



Awareness of Teachers Towards Using Songs in Teaching Reading Skills to Primary Schools in Tanzania: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract: Reading is a laborious journey that takes a child to a world of understanding written language for use in further education. This study explores the perception of teachers towards using songs in teaching reading skills to Standard One pupils. This study used a qualitative research approach. This study adopted a sample size of 24 pupils' teachers. The study used questionnaires, interviews and documentary reviews as data collection methods and tools. The study found that female teachers who were 45 years old and older could interact well, start a song, dance with the pupil, and sing with them. The researcher also observed that teachers who had an experience of more than fifteen years of work knew many songs compared to those who were younger. This study found that most teachers understood that songs were effective in teaching reading. Teachers were aware that some pupils could understand sounds only by reciting them. It was further revealed that teachers used common songs to help pupils remember what they had learnt during the past lessons. There were a lot of challenges facing teachers in using songs to facilitate reading. The study recommended that teachers with little knowledge about using songs in teaching should seek assistance from qualified counsellors like senior teachers to assist their children in using songs during teaching in order to increase performance. Also, heads of schools should develop programmes of teaching methodology by inviting experts of different professions to enable teachers to get information about teaching using songs. The government should conduct seminars and workshops, especially in government schools, to update teachers on teaching using songs to make career service provision more successful, and the study was narrowed to the teachers as the decisive factors in the learning capacity of prospective pupil students; therefore, further research can be done to investigate the other background characteristics, like social media, community, and sociocultural institutions.

Keywords: Teachers; Songs; Reading Skills; Primary Schools

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1. Introduction

Teaching reading to early grade one pupils includes a range of practices; for many years, teachers in early grade one employ various teaching strategies so as to help children learn. Learning is a process

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that involves skills acquisition. Someone is invented to be learnt only if there is a change of performance. Effective learning is attended by memory that helps a learner to remember what has been taught (Utami & Musthafa, 2023). The aim of language familiarity is to teach children to read words that are meaningful to them. Today a lot more is known about the way children learn and the method which can help them to infer the meaning (Kirby et al., 2023). Teachers are currently looking for a method or technique that will help them achieve the intended skills. There are many teaching methods that a teacher can use, and they have brought positive results in his teaching. One of the methods of learning for students, especially those in pre-school, namely kindergarten, first and second grade, who are taught the subject of reading is teaching using songs. The brains of pre-school students are easy to capture; what they are learning can be sent to the brain and thus connected to the real world.

A song is a rhythm that follows certain beats with the theme of rising and falling of sound waves and a specific arrangement of words. The teacher should compose a song based on the intent he or she is going to teach (Rohana & Saharani, 2023). There are many studies that show a positive influence on the use of songs in teaching, but there is very little evidence to show the negative impact of the use of songs in the classroom. Song is a very important method for teaching. Students have shown that using songs in teaching them in kindergarten, first grade and second grade enhances cognition in their brain, whereas the IQ of students taught using songs has to be high (Bsharat et al., 2021). Another view observes that using songs in teaching reading skills to early grade one pupils helps them to create short- and long-term memory. It is argued that songs help teachers to motivate pupils, increase language development and make pupils like schooling. So far songs have been effective in influencing effective teaching of vocabulary and retention of young learners at school (Ali, 2020).

In Colombia, Ghaith (2018), in his study on the use of song as a tool to work on listening, argues that using songs is a good method to teach reading in the development of higher levels of understanding. These observations indicate that using songs in teaching reading to early-grade pupils is very important because it prepares them for a higher level of comprehension. Other findings by Sohut and Yunus (2019) show that the student is encouraged to participate more and more in class activities while the song is used in their English classes. This research still shows that the song is very important. Moreover, Aristotle, as cited by Yagual (2026), identified that songs as the method of teaching reading help the child to develop self-confidence and language development. Through these comments it is true that a song can help a child to speak and arrange words logically and to bring meaning, so when a child sings, it builds his or her ability to pronounce words well and develops his or her language.

Piaget says children enjoy songs and rhythms. So it creates excitement and draws attention and emotion. Songs stimulate the brain and preserve long-term memory, thus facilitating the learning process where teachers are encouraged to use songs in teaching as well as in singing, there to be supplemented with actions. Chindengwike (2024) conducted a study about using songs in teaching and identified that teachers have difficulties in accessing suitable songs to use in the classroom and measuring pupils' success when they use songs. But the researcher said nothing on how to overcome the situation.

