses people to read her letters and telephone numbers and to dial for her to talk to her contacts.

NOTE: Sarafina's home was one of the sites for ethnographic observation of literacy use in the context of a rural home life.

Akuma, Godfrey (casual labourer) interview conducted in Luo on 27th March 2005

Godfrey Akuma is a 23-year-old single man who has no children. He did not attend school. He works as a hired labourer for any person who can pay for his services. I

interviewed Akuma in Luo at the home of my guide in the village where Akuma was living. Akuma speaks only the Palwo dialect of the Luo language. He spoke in his Palwo dialect and me in my Acholi dialect. His main interest was to have another opportunity at education through adult education. That was why he was very eager to come and participate in my research. According to Akuma, being able to read and write is about learning how to read and write in English. He once tried his hand at trade buying and selling cassava flour, but he failed because his business partner was taking advantage of his inability to read and write to cheat him of his money. Therefore, he decided to stop the business.

Amono, Moni (tailor) interviews and observation over many days

Moni Amono is a 22-year-old secondary school drop out. After leaving school, she decided to train as a tailor and came to work as a tailor in Bweyale. She shares the shop with Anena. The objective of selecting her shop was to observe the literacy practices involved in a tailoring shop. She is not married and has no children.

Angeyo, Gladys (homemaker and mother of school-going children) interview conducted in Acholi on 25th June 2005

Gladys Angeyo is a 32-year-old married woman with three primary school age children. Her husband is attending a teacher training college training to become a primary school teacher. She studied up to primary six (P.6) before dropping out of school. She is able to read and write well in Acholi and fairly well in English. She speaks Acholi and I interviewed her in the same language. Her homestead consists of three grass-thatched huts, and she was staying with her older brother. She stays in one of the huts with her children. Her children were attending a primary school newly established in the village. Sometimes she helps her primary school children with their homework showing them how to do their maths and English.

She sells foodstuff in a small roadside market to earn some income to look after her children and she is involved in an informal women's revolving fund scheme. She uses her reading and writing skills to participate in this scheme, e.g. identifying the number designating her position in the scheme. She also counts the money she is earning from her sale of foodstuff, although she does not often record the amount of money she is earning. She says she uses "*rough paper*" to do her writing because she cannot afford to buy a proper recording book. She keeps the rough paper record in her handbag.

Anywal, Josephine (homemaker) interview conducted in Luo on 21st May 2005

Josephine Anywal is a married 28-year-old mother of two pre-school age children. She lives in Bweyale looking after her children. Her husband was attending a Teacher Training College to train as a primary school teacher. Josephine was a very talkative respondent who confidently provided long explanations to questions that touched her primary life concerns: education and good Christian life. She speaks Acholi mixed with some words from English, which she also speaks well. She is only able to read and write well in English, because her earlier education was in areas which were Bantu speaking and she therefore did not learn to read and write in Acholi, although she is able to speak Acholi very fluently.

She studied up to 'A' level (thirteen years of school education after kindergarten in Uganda⁶⁵). She worked briefly as an untrained teacher in one of the village schools but failed to get an appointment letter that would entitle her to a good salary. At the time I interviewed her, she was living as a full time homemaker looking after her children.

As a homemaker, she spends most of her time engaged in subsistence cultivation of the family food supply, and participating in the local Christian women's saving and credit group where she is the group's secretary. In this women's group they discuss the bible and good homecare practices deserving of good Christian women. This included topics on how to welcome visitors, and how to live your life as a Christian woman in the community etc. As secretary of the group, she records contributions from women, the names of people making pledges and dates they will be honouring their pledges. This included money paid by the members, and food crops contributed in lieu of money. The Pastor later sold the items through auction in the church to raise money for the church. In the next meeting, she collects the pledges and records them in the books noting which people have not paid their pledges. Those who have forgotten what they have pledged occasionally ask her to remind them of their pledges so that they can pay them off. Apart from her role as secretary of the local women's group, she reads the bible since she is a devoted Christian (*Morokole* in the local Acholi dialect of the Luo language).

Aryek, Lucy (market woman and mother of five primary school children) interview conducted in Acholi on 22nd September 2005

Aryek is a 36-year-old mother of five children all of whom are attending primary school. I interviewed Aryek at her home that is about 5 kilometres away from the trading centre. The focus of this interview with Aryek was the literacy practices of a non-literate market woman and mother of school going children.

She sells fish in the market to earn the family's livelihood. She stopped her school education in P. 2 before she could learn how to read and write. She left school when her parents died and her older brothers could not pay her school fees. She speaks Alur (one of the Luo dialects) only. Although she is not able to read and write, she interacts with written materials like receipts for market dues and counting the money she earns from the sale of her fish. She does not look at her children's work. She leaves that for her husband who is a secondary school drop-out to do. This is mostly looking at the school report and participating in the school parents' meetings. However when he is not around, Aryek goes to attend the meetings herself.

Atugonza, Mary (Head teacher) interview conducted in English on 13th September 2005

Atugonza is a primary school head teacher, I did not ask how old she was but I can guess that she could be about 37 years old. I did not ask her about her marital status or the number of children she has since I thought they were not appropriate considering the objective of the meeting that I had already communicated to her in an earlier communication with her office. I interviewed her in her office on the school compound. She sat at her office desk while I took the visitor's seat in her office. The objective of this interview was to find out how the schools related with the community, and influence the literacy practices that go on in the community.

⁶⁵ School education in Uganda is structured into Kindergarten (three years of optional education (not compulsory)), Primary School (seven years excluding kindergarten), Ordinary level (four years after primary), Advanced level (two years after Ordinary), and University (three years and above).

Atugonza outlined to me the different ways the school links up with the community as follows:

We communicate to the parents in most cases through their children. It is verbal communications. We talk to the children. We tell them the information we want to go down to the parents, then the children take the message to their parents. That is one way. Secondly, we also communicate to our parents through letters. We write letters and send these letters through the children to the parents. Then thirdly, we also use mass media, our local radio stations around. We put announcements on the radios and we inform the parents on whatever we want to communicate to them.

These different modes of communication and use depending on the situation she explains: “*First, if it is to all parents we feel it is economical to use children: verbal communications to the parents through the children. Then if we feel that it is going to some specific parents, and there is enough time to communicate, then we can use letters putting in mind that these letters may take one week to reach these particular people we want to communicate with. Then if the matter is urgent, and it is a short time period then we can use the radio*”.

She said they normally use the local languages. The head teacher uses different languages when communicating through a particular mode. She explains this, “*We tell these children we use two languages, that is English and the local language which is Luo, commonly here is Luo. Then in letters, we normally use English. In radio we use both English and Luo*”. What is interesting here is the use of English when it comes to letter writing. This shows how English is deeply embedded as the language of literacy. The school meetings are always in English with translations into the other languages for the benefit of those who are not able to understand English.

Ayoli Opoka, Michael (administrator) interview conducted in Acholi on 22nd September 2005

Michael Ayoli is a 53-year-old married man. He is not staying with his family in Bweyale, they stay in another district and he regularly goes to visit them. He works as an estate/property manager in one of the medical clinics in Bweyale as an administrator. He is responsible for managing the estate and equipment of the medical centre ensuring that they are in good working order. He writes on a daily basis in relation to his work as property manager of the medical centre. These are keeping inventories of equipment, making budgets for the construction of new facilities for the medical centre, and procuring equipment and construction materials. He uses English for most of his writing while at home and during work. Oral communication is mostly in Acholi.

Bakayeka, Moses (secondary school teacher) interview conducted in English on 8th January 2006

Bakayeka is a 37-year-old married man with three pre-school age children. He is a secondary school teacher and a director of one of the private schools he established in the community. He holds a diploma in secondary school education. He stays with his family in a one-room rented house in the trading centre. His wife sells charcoal and other goods in the market.

Bakayeka describes himself as someone who likes to read and write. As a teacher, he reads and writes all the time as part of his work. In addition to his normal reading and writing as a teacher, he is also a very active member of his church. He preaches during the

Sunday church services in addition to reading the bible. During the time of the interview, he was busy mobilising other Christians to raise money for completing a church building in the Parish. This activity involves holding meetings with fellow church members. All the activities involve reading and writing in different formats

Privately, he likes reading the bible and biographies of eminent personalities. At the time of this interview, he was reading the biographies of Archbishop Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, "Voice of the Voiceless". Bakayeka said he had already completed the book on Steve Biko, and admired Biko for his courage in fighting apartheid in South Africa.

He also writes most of his ideas and plans on paper. Whenever he thinks of some good ideas, he said, he writes them down. If he has written down all his plans, he takes them for typing. He also talked about how he wrote a good advert and posted it in the trading centre inviting parents to send their children to his school.

Dagupazi, Data (secondary school teacher) interview conducted in English on 13th September 2005

Dagupazi is a 25-year-old man working as an untrained secondary school teacher in a private secondary school in Bweyale. He is not married and his parents are not living in Bweyale. Therefore, he lives alone in his rented room in Bweyale. I interviewed Dagupazi in English at the school's staffroom that consisted of two tables and three chairs and a bench. The focus of my interview with Dagupazi was to find out the literacy life of a secondary school teacher in a rural community like Bweyale.

His home language is Lugbara, but he prefers to read and write in English most of the time. He reads all the time in preparation for his lessons every day until late in the night and early in the morning. In addition to his teaching work, he is also preparing to take the 'A' level examination by studying privately. Apart from his work-related reading and writing he reads the bible often.

