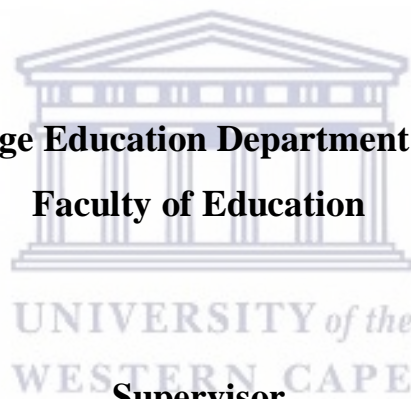


**Reading challenges experienced by the Foundation Phase learners at two
selected primary schools in the Western Cape.**

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4014382**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education (Language Education) at the
University of the Western Cape.**

**Language Education Department (LED)
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Supervisor

Professor Simphiwe Sesanti

November 2022.

Declaration

I, **Anthonia Oritsemauruntosan Oyowe**, hereby declare that the entirety of this Master's thesis entitled "*Reading Challenges Experienced by the Foundation Phase learners at two selected primary schools in the Western Cape*" is my own work and that I have not previously submitted it at any university for a degree or examination. All the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and duly acknowledged by means of complete referencing.

Sign: 

Anthonia Oritsemauruntosan Oyowe

Date: 31st October 2022



Dedication

My greatest gratitude goes to God almighty for the gift of life, his grace and mercy, and for giving me the strength and patience to persevere throughout this journey.

To my late father, Mr. John Agboghroma Oyowe. My mother, Mrs. Mabel Ogbareno Oyowe, for her prayers and encouragement, and to my brother Prof. Anthony Oritsegbubemi Oyowe, for his tireless encouragement and support.

Thank you.



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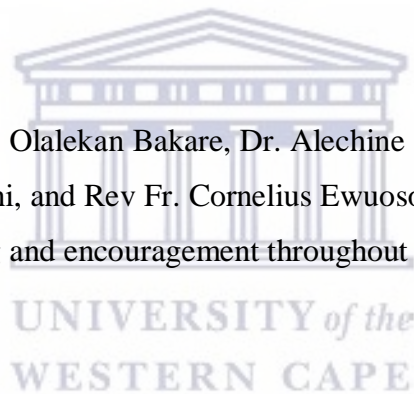
No words can be sufficient to express my appreciation and gratitude to every member of my family. Mrs. Mabel Ogbareno Oyowe, Mrs. Helen Oyowe Ogboduwa, Mrs. Dora Oyowe Mayuku, Prof. Oyowe Anthony Oritsegbubemi, Mr. Tanro Ogboduwa, Mr. Festus Mayuku, Mrs. Khanyisa Oyowe, and Ms. Comfort Oyowe for their love, prayers, and support. Not forgetting my nephews and nieces, Godstime, Muoyowa, Ayeoritse, Oritsegbubemi, Toritsemofe, and Oritsetsolaye.

A special thanks to the principals, deputy principals, to all the interviewees, and learners who participated in my study and the school's management team who provided me with all the information I needed.

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I love you all.

MODOKPE!!!



Abstract

Reading is a key component of literacy that plays an important role in knowledge access. It helps children's minds grow, and stimulates their comprehension of reading content, enabling them to function and interact effectively in society. Although, reading is prioritised as an indispensable aspect of literacy, reading comprehension remains a global challenge (Ligembe, 2014). Most South African learners in the Foundation Phase perform poorly in literacy particularly in reading and writing and are reading far below appropriate expected age levels according to the reports on systematic evaluations by the Department of Education (DoE), and other international research organisations on learners reading skills (Hugo, Le Roux, Muller & Nel, 2005).

According to the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) report from 2016 on reading comprehension for students in their fourth year of primary school, South African students ranked last out of the 50 countries that took part in the PIRLS assessment. Due to the high rate of reading challenges experienced by learners, the reading specifications for Foundation Phase learners have been divided into five categories by the National Curriculum Assessment Policy (CAPS). This is to aid in the development of literacy and reading skills.

Although, a number of research studies have been conducted about the poor reading performance of learners in South African schools, there is a limited research on the challenges of reading faced by the Foundation Phase learners that is Grades 1, 2, and 3. This research gap and the researcher's interest as an educator inspired the investigation of some of the challenges that hinder the Foundation Phase learners from being effective and efficient readers. The aim of this study, therefore, was to investigate the challenges faced in reading at the Foundation Phase of schooling as well as the strategies that teachers use to teach reading to learners of English as First Additional Language (FAL).

The study utilised the Social Constructivist theory by Vygotsky to gain insight of how cultural awareness, cultural mediating tools, and social group learning can be used to enhance and promote reading among learners of the Foundation Phase and its importance for promoting learning. A case study research design and a qualitative research methodology was used as a guide for the collection of data and interpretation. The samples of the study were purposefully chosen from the selected schools. Data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews

and non-participant observations. The study was conducted in Grades 1, 2, and 3 classrooms in two selected primary schools in South Africa's Western Cape Province. The data collected was analysed using the theoretical Framework as a tool of analysis.

The findings of the study revealed that there are a number of factors that inhibit learners from reading effectively and developing their reading skills in English Language especially learners of English as FAL. Factors such as learners Home Language (HL), lack of Parental Involvement (PI), large class size, Working Memory Deficit (WMD) and insufficient teaching and learning resources. Also, the study found that the incorporation of learners' Home Language in the teaching of reading to FAL learners of English have a great impact and a positive effect on the teaching of reading literacy, and also enhanced reading comprehension. Furthermore, the study also found that mediating tools such as pictures and flash cards played an important role in enhancing learners reading skills and comprehension especially for FAL learners. Additionally, it was also found that teachers incorporated a variety of learner-centred approach strategies in the teaching of reading such as shared reading, group-guided reading, paired reading, and question and answer method, all of which enabled their learners not only to comprehend but also apply their knowledge in developing their reading skills. However, it is worth noting that the findings revealed that most of the Foundation Phase teachers do not know how to apply strategies such as Rhyme-based play to motivate and pique learners interest especially learners of the Foundation Phase. In addition, it was found that the insufficient teaching and learning resources has a negative impact on the teaching and learning process and the learners.

This study therefore concludes that the incorporation of HL in the teaching of reading to FAL learners is crucial because it enhances learners comprehension and reading skills. Also, the use of cultural mediating tools which develops and enhance reading skills could be used to strengthen the teaching of reading for Foundation Phase learners with the aim of resolving the persisting challenges of reading experienced by these learners and also exploring appropriate and innovative strategies to motivate learners. In line with the social constructivism theory, it can therefore be argued that the teachers' pedagogical strategies can either facilitate or impede learners reading abilities.

Keywords: First Additional Language, Foundation Phase, Learners, Reading Challenges, Reading Comprehension, Reading Strategies, Teachers.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
ANA's	Annual National Assessment
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CEA	Centre for Evaluation and Assessment
CLS	Co-operative Learning Strategy
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
EFL	English as Foreign Language
FAL	First Additional Language
FISH	Find the rhyme, Identify the rhyme, Say the rhyme, and hook the new onset to the rhyme
FP	Foundation Phase
GNU	Government of National Unity
HL	Home Language
HODs	Heads of Departments
HONS	Honours
HR	Human Resources
HSSREC	Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LIEP	Language in Education Policy
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Materials
MP	Multiple Perspectives
MR	Multiple Realities
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NRS	National Reading Strategy
NSNP	National School Nutrition Program

OBE	Outcome Based Education
PI	Parental Involvement
PP	Parental Participation
PoPIA	Protection of Personal Information Act
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Strategy
RBPM	Rhyme-Based Play Method
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
RR	Repeated Reading
RRS	Reward for Reading Strategy
RTS	Reciprocal Teaching Strategy
SACMEQ	South African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SADC	South African Development Committee
SASA	South African Schools Acts
SDG's	Sustainable Development Goals
SE	Special Education
SES	Socio Economic Status
SGB	School Governing Body
SID	Severe Intellectual Disability
SPED	Special Education
SQ3R	Surveying, Questioning, Reading, Reciting, and Reviewing
TLR	Teaching and Learning Resources
TR	Technology and Reading
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UP	University of Pretoria
UPE	Universal Primary Education
WCED	Western Cape Education Department
WCP	Western Cape Province
WMD	Working Memory Deficit
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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Chapter One

Introduction and Background Context

1 Introduction

This study investigated the reading challenges experienced by Foundation Phase learners (Grades 1, 2, and 3). The main objectives of the study were to investigate the challenges that hinder learners from reading for effective learning, to investigate the strategies used for teaching reading, to establish how these challenges affect the development of reading skills, and to observe the strategies used by teachers in dealing with these challenges. The theoretical framework chosen for this study is the theory of social constructivism. This study employed a case study research design, and the qualitative research methodology which will be discussed extensively in Chapter 4. Data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, and non-participant classroom observation. This chapter consists of the background to the study, rationale for the study, problem statement, significance of the study, and research question. It also gives the chapter outline of the study in the final section.