In Tanzania, Mmasa and Anney (2016), in the study exploring literacy and numerical teaching, pointed out that most teachers teaching reading do not have the skills of teaching reading to young learners. In the study area, they found that 64% of second-grade students are illiterate, while 54% of third graders cannot do the same. The use of songs could create repeats which motivate young learners to learn effectively and efficiently, as observed by Chindengwike (2025). Along with the strategies

adopted by the government to ensure that teachers are well equipped, the methods used in the research show that the situation is not ideal. Evidence was made on reading, in which he noted seven out of ten students in Tanzania cannot read simple ordinary Kiswahili stories. The study shows that teachers do not have enough resources to use reading techniques to teach reading skills (Chindengwike, 2024).

Reading is a laborious journey that takes a child to a world of understanding written language for use in further education. Most children seem illiterate, and there is no way or method that seems to help solve the problem. The difficulty for most students is reading the words correctly on the page, and even understanding what is written for them is a problem. Teachers can use different processes for how to help students. So instead of each teacher using his own technique, it is better to look for one technique that seems suitable for teaching (Chindengwike, 2024). According to Chindengwike (2025), the use of songs in teaching has proved useful. The songs have been shown to enhance the language skills of the student; the songs have been shown to inspire students and have also been shown to bring long-term memories. There have been several studies conducted to examine the use of songs, as they can help bring about an understanding of reading skills. And that is why today many researchers have done research on the use of songs.

There have been several reading comprehension lessons. The results of many studies have shown that songs increase the number of a child's vocabulary and help to develop a child's brain and increase cognitive levels. Students need to learn, and they need the creativity of teachers in mastering techniques that will be helpful to students and that will bring positive results (Chindengwike, 2026).

Reading skills are an important part of reading; if students do not understand what they have read, they will not be able to analyse the text in order to understand what is meant in the text. and writing. If students are unable to understand what they have read, they will not be able to analyse the text and understand what the author is trying to convey, and so the goals of the text will be the same and free (Chindengwike, 2025). Thus, the major consumption that improving teaching reading by using songs will help early-grade teachers to teach reading effectively and efficiently and help pupils to be competent with literacy skills. Therefore, it is important to conduct a study aiming at examining the use of songs to teach reading skills to early grade one pupils.

2. Literature Review

Cognitive Learning Theory, which emerged from the cognitive revolution in psychology, emphasises that learning happens through internal mental processes such as attention, perception, memory, and problem-solving. The hypothesis was largely influenced by Piaget's (1952) work, which described how learners form cognitive structures through interaction with their environment. Cognitive learning theory is particularly relevant to song reading because it views learning as an active process in which students acquire, organise, and retain knowledge using mental processes such as attention, perception, memory, comprehension, and reasoning (Piaget, 1952; Bruner, 1960; Ausubel, 1963). In song reading, students do more than just memorise lyrics; they actively evaluate the meaning of words, recognise patterns of rhyme and rhythm, relate new vocabulary to existing knowledge, and comprehend the overall message provided by the song. This cognitive processing improves reading comprehension and long-term memory of linguistic information.

Bsharat et al. (2021) conducted a study on first-grade teachers teaching reading with songs. The study done in Turkey. The purpose of the study was to investigate how first-grade teachers teach reading

with songs; the qualitative research method was used, and an interview was deployed which was applied to ten first-grade teachers. Descriptive analysis was used while analysing data. The findings showed that teachers are aware of studies given at first reading; writing and music teaching lessons can be increased for the class teacher undergraduate programme. The study used descriptive analysis while analysing data, while the current study used thematic data analysis. A study by Şevik (2011) on teachers' views on the use of songs in teaching English to young students. The aim of the study was to examine the views of teachers of the Turkish government EFL elementary school on the use of songs in teaching English to young students; a questionnaire was used in data collection. The results showed that Turkish EFL teachers have great confidence in the value of teaching songs and in the skill of using songs in teaching EFL for younger students.

The study used a questionnaire while collecting data, but the current data used thematic data analysis. Bsharat et al. (2021) conducted a study on pre-service teachers' perceptions about original songs in teaching English to young learners. The study used a descriptive design; participants were 22 ELT, and the data collection tool was a questionnaire. The finding showed a problem encountered by the teachers is their capabilities in finding appropriate songs to be used in each curriculum.