Drama, Herbert (secondary school teacher) interview conducted in English on 13th September 2005

Drama is a 22-year-old untrained secondary school teacher in a private senior secondary school in Bweyale. He is not married and his parents are not living in Bweyale. Therefore, he lives alone in his rented room in Bweyale. He had just completed his Advanced level. Unfortunately, his grades could not secure him admission to any university on a government scholarship in Uganda, and his parents are not able to raise money for private sponsorship. He therefore decided to do some teaching and earn some money. I interviewed him in the school's staff room that consisted of two tables, three chairs, and one bench. His home language is Lugbara. I interviewed him in English, and he prefers to read and write in English.

The focus of my interview with Drama was to find out the literacy life of a secondary school teacher in a rural community like Bweyale. After the preliminary biographical information, I started by asking him how many times he reads or writes in a day. He said he reads and writes almost all the time because of the nature of his work as a teacher. He has to study all the time in preparation for his lessons. He teaches physics and he said physics is a very difficult subject to teach. Therefore, he spends a lot of time reading and thinking about how he can explain some of the difficult concepts to his students during class time. He said he uses two sources of knowledge to teach physics: firstly, he tries to remember how his teacher taught him a particular topic, and he reads from the textbook directly. Apart from his work as a teacher, he writes personal notes especially information

concerning further education opportunities that he finds in the newspaper. He also reads the newspaper when he comes across any, since he is not able to buy his own copy.

Kaba, Anena (tailor) interview and observation over many days

Anena is a 21-year-old secondary school dropout. She dropped out of school after her father died and there was no one to continue paying her school fees. After leaving school, she decided to train as a tailor and come to work in Bweyale. She shares a shop with another woman. The objective of selecting her shop was to observe the literacy practices involved in a tailoring shop. Before setting up to work as a tailor, Anena first worked as a shop attendant from which she moved to work with Amono Moni. She has one brother and a sister who are all in high school and they do not stay with her all the time.

Kabatoro, Alice (owner of a restaurant/bar and lodge) interview and observation over many days

Kabatoro is a 56-year-old woman who owns and runs a bar, restaurant and lodge. She employs people to work for her in the restaurant and oversees the operations of the business. She designs the recording systems used in managing the business and ensures that the business is running well. She is not always at the restaurant but comes frequently to check what is going on. She is the employer of Peter Larubi who reports to her. She lives with her retired husband and grandchildren on her farm that is about 10 kilometres away from the trading centre. Most of her grown-up children are no longer staying with her.

Kinyera, Godfrey (community development worker) interview conducted in English on 17th September 2005

Godfrey Kinyera is a 32-year-old man, he is not married and he has no children. He is in Bweyale as a community development worker for an NGO that supports orphans and disadvantaged children from poor families. I interviewed Kinyera in one of the restaurants in the trading centre. The focus of this interview was his personal literacy practices as a rural community development worker. In addition, how the activities of NGOs like the one he was working for influence the literacy practices in the community.

Generally, the reading and writing activities that Kinyera is involved in are those related to his work as a community development worker. However, he said he also reads the New Vision and Monitor newspapers. This was how he talks about the reading and writing related to his office work.

(In the office I do) some paper work, which involve reading, report writing and when having meetings. We always have meetings with the community at the local level. We use writing there. Then also where we are working also, we have a department call sponsor relations in which we write many letters to the sponsors. Children write to their sponsors and the community and the parents, and if we suspect that the parent are semi-literate, or illiterate, we are not allowed to write for them but when the child can write then we guide them .

In the above extract, Kinyera explains how the NGO he is working for uses literacy to help people. The disadvantaged children and their parents participate in the process by writing letters to their sponsor to seek financial support. Through letter writing activities, the beneficiaries linked directly to their benefactors. Therefore, literacy has a very

important positive role in linking the disadvantaged children directly with their sponsors abroad.

They also hold meetings during which minutes in English are written, and read to the members orally. All the meetings are held in English and translated to different languages.

Kweya, Charles (*Bodaboda* rider) interview conducted in Luo on 9th July 2005

Charles Kweya is a 24-year-old married Primary 7 school leaver. He now earns his living as a *Bodaboda* rider. He has school going children. I interviewed Kweya in the same place I interviewed David Ocan i.e. in a restaurant near the *Bodaboda* Park where he waits for customers. The focus of his interview was his everyday literacy practices as a *Bodaboda* rider.

Before becoming a full-time *Bodaboda* rider, he was a full-time subsistence farmer selling surplus produce from his farm for family income. He is literate and speaks four languages Luo, Kiswahili, Lunyoro, and English. He prefers to read and write in Luo only. In his everyday life, he reads and writes on average about three times a day (could not specify when and why). He says he records his daily earnings for knowing how much he should be saving. He also reads some books. When I asked him what kind of books he reads, he says he reads SST book. This is a primary school Social Studies book. He does most of his writing from home after work, which is the time when he counts how much money he has. As a parent of school going children, he participates in school parents' meetings.

Ladaah, Yowana (elder in the community) interview conducted Luo on 25th April 2005

Yowana Ladaah is an 80-year-old man. He was one of the first trained teachers who taught in the first schools established in Bweyale. He was born in Bweyale and has lived in the area ever since. He is now under the care of one of his sons. He lives in a small hut built for him by his son. I interviewed him in his part of the homestead in the presence of his son and grandchildren who were all listening to him with a lot of interest and excitement

The focus of the interview was the history of literacy and education in Bweyale, and he was one of those who first learnt how to read and write in the area and even trained as a grade C primary school teacher. He is now not able to read or write because of poor eyesight.

Ladur, Vento (grandmother) interview conducted on 20th September 2005

Ladur is a 65-year-old grandmother taking care of several school age grandchildren. She was literate and able to read and write but for some reason she decided to stop writing. Now she cannot even read because of poor eyesight. She attended school for only four years but she was able to learn how to read and write. The focus of her interview was how their teacher taught them how to read and write during that time and how they were using it in their everyday life.

Lafur, Sometimes (cash crop farmer) interview conducted in Acholi on 20th June 2005

Mr. Sometimes is a 65-year-old farmer; he is married and blessed with 40 children. At the time of the interview, there were about five young children below the age of 10 playing around in his compound. It is difficult to tell if all were his children because in rural community life children are free to move from one home to the other. Given the fact that his older children who are now married are also living near his home, they could be his grandchildren.

He is not a subsistence farmer because he grows cash crops like cotton and tobacco that are strictly for sales. Although we talked a lot about the reading and writing which goes on in farming activities, most of them did not relate to him actually reading or writing. It was either the extension officer or the marketing assistants. The focus of the interview with Mr. Sometimes was his literacy experiences as a farmer in a rural community like Bweyale

Laloyo, Jane (homemaker) interview conducted in Luo 25th May 2005

Jane is a 42-year-old mother of one boy and three girls. All the children except the eldest daughter were attending school. Two were in primary school and one daughter was in a boarding secondary school. One daughter had dropped out of school and had walked out of home. Her husband works as a school driver at a school in Gulu. Her home consists of four huts; one is for her already married stepson, another for the boys and overnight visitors to the home, another for her husband's sister, and the main hut is used by her both as the kitchen and for sleeping for her and her daughters. It was in the main hut that she always hosted me whenever I went visiting the family. The young schoolchildren also keep their schoolbooks in this hut. Jane's home was one of my sites for ethnographic observation of literacy use in the context of rural home life.

She dropped out of school at the lower primary school level. However, she attended long enough to learn how to read and write in Acholi. She once prepared and sold cooked food as a means of earning a living. At the time of research, she was attending to her family needs through subsistence farming. She was very active in the Catholic Church as a choir member and helping the nuns with church work. She likes reading religious books especially prayer books. She speaks only Acholi and I interviewed her in Acholi. The focus of Jane's interview was personal and home literacy use.

Lamaro, Catharine (bar cashier and receptionist) observation over many days

Lamaro is a secondary school leaver now working as a cashier in a bar/restaurant and lodge. She is not married and has no children. She monitors the sales of beer, food and other items in the bar, restaurant, and lodge. She also supervises the waiters. All the reading and writing she does are those related to her work in the bar as cashier. She starts work very early in the morning and works until late in the night. The purpose of the observation was to see how reading and writing is used in a bar, restaurant and lodge. She abbreviates most of the things she writes. Her records are a combination of numbers, names of items, and prices/cost.

Larubi, Peter (manager of bar/restaurant and lodge) interview and observation over many days

Peter is a 27-year-old man. He holds a diploma in electrical engineering, and was planning to go for further studies at the time of the fieldwork. He was working as the manager of a bar, restaurant and lodge. He is always at the bar, restaurant and lodge every morning and leaves late in the evening for his home that is outside the trading centre. The observation was based in the bar/restaurant and lodge where he was working. His reading and writing relates to the management of the business activities, carrying out stocktaking, checking sales and supplies records etc. Occasionally, when business is low, he reads a newspaper.

Lolyong, Tabu (bookseller) interview conducted in English on 23rd September 2005

Tabu is a 27-year-old bookseller. He is married with two children. The eldest is attending school at Bweyale Primary School. He operates one of the only two bookshops in Bweyale. See picture of his bookshop in Chapter Five.

He lives with his family in the same place where he operates his bookshop. Since it was a market day, we had the interview in a quiet place away from the noise coming from the market. The purpose of the interview was to find out from him the kind of books that are popular in Bweyale and why.

He said the most popular books are old magazines, and schoolbooks for lower primary school. He says most people in Bweyale lack money for buying books, and books for lower primary schools are cheaper than the books for the higher classes. All his books are English books and they are mostly religious books. People buy some magazines like *Focus on Africa* because of the good pictures that are in them. Young boys like buying those magazines to decorate the inside walls of their huts.