1.1 Background to the study

After abolishing the apartheid government in 1994, South Africa became a democratic republic, which was a significant transition for this African nation (Moodley, 2013:2). According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2012), South Africa needed a curriculum review as part of its democratic transition to enhance student literacy outcomes. As a result, the government embarked on several initiatives aimed at increasing literacy levels in South African schools (ibid). In 1997, the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) program was adopted, and it was later substituted by Curriculum 2005 (C2005) (Bantwini & King, 2011:6). Due to the problems with C2005, the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) for Grades R to 9 and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for Grades 10-12 were adopted (Ligembe, 2014:1). This transformation has become evident in people's lives and the educational aspect in that the education system was restructured from the then Bantu Education system to an education system that gave voice and empowerment to different population sections (Cross, Ratshi & Sepi, 2002). When, in 1994, the Government of National Unity (GNU) took over-power, it identified educational development as one of the critical areas to remodel for her citizens' benefit (Faatar, 1997; 2008:98). Chapter 2 of the Constitution of South Africa, 108 of 1996: Section 29 of the Bill of Rights, states that

(1) Everyone has the right

- a) to primary education, including adult basic education; and
- b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

Young learners begin to enjoy this fundamental right to education at the foundation period of schooling. The foundation period of education is a vital stage in education because it forms reading and writing for subsequent phases for the learners (Morris, 2017:4). If the foundation is frail, the following grades are likely to be vulnerable, while a formidable foundation ensures that learners acquire sound reading skills (ibid).

The term “Foundation Phase” refers to the early stages of formal learning. Within this study’s context, the “Foundation Phase” is the early grades of schooling, namely grades 1, 2, and 3 (National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996: A-32). Learners are expected to have developed some reading literacy skills in the Foundation Phase, enabling them to go through the other schooling stages. Hence, Matlin (2007:284) defines reading aptitudes as a medium used to travel through life, indicating that reading empowers people and allows them to develop insight and abilities that will make their lives easier. Therefore, children must learn to be productive in both life, in general, and school life.

Education is now open to most citizens, even in remote areas of the country. Goodman (2014:126) argues that reading is a psycholinguistic inference game and a conscious effort of the mind. It is an engaging activity that allows the reader to wonder what is being addressed concerning the text. If it were a novel, the reader would need to be aware of the continuity and coherence of the tools, the texts’ logic, and other hints that will make it understandable (ibid). Reading comprehension remains a global challenge, even though reading is prioritised as an essential feature of literacy (Ligembe, 2014:1). As a result, many countries around the world are concerned about children’s insufficient reading comprehension levels. For example, many Tanzanian learners’ complete primary school without learning to read in Kiswahili, their native language, and Tanzania’s official language (ibid). As a developing country, South Africa still encounters difficulties in the field of education which have a direct impact on learner’s reading literacy, ranging from the language of instruction to the qualifications and competence of the teachers, the language policy of education, the socio-economic factors, availability of reading materials, and large class sizes (Naidoo, Reddy, & Dorasamy, 2014:155). A report in 2016 by

the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2016) on reading comprehension for learners in their fourth year of primary schooling, South Africa ranked last out of 50 countries. PIRLS is an international study of reading achievement in fourth graders. It has been conducted every five years since 2001 by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The study found that 78% of South African pupils at this level could not read for meaning. However, PIRLS in 2021 conducted its fifth reading assessment which provided data on 20 years of trends in comparative reading achievement across different countries, with focus on converting the assessment to a digital format called ePIRLS (Mullis & Martin, 2019:6). Furthermore, it is worth noting that the PIRLS 2021 result will be released in December 2022 (ibid). Taking the above into cognisance, an investigation into the challenges of poor reading among learners of the Foundation Phase is imperative.

According to the reviewed literature, the primary focus has been on the reading challenges experienced by the Foundation Phase learners, that is, grades 1, 2, and 3. However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, not enough research has been done on these challenges faced by learners and little has been done to examine the techniques of teaching. This study aims to fill the gap mentioned above and contribute to the body of existing knowledge by investigating the factors that hinder learners from being effective and efficient readers. It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to the body of educational knowledge, benefit parents and teachers by emphasising literacy activities to enhance reading skills in the foundation phase. The next paragraph presents the rationale for this study.

1.2 Rationale for the study

As an educator, I am interested in investigating some of the challenges that hinder learners from being effective and efficient readers from the Foundation Phase of schooling. Reading is a significant skill that needs to be cultivated at the beginning of the schooling experience (Bohlman & Pretorius, 2002: 205). It is the premise of all other subjects that a learner studies. For learners to read effectively, they must have practical knowledge of reading comprehension (ibid). One reason for a high rate of failure in Grade 12 is the learners' lack of reading skills (Mafokwane, 2017:3). They are promoted from one class to another without having the required reading skills to enable them to explore issues in a manner consistent with successful readers (ibid).

According to Bohlman and Pretorius (2002:205), reading is essential for learning. If learners have not adequately mastered this learning tool, their potential for success in the learning context is handicapped. Given the crucial role of reading in and out of school, and the accumulated long-term cost of literacy deficiencies, intervention is vital, especially in the Foundation Phase. Learners who do not learn how to read during their primary school years have difficulty understanding the school's curriculum during the upper grades (Schmidt, Rozendal & Green, 2002:131).

Reports on systemic evaluation conducted by the Department of Education (DoE) in 2008 and other international research bodies (Hugo, Le Roux, Muller & Nel, 2005:210) on learners' reading levels, indicate that South African learners are reading far below appropriate expected age levels. Furthermore, Hugo et al. (2005), point out that there is a growing concern nationally that South African learners lack the necessary language and reading abilities to achieve success in their academic years in schools and tertiary institutions. Those who have experienced Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) are either reading far below the average or cannot read by any stretch of the imagination- they are weak and cannot express themselves well in writing (Hugo *et al.*, 2005:210).

Vaughn, Wanzek, Woodruff and Thompson (2007:11) posit that learners who do not learn how to read in their first and second grades are likely to be at risk of poor academic performance and school dropout. It is essential to analyse reading challenges to help these learners delve into learning without the prevention or fear they encounter in the Foundation Phase. Not enough research has been done on these challenges faced by learners, and little has been done to examine the techniques of teaching. This study's problem statement and focus is discussed in the next paragraph.

1.3 Problem statement and focus

As a developing nation, South Africa keeps on confronting educational difficulties that directly affect students' reading proficiency, going from the language of instruction to instructor qualifications and abilities, the language policy of education, socio-economic elements, the accessibility of reading materials, and the enormous size of the class (Naidoo *et al.*, 2014:155). This research's focus is on Foundation Phase learners, that is, grades 1, 2, and 3. Taking into cognisance that South African learners are reading far below appropriate expected age levels,

according to reports on systemic evaluations done by the Department of Education (DoE) and other international research organisations on learners' reading skills in 2008 (Hugo, Le Roux, Muller & Nel, 2005:210), this study sought to investigate the reading challenges experienced by the Foundation Phase learners in Western Cape Province, and how such challenges are being addressed by teachers of the Foundation Phase, and based on the findings, makes recommendations on how to enhance learners reading skills. The next paragraph presents the significance of this study.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study is critical because it deals with one of the essential abilities' learners should be skilled in, and capable of. Through reading, students can handle the thoughts, ideas, suppositions, and information introduced to them (Hugo, 2010:36). It is, subsequently, basic that studies such as this be done. Likewise, it is significant for instructors to have the essential procedures and methodologies for teaching reading, imparting an adoration for reading, and assisting students with procuring applicable reading aptitudes. With the strategies and methods of the educator, the students' affection for reading would be appropriately supported, helping them to shape ideas, increase their vocabulary, make inspirational mentalities, and keep up an enduring interest in reading as a path to a broader acquisition of related reading aptitudes (Hugo, 2010:36). This study is therefore imperative because it has the potential to contribute to the body of educational knowledge, benefit parents and teachers by emphasising literacy activities, and the variables that influence the acquisition of reading skills.

1.5 Research Question

The main research question of this study is:

- What are the challenges of reading faced by learners of English as First Additional Language (FAL) in the Foundation Phase (Grades 1, 2 and 3)?

To answer the main research question, the following sub-questions were also considered.

- How do these challenges impact on the development of the learners' reading skills?
- What strategies do teachers use to deal with these challenges?

1.6 Aims of the Study

This study sought to investigate the reading challenges experienced by the Foundation Phase learners and how such challenges are being addressed.

1.7 Research objectives

To answer the research questions, this study has set the following objectives:

- To investigate the challenges that hinder learners' reading for effective learning.
- To investigate the strategies used for teaching reading in the foundation phase.
- To establish how these challenges affect the development of reading skills.
- To observe the strategies used by teachers in dealing with these challenges.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised into six chapters, and is being presented according to the following structure:

Chapter One: Background and Context

Chapter one gives a clear introduction of the thesis, provides the background to the study, rationale for the study, problem statement, significance of the study, research question, as well as the aim and objectives of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter presents reviewed literature pertinent in this study, focusing on the concept of literature review, concept of reading, purpose of reading, importance of reading, importance of reading in the Foundation Phase, global issues on reading challenges, issues of reading literacy in Africa, evidence of poor reading in South Africa, and the factors influencing the acquisition of reading skills.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses the concept "theory" and presents the theoretical framework chosen for this study and the reason for this choice.

Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter presents the research design and methodology chosen for this study.

Chapter Five: Data Presentation and Data Analysis

In this chapter, I present the data collected through this study's research techniques, namely semi-structured interviews, and non-participant classroom observations from six teachers and learners from two distinct schools in order to derive meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge and put them in context in relation to the research objectives and main research question. Subsequently the data presented is analysed through this study's theoretical framework – a tool of analysis – namely, social constructivism.

Chapter Six: Research findings, Conclusion and Recommendations.

This chapter presents its research findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the research topic, discussed the rationale for the study, explained the problem statement and formulated the main research question and sub-questions. The theoretical framework applicable for the study, the research design and methodology were introduced, and the structure of the thesis was also provided in the final section. The next chapter discusses the reviewed literature pertinent to this study.

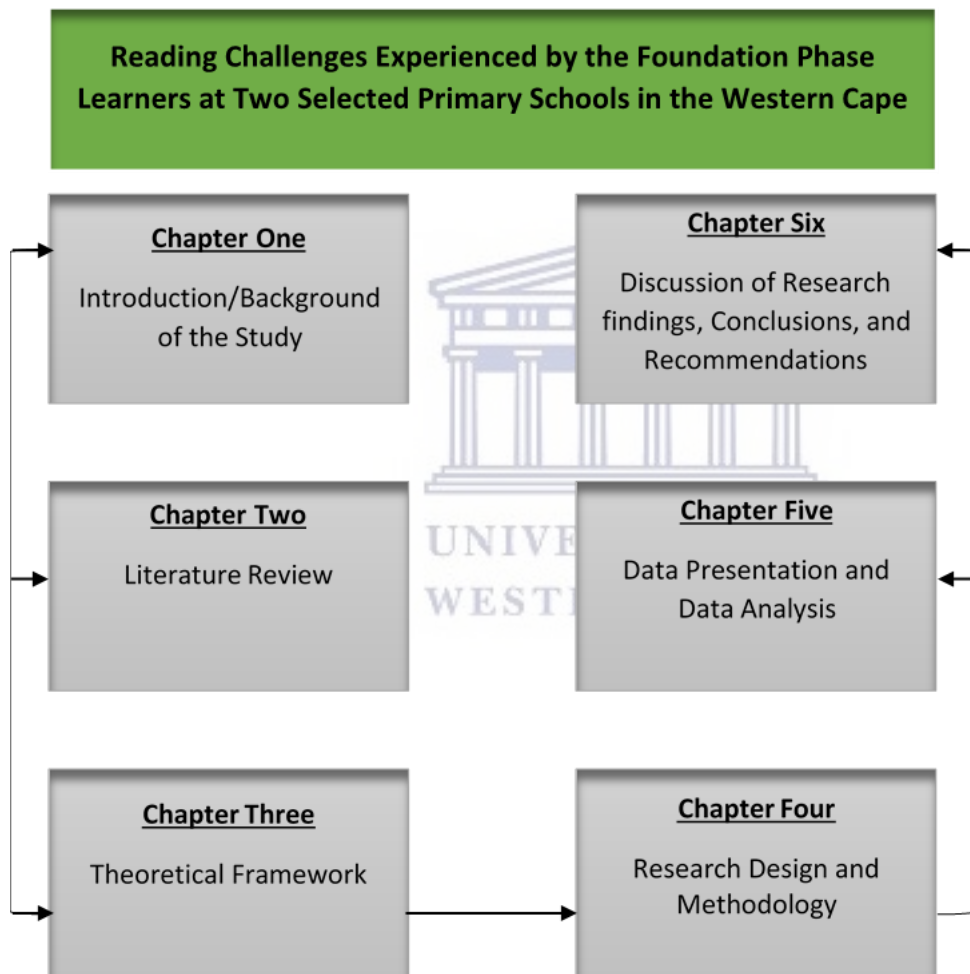


Figure 1.1: Depicts a diagrammatic representation of the thesis structure.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2 Introduction

A review of literature is defined as a methodical way of gathering and combining past studies or writing that fits the pre-indicated incorporation rules for addressing a particular inquiry or hypotheses (Baumeister & Leary, 1997:311). A literature review is an analysis of scholarly articles on a particular topic. It offers an insight into existing knowledge, helping one recognise related hypotheses, approaches, and research gaps (Valdes, 2020). A literature review is an ideal method to blend research results, to show meta-level verification and investigate areas where further exploration is required, which is a critical part of the advancement of hypothetical systems and conceptual models (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003:207).

This chapter, therefore, gives a point-by-point framework of the literature review pertinent in this study. It covers angles, for example, such as concepts of literature review, reading concepts, the significance of reading, the significance of reading in the foundation phase, purpose of reading, factors repressing the acquisition of reading aptitudes, socioeconomic components, instructor competency, accessibility of materials, language of learning and teaching (LoIT), and techniques to upgrade the teaching and advancement of reading abilities. We begin by discussing the concept “reading”.

2.1 What is reading?

Reading has different connotations for different scholars. There are many diverse perspectives on what literacy is for and what it can accomplish; nonetheless, the literacy is inexorably linked to these diverse perspectives of various scholars. According to Clapham (2009), reading is the ability to comprehend written and printed symbols. That is, the reader uses these symbols to facilitate the recovery of information from his/her memory, and then uses this information to construct a credible interpretation of a writer’s message (Clapham, 2009:11). Grabe (2009:14) also notes that “reading is fundamentally a comprehension process”. According to Nel, Nel, and Hugo (2012:89), being a skilled reader is a prerequisite for success in life, and because reading is a core skill for all academic subjects, failure in school may be linked back to poor reading skills. In a formal school setting, much of classroom learning takes the form of reading, whether from the chalkboard, the textbook, or the media, and being a proficient reader is a basic prerequisite in life. Reading is “magical”, according to Nel et al. (2012:89) and Gunning

(2007:3) since it opens a wide universe of information, fulfilment, and delight, and a person is not the same after learning to read.

According to Yoshida (2012:27), reading in a second language (L2) requires readers to be “more actively involved with the text than when reading in the first language L1 (mother tongue)” because when reading in the first language, many lower-level processes such as decoding are activated automatically, which is not the case when reading in a second or foreign language L2 (ibid). This is consistent with Grabe (2009:14) and Nassaji (2011:173), who emphasise that L2 reading differs from L1 reading in terms of how meaning is created, making L2 reading more complex than L1 reading. Similarly, most Foundation Phase learners of English as First Additional Language (FAL) perceive reading as challenging. In line with these, the purpose of reading will be discussed below.

2.2 Purpose of reading

Reading serves multiple functions. According to Mohamed (2016:29), people read for a variety of reasons. While some people read for pleasure, to obtain specific information, or to comprehend the overall meaning of a piece, many others read to obtain information from written materials (ibid). A reader reads in order to perceive or comprehend what is being conveyed in the writing (Nel et al. 2012:89; 2007:3). In addition, Nassaji (2011:173) notes that “reading is a complex cognitive skill encompassing multiple sub skills, processes ranging from basic lower-level visual processes including grammar, semantics, and discourse to text comprehension skills”.

Learners, on the other hand, are taught to read in order to strengthen their language skills and to better develop their understanding of literature. Furthermore, reading for pleasure encourages a reader to read more, which leads to improved comprehension and vocabulary expansion, as well as the development of general reading skills.

Reading can be classified into two types: academic type and non-academic type. In an academic context, students are obligated to read texts because of the curriculum or for passing examination (Mohamed, 2016:29-30). Reading a given material effectively, meaningfully, and understanding it are critical for a student to answer any type of question provided in the tests (ibid). In a non-academic setting, learners or readers could select from a wide range of written

materials that are of interest to them, as well as the time available for reading. However, the non-academic reading is done for pleasure (Mohamed,2016:30). Hence, McDonough and Shaw (2003), posit that “teachers should offer learners a reason for reading by providing reading materials that spark interest and do not have overly familiar content”. This is because the goals that teachers have when teaching reading, as well as their perceptions of their learners’ goals, influence their material choices (McDonough & Shaw, 2003:99). In the next section, we discuss the importance of reading.