The study used a questionnaire only while collecting data; the study used a descriptive design and also used 22 ELT participants, but the current research used a questionnaire and interview while collecting data and used forty-four participants. Bsharat et al. (2021), in his research, showed that teachers have a positive response to the use of songs as a way to promote language faster, and this response has been seen in teachers over the age of 40. They also agreed that the songs could be used in all AFL departments except in writing by Arabic media departments. Through this information, they still show that teachers are responsive in using songs to teach because they have seen it as a way that helps students develop their language, building brains for pre-school students. So this method is very useful for teaching. Even for teachers under the age of 40, as long as it is very useful for teaching, it is good for all teachers to use it.

Bsharat et al. (2021) conducted a study on a teacher's views about using songs in teaching English to young learners. The aim of the study was to explore the views of Turks. The study used a questionnaire. The findings showed that teachers had difficulty appropriating songs to use in their classes and measuring student success when they used songs. This study has shown goals and findings, but the current study has shown them. But the current showed methodology. Herrera et al. (2023) conducted a study on the role of music education in early literacy. The qualitative research approach used, the design used was multi-case, and data indicated parallels focused on the five key reading components between music and language literacy development. Findings described the sequential sound-before-symbol pedagogical practice of music literacy development from the perspectives of the nine general music educators to be similar to early reading skills progress as they experienced equivalent learning processes.

The study used a multiple-case study design; the study did not show the sample size, but the current study used a phenomenology design (Bsharat et al., 2021) and conducted a study on teachers' perceptions of the influence of professional elementary teachers regarding the influence of professional development on music integration at the elementary school. The study used a qualitative approach and used a phenomenological approach. Data collection tools were interviews, focused group discussions and questionnaires. The study used 40 participants, and data analysis was adopted from Flick. The study used focused discussion, but the current study did not use focus.

Bsharat et al. (2021) conducted a study on using songs in teaching oral skills to young learners, teachers' views and attitudes. The aims of the study were to explore the views and attitudes of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Saudi Arabia about using songs when teaching Young Learners (TEYL) oral skills (listening and speaking) specifically. Participants were 98 teachers; data was gathered through IBM and SPSS. The research design used a descriptive approach. The result showed that most of the teachers surveyed realise the pedagogical value of using songs when teaching English oral skills to young learners (YL); however, they do not use songs because of their religious and cultural beliefs. The study suggested that teachers should be provided with chants that are free of musical instruments to avoid any controversies with cultural or religious beliefs.

The study used a quantitative approach and did not show the data collection tools, but the current study used a qualitative research approach and the data collection tools, which were observation and interview. Herrera et al. (2023) conducted a study on reflections of English language teachers about the effect of using songs on pronunciation. The aim of the study was teachers' views about the effect of using songs on pronunciation. Data were generated by using IBM and SPSS. A questionnaire was used while collecting data. The study suggested that song-based lessons have to be exemplified and encouraged in English language teaching departments.

As a result, there is a contextual, methodological, and knowledge gap when it comes to using songs as an instructional tool to improve language abilities in Tanzanian schools. This study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the effectiveness of using songs to teach language skills, examining both learners' academic outcomes and teachers' classroom experiences, thus providing evidence that can inform language teaching practices and educational policy in Tanzania.

3. Research Methodology

This study used a qualitative research approach, while a phenomenological research design was used. The study was conducted in Tanga City Council, in the Tanga region. For two reasons, the first researcher did not see the research done on this topic, so he saw the need to do this research. The study used two techniques to obtain samples, which were the purposive and convenience sampling techniques. This study opted for a sample size of 24 pupils' teachers. The study used questionnaires, interviews and documentary reviews as data collection methods and tools. The scientific justification of using these methods is that it is easy to triangulate information from different groups of respondents. Also, accessibility of data from reliable sources.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

In this study, different participants were involved. They included early grades teachers, school quality assurance, and early grade one pupils. The demographic characteristics of these participants are presented in terms of sex, age, education level and working experience.

4.1.1. Age of Respondents

The study involved seven public primary schools in which seven school quality assurances were involved. Of all school quality assurances, three were below 40 years old, while the remaining four were above 40 years old (42, 45, 47 and 50, respectively). Likewise, ten early grade one teachers were

involved in the study; among them, six were 25 and 49 years old, while the remaining ranged from 49 to 59 years old.