Lumumba, Patrick (clinical officer) interview conducted in English on 24th September 2005

Lumumba is a 37-year-old medical officer who works in one of the best clinics in Bweyale. He trained as a clinical officer in Gulu Clinical School. He is married but does not stay with his family in Bweyale. His home language is Atesot, but he prefers to read and write in English. Reading and writing medical prescriptions and diagnosis is part of his everyday literacy. I interviewed him in English in his office at the medical centre where he was working. The focus of the interview was the literacy practices related to the provision of health services. The key issue noted during this interview was that the reading and writing related to the provision of health services are unique and difficult to understand by anybody who is not a health practitioner. For that reason anybody, literate or not, who goes to seek medical services will not be able to access all the information that is written on their medical form five. Privately he likes reading the daily newspapers, the Monitor and the New Vision, and any other storybooks that he comes across. His only problem is finding time to read since he is busy all the time dealing with patients.

Mego, Paullina (grandmother) interview conducted in Acholi on 21st May 2005

Paullina is an 80-year-old grandmother who now oversees her grandchildren who are attending school in Bweyale. She attended catechism in the Anglican Church during which she learnt how to read and write. She was able to read and write when she was still younger and able to see well. She lives in one of the villages that is about 1.5 kilometres

from the trading centre and about 200 meters from the Catholic Church. I interviewed Paullina in Acholi at her home that consisted of two round grass-thatched huts. The purpose of the interview was for me to know how she learnt to read and write in those days. She is now not able to read and write because of poor eyesight. It seems she was still mentally sound and very talkative, and she was able to remember and relate very clearly how she learnt how to read and write as a young girl.

When her children write letters to her, she asks her grandchildren to read for her. She also requests them to dial the mobile phone they have bought for her to talk to her children who are not in Bweyale. These are the only reading activities in which she is involved.

Mijumbi, Alex (peasant farmer) interview conducted in Acholi on 4th October 2005

Alex Mijumbi is a 58-year-old peasant farmer. He was born and brought up in Bweyale. His children are now grown up and they are no longer staying with him. I did not see his wife, neither did he talk about her. He seems to be sharing his home with another old man and a young boy. He speaks the Paluo dialect of the Luo language.

He did not go to school for long but it was long enough to enable him to learn how to read and write. I interviewed him in Acholi at his home, which like others consists of two grass-thatched huts. We sat under a tree in his compound. This attracted some neighbours who also came to listen to the interview and to see my very small tape recorder. This made the interview turn out like a group interview with the inquisitive spectators making contributions to some of my questions, and generating discussions. The objective of this interview was initially to get some historical information about Bweyale and his personal literacy practices.

The interesting thing about Mijumbi is his habit of keeping a pocket note book in which he records what he considers to be important events, like people who have come to visit him or dates of death of some members of the community and when their funerals were organised etc.

Minkalulu, Stella (grandmother) interview conducted in Acholi 20th September 2005

Minkalulu is a 56-year-old mother of three grown up girls who are all not staying with her. She takes care of three grandchildren and others visit her occasionally. She completed primary five and she is able to read and write. Presently she sells vegetables at a small roadside market to earn a living. The focus of the interview was her everyday use of reading and writing. She is still able to read printed materials and has a lot of problems reading hand-written materials because her eyes cannot now see well. As a market woman, she counts her money daily although she does not record it anywhere. The other material she sometimes likes reading is printed religious materials distributed by the Jehovah's Witnesses in the community during their door-to-door visits.

Ocan, David (*Bodaboda* rider) interview conducted in Luo on 9th July 2005

David Ocan is a 25-year-old senior four school leaver. He now earns his living as a *Bodaboda* rider. He is the current chairperson of the *Bodaboda* riders. I interviewed Ocan in Luo at a restaurant near the *Bodaboda* Park where he waits for customers. The focus of the interview was the everyday use of reading and writing involved in *Bodaboda* riding as a way of earning a living in Bweyale.

Ocan could not continue with his education because rebels in Gulu killed his parents. After the death of their parents, he took responsibility for caring for his two brothers and

six sisters. He decided to move them to safety in Bweyale to enable them to continue with their education. He is now like the parent. To support the family he got involved in *Bodaboda* riding in addition to engaging in subsistence farming. Although he works in the trading centre, he stays in one of the villages out of the trading centre.

He managed to become the chairperson of the *Bodaboda* group in Bweyale. As the chairperson of the *Bodaboda* Association, he does a lot of reading and writing related to his work, registering new members and bicycles or motorcycles brought in to be used for *Bodaboda* transportation. He prefers to read and write in English.

Ocen, Jacobs (non-literate casual labourer) interview conducted in Acholi on 20th May 2005

Jacobs Ocen is a 28-year-old casual labourer in the village. He is married but separated from his wife who decided to go away with the two children they had together. Therefore, at the time of the interview he was staying alone.

He hires out his services to any person who can pay him for work done. He also makes and sells sun-dried bricks to people who are looking for building materials or those who cure the bricks before selling to builders. The focus of the interview with him was his experience as a non-literate person in such a rural community. For example when selling his bricks what kinds of difficulties does he face as a person who is not able to read and write?

Odoki, Sabino, Otoo, Albertino and Palenga, Milton (local council officials) group interview conducted in English on 12th December 2005

This was a group interview with three local council officials, their ages ranging from 30 to 40 years. They are all married men with children, and they live in the same village they are serving as members of the local council executive committee.

I interviewed them in their office at Nyakadoti. The office is a one-room shop building with one desk and several chairs and benches for seating their visitors. The positions they occupied in the local council system were Sabino Odoki (Chairperson), Albertino Otoo (General Secretary) and Palenga Milton (Secretary for Youth). They could all speak Acholi but preferred to have the interview in English because, they argued, it is the official language of the country. All the men had been serving as local council officials for at least one and a half years, with the longest having served for two years⁶⁶.

The focus of the interview was the literacy practices in the local council work as one area of literacy use in everyday community life. The General Secretary, who was more talkative and more fluent in English, dominated the entire interview.

As local leaders in the community, these three men said they read and write all the time, referring cases to the police, writing identification letters to other local councillors in different areas, and during meetings with the community and amongst themselves. They always write in English for the same reason given above. Their office had plenty of legal charts, which they use to educate the people about different types of offences and how they handle them. Most of the charts were written in English.

⁶⁶ The full term of office for local council is five years.

Odong, James (police officer) interview conducted in English 22nd December 2005

James Odong is 38 years old. He is married with two children. He works as a police officer. He joined the police force in 1991 after completing ordinary level (11 years of school education in Uganda after kindergarten). As a police officer, he has worked in many districts in Uganda.

I interviewed Odong in a restaurant near the police station. People were crowded into the charge office so we could not hold the interview there. The purpose of this interview was literacy practices in police work, which is the nature of the reading and writing activities at the police station. At the Bweyale police post, Odong works in what he calls, “the charge office”, in non-professional’s language this is the counter or the police front desk where people first report cases and have them recorded by the police officer on duty. He is therefore involved in many reading and writing activities at the police station.

While at home or even in the office when activities are low, he reads English newspapers like the *New Vision* and *The Monitor*, which are Uganda’s leading dailies. However, he does not buy a newspaper regularly. He either borrows from his friends, or buys when he has money or if there is some interesting news. He also reads storybooks especially African Writers novels, which he borrows from teachers. His reason for reading is to pass time. He does not drink beer which is the most popular pastime for most men in Bweyale. On Sundays, he goes to the local Anglican Church in Bweyale to pray and meet with fellow Christians in addition to participating in the local church activities.

Ogala, Ibra (shopkeeper) interview conducted in English on 16th May 2005

Ibra Ogala is a 25-year-old trader who runs his father’s business. He had just completed his Advanced level (A-Level) education. I interviewed Ibra as a shopkeeper or trader in Bweyale. The focus of the interview was to get information on how he uses reading and writing in running a shop in Bweyale. Ibra’s home language is Kakwa, and I interviewed him in English because Kakwa is very different from Luo. He prefers reading and writing in English.

Ibra is not married. He is staying with his parents and three brothers and sisters. The family lives in one of the villages outside the trading centre of Bweyale. Ibra’s family are Moslems so they read the Koran, although he says, “*But not much.*” Since he is always in the shop, he has very little time to read the Koran or even to teach his younger siblings how to read the Koran. He says his mother sometimes teaches the younger children how to read the bible. The Koran that they use at home is an English translation using the Roman alphabet and not Arabic letters.

I interviewed him in front of his shop in the midst of shop-related activities like people coming to buy from the shop and a lorry offloading new merchandise. While these would seem like distracting activities, which indeed they were because Ibra had to stop and shout instructions to his other brother working in the shop, they also provided me with the opportunity to see where literacy was involved in those activities while at the same time talking about them. Therefore, the activities were complementary. The things he reads and writes most of the time are receipts, lists of merchandise, names of products and records of suppliers especially Coca cola.

Ojara, Lawrence (businessman) interview conducted in Acholi on 25th April 2005

Lawrence Ojara is a 60-year-old man born and brought up in Bweyale. He was one of the people who established the first shop in what later became Bweyale trading centre in the 1960s. He lives about 10 kilometres away from the trading centre in a very large

traditional homestead with a large compound with several huts belonging to members of his extended family. In the middle of this homestead is a small modern iron roof building. The interview took place in this building. The inside wall of the building was plastered with pages of magazines, old newspapers and a few old photos of him and his family members.

The objective of interviewing him was to get information relating to the historical background of Bweyale, for example, when the first shop was established. I interviewed him in Luo with him speaking the Palwo dialect and me the Acholi dialect. He also speaks good Lunyoro.

Ojwiya, Vincent (elder in the community) interview conducted in Luo on 15th May 2005

Ojwiya was 60 years old at the time of the interview. He lives in his big homestead made up of his already married children and grandchildren. His part of the homestead consists of three huts and goat shade was still the centre of the homestead.