2.3 Importance of reading

English is widely regarded as the world’s universal language (Mohamed, 2016:35). As a result, reading effectively in English has become a need for many people, particularly those learning English as FAL (ibid). Reading is the most crucial foundational skill a person can master, and it serves as the foundation for effective learning (Phantharakphong & Potitha, 2014:497). Despite the importance of reading literacy in the Foundation Phase, a considerable majority of FAL learners read below a minimum level of proficiency and have poor reading literacy skills. According to Adeniji and Omale (2010:22), the importance of reading underlines the ability to read as an important ability to find or search for information. Teaching must begin at an early age and continue in both high and secondary education because it is essential to have adequate reading skills (ibid). However, Smith (2014:23) points out that reading is considered a service skill such that if one can read, it makes it easy for others to learn. Reading is a method of decoding, identifying, and interoperating information from images, signs, codes, and letters (ibid). Similarly, Goodman (1997:1) argues that reading is likewise observed as a form of communication between the writer and the reader. Reading commences with the interpretation of the linguistic surface encoded by a writer and ends with the meaning decoded by a reader (ibid). In other words, reading is seen as a responsive form of writing (ibid). Consequently, Hismanoglu (2005:1) states that the more frequently an individual reads, the more s/he becomes engrossed, and when that occurs, the purpose of reading shifts from knowing the meaning to discovering what appears next in the story. The gateway to knowledge acquisition and expansion is a sound reading capability, but there are learners for whom reading is a struggle (Mafokwane (2017:4). In this study, these learners are referred to as learners who experience reading challenges.

Due to the increased rate of reading challenges among learners worldwide, necessary measures have been taken to increase reading skills and literacy both at the national and international level because it is the cornerstone to children's educational success (Bharuthran, 2012:205; Hlaithwa, 2013:3). Baatjies (2003:1) argues that the most important aspect of quality education is literacy. Without the ability to read, learners are denied the relevant information on health, social, cultural, and political problems and sources of pleasure and enrichment. Reading is important for learning because it gives the learners independent access to a vast world of information and satisfaction (Gunning, 2013:3). The National Department of Education (DoE), in 2008, recognised that reading is part of the process of nation-building and is one of the most important linguistic skills to be developed in young learners (Naidoo *et al.*, 2014:156). Hugo *et al.* (2005:210), points out that there is an outcry around the world that learners lack the necessary reading skills required to make success during their academic years at high school and tertiary institutions. A U.S study showed that 40% of children encounter similar difficulties in becoming efficient readers, and 40% of fourth and eighth graders do not read at the level considered basic to graduate schoolwork (Hugo *et al.*, 2005:210). This study tries to benefit learners in the reading domain. The importance of reading in the foundation phase is discussed in the next section.

2.4 Importance of reading in the foundation phase

Reading instruction should begin at a young age and continue throughout secondary and higher school (Mason, 1980:203). It is essential to be able to read efficiently because reading is viewed as a service skill and, thus, if one is competent in reading, it is easier to make room for other skills (*ibid*). Reading with comprehension supplies the reader with detailed information and the ability to perform a specific activity or actively engage with a global issue (*ibid*). People develop and grow by reading (Hugo, 2014:5). If learners have not acquired correctly or are not well-acquainted with the prerequisite reading capability, it hinders the learning environment's chances of success (*ibid*). This implies that children need the appropriate reading skills to become academically successful. Reading is, therefore, a vital skill for students in the foundation phase and even in other stages of schooling (Rajchert, Zultak & Smulczyk, 2014:3). Zuze and Reddy (2014:100) argue that reading skills are essential to personal growth and that there is a strong connection between reading comprehension, educational opportunities, and well-being. Similarly, Morara (2013:12) argues that reading requires the utilisation of cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and social domains, all of which influence a learner's

reading competence and growth, as well as the rate at which they achieve reading proficiency. Given the fact that some learners have some phonological awareness as English is their first language, a teacher's role in the development of children's reading skills is crucial (ibid). Teachers must use the cognitive, emotional, psychomotor, and social domains in reading lessons in order to effectively develop adequate reading competencies or skills in early grade readers through the instructional techniques used during instruction (ibid). One of the fundamental goals of classroom reading practice is for learners to enjoy reading. This goal is to increase individual self-knowledge, societal awareness, and the confidence to participate freely, creatively, and critically in one's own environment.

Reading is an important mode of communication through which we obtain most of the information required in teaching and learning contexts as well as in everyday life (Adeniji & Omale, 2010:20-21). Furthermore, the significance of reading emphasises the capacity to read as a crucial skill for finding or searching for information (ibid). Reading is one of the linguistic abilities that contributes to a person's full potential and other growth, and so it is important (ibid). Reading is a lifelong practice that unlocks all doors to achieving one's goals and happiness (ibid). It provides learners with the knowledge necessary to comprehend the entirety of a text and assists them in organising their thoughts and presenting their ideas (ibid). Consequently, the state, teachers, parents, and all educational stakeholders have a significant role in learning performance, particularly in English, which is important for global communication and impacts other topics, as discussed, below.

2.5 Global issues on reading literacy

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2007:14), 68% of students in the United States received six hours of reading instruction each week. This was higher than the international average of 25%. The percentage of learners in the United States receiving more than six hours of reading instruction per week was higher than the percentage of students receiving the same amount of instruction in all participating Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) jurisdictions. The United States has a higher percentage of certified educators than the international average of 97%, with almost 99% of certified educators instructing fourth graders (U.S. D.o.E., 2007:15). In 2001, PIRLS found that Singapore students had the highest reading aptitude. The Singapore students read and performed much better than students in England and Hong Kong (Tse Lam, Lam, Chan, & Loh, 2005:84). Furthermore, Gregory and Clarke (in

Tse *et al.*, 2005:84), argue that this may be the case because Singapore's education system is ability-based, with learners being streamlined. The educational system is performance-based, with a broad political philosophy and abundant resources. It also appreciates educators, creativity, and sound educational policies. According to Tse *et al.* (2005:85), these factors may have aided to Singaporean learners achieving the highest in the world in mathematics and science.

Hong Kong learners scored the lowest on measures influenced by social and educational variables because they have grown accustomed to being subjected to test and competition pressure (*ibid*). The Hong Kong administration has been chastised for implementing educational reforms. However, these modifications have been criticised as hasty, ill-considered, and meddling (Tse *et al.*, 2005:84). As a result of the preceding arguments, it is possible to argue that reading and writing is a global issue.

In comparison to other countries, England had a substantially greater proportion of students with exceptional needs in reading and writing (Twist, Sainsbury, Woodthrope, & Whetton, 2006:31). The average number of learners with reading challenges in a grade 5 class was five, according to the teachers. Support educators interact with learners outside of the traditional classroom, according to Twist *et al.* (2006:31) in the Netherlands. Educationalists reported that this form of assistance was always available in England and New Zealand.

A study conducted by United Nations in 2013 found that globally, approximately 757 million youth and children aged 15 and above were unable to read or write. Women made up an enormous proportion of the illiterate population globally (UNESCO, 2013). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicate that children from illiterate households are more than four times more likely to drop out of school than those from secondary or higher education households (The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016, 2018). This implies that socioeconomic factors and parents' educational levels have an impact on children's education. To address international issues, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were designed for developing countries to reduce poverty, enhance health, education, and other human necessities over a 15-year period from 2000 to 2015. (Sachs, 2012: 2206). Later, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were established. When the high-level global sustainability group released its recommendations in 2012, it recommended that countries adopt Sustainable Development Goals (*ibid*). In 2016, the Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs) were implemented (Hak, Janouková & Moldan 2016:565). Ultimately, these goals are intended to benefit all United Nations (UN) member countries, both poor and rich. All countries, rich and poor alike, are required to contribute to the well-being of future generations (Sachs, 2012:2206).

Although there are seventeen SDGs, that have been formed, my study coincides with goal number four, which aims to ensure equal quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016, 2018). The study focuses on the reading challenges of learners, how teachers' literacy practices affect students' reading literacy, or how much they encourage them to read for and with meaning. The learning of foundational and high-order abilities is also a focus of goal number four. It strives to expand and make more accessible options for technical and vocational education and training, as well as higher education. It aims to educate children and adults in the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for people to function properly and contribute to society throughout their lives (The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016, 2018). Furthermore, about 38 countries in the developed world have 75% or more young people who are at least minimally proficient in reading or mathematics, although effective education should emphasise the learning of core skills such as literacy, numeracy, and higher-order skills (The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016, 2018). Reading and writing skills are a global issue, and any attempt to enhance them necessitates an inquiry into the factors that contribute to learners' poor reading and writing abilities. From the preceding discussion, the United States spends more time reading than any of the other countries participating in PIRLS. Learners in England from low socioeconomic backgrounds did poorly compared to those from affluent backgrounds. Singaporean students have the best reading ability.

However, according to a recent study conducted by Bauer, Compton, Li G, and Razfar (2021), 773 million individuals worldwide lack basic literacy abilities, and 617 million children and adolescents do not fulfil minimum reading and numeracy criteria. Existing educational and literacy challenges and disparities have been aggravated by lockdowns and social distancing initiatives. According to the United Nations, school closures affected 62.3% of the world's student population during the pandemic. Literacy is an important component of the United Nations' Global Goals, which aim to alleviate extreme poverty by 2030. As a result, reading skills are an important tool in assisting individuals to escape poverty and develop healthy and

sustainable societies (Bauer *et al.*, 2021:291-293). Next, we discuss the issue of reading literacy in Africa.