Table 1. Age Range of the Participants (N=24)

Category	Age range (years)	Number of participants	Percentage (%)	Overall sample
School quality assurances	<40	3	42.8	
	> 40	4	57.1	
Sub-total		7		7
First grade teachers	<50	3	30.00	
	> 50	7	70.00	
Sub-total		10		10
Academic teacher's	≥45	5	71.4	
	>45	2	28.5	
Sub-total		7		7
Grand total				24

Source: Field Data (2026)

4.1.2. Sex of Respondents

The study involved 38 participants, whereby 19 (63.3%) were female while the remaining 11 (36.6%) were male. It can be observed that the number of females surpassed that of male participants. This is because most female teachers prefer to teach lower classes compared to male teachers (Herrera et al., 2023). Furthermore, most of the heads of school were males, composed of four (57%), while three (42.8%) were female head teachers. The study also involved seven academic teachers, of whom six (85.7%) were male and the remaining one (14.2%) was female. A total number of sixteen teachers who were teaching early grade one were involved in this study. The study found that 15 (81.25%) were female teachers and the remaining one (18.75%) was male. This study is similar to one done by Rohana and Saharani (2023), who explained how the sex of respondents influences the songs in teaching reading skills.

Table 2. Sex of the participants (N=24)

Category	Sex	Number of participants	Percentage (%)
Academics teacher's	Male	4	57.14
	Female	3	42.8
Sub-total		7	100.0
School quality assurances	Male	6	85.7
	Female	1	14.28
Sub-total		7	100.0
First grade teachers	Male	2	20.00
	Female	8	80.00
Sub-total		10	100.0

First grade pupils	Male	7	50
	Female	7	50
Total	Sub-	14	100.0

Source: Field Data (2026)

4.1.2.1. Education Level of the Respondents

The educational level of all participants was also analysed, in which one school quality assurance (14.2%) had a master's degree in education, while 2 (28.5%) had bachelor's degrees in education. Likewise, 3 teachers (42.85%) had a diploma in education while the remaining one (14.2%) had a certificate (grade A). The study also observed that, of all seven academic teachers, none of them had a master's degree, while two (28.5%) had bachelor's degrees in education. One academic teacher (14.2%) had a diploma of education, and the remaining four (57%) had a certificate (Grade A) in education. The study further found that eight teachers (80%) teaching first-grade teachers (Grade A) in education. Meanwhile, one (20%) had a diploma in education. This study, supported by Chindengwike (2025), further found that eight teachers (80%) were teaching first grade (Grade A) in education.

Table 3. Educational level of the participants (N = 24)

Category	Qualification	Number of participant	Percentage (%)
School quality assurances	Master degree	1	14.2
	Bachelor degree	2	28.5
	Diploma	3	42.85
	Certificate	1	14.2
	Sub-total	7	100
Academic Teachers	Master degree in education	-	-
	Bachelor Degree in Education	2	28.57
	Diploma in education	1	14.28
	Certificate in Education	4	57.14
	Sub-total	7	100
First grade teachers	Bachelor degree	-	-
	Diploma in Education	2	20.00
	Certificate in Education (Grade A)	8	80.00
	Sub total	10	100

Source: Field Data (2026)

4.1.3. Working Experience

Making reference to teaching experience, ten first-grade teachers equal 42%; one has 1-10 years, four have a range of 10-20 years, while five have a range of 20 years and above. Academics teachers participated were seven equal to 29% two were ranged 1-10 years, two ranged 10-20 years while three ranged more than 20 years. School quality assurances participated in were seven, equal to 29%; four have 1-10 years; two have 10-20 years, while one has more than 20 years. This study is supported by Chindengwike (2025), who observed that the school quality assurances depend on working experience among staff.

Table 4. Working Experience of the participants (N=24)

Category	Years at work	Number of participants	Percentage(%)
Academic teacher's	1-10 years of experience	2	28.57
	10-20 years of experience	2	28.57
	More than 20 years of experience	3	42.85
	Sub total	7	100
School quality assurances	1-10 years of experience	4	57.14
	10-20 years of experience	2	28.57
	More than 20 years of experience	1	14.28
	Sub total	7	100
First grade teachers	1-10 years of experience	1	10.00
	10-20 years of experience	4	40.00
	More than 20 years of experience	5	50.00
	Sub total	10	100

*Source: Field Data (2026)***4.1.4. Main Themes and Sub-Themes of the Findings****Table 5. Main Themes and Sub-Themes of the Findings**

S/N	Main Themes	Sub-Themes
1	Assess how grade one pupils' teachers are teaching reading skills by using songs to early grade one pupils.	• The role of using songs in teaching reading in early grade one • How teachers use songs to teach reading skills
2	Explore the perception of teachers towards using songs in teaching reading skills to early grade one pupils	• Perception of the teacher in using songs to teach reading as a method of teaching • Reactions of students about songs

3	Examine challenges facing teachers in teaching reading skills by using songs to grade one pupils.	- Challenges facing teachers in teaching reading to early grade one - Lack of teacher training
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Source: Field Data (2026)

4.1.5. Background Information of Early Grades Pupils

In the case of early grade one pupils, seven were boys and seven were girls. The students were in public primary school in Tanga city. All are grade one students. A researcher interviewed the students by using the Kiswahili language. The interview was conducted after the lesson session in order to get effective answers from them.