The focus of the interview was the historical background of Bweyale as a community: how people settled in Bweyale; the construction of the main road; who the first people were to settle in Bweyale; how the different groups speaking other languages came to settle in the area; when and how the trading centre developed; who the first trader was to come to Bweyale and what the person was selling.

He never attended any school because at that time, there was no school in the area and they did not see school as something of value. Therefore, he is not able to read and write. All his reading and writing needs are handled by his children.

Okellowange, Peter (non-literate trader) interview conducted in Acholi on 22nd September 2005

Okellowange is a 26-year-old non-literate trader. He never stepped in any school. He only speaks the Acholi dialect of the Luo language. He learnt his trading skills and counting money informally including doing calculations. His wife died one year ago leaving him with a baby that he is still nursing with the help of his mother.

The interview with Okellowange was in Acholi in front of his shop established in a small trading centre call Kichwabugingo that is about 5 kilometres away from the main Bweyale trading centre. The focus of his interview was on how a non-literate shopkeeper deals with the literacy involved in buying and selling merchandise for profit, that is the reading and writing that is involved in the process of buying or selling merchandise.

Okere, Jackson (tailor) interview conducted in Acholi on 25th May 2005

Jackson Okere is a 49-year-old tailor and father of six grown up children who are no longer staying with him. He is separated from his wife and at the time of the interview, he was staying with his younger sister in the same home of three grass-thatched huts. His wife later came back to stay with his parents.

He did not continue with his education beyond the P 7 class. After leaving school, he learnt how to tailor informally from a senior tailor with whom he worked. Since then he has been tailoring clothes in different places. He uses his reading and writing skills daily in his tailoring work. He writes his information on the materials he is tailoring.

Okere was my guide in the Kichwabugingo village and his home was a site of my ethnographic observations of literacy use in the context of a rural home life and the literacy practices of his tailoring work. I interviewed Okere at his home that also served as the interview venue for four other interviews.

Okumu, Martin (primary school pupil) interview conducted in Acholi on 17th January 2006 in his father's bookshop

Okumu is a 7-year-old primary school pupil attending Bweyale Primary school in P 2. He speaks the Acholi language while at home and helps his father to sell books in the trading centre. He speaks his mother's language and not his father's which is Lugbara. Acholi is the dominant language in this community. Although he helps his father, he is not yet able to read and write very well but is able to identify different types of books, their prices and the level of education. He is also able to count money and give back change. (It would have been interesting to find out how he relates that to his schoolwork. He could not make sense of what I was asking when I tried to find that out from him directly, and I did not want to press further than two questions). At school, he said the teacher teaches them reading and writing in English and later translates to Acholi.

Olango, Willy, Reverend of the Church of Uganda (priest of the church of Uganda) interview conducted in English on 12th September 2005

Olango is a 48-year-old man who is a priest of the Anglican Church in Uganda (Protestant Church). He is married with three children who are all attending primary school. He is a trained Reverend and holds a diploma in the field. He speaks Lunyoro as his mother tongue, but does all his reading and writing in English. The focus of this interview with Reverend Olango was his personal literacy practice as a priest and how the Church as an influential social institution in the community shapes the literacy practices of the community members.

Reverend Olango reads the bible every day as a priest, following the church's bible reading calendar. His objective for reading the bible is to fulfil his religious duties as a priest. I informed him that I have noticed that the church is having a noticeable influence on the community's literacy practices in Bweyale, especially reading the bible. He said my observation was not correct because, according to him, whenever he goes for his pastoral work in the villages, he asks if they have a bible, and they say no they do not have one. Therefore, he maintains that the people in Bweyale do not own or read any bibles. He said, even in the church, if he asks those who have come with the bible, "Please put up your hands," only 3 out of 10 people would put up their hands. According to him, I was very lucky to find that people read the bible. He maintains that out of every ten Christians, only four or five people may be reading the bible. His rate was fluctuating between two and five. He said he has even tried to start a bible study group but nobody turns up for bible study meetings. It was an interesting revelation and I wondered why his observation differed from mine.

NOTE: The church was one of the sites in which I carried out a long-term ethnographic observation of literacy use in the community in relation to the practice of the Christian life.

Omali, Mohammed (non-literate guard) interview conducted in Acholi on 20th May 2005

Mohammed is a 43-year-old non-literate man who works as a guard in a local tobacco store in the village. I interviewed him in Acholi at the home of my guide and we sat under a mango tree. He speaks the Lango dialect of the Luo language. He did not have a stable childhood which resulted in him staying with his uncles at one time and going back to his father at another time.

His mother separated from his father when he was still very young. For that reason, he was not able to attend school beyond three years of education. Therefore, he does not know how to read and write. When he was with his uncles, he tried to learn some motor mechanic skills informally but they seemed not to have helped him. However, he can work under instruction. The focus of the interview with Mohammed was his experience of literacy as a non-literate person living in such a rural community.

Otim, Anthony (police officer) interview conducted in English on 15th June 2005

Tony Otim is a 38 year old, married police officer. He is an O-level leaver. After leaving school, he joined the Police services and trained at Masindi Police training school. He has worked in several police stations in Uganda, and Bweyale police post was his last posting station at that time. His home district is Apach District and he speaks the Lango dialect of the Luo language. He is the deputy Officer in Charge (Deputy O/C) and he had an independent office. I interviewed him in English in his office at the police station. The focus of the interview was everyday use of reading and writing related to police work in Bweyale. Most of his reading and writing relates to his police work. The only personal reading and writing he frequently does is reading the daily newspapers, the New Vision and the Monitor.

Owot, Michael (trader and leisure reader) interview conducted in English on 24th September 2005

Michael Owot is a 28-year-old A-level school leaver. He is not yet married and he has no children. However, he has some younger brothers who are attending primary school. He says he normally buys reading charts for them.

I interviewed Owot in the bookshop where he was a noticeable customer. We sat inside the bookshop, and we were looking at some of the books as we were talking to each other. He speaks and is literate in Kakwa his mother tongue. Therefore, I interviewed him in English and he prefers to read and write mostly in English.

I wanted to talk to someone in the community who buys books regularly from this bookshop. Owot was the identified regular customer who buys books to read by the bookseller above. The purpose of my interview with Owot was to get information about the kinds of books he likes buying and reading, and why he likes those books.

Owot says he reads a variety of books but he prefers African writers. Although he did not admit, it, he likes reading things related to religion: about the pope, religious conflicts and such titles in both books and magazines.

Peko, Andréa (school dropout) interview conducted in Acholi on 21st May 2005

Andrea is an 18-year-old senior two (secondary school) dropout. He left school because the person who was paying his school fees died and there was no one to take over the

responsibility of paying his school fees. He is not married and he has no children. He is now at home.

I interviewed him in Acholi at the home of my guide in the village where Peko lives. He also speaks Acholi at home. The focus of this interview was the personal literacy practices of a person who is literate and educated up to his level and lives in a rural community.

Since he left school, he has continued reading his school notes and books in the expectation that one day he will get some support and be able to go back to school. He is also active in the local village football club in which he uses his reading and writing skills in organising the activities of the club. He writes in both his Paluo dialect of the Luo language and English. He uses English for accessing information that is written in English and he uses the local language to write letters to his relatives who are not able to understand English. He prefers to read and write in English though. Sometimes he helps those who come to him with their reading and writing difficulties. He provides such assistance very occasionally. The only reading that he regularly does is revising his school notes.

In conclusion, he mainly reads and writes things related to his school reading and writing experience.

Richard, Min (homemaker and mother of school going children) interview conducted in Acholi on 19th September 2005

Min Richard is a 32-year-old mother of four primary school going kids. She could not continue with her education beyond primary two and she was not able to learn how to read and write. She is therefore a non-literate mother. I interviewed Min Richard in Acholi at her home that consists of two grass thatch huts and one iron roof cement and redbrick building. She informed me that she is able to speak Luganda and Lunyoro that are Bantu languages and she is not able to read in any language. Her husband is working in another town and regularly comes home to visit the family.

The primary focus of the interview with Min Richard was how she deals with her children's homework, report forms and written communications that come from school as a non-literate mother. In spite of her not being able to read and write she has developed a formula for looking at her children's work and is able to tell if a child has performed well or not.

Tumuboine, Gerald (trader and leisure reader) interview conducted in English on 24th September 2005

Tumuboine is a 35-year-old man, who earns his living as a shopkeeper. He is married with two pre-school age children. However, he does not stay with his family. He lives in Bweyale where he has established his shop, and his family lives in Hoima, his home district. He speaks Lunyoro as his mother tongue, and he prefers to read and write in English. He left school after completing A-level in 1993. At the time of the interview, he was already 12 years out of school. I interviewed Tumuboine in English in front of his shop.

The focus of the interview with Tumuboine was like that of Owot above, to get information on the kinds of books he likes buying and reading, and why he likes those books. The bookseller identified him as one of the few people who likes reading for leisure. Therefore, when I asked him about his reading habits, he said he reads anything that comes his way: novels, New Vision newspapers, and any books that he comes across.

He gets his books from Hoima town, his home base. He shares some books with the few friends who like reading like him, and when they get good books, they bring them to him. His main reason for reading is to pass time.

Wanadi, Angelo (*Bodaboda* rider) interview conducted in English on 9th July 2005

Wanadi is a 23-year-old senior two school dropout (nine years of school education after kindergarten in Uganda). After leaving school, he migrated from his home district in West Nile to come and settle in Bweyale. He is not yet married and he has no children. In Bweyale, he works as a *Bodaboda* rider and he hires the motorcycle he uses from someone else with whom he has signed an agreement spelling out the terms of payments. For that reason he carefully records the amount of money he earns from his work as a *Bodaboda* rider. He records his starting income in the morning and his closing income in the evening, the expenditure incurred on repairing and fuelling the motorcycle, etc. In addition to his *Bodaboda* reading and writing, he reads the Kakwa bible every Sunday.