2.6 Issue of reading literacy in Africa

It is said that the reading conditions in Africa (including South Africa) is a significant educational crisis (Howie, *et al.*, 2007:218). Every year, there is a public outrage about secondary school students' low grades and pass rates. Although the reading skills of these final-year students are not indicated, their significant failure rate suggests that they have reading challenges. Many of these students then apply to study at university institutions, but due to their low levels of reading and English proficiency, they are ill-prepared to meet the demands of tertiary education (*ibid*).

Nigeria is a multilingual society with over 250 different languages and distinct dialects. Such circumstances facilitate the adoption of English as the official language of teaching in schools. Nigerian learners encounter a difficult task in learning to read in both their native languages and a second language. However, reading instruction in both English and home languages is given in some schools at the same time. Reading challenges are unavoidable because learners may become confused and frustrated when learning to read. The learners' first languages serve as a solid basis for second language acquisition (Aina, Ougbeni & Adigun, 2011:5). Nigerian primary school students are approximately three years behind their British or American peers, and more than 30 million Nigerians have graduated from high school with poor reading skills. This is because the average Nigerian reads less than one book per year, with only 1% of successful men and women reading one non-fiction book every month (*ibid*). Consequently, Namibian students learn to read formally in their home language, but English is taught as a second language beginning in grade one with the goal of establishing excellent reading abilities in English. However, by the fourth grade, students are unable to read well in either their native language or English. The South African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) research indicated that grade six pupils were unable to read texts with comprehension, and Namibia had the lowest reading performance in the South African Development Communities (SADC) region. The situation was even worse, with only 25% of students achieving the desired levels of reading proficiency (Mutenda, 2008:2). Similarly, Nalusiba (2010:2) notes that the first schools in Uganda were founded by Catholic and Protestant missionaries to train catechists. The education system underwent several

modifications, ranging from mission schools to privately run schools, until the Republic adopted the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme in 1997. These schools were distinguished by overcrowded classrooms, inexperienced teachers, a lack of resources and instructional materials, and a few reading materials. Furthermore, Nalusiba (2010:3) indicates that most learners in UPE in Ugandan schools barely read outside of school because reading was not part of the curriculum, and this had a poor impact on the learner's performance both in and out of school, both in the language taught and other academic topics. The evidence of poor reading in South Africa is presented below.

2.7 Evidence of poor reading in South Africa

South African schools are faced with reading literacy crisis (Pretorius & Lephala, 2011:10). The learners' low literacy levels are indicated in the Department of Basic Education's Annual National Assessments (ANAs) in literacy and numeracy in Grades 3 and 6 (DBE, 2011). The South African government launched the Foundations for Learning Campaign in 2008, with the goal of improving literacy and numeracy in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases (Siyothula, 2019:3). Schools received learning tools such as DBE workbooks to assist teachers and students with literacy teaching and learning (ibid). Teachers were instructed on how to arrange time evenly throughout the day to facilitate the teaching and learning of reading and numeracy through this intervention (Meier, 2011:549). The program emphasised the need of students in primary schools reading for at least thirty minutes each day (ibid). Despite these literacy initiatives in the Foundation Phase, the ANA, and Special Education (SE) results show that many South African Grade 3 learners have low reading comprehension in their native languages. This is a dilemma because after three years of study, Grade 3 students still exhibit poor reading proficiency levels in their home languages (ibid).

According to Howie, Sarah, Elsie, and Van (2008), English, as a first language, is spoken by less than 10 % of the population, although English is the most frequently used language in schools. Hence, the challenge of learning and mastering a second language is a reality for most learners. Such a language system, where learners are not taught in their home language, is known as immersion (Howie *et al.*, 2008:552). Consequently, Admiral, Westhoff, and De Bot (2006:75), state that instructions in a language foreign to the students contribute to the learners' poor reading abilities. An added challenge is the issue of language policy.

Stoffelsma (2019:1) states that regarding the 1997 National DoE Language Policy, which promotes additive multilingualism and recommended home-based education, learners should receive instruction in their home language from Grades 1 to 3. In 2011, the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) recognised the switch to English after Grade 3 (ibid). This effectively means that from Grades 4 to 12, the medium of instruction is English or Afrikaans. However, “White, Coloured, and Indian learners” are instructed in English or Afrikaans from Grades 1 to 12. In contrast, African learners, whose home languages are not English or Afrikaans, receive instruction in English or Afrikaans from Grades 4 to 12. This prevails despite the government’s policy on language, making learners receive education in their home language from Grades 1 to 12 (Howie *et al.*, 2008:552).

Research in South Africa indicates that, in general, learners’ reading skills are poorly developed, and this applies from primary school through to tertiary level (Pretorius & Mampunu, 2007:47). The study also suggested that many young learners have difficulty reading, and that there has been a long-standing misconception of the teaching position in reading, whether with the Curriculum 2005 or the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (ibid). Many teachers have assumed that they should not “teach” reading but simply “facilitate” the process if they teach themselves to read while some have also clearly not learned how to teach reading (Hugo, 2010:133).

As a developing country, South Africa still encounters difficulties in the field of education that has a direct impact on the learner’s reading literacy, ranging from the language of instruction to the qualifications and competence of the teachers, the language policy of education, the socio-economic factors, availability of reading materials, large class size, and parental involvement (Naidoo *et al.*, 2014).

In 2011, South African students participated in Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), an international reading literacy study that looked at how well Grade 4 and 5 learners read and compared their achievements nationwide. The results suggested that they struggled to develop the skills required to make a successful transition to reading as a tool for learning and academic success (Zimmerman, Howie & Smit, 2011:215). In 2001 and 2004, two national systemic assessments of literacy and numeracy in primary schools showed low reading capacity across the country. Another study, based on the results of 1,000 Grade 3 classes in 2008, indicated that 8 out of 10 learners obtained less than 50% for language skills

and mathematics, and 35% of Grade 3 learners across the country obtained between 0% and 34% for literacy, which include reading (Hugo, 2010:133). The findings highlighted concerns about quality reading literacy in primary schools in South Africa (ibid). According to Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena, and McLeod (2017), the International Comparative Reading Assessment conducted by researchers at the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) at the University of Pretoria (UP) has shown that there has been no significant progress since the last report in 2011 in South Africa in National Primary School Reading Literacy. Out of the 50 countries that participated in the fourth-grade study, South Africa ranked last with 22.1% of Grade 4 learners reaching the low benchmark, compared to only 4 % of learners internationally (ibid). However, the study showed that more than half of English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking learners and more than 80% of African language-speaking learners had not attained a low international standard, asserting a lack of basic reading skills and strategies to perform academic tasks. The results imply that primary schools in South Africa face significant challenges in assisting learners towards attaining optimum development of their reading abilities. Reading with understanding gives the reader in-depth knowledge and an opportunity to perform a specific task or deal with a problem. In teaching reading at the foundation stage, the teacher needs to pay much more attention to instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency development (swift reading of exact words on the page) than to vocabulary development or strategies for understanding (Parlindungan, 2010). Phyu and Thida (2013:1510), argue that readers often use context clues, morphemes, semantics, and syntax to define and extract the meaning of unknown words. Thus, reading is designed to generate knowledge, whether new or common knowledge. Learning skills in reading may develop vocabulary, grammar, communication, and memory skills (ibid). These learners achieve comprehension after reading a book and then re-telling the story properly, taking large amounts of information and condensing it into the key ideas and points. As a result, Adeniji and Omale (2010:23) see reading as an acknowledgment of printed or written symbols that act as triggers for the symbol, and remembrance of the senses built up by the learner's practice. It is, therefore, the method of transforming alphabetical symbols into a type of language from which the reader has already extracted its meaning. Reading is one of the language skills that help individuals to achieve full potential and other developments and is, therefore, significant. The factors influencing the acquisition of reading skills are discussed below.

2.8 Factors Influencing the acquisition of reading skills.

Reading necessitates a unique set of abilities, but there are a few variables that influence how well you learn to read. Teacher competence, libraries, availability of resources, teaching environments, parents' literacy levels, language problems, and parental involvement, among others, are all listed as potential barriers to the acquisition of reading skills in the National Reading Strategy (NRS) (DoE, 2008:9; Geske & Ozola (2008:71), respectively. Similarly, Hlaithwa (2013:30) states that language proficiency, achievement, and cognitive factors are all inhibitors to reading abilities. I am discussing a few of them below.

2.8.1 Socio-economic status (SES)

Most of the studies on teaching reading in South Africa focus, in some manner, on the impact of socioeconomic and cultural factors on reading achievement (Naidoo, 2012:42). This is consistent with a number of studies from around the world, which focuses, for example, on what are perceived to be inadequate childrearing practices, a lack of stimulating early language and literacy environments, a lack of reading material, learning in a second (or third) language, the pernicious effects of individual and national poverty, and cultural differences leading to a lack of motivation to succeed in school (Naidoo, 2012:42).