Table 6. Background of Early Grade One Pupils

Frequency	Sex	Age	Grade	Percentage
1	Male	6	Grade one	7.14
2	Female	6	Grade one	14.28
3	Female	7	Grade one	28.57
1	Female	7	Grade one	7.14
4	Male	7	Grade one	28.57
2	Male	8	Grade one	14.28
1	Female	8	Grade one	7.14
Subtotal 14				100

Source: Field Data (2026)

4.2. How Songs are Related to Teaching Reading

This study found that most teachers understood that songs were effective in teaching reading. Teachers were aware that some pupils could understand sounds only by reciting them. It was further revealed that teachers used common songs to help pupils remember what they had learnt during the past lessons. Teachers were aware that children only developed attention when songs were used during teaching reading. It was further revealed. Most of the pre-primary teachers perceived songs as one of the things which can help the pupils to come to the school daily because the pupils like to sing a song, so when they come to the school aspect, they will sing a song. Pre-primary teachers are supposed to teach through song in order to motivate the learners to come to school, and when the pupils come to school, it is easy for them to know how to read because when the pupils do not come to school, there are some letters which are missed, so it is difficult for them to know how to read. During an interview with a head teacher of school SA, these were his comments:

“Pupils like singing. I always advise pre-primary teachers to teach our pupils new songs every day... you know, some children do not like mundane activities... they like playing and singing. I cannot surely prove that songs have helped to improve the level of reading at my school, but I can say that we cannot undermine songs.”

It was further revealed that teachers perceived songs as tools of relaxation since they were removing stress and anxiety amongst pupils. During an interview with one district education quality assayer, the researcher asked if there was any relationship between reading and songs and if songs can help in teaching reading. The following was her response.

“Before I became an education assurer, I was a teacher; I used to teach those lower classes. Teaching reading is amongst the hardest parts of the teaching profession. It is not easy... yet songs can help in the whole process.... You know, songs help reduce stress; they make pupils become your friend. We always advise teachers to use songs and avoid ridiculing pupils... They should help them understand reading.”

Teachers, on the other hand, cited that the relationship between songs and reading is evident. Teachers asserted that pupils were eager to learn only when the teacher started a song. An observation conducted in schools, SA, SD, and SE revealed that, when entering the classroom, pupils were dormant, but when teachers started a song, all pupils could join in and sing with all their heart. It was also revealed that pupils were more interested when a new song was introduced to them; they could sing a song for a while even if a teacher had already left the class. During an interview with a teacher from school SE on whether songs were related to teaching reading, she said that

“I have been a teacher for almost twenty years; since my first appointment into employment I always taught lower classes. With all my experience, songs are a most effective way of teaching reading. Just imagine coming into a classroom with different pupils from different families; some are hungry, others are angry... Sometimes you find a child crying; if you ask why, the answer is ‘I do not like school!’ But if you start singing, the whole class joins in; they will sing and be happy. Then after teaching comes through... it is good.”

Head teachers in all schools were positive on the association between the use of songs and reading. Head teachers commented that pupils were learning well when songs were used during teaching reading.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that teachers used common songs to help pupils remember what they had learnt during the past lessons. There were a lot of time and financial challenges facing teachers in using songs to facilitate reading. The study recommended that teachers with little knowledge about using songs in teaching should seek assistance from qualified counsellors like senior teachers to assist their children in using songs during teaching in order to increase performance. Heads of schools should develop programmes of teaching methodology by inviting experts of different professions to enable teachers to get information about teaching using songs. The government should conduct seminars and workshops, especially in government schools, to update teachers on teaching using songs to make career service provision more successful, and the study was narrowed to the teachers as the decisive factors on the learning capacity of prospective pupils and students; therefore, further research can be done to investigate the other background characteristics like social media, community, and social-cultural institutions.

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