He speaks Kakwa as his mother tongue. In addition to his mother tongue, he speaks three other languages: English, Barri, and Kiswahili. He prefers to read and write in English, although he can read and write in Kakwa. His main reason for preferring to read and write in English is to improve his English. He has some difficulties reading and writing in English. He says some words are difficult for him.

Appendix 3: Tools for data collection

3.1 Guide for biographical interviews

Unstructured interview schedule for an ethnographic study of community rural literacy practices in Bweyale.

Introduction

Authority

The National Council of Science and Technology, The University of KwaZulu-Natal and Makerere University cleared this ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF RURAL COMMUNITY LITERACY PRACTICES IN BWEYALE AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION IN UGANDA. The aim of this study is to understand how rural people in Bweyale use literacy in their everyday lives. Information attained from this study could be used for improving adult literacy education in Uganda in particular and generally in any other part of the world where a similar literacy situation may exist.

You have been selected to participate in this study by honestly providing information about your reading and writing that can be used to understand how rural people in Bweyale use literacy in their day-to-day lives by answering the following questions. The interview may be accompanied with examination of your daily life's routine with your permission.

Confidentiality statement

The information that you will supply will only be used for the purpose of this study and will not be made available for any other purpose other than this study and the reports and publications that may come out of it. Your name will not be quoted in any of the reports without your express consent and you are free not to supply it in this schedule.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Date of interview
- 1.2. Time interview started
- 1.3. What is your name?

2. Socio biographical information

- 2.1. How old are you?
- 2.2. Sex: Male (...) Female (...)
- 2.3. Work done (work you do) for a living (employed, or self employed)
- 2.4. How many different kinds of work have you been doing (work history)?
- 2.5. What are the things you most value in your life?
- 2.6. Are you married?
- 2.7. When did you get married?
- 2.8. How many children do you have, alternatively how many are you in your family? (how many brothers, and sisters)?
- 2.9. Did your family move?
- 2.10. If yes what was the reason for your movement?
- 2.11. For how long have you been in this place?
- 2.12. Do you have another home elsewhere other than this place?
- 2.13. If yes, where is that home?
- 2.14. How often do you go there?

3. Questions related to family educational background

- 3.1. Have you been to school?
- 3.2. If yes how far did you go with your education?

- 3.3. How many brothers and sisters or children of yours have been to school?
- 3.4. How many people in your family are able to read and write?
- 3.5. Did your father and mother attend school?
- 3.6. How far did they go with their schooling (do they know how to read and write?)
- 4. The prominent domains and context of everyday local literacy practices in the lives of rural people in Bweyale**
 - 4.1. Are you able to read and write? If Yes move to the next question, if No proceed to rephrase the questions to suit a non-literate and their interaction with text?
 - 4.2. When did you learn how to read and write?
 - 4.3. How did you learn how to read and write?
 - 4.4. Where did you learn how to read and write?
 - 4.5. In what languages are you able to read and write?
 - 4.6. How often do you read (most of the time, sometimes, a few times in a day)?
 - 4.7. How often do you write (most of the time, sometimes, a few times in a day)?
 - 4.8. Where do you most often do your writing?
 - 4.9. Where do you most often do your reading?
 - 4.10. What do you read everyday?
 - 4.11. What do you write everyday?
 - 4.12. What reading materials do you have in your possession (books, letters, documents, etc)? Show me some
 - 4.13. Where did you get these reading materials?
 - 4.14. Which are the most important reading materials to you?
 - 4.15. Why do you say these are the most important reading materials?
 - 4.16. How do you use these reading materials in the home? (*This question will be supplemented by the observation of the home literacy environment*)
 - 4.17. What kinds of reading activities always take place in the family?
 - 4.18. What are the things you have written which are in your possession (books, letters, documents, etc)? Show me some
 - 4.19. When did you write these materials?
 - 4.20. Why did you write and keep them?
 - 4.21. Which is the most important writing you have done?
 - 4.22. Why do you say it was the most important writing you have done?
 - 4.23. How do you use your writing skills?
 - 4.24. What kind of writing activities always take place in the family?
 - 4.25. What kind of material do you always
 - 4.25.1. read and
 - 4.25.2. write?
 - 4.26. Why do you always
 - 4.26.1. read and
 - 4.26.2. write these materials?
 - 4.27. Where are these materials located?
 - 4.28. Can you describe your literacy life from the time you wake up in the morning before going to work, during the day at work, and in the evening after work, and at night when planning to go to bed or relaxing with friends?
 - 4.28.1. reading
 - 4.28.2. writing
 - 4.29. Can you describe to me your literacy life for the whole week (from Sunday to Saturday)?
 - 4.30. Can you do without reading and writing in your everyday life?
 - 4.31. Give me reason for your response in the above question
 - 4.32. What are the most important documents in your life?
 - 4.33. Why do you say they are the most important?
 - 4.34. How do you keep them?

- 5. The activities in which rural people use reading and writing in their everyday life**
 - 5.1. What makes you read every day?
 - 5.2. What makes you write every day?
 - 5.3. What are the activities, which change your literacy life in a single day?
 - 5.3.1. reading
 - 5.3.2. writing
 - 5.4. What are the factors which change your literacy life in a week?
 - 5.5. Can you describe the things you do where reading and writing must be used as part of doing those activities?
 - 5.6. Do you experience difficulties with these changing literacy demands in your life?
 - 5.7. How do you get along with these changing demands?
 - 5.8. How often do you come face to face with very new ways of reading and writing?
 - 5.9. What are the things you see people reading and writing in this community?
 - 5.10. How important is reading and writing in the life of this community?
- 6. How do rural people learn new literacy practices in new occasions of literacy use?**
 - 6.1. Are you able to meet all the reading and writing demands of your life?
 - 6.2. If yes, how are you able to do that?
 - 6.3. Have you ever encountered something you were not able to comprehend?
 - 6.4. If no, which reading and writing tasks do you find most difficult, and why do you find them difficult?
 - 6.5. What do you do in such a circumstance? (do you seek help, give examples)
 - 6.6. Have you ever been faced with a situation in which you had the need to learn how to read something you have never read before?
 - 6.7. If yes, what was it, and how did you learn how to read it?
 - 6.8. What reading and writing skills do you always start with when dealing with new literacy situations?
- 7. Perceptions of and attitudes towards literacy among the rural people in Bweyale**
 - 7.1. What do you think literacy is?
 - 7.2. What is being able to read and write good for?
 - 7.3. Would you like every person to learn how to read and write?
 - 7.4. Do you think reading and writing is important in a person's life? Explain your answer.
 - 7.5. What is the value of literacy in your day to day life?
 - 7.6. Do you think being able to read and write is very important in your day to day life?
 - 7.7. Explain how literacy is important in your day-to-day life.
 - 7.8. Is it possible for you to live without any need for reading and writing in your day to day life?
 - 7.9. Why do you say literacy is or is not important for you in your day-to-day life?
 - 7.10. What positive contribution does literacy make to your daily living?
 - 7.11. How has your ability to read and write helped you with your life?
 - 7.12. How do you compare yourself with people who are able to read and write or not able to read and write?
- 8. Ending the interview**
 - 8.1. Is there any thing you would like to add about what we have been discussing about reading and writing?
 - 8.2. Thank you for your participation.
 - 8.3. Time of ending

3.2 Guide for documentary analysis

This will be used to study the literacy artefacts that are available in the community (news-papers, bibles, personal letters, certificates, business records, medical forms and visiting cards to hospitals, minutes of meetings, police statements, schoolbooks, primers, storybooks etc)

What kind of document

Letter	
Reading Book	
Business record	
Work report	
Health report	
A police statement	
Letter of introduction fro the local council I	

How was this document generated? E.g. locally or externally such as a textbook, can give the author of the documents.

What use or purpose is the document?

What is the content of the document?

Who are the presumed target audience?

Language used, (how many)

Language	Tick all the languages you see on the notice
English	
Swahili	
Luo	
Lunyoro	
Luganda	
Lugbara	
Any other ...	

Language level

Level	Tick accordingly
It could be understood by anybody who is able to read and write	
It can be understood by a primary school leaver and above	
It can be understood by a secondary school leaver and above	
It can be understood by an A level leaver and above	
It can be understood by a graduate only and above	
It is very difficult to understand what is written	

Material on which the message is written

Material	Tick
Paper	
Printed poster	
Any other	

Format of the message

ITEM	Tick
Size of paper	
A4	
A3 (Poster size)	
Not a paper	
Production	
Handwritten	
Printed (typed)	
Published books	
Any other	
Font size	
Lower case (small letters)	
Upper case (CAPITAL LETTERS)	
Mixed	
Readability	
Difficult to read	
Can be read but with difficulty	
Can be easily read	
Colour	
Blue	
Black	
Red	
Mixed (indicate the mixed colours)	
Other comments	
Print style	
Looks (poor; good; fair)	
Mounting	
Justified	
Aligned left (normal alignment)	
Centred	
Aligned right	
Permanent notice	
An announcement	
Changing notice on chalkboard	
Any other	

3.3 Observation guide for public notices/writing

What kind of notice

Examples	COMMENTS
A billboard, advert a shop name etc	
A board giving directions/name of a place	
A letter giving an announcement	
A poster calling people for immunisation	
A letter calling for job application	

Location of the notice

Purpose of the notice

Actual wording used

Presumed target audience

Language used, (and how many)

Language	Tick all the languages you see on the notice
English	
Swahili	
Luo	
Lunyoro	
Luganda	
Lugbara	
Any other ...	