The socio-economic environment of the child plays a very vital role in the acquisition of reading skills (Geske & Ozola, 2008:71). According to Jednoro'g, Altarelli, Monzalvo, Fluss, Dubois, Billard, Dehaene-Lambertz, and Ramus (2012), socio-economic status (SES) is a multidimensional facet that includes both measures of material wealth, education, and social prestige. However, low-income families sometimes have limited or inadequate access to community resources that promote and support children's development (ibid). Consequently, literature has revealed that families from low SES communities are less likely to have financial resources or time to provide their children with academic support (Okioga, 2013:39). Kainuwa and Yussuf (2013:2251) emphasise that learners from families where parents tend to have less education perform worse than those whose parents have acquired a higher educational level. If the parents are illiterate, poor, and unemployed, they do not value their children's education that much (ibid). The issue of learners with reading difficulty is discussed in the following section.

2.8.2 Learners with reading difficulty

Personality attributes such as enthusiasm, determination, sense of personal ability, ability to function in groups, and desire to seek support from other learners, are essential to the achievement of learning, and a highly motivated learner develops positive self-esteem, which helps improve academic performance (Patil, Saraswathi & Padakannaya, 2009:95). Hlaithwa (2013:27) argues that learners bring diverse levels of motivation to learning, and that the strength of this motivation is a significant element of education. Among other beliefs, behaviours, and feelings, learners must develop the ability to endure and overcome challenges and the willingness to take risks. The inability of learners to read can lead to fear, nervousness, and low self-esteem (ibid).

Children play a vital role in their own learning experiences, as children's traits and parenting practices have a positive spill-off impact (Mafokwane, 2017:29). Learners with reading obstacles face reading difficulties at various levels, mainly the alphabet, the syllable, the word, the phrase, the sentence, the paragraph, and the text (ibid). Similarly, Vargo, Young, and Judah (2015:47) suggest that learners need to master alphabets to be able to read effectively, and good mastery helps learners to combine sounds to make syllables, syllables to make words, words to make sentences, sentences to make paragraphs and paragraphs to make sentences a text. Barriers to read at an early stage need to be understood to help the learner overcome the challenges and aid assistance. Consequently, Hugo (2014:317) describes barriers to reading as anxiety, shame, and motivation. As Hugo (2014) notes, most learners are afraid to read, fearing that they will not be able to translate the words correctly, and they will be mocked and criticised by other learners. As a result, Motitswe (2013:13) states that failure can become a success if a learner learns from errors committed. Learners feel ashamed of what they are reading because they feel that they cannot read properly for others to understand. Teachers are called upon to encourage learners when reading because, as Hugo (2014:317) indicates, no reading goal can be accomplished without motivation. This is because the instructor's skill, expertise, attitude, and experience serve as an important tool that is necessary for learners to read. Teachers are the people who make reading possible, so if students are to learn, their beliefs and feelings are crucial (Florian & Rouse, 2010:185).

Teachers, however, should consider the context of their learners, as this could allow them to identify those who face obstacles. According to Hugo (2010:133), reading is a socially constructed form of human activity with learning that connects with the social environment

and guidance of a more experienced individual. Swart and Nathanson (2011:64) suggest that the learner does not obtain knowledge automatically but is actively constructed. Parental participation as a factor is discussed below.

2.8.3 Parental Participation (PP)

Parents are viewed as first educators, and parental involvement in their children's education is critical (Mafokwane, 2017:18). Many parents appear to be unaware of the critical role they play in their children's education and, as a result, are unaware of their responsibilities towards learning (Mutodi & Ngirande, 2014:279). Parental attitudes, behaviours, and involvement in home learning activities, can be vital to children's achievement and can help minimise or eradicate the influences of other factors that impede reading skills among learners. Parents who are not engaged in their children's education, according to Motitswe (2013:13), would have their children perform poorly in school activities. Similarly, Al-Matalka (2014:147) points out that parents have a significant impact on their children's lives because they have the power and capacity to form, maintain, and grow their children's reading skills by being involved, innovative, and tolerant in the learning process and educational activities (ibid). However, active parental participation in the teaching and learning process is essential for successful learning in general, and reading success, in particular. Parents' negative attitudes toward their children's reading education will have a detrimental effect on their children's performance. The South African Education Law and policy of 1999 supports the involvement of parents in the education of their children (Okeke, 2014).

According to Section 20 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA), the School Governing Body (SGB) has a responsibility to help parents with the professional development in the education of their children to improve the quality of learning and teaching in their schools. In line with this, Adnan, Akram, and Akram (2016:58) notes that the 1999 Education Law and Policy obliged parents to support their children with their schoolwork, for example, reading, this means that when parents find ways to bring enjoyment and bridge the gap between books and children, they can successfully engage their children in reading. Parents can more effectively explain to their children the graphic elements, complex material, and linguistic challenges that cause difficulty. They serve as a central point for their children's reading development. Therefore, parents and teachers play critical roles in the development of children's reading habits (Adnan, Akram & Akram, 2016:58). I discuss the language of learning and teaching as a factor that influences the acquisition of reading skills below.

2.8.4 Language of learning and teaching (LoLT)

Standardised language is one of the most promising successes in early childhood development because it allows children to exchange meanings with others and participate in ancient cultural learning (Rodriguez & Tamis-Lemonda, 2011:1058). Ancient cultural learning is a method for learning and experimenting and requires the use of all senses and domains which is based upon the relationship involving people and natural resources (Brinia, Psoni & Ntantasiou, 2019:2-3). Ancient cultural learning is a form of outdoor education practice which contributes to the enhancement and enrichment of the learning process, the student-teacher engagement, and experiences (Brinia *et al.*, 2010:3). As a result, ancient cultural learning offers invaluable cultural and social values stemming from the tradition and cultural heritage, embracing cultural and social diversity under the scope of democratic education (*ibid.*). Language learning is important for children's educational readiness and achievement. According to CAPS (2011:11), the mother tongue is taught in the foundation process as an educational medium. English is taught as the first additional language in the first year of school. If English is the first mother tongue, one of the 11 official languages will be chosen as the first different language. Since language is a means of communication, it must be included in the curriculum mastery. A learner would be unable to succeed in any subject if language were not involved, and reading ability is an essential means of communication. The ability to interpret must enhance the spoken language because it aids in correctly understanding the instruction medium, with the connection between reading and understanding.

In section 29, Chapter 2 of the South African Constitution, 108 of the 1996 Bill of Rights, all citizens have the right, where possible, to receive education in the official languages or language of their choice in public school systems. This means that learners must be taught in their mother tongue, which is not the case in other public schools, where they are taught in a language that is not convenient or not their choice. Due to a shortage of teachers in languages such as Xitsonga, Tshivenda, and Shona, Sepedi is taught as a home language to learners in rural areas of Bolobedu, Limpopo (Mafokwane, 2017:28). However, CAPS 2011 recommends that all official languages should be used as the first additional language of the learner in the foundation phase, a view endorsed by the Language in Education Policy (LIEP), that learners must be taught in their home languages. All 11 official languages must be, as laid down in the Constitution, equally treated. The mother tongue is the home language for children in public schools when coping with language problems regarding reading during the foundation phase (Mafokwane, 2017:28). On the other hand, English is seen as the language of learning and

teaching in most private schools, and as the learner's home language, as First Additional Language (FAL). Teacher competence as a factor that influences the acquisition of reading skills is discussed below.

2.8.5 Teacher competence

Competence has become the primary prerequisite for teachers to perform their duties professionally (Akinbobola cited in Setiawan, Sitorus & Natsir, 2018:30). Teachers certainly need to have appropriate competencies for their duties and responsibilities. Teacher competence includes mastery of the subject matter, understanding human nature to improve professional knowledge, workshops, seminars, effective communication, and adequate knowledge (ibid). Teacher competence is the roundness of knowledge, skills, and attitudes embodied in intelligent action and full of responsibility in carrying out a teaching agent's task, which includes personal, pedagogical, professional, and social knowledge (Ahmad & Setyaningsih cited in Setiawan et al., 2018:30).

According to the National Reading Strategy (NRS), the DoE in 2008 highlighted that some South African teachers have underdeveloped knowledge of teaching literacy, especially in reading and writing (DoE, 2008:12). Similarly, Phajane (2012:50) argues that lack of teacher understanding of the curriculum leads a teacher to use a method of teaching reading that may not suit all learners' learning styles. The National Reading Strategy emphasises that many foundation phase teachers have not been specifically trained in teaching reading and, as a result, find it challenging to help learners who experience challenges in reading. This can be attributed to the employment of unqualified teachers in the past, particularly in the foundation phase, and some of these teachers are still in the system. They do not go for any form of training, which could be the leading cause of the problem (Bharuthram, 2012:206). However, trained teachers exhibit substantial differences for specific competencies, such as pedagogical, management, and assessment. Hence, most educators are not familiar with various methods of teaching reading that may be suitable to the learning approach of learners. Most teachers are also not familiar with ways to motivate students to read within and outside the classroom. This is because teacher training has failed to meet the required standard of teaching reading (Malda, Nel, & Van der Vijver, 2014:34). However, it was recommended that teachers be adequately equipped with the necessary training to improve their skills and knowledge in teaching reading (Junias, 2009:60). Most trained teachers are more competent than those who are not trained (Aziz & Akhtar, 2014:121). Next, I discuss the issues related to teaching reading.