Language level

Level	Tick accordingly
It could be understood by anybody who is able to read and write	
It can be understood by a primary school leaver and above	
It can be understood by a secondary school leaver and above	
It can be understood by an A level leaver and above	
It can be understood by a graduate only and above	
It is very difficult to understand what is written	

Material on which the message is written

Material	Tick
Paper	
Wood	
Chalkboard	
Wall	
Printed poster	
Any other	

Format of the message

ITEM	Tick
Size of paper	
A4	
A3 (Poster size)	
Not a paper	
Production	
Handwritten	
Printed	
Artist printed	
Any other	
Font size	
Lower case (small letters)	
Upper case (CAPITAL LETTERS)	
Mixed	
Readability	
Difficult to read	
Can be read but with difficulty	
Can be easily read	
Colour	
Blue	
Black	
Red	
Mixed (indicate the mixed colours)	
Other comments	
Print style	
Looks (poor; good; fair)	
Mounting	
Justified	
Aligned left (normal alignment)	
Centred	
Aligned right	
Permanent notice	
An announcement	
Changing notice on chalkboard	
Any other	

3.4 Observation guide for privately displayed writing

What kind of display

Examples	Tick
Calendar	
Health and other posters	
Certificates	
Cards with philosophical and religious statements	
Timetable	
Alphabetic cards	
Football team fixtures etc	

Location of the display

Purpose of the display

Actual wording used

Presumed target audience

Language used, (and how many)

Language	Tick all the languages you see on the display
English	
Swahili	
Luo	
Lunyoro	
Luganda	
Lugbara	
Any other ...	

Language level

Level	Tick accordingly
It could be understood by anybody who is able to read and write	
It can be understood by a primary school leaver and above	
It can be understood by a secondary school leaver and above	
It can be understood by an A level leaver and above	
It can be understood by a graduate only and above	
It is very difficult to understand what is written	

Material on which the message is written

Material	Tick
Paper	
Wood	
Chalkboard	
Wall	
Printed poster	
Any other	

Format of the message

ITEM	Tick
Size of paper	
A4	
A3 (Poster size)	
Not a paper	
Production	
Handwritten	
Printed	
Artist printed	
Any other	
Font size	
Lower case (small letters)	
Upper case (CAPITAL LETTERS)	
Mixed	
Readability	
Difficult to read	
Can be read but with difficulty	
Can be easily read	
Colour	
Blue	
Black	
Red	
Mixed (indicate the mixed colours)	
Other comments	
Print style	
Looks (poor; good; fair)	
Mounting	
Justified	
Aligned left (normal alignment)	
Centred	
Aligned right	
Permanent display	
An announcement	
Changing display on chalkboard	
Any other	

3.4 Observation guide for privately displayed writing

What kind of display

Examples	Tick
Calendar	
Health and other posters	
Certificates	
Cards with philosophical and religious statements	
Timetable	
Alphabetic cards	
Football team fixtures etc	

Location of the display

Purpose of the display

Actual wording used

Presumed target audience

Language used, (and how many)

Language	Tick all the languages you see on the display
English	
Swahili	
Luo	
Lunyoro	
Luganda	
Lugbara	
Any other ...	

Language level

Level	Tick accordingly
It could be understood by anybody who is able to read and write	
It can be understood by a primary school leaver and above	
It can be understood by a secondary school leaver and above	
It can be understood by an A level leaver and above	
It can be understood by a graduate only and above	
It is very difficult to understand what is written	

Material on which the message is written

Material	Tick
Paper	
Wood	
Chalkboard	
Wall	
Printed poster	
Any other	

In what language is the reading being done? (English only or English and Alur (translation or Alur with translation to English))	
Why is the reading being done in that language?	
Is the reading being translated into other languages?	
Why is this being done? (find this out by asking if it is not immediately obvious)	
What material is being written on? (e.g. paper, chalk board, exercise book)	
Where is the location of the activities? (e.g. in the church)	
What are the behaviours associated with the literacy event/s? (e.g. prayers, burial, meeting)	
How is the material being handled? (e.g. in a very ceremonial way like in the church and funeral prayers or casually like newspapers and storybooks)	
How is the material being positioned in the literacy events? (in the middle for all to see or for all to hear as it is being read)	
How many people are involved in the literacy event?	
What is each doing in this event? (e.g. listening, taking notes) try and find out the reasons why people are behaving the way they are doing in the literacy event	
What is the characteristic of the group? (e.g. women only, children only, mixed i.e. men, women and children etc)	
What is the format of the literacy material being read or written? (e.g. text book, cash book format, note book, formal letter format, personal letter format)	
Format of the writing or reading materials? (reading following rows and columns, hand written or printed)	
How important is literacy for the accomplishment of this activity? (could the activity be done without the involvement of reading and writing)	
Find out why literacy is important for the accomplishment of the activity	

Appendix 4: Lyrics of local song about development (Dongo lobo)

Acholi	English translation
1. Kadi makwia kwan bene tin dong cayo an,	Even the one who is not literate today can now despise me
2. Dongo Lobo	Development
3. Ada nye dongo lobo konyo wan,	It's true yah! Development has helped us
4. Okonyo wan bene weko dong angeyo piny	It has helped us also, that is why I am now knowledgeable
5. Dongo Lobo	Development
6. Enoba dongo lobo konyo paco,	There it is, development has helped the home
7. Okonyo wan bene weko dong angeyo piny	It has helped us also, that is why I am now knowledgeable
8. Enoba dongo lobo ber ada,	There it is, development is truly good
9. Okonyo wan bene weko dong angeyo piny,	It has helped us also, that is why I am now knowledgeable
10. Dongo Lobo,	Development
11. Enoba dongo lobo ber wai,	There it is, development is truly good
12. Omio kwan bene weko dong angeyo kwan ,	It also gave us education , that is why I can now read
13. Dongo lobo ni konyo wan weng,	Development helps us all
14. Dongo lobo ber ada,	Development is truly good
15. Enoba dongo lobo okonyo wan,	There it is development has helped us
16. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo okonyo wan,	There it is, hey! Development has helped us
17. Mon ma kwi kwoc bene tin dong kwoyo,	Women who did not know tailoring can now tailor
18. Enoba inen bene dongo lobo okonyo mon,	There it is, you see development has helped women
19. Makwia kwoc bene ineno dong kwoyo do,	Those who did not know tailoring you can see they can tailor now
20. Enoba dongo lobo ber ada,	There it is development is really good
21. Okonyo kwan bene ineno dong angeyo yo!	It has helped us with education ; you can see I now know it really
22. Enoba dongo lobo konyo wan	Development
23. An nye dongo lobo ber nye,	I...hey! Development is good hey!
24. Dongo lobo ni konyo wan bene weko dong angeyo piny,	This development helps us also, that is why I am now knowledgeable
25. Ada nye dongo lobo ni ber yo, yam akwia kwan bene ineno dong angeyo do	Its true yah! This development is good really! I used not to know even reading , you can see I know now
26. Aongo lobo ni ber yei yam akwia coc bene tin dong acoyooo ,	This development is really good for sure, I used not to even know how to write , today I can write really
27. Enoba dongo lobo ni konyo wan yam akia coc bene tin dong acoyooo ,	There it is, this development helps us I used not to know even how to write , today I can write

28. Dongo lobo ni konyo wan weng dongo lobo ni konyo paco,	This development helps us all. This development helps the home
29. Yam akwia coc bene ineno dong acoyo do,	I used not to know even how to write , you can see I can now write
30. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo ber ada,	There it is true yah! Development is good truly
31. Yam akwia leb munu tin dong adum do,	I used not to know how to speak English now I can speak it.
32. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo okonyo wan,	There it is, it's true hey: development has helped us.
33. Yam akwia leb munu menu dong adum do,	I used not to know how to speak English , now I can speak it
34. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo okonyo wan,	There it is, hey! Development has helped us
35. Malan ma yam kiwia leb munu tin dong dumu ada,	Malan who did not know English today can speak it truly
36. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo okonyo awobi,	There it is, it's true yah! Development has helped the young man
37. Yam akwiya coc bene ineno dong acoyo do,	I did not even know how to write , you can see I now can write
38. Ada nye dongo lobo okonyo awobi,	It is true yah! Development has helped the young man
39. Yam akwiya coc bene ineno dong acoyooo,	I did't know how to write , you can see I can now write
40. Ada nye dongo lobo ber wai,	Its true yah! Development is good is that not so?
41. Yam akwia coc bene tin dong acoyo do	I did not know how to write , yet today I can write for sure
42. Ada nye dongo lobo ni konyo wan,	It is true yah! Development has helped us
43. Malan ma yam kwiya coc bene tin dong ngeyooo,	Malan who even did not know how to write today knows truly
44. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo okonyo an,	There it is, its true yah! Development has helped me
45. Yam akwia London tin dong angeyo do,	I did not know London, now I know really.
46. Nen ba ada nye dongo lobo okonyo an,	See, it's true development has helped me
47. Yam akwia London tin dong angeyooo,	I did not know London, today I know now
48. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo okonyo wan,	There it is it's true yah! Development has helped us
49. Yam akwia London tin dong angeyo dooo,	I did not know London, today I know now
50. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo ber ada,	There it is, it's true development is good truly.
51. Yam akwia piny bene tin dong angeyo do,	I even didn't know anything, today I do
52. Dongo lobo ni konyo wan weng dongo lobo ni ber wai,	This development has helped us all, this development is good, isn't it

<p>In what language is the reading being done? (English only or English and Alur (translation or Alur with translation to English))</p>	
<p>Why is the reading being done in that language?</p>	
<p>Is the reading being translated into other languages?</p>	
<p>Why is this being done? (find this out by asking if it is not immediately obvious)</p>	
<p>What material is being written on? (e.g. paper, chalk board, exercise book)</p>	
<p>Where is the location of the activities? (e.g. in the church)</p>	
<p>What are the behaviours associated with the literacy event/s? (e.g. prayers, burial, meeting)</p>	
<p>How is the material being handled? (e.g. in a very ceremonial way)</p>	

like in the church and funeral prayers or casually like newspapers and storybooks)	
How is the material being positioned in the literacy events? (in the middle for all to see or for all to hear as it is being read)	
How many people are involved in the literacy event?	
What is each doing in this event? (e.g. listening, taking notes) try and find out the reasons why people are behaving the way they are doing in the literacy event	
What is the characteristic of the group? (e.g. women only, children only, mixed i.e. men, women and children etc)	
What is the format of the literacy material being read or written? (e.g. text book, cash book format, note book, formal letter	

format, personal letter format)	
Format of the writing or reading materials? (reading following rows and columns, hand written or printed)	
How important is literacy for the accomplishment of this activity? (could the activity be done without the involvement of reading and writing)	
Find out why literacy is important for the accomplishment of the activity	

Appendix 4: Lyrics of local song about development (Dongo lobo)

Acholi	English translation
1. Kadi makwia kwan bene tin dong cayo an,	Even the one who is not literate today can now despise me
2. Dongo Lobo	Development
3. Ada nye dongo lobo konyo wan,	It's true yah! Development has helped us
4. Okonyo wan bene weko dong angeyo piny	It has helped us also, that is why I am now knowledgeable
5. Dongo Lobo	Development
6. Enoba dongo lobo konyo paco,	There it is, development has helped the home
7. Okonyo wan bene weko dong angeyo piny	It has helped us also, that is why I am now knowledgeable
8. Enoba dongo lobo ber ada,	There it is, development is truly good
9. Okonyo wan bene weko dong angeyo piny,	It has helped us also, that is why I am now knowledgeable
10. Dongo Lobo,	Development
11. Enoba dongo lobo ber wai,	There it is, development is truly good
12. Omio kwan bene weko dong angeyo kwan ,	It also gave us education , that is why I can now read
13. Dongo lobo ni konyo wan weng,	Development helps us all
14. Dongo lobo ber ada,	Development is truly good
15. Enoba dongo lobo okonyo wan,	There it is development has helped us
16. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo	There it is, hey!

okonyo wan,	Development has helped us
17. Mon ma kwi kwoc bene tin dong kwoyo,	Women who did not know tailoring can now tailor
18. Enoba inen bene dongo lobo okonyo mon,	There it is, you see development has helped women
19. Makwia kwoc bene ineno dong kwoyo do,	Those who did not know tailoring you can see they can tailor now
20. Enoba dongo lobo ber ada,	There it is development is really good
21. Okonyo kwan bene ineno dong angeyo yo!	It has helped us with education ; you can see I now know it really
22. Enoba dongo lobo konyo wan	Development
23. An nye dongo lobo ber nye,	I...hey! Development is good hey!
24. Dongo lobo ni konyo wan bene weko dong angeyo piny,	This development helps us also, that is why I am now knowledgeable
25. Ada nye dongo lobo ni ber yo, yam akwia kwan bene ineno dong angeyo do	Its true yah! This development is good really! I used not to know even reading , you can see I know now
26. Aongo lobo ni ber yei yam akwia coc bene tin dong acoyooo ,	This development is really good for sure, I used not to even know how to write , today I can write really
27. Enoba dongo lobo ni konyo wan yam akia coc bene tin dong acoyooo ,	There it is, this development helps us I used not to know even how to write , today I can write
28. Dongo lobo ni konyo wan weng dongo lobo ni konyo	This development helps us all. This development helps the home

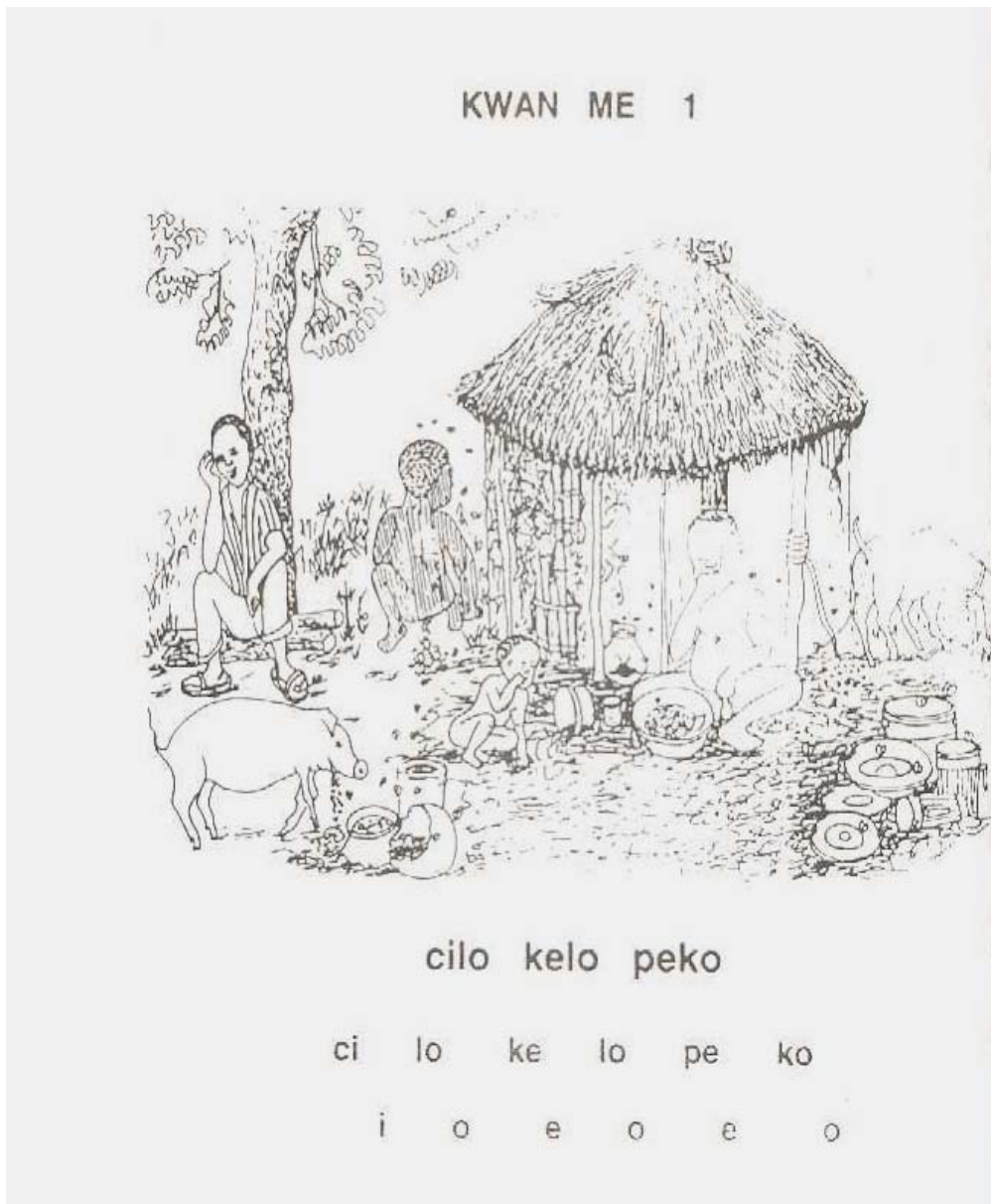
paco,	
29. Yam akwia coc bene ineno dong acoyo do,	I used not to know even how to write , you can see I can now write
30. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo ber ada,	There it is true yah! Development is good truly
31. Yam akwia leb munu tin dong adum do,	I used not to know how to speak English now I can speak it.
32. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo okonyo wan,	There it is, it's true hey: development has helped us.
33. Yam akwia leb munu menu dong adum do,	I used not to know how to speak English , now I can speak it
34. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo okonyo wan,	There it is, hey! Development has helped us
35. Malan ma yam kiwia leb munu tin dong dumu ada,	Malan who did not know English today can speak it truly
36. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo okonyo awobi,	There it is, it's true yah! Development has helped the young man
37. Yam akwiya coc bene ineno dong acoyo do,	I did not even know how to write , you can see I now can write
38. Ada nye dongo lobo okonyo awobi,	It is true yah! Development has helped the young man
39. Yam akwiya coc bene ineno dong acoyooo,	I did't know how to write , you can see I can now write
40. Ada nye dongo lobo ber wai,	Its true yah! Development is good is that not so?
41. Yam akwia coc bene tin dong acoyo do	I did not know how to write , yet today I can write for sure
42. Ada nye dongo lobo ni konyo wan,	It is true yah! Development has helped us
43. Malan ma yam kwiya coc bene tin dong	Malan who even did not know how to write today

ngeyooo,	knows truly
44. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo okonyo an,	There it is, its true yah! Development has helped me
45. Yam akwia London tin dong angeyo do,	I did not know London, now I know really.
46. Nen ba ada nye dongo lobo okonyo an,	See, it's true development has helped me
47. Yam akwia London tin dong angeyooo,	I did not know London, today I know now
48. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo okonyo wan,	There it is it's true yah! Development has helped us
49. Yam akwia London tin dong angeyo dooo,	I did not know London, today I know now
50. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo ber ada,	There it is, it's true development is good truly.
51. Yam akwia piny bene tin dong angeyo do,	I even didn't know anything, today I do
52. Dongo lobo ni konyo wan weng dongo lobo ni ber wai,	This development has helped us all, this development is good, isn't it