2.8.5.1 Issues related to teaching reading

The challenges that learners have in mastering and developing their reading skills appear to have as much to do with the reading instruction as with the students' inability to grasp and grow their reading skills. Hence, Yazar (2013:35) argues that "while reading is an individual activity, basic reading abilities require guidance". However, one of the issues that impedes the efficient teaching of reading abilities is a lack of experience among educators (Duke & Block, 2012:55). In line with this, Sailors, and Price (2015:115) suggest that in order to increase learners' reading achievement and capacity to grasp texts, teachers' belief, and attitude, how they motivate learners and teachers' ability to effectively teach their learners must be improved. When learners begin to consistently practice reading and employing any reading skills that they have been trained to utilise, providing relevant training for teachers can be useful. Below, I discuss the beliefs, attitudes, and reflections of teachers as issues that are relevant to the teaching of reading.

2.8.5.2 Teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and reflections

Because many teachers utilise the traditional teacher-centred teaching technique, which makes learners passive bystanders throughout the entire teaching process, learners are not challenged in a way that encourages them to use and develop their reading abilities (Mohamed, 2016:76). As a result, Yazar (2013:35), argues that "to teach effectively, teachers must teach and make learners utilise reading methods, as well as choose the proper one to enable them to understand the text". Similarly, Lau, Lau, and Thompson (2011:23-26) believe that learners should be taught and given time to read and interact with texts, as well as encouraged to use these abilities independently. In line with this viewpoint, Dabarera, Renandya, and Zhang (2014:462) point out that teacher views and attitudes influence and decide the success of the teaching process. When teachers use inefficient ways to teach reading, they may inadvertently lead their students to poor comprehension (ibid). Furthermore, Coleman, Ferny, Head, and Rix (2005:80) argue that "excellent teaching is becoming considered to be a question of offering good learning experiences [...] both at the level of quality performance activities and a conducive learning atmosphere". In other words, focusing entirely on traditional teaching methods may irritate rather than stimulate their learners to read and learn. As a result, Keene, and Zimmerman (2013) suggest that in order to teach reading successfully and increase comprehension, teachers should examine their own thought processes, reflect, and discuss their thoughts and insights with others. Reflection on practice assists teachers in moving from theoretical knowledge to

teaching perspectives that are compatible with their understanding of the settings and learners (ibid). This also allows teachers to build pedagogical content knowledge, which does not appear to develop as a result of teacher education courses (Hashweh, 2005:273).

Teachers' attitudes about teaching have a considerable influence on their instructional techniques in teaching reading. In line with this, Farrell (2007:9) notes that "teachers must subject their own views to critical assessment by comparing these beliefs to their actual classroom practice". However, Grabe and Stoller (2013: 226) observe that "reflective teachers question the efficiency of their classroom instruction". This is consistent with Adam, Mwdaw, and Eldouma's (2013:144) suggestion that teachers should use an interactive method when teaching reading. In other words, "if a teacher education program is to change, teachers' teaching methods must address their ideas" (Wyatt, 2014:1). According to Macalister (2014:393) "professional course work in the form of pre- and in-service teacher education has an essential role in strengthening the teaching of reading". Most teachers, on the other hand, do not receive in-service training or professional assistance because school officials believe that instructors are already equipped to teach any grade and subject, putting pressure on these educators (Elabbar, 2011:149). As a result, most teachers rely solely on their own teaching experiences with no critical analysis of their technique. The next section presents word recognition as an issue that is relevant to the teaching of reading.

2.8.6 Word Recognition

Reading requires cognitive skills, such as the recognition of letters and whole words, the combination of letters and sounds, the combination of sounds to form words and comprehension (Janks, 2011:28). In the South African and global media, the perception of literacy as an ability predominates. Literacy is understood as the ability to use alphabet letter combinations in a language to produce unit meanings such as words and phrases in that language, and this is one thing most South African learners do not have (Abdulatief, Guzula, Kell, Lloyd, Makoe, McKinney, & Tyler, 2018:30). Understanding of the sound-symbol correspondence is seen as a key ability. If a learner is able to accomplish this communication, it is assumed that s/he will continue to become literate through the stages of development in a reasonably linear trajectory, from 'decoding' to 'reading words' to 'understanding' and to what is known as 'automaticity' (Abdulatief *et al.*, 2018:3).

- **Decoding:** In this context refers to the ability to correctly connect letters to sounds, e.g., the word ‘chin’ can be decoded as ‘ch-i-n’ where the initial consonant cluster ‘ch’ is combined with the vowel ‘i’ and the final consonant ‘n’ to create the word ‘chin’ (ibid).
- **Comprehension:** The understanding that the term ‘chin’ refers to a portion of the body located around the facial area is implied in this sense (ibid).
- **Automaticity:** This is accomplished by being able to read the word ‘chin’ without having to break it down into smaller units, which allows the reader to move on to the next word easily to maintain its meaning throughout the sentence (ibid).

In this view, letter identification, letter-sound relationships, and reading words and phrases are all about being literate. With increasing cognition, it is expected that skilled readers can extend this uniform set of literacy abilities to a wider range of texts, such as short stories, novels, dictionaries, etc. Nevertheless, while decoding is necessary for the learner, it is not enough to make sense of written text (Abdulatief *et al.*, 2018:3). The next section will discuss class size as an issue that is relevant to the teaching of reading.

2.8.7 Class size

The educator-learner ratio and class size have an impact on teaching and learning, according to the Southern and East Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) (2011:2). A smaller class size aids the delivery of quality education. Smaller class sizes allow for more interaction between educator and learner, resulting in better teaching and learning. In South African primary schools, the recommended educator-to-learner ratio and class size is forty students per educator (SACMEQ, 2011:2).

Class size is a topic that piques the interest of parents, teachers, researchers, and government officials (Fatima & Sojinu, 2021:48). Fatima and Sojinu (ibid) also argue that small class sizes have a direct impact on student learning since they increase individualised instruction. Another study conducted by Spark in 2010 (cited in Fatima & Sojinu, 2021:48) indicates that teachers with big class sizes spend significantly less time on task and significantly more time on discipline and organisational concerns as compared to teachers with small class sizes (ibid). Furthermore, Spark in 2010 (cited in Fatima & Sojinu, 2021:48) did note in his study, however, that the performance of students as indicated by his findings shows that the medium class size, with a mean of 58%, performed significantly better than the small and large class sizes, with

measures of 53% and 53.5%, respectively (ibid). In contrast to these findings, Christopher, and Steven (2009:225) reported in 2009 in their study on class size reduction and student achievement that “The potential trade-off between teacher quality and class size shows that smaller classes had a better reading achievement”. Similarly, Yara (2010:108) noted in his 2010 study that class size and academic accomplishment of pupils in Southwestern Nigeria showed that the performance of students in big class sizes was relatively poor with 23% compared to those in smaller classes with 64%. However, Bascia and Fredua-Kwarteng (cited in Fatima and Sojину, 2021:4) argue that “class size does not directly affect learner accomplishment; rather, it is what teachers and learners do in these classrooms that matters”. Next, I discuss classroom practice as an issue relevant to the teaching of reading.

2.8.8 Classroom practice

A relatively consistent picture of classroom practice in Foundation Phase reading classrooms in South Africa emerges from several studies by Bloch (1996; 1999) which have attempted to describe it. Bloch (1996:10) presents a very detailed description of early literacy classes in South Africa. Bloch (1999:10) describes typical classroom interactions as centred on the teacher providing instructions and eliciting appropriate responses, frequently through chanting. Bloch’s (1999:10) observations include a lack of narrative reading, rhyme-based play, and literacy activities that are relevant to the child’s life. Bloch (1999) points out that many teachers underestimate the potential of what children bring to the classroom from their homes and communities, and that they do not regard children as capable of taking initiative in the reading and writing processes. Mistakes are viewed as the product of inadequate listening rather than as a natural component of learning and discovery. Mechanical abilities such as letter formation and neatness are emphasised (Bloch, 1999:35). Bloch (1996:22-23) further argues that teachers regard teaching language as ‘standard’, and as a result, tend to explain children’s challenges as phonological flaws rather than questioning whether what is asked of them makes any sense to them.