53. Kadi ma kwi leb munu tin dong yeto an,	Even the one who does not know English today can abuse me
54. Ada nye dongo lobo ber yo,	It's true development is good really
55. Kadi ma kwi leb munu tin dong wake ikuma,	Even the one who does not know English today can brag to me
56. Ada nye dongo lobo konyo wan,	It's true hey! Development has helped us
57. Mogo ma yam konye peke bene tin dong cayo an,	Even those who were useless, today can despise me
58. Enoba dong lobo okonyo wan,	There it is, development has helped us
59. Mogo ma yam konye peke bene tin dong yeto an.	Even those who were useless, today they can abuse me today
60. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo okonyo wan,	There it is, it's true, development has helped us
61. Mogo ma yam konye peke bene tin dong cayo an	Even those who were useless, today they can despise me
62. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo okonyo wan,	There it is yah! Development has helped us
63. Kadi ma namo I kibuli tin dong yeto an,	Even the one who spends time in Kibuli today can abuse me
64. Enoba ada nye dongo lobo okonyo wan,	There it is, it's true yah! Development helped us
65. Kadi ma bedo I Vangard tin dong cayo an,	Even the one who stays in Vangard today despises me.
66. Enoba ada nye dong lobo ber ada,	There it is, its true yah! Development is truly good
67. Mon ma yam dong bedo I vangard tin dong ryemo an,	The woman who used to stay in Vangard today turns me away
68. Enoba ada nye London ber ada,	There is it is, it's true yah! London is truly good
69. Oo I council tin dong ryemo an,	Now in council, today they can banish me
70. Ada nye London ber ada,	It's true yah! London is good truly
71. Ono council tin dong cayo an,	Became a local Council Member and today despises me
72. Enoba dongo lobo ni konyo wan mogo mayang kony wa peke bene tin dong yeto wan,	There it is, this development has helped some of us who were useless, today they can abuse us
73. Ada acii wae dongo lobo okonyo wan,	It's true Acii that development has helped us
74. Kadi ma yang boloka tin dong cayo an,	Even those who were taxi/bus touts today despise me
75. Enoba ada nye London okonyo wan,	There it is, yah! London has helped us
76. Okonyo wan bene ineno dong angeyo piny,	It has helped us also, that is why I am now knowledgeable
77. Dongo lobo ni konyo wan weng,	This development has helped us all
78. Dongo lobo ber ada,	Development is good truly
79. Muuumuu dongo lobo okonyo wan.	Muumuu development has helped us

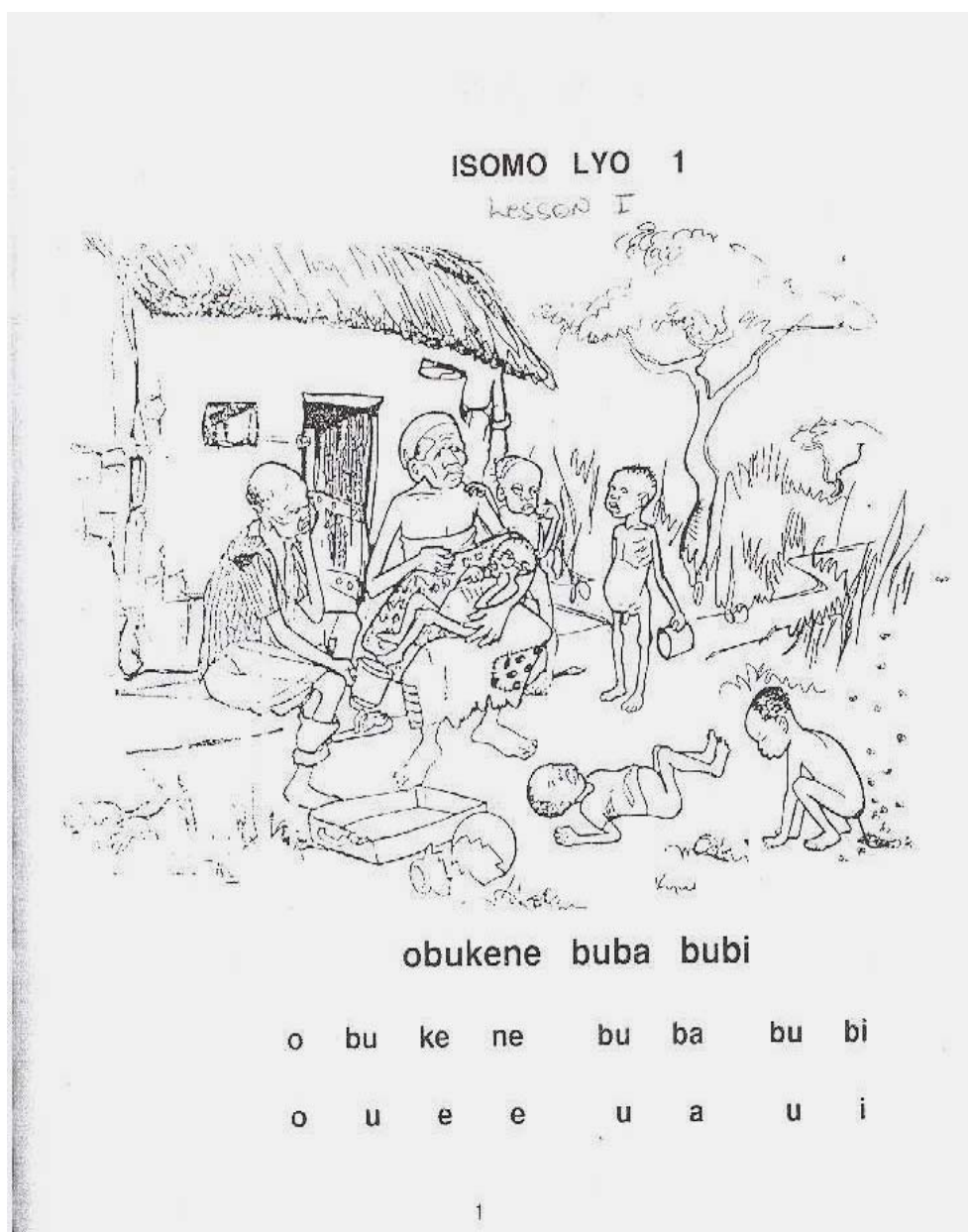
Appendix 5: Sample pages from Luo and Kinyankole primers

5.1 Luo primer



Source document: Acaye, A., & Omara-Akaca. (2003). *Ryeko aye lonyo: buk me acel (Luo primer)*. Kampala: Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

5.2 Runyankore/Rukiga Primer



Source document: Ministry of Local Government (1993) "Amagyezi n'etitungo"
Runyankore/Rukiga Primer, Kampala: Government of Uganda

Appendix 6: Approval and clearance letters

6.1: Approval letter



Uganda National Council For Science and Technology
(Established by Act of Parliament of the Republic of Uganda)

Your Ref:.....

Our Ref:.....SS.1687.....

Date:.....11-Jan-05.....

Mr. George Openjuru
C/O Institute of Adult and Continuing Education
Makerere University
KAMPALA

Dear Mr. Openjuru,

RE: RESEARCH PROJECT, "AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF RURAL COMMUNITY LITERACY IN BWEYALE AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR LITERACY EDUCATION IN UGANDA"

This is to inform you that the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) approved the above research proposal on **January 07, 2005**. The approval will expire on **January 07, 2006**. If it is necessary to continue with the research beyond the expiry date, a request for continuation should be made in writing to the Executive Secretary, UNCST.

Any problems of a serious nature related to the execution of your research project should be brought to the attention of the UNCST, and any changes to the research protocol should not be implemented without UNCST's approval except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the research participant(s).

This letter also serves as proof of UNCST approval and as a reminder for you to submit to UNCST timely progress reports and a final report on completion of the research project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Julius Ecuru', is written over a faint circular stamp.

Julius Ecuru
for: Executive Secretary
UGANDA NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY


LOCATION/CORRESPONDENCE

PLOT 10, KAMPALA ROAD
UGANDA HOUSE, 11TH FLOOR
P. O. BOX 6884
KAMPALA, UGANDA.

COMMUNICATION

TEL: (256) 41-250499
FAX: (256) 41-234579
E-MAIL: uncst@starcom.co.ug
WEBSITE: <http://www.uncst.go.ug>

6.2: Clearance letter



Uganda National Council For Science and Technology
(Established by Act of Parliament of the Republic of Uganda)

Your Ref:.....
 Our Ref:..... **SS 1687**

Date: **11-Jan-05**

The Resident District Commissioner
 Masindi District
MASINDI

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH CLEARANCE

We wish to introduce you to Mr. George Openjuru who would like to carry out a research project entitled "An ethnographic study of rural community literacy in Bweyale and their implications for literacy education in Uganda" between January 11, 2005 and January 07, 2006 in your district. The Uganda National Council for Science and Technology has approved the research project.

This letter is to request you to give the researchers the necessary assistance to facilitate the accomplishment of the research project.

Your cooperation in this regard is highly appreciated.

Yours Faithfully,

Leah Nawegulo

Leah Nawegulo
 for: Executive Secretary
UGANDA NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

cc Mr. George Openjuru
 c/o IACE, Makerere University
 KAMPALA

DALE KASIMIRO

CHAIRPERSON L.C.I
 KICHABUGINGO VILLAGE
 KIRYANDONGO
 DATE 28/4/05

[Signature]

LOCATION/CORRESPONDENCE

PLOT 16, KAMPALA ROAD
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 KAMPALA, UGANDA.

COMMUNICATION

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