Bloch (1996:31) is concerned that issues about literacy teaching methodologies have been “tossed-aside” by a focus on which language children should learn in. *Getting Learning Right*, an influential report by Taylor and Vinjevold (1999), documents a number of similar classroom practices: lessons are dominated by teacher discourse and low-level questions; there is an absence of higher order skill activities such as exploration, understanding relationships, and curiosity; real world examples are frequently utilised superficially; there is little group work;

and minimal reading. Writing is mostly limited to one-word responses at the end of the class; there is a lot of copying without comprehension; and writing entire sentences is uncommon. The findings of numerous other studies are detailed in this report. Duncan (in Taylor & Vinjevoold, 1999:151) discovered an unexpected fact that schools spent an average of 4% of their time reading. Duncan (in Taylor & Vinjevoold, 1999:152) also discovered that separate reading lessons in early reading programs were almost non-existent in the 1990s. Reading instruction appears to be “sporadic and incidental rather than a primary emphasis and outcome of classes” (ibid).

When considering classroom practice as a factor in the development of reading competency, the extent to which learners read widely is also a significant issue. According to Pretorius and Ribbens (2005:144), “until learners are exposed to extensive reading, they do not easily develop those meaning formation processes so crucial to understanding”. It also showed that many young readers are unable to access many genres of writing, including literary genres which affect motivation to read. The role of libraries as an issue relevant to the teaching of reading is discussed below.

2.8.9 The role of libraries

Libraries play an important role in the affective domain by offering exposure to diverse forms of creative expression, particularly literature and the arts (Aina, Okusega, Taiwo & Ogundipe, 2011:174). Libraries are critical in the development and promotion of reading habits among learners. Because libraries are an intrinsic element of learners’ educational growth, they – particularly school libraries – are fundamental and basic to the design, implementation, and achievement of educational excellence (Aina *et al.*, 2011:174).

Libraries provide learners with access to fun and information-rich reading materials through which they can acquire and develop their reading skills (Aina *et al.*, 2011:175). According to Aina *et al.* (2011), libraries help introduce the use of reading for information, pleasure, passing exams (learning in school), and personal improvement through lifelong learning (ibid). However, it is clear that libraries provide materials that are more comprehensive and diverse than classroom study alone. Learners who read on a regular basis are more likely to have some background information, familiarity with new terms, or subjects, making learning and discussions easier and more enjoyable (ibid). Furthermore, libraries strive to enrich young learners by introducing them to high-quality reading literature that will expand their

knowledge, widen their horizons, develop their aesthetic sense, and assist them in developing their reading habits. Permanent literacy can be achieved by learners through reading (ibid). Governments and schools should therefore equip libraries with sufficient and good resources to complement qualitative education because these resources can take learners far beyond technical literacy to developing reading culture, which makes literacy development attainable, and the acquisition and accessibility by readers to a good reading collection would help learners develop ethical values, vocabulary development, appreciation of different people, culture, and an understanding of the world around them. Next, I discuss the issue of motivating students to read.

2.8.10 Motivating students to read

Motivation is a critical aspect in the development of reading skills. Dornyei (2001:21) defines motivational strategies as techniques that stimulates an individual's behaviour. According to Logan, Medford, and Hughes (2011:414), there are two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation comes from within an individual, whereas extrinsic motivation is something or someone that contributes to a desire to learn. In a reading class, intrinsic motivation can lead to the development of reading skills, while extrinsic motivation requires the teacher to inspire students to read (ibid).

To establish a motivating environment for reading, reading tasks should neither be too easy nor too difficult. They should be challenging but doable. Accordingly, Matsumoto, Hiromori, and Nakayama (2013:39-49) note that there may be a possible association between reading motivation and L2 reading strategy. Similarly, Stutz, Schaffner, and Schiefeld (2016:101-113) argue that motivating learners to read can improve their reading capacity and make reading a common habit, allowing them to decipher words automatically and build topic knowledge, so improving their reading performance. According to Dundar and Akyol (2014:362), "selecting books that pique learners' interests will boost their enthusiasm to read". Similarly, Chen (2012:20) proposes that engaging a FAL student in an L2 reading class by introducing them to children's stories and accompanying DVD films makes reading fun for FAL learners. Chen (ibid) also emphasises other advantages of this strategy for FAL learners in L2 reading classes, such as increasing learners' language ability, allowing them to acquire customs from various countries, and positively influencing their reading proficiency.

In an attempt to clarify the motivations for learning a foreign language and the potency of the desire of needing to read in that language, Allwright and Bailey (2002:164) point out that learners do not need to be certain that success would result in positive rewards. On the other hand, Field (2000:20) believes that studying a foreign language can help learners find a better career, which is a strong reason to encourage reluctant readers to read. However, Nutall (2005:58) presents a situation in which a foreign language is only required in the classroom and suggests that low motivation is unsurprising if this is the case. This provides a detailed picture of the situation in English classes. Hence, Omar (2013:27) proposes that one of the factors that makes learning English demotivating and learners inactive is that their teachers ignore speaking and listening activities owing to limited time given to teaching English, overcrowded classrooms, and a non - availability of resources. The explicit guidance on strategy implementation is discussed below.

2.8.11 Explicit guidance on strategy implementation

According to Ahmadi, Ismail, and Abdullah (2013:235), “the teaching of reading comprehension technique is substantially neglected in the field of English language teaching”. Considering this, Lo, Yeh, and Sung (2013:413) emphasise the relevance of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading instruction in assisting learners in developing their reading comprehension by identifying the main idea of a paragraph and recognising paragraph components. Learners increase their reading skills when they get guidance that promotes cognitive and meta-cognitive techniques. Hence, Grabe and Stroller (2002:226) state that the effectiveness of reading instruction is dependent on a variety of instructional and motivational factors, including the appropriateness of the lesson objective, the sequencing of classroom activities and tasks, the clarity of instruction, suitability of material, and corresponding task, teacher flexibility and responsiveness to learners’ needs, attitudes, interest, and motivation, pacing and time allotment, and teacher/student preparedness.

Grabe (2010) believes that many of the reading skills required for fluency are acquired through implicit learning and reading practices rather than explicit language instruction. However, some researchers, such as Ness (2011), Mobalegh and Saljooghian (2012), Huang and Newbern (2012), Dabarera et al. (2014), and Ghafournia (2014), argue that reading strategies should be explicitly taught in order to boost learners’ esteem in reading and motivation to learn independently. Ismail, Ahmadi, and Gilakjani (2012:11836) believe that explicit reading strategy education is a way to address the issue of poor reading abilities. Staden (2011) argues

that specific guidance and explicit instructional strategies (such as inquiring, predicting, inferring, and summarising) benefit learners significantly. As a result, Yeh, McTigue, and Joshi (2012:128) argue that reading lessons should begin at the word level to assist students establish the connection between decoding words in a text and understanding the content of the text. The strategies for effective teaching of reading is discussed below.

2.9 Strategies for effective teaching of reading

A strategy is a collection of instructions for achieving predetermined objectives (Makhubele, 2015:29). Teachers must employ a variety of reading strategies to facilitate effective reading – these strategies will be discussed below. Because reading is vital for the development of the mind, teachers who utilise cross-curricular themes engage students in tasks that are defined as “those in which reading, and writing serve a function for learners” and “involve learners in the immediate use of literacy for enjoyment and communication” (Hiebert, 1994:392).

According to reading strategy research, successful readers connect and use ideas and information from a variety of previous life and literacy experiences (Anderson *et al.*, 1985 cited in Makhubele, 2015:46). Reading intriguing literature on a regular basis improves reading comprehension and increases enjoyment (*ibid*). However, when learners read more, their understanding increases over time (*ibid*). Therefore, to gain a better understanding, students should have read a variety of texts, including narrative and expository literature, as well as real-world resources such as brochures, magazine articles, maps, and informational signs.

Since reading skills and literacy are the foundation of children’s educational success, adequate steps have been taken on the international and national levels to develop reading skills and literacy because of the high reading challenges among learners worldwide (Bharuthram, 2012:205; Hlaithwa, 2013:3). In South Africa, the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for the Foundation Phase divided reading specifications into shared reading, group guided reading, paired reading, independent reading, and phonics, including phonic knowledge (DBE, 2011:11-12). The preceding points are discussed more below.

2.9.1 Shared Reading

According to the DoE (2011:11), shared reading is an educational strategy in which the instructor specifically models the techniques and abilities of proficient readers. Shared reading

is a class-wide practice (DoE, 2011:11). The teacher reads aloud to the class and points to what they are reading to follow along. This also helps to model and teach reading skills. CAPS (2011:12) recommends that the first 15 minutes of reading be spent on shared reading using large books or posters. However, CAPS suggests that shared reading can be performed in four separate sessions (ibid).

The first session should be focused on having fun and learning the text. Secondly, there is an emphasis on discussion, which focuses on making sense of the story and the learners' thoughts and opinions (ibid). Decoding (phonics), grammar, and punctuation can be the subject of the third session. Finally, learners can read stories aloud to themselves and participate in oral and written activities related to the story (ibid). These exercises can pique the learners' attention and apply their own reasoning and creativity while reading the text. Group-guided reading is discussed next.

2.9.2 Group-guided Reading

Guided reading is an educational method or approach in which teachers assist a small group of students in reading a text independently (DoE, 2011:11). In group-guided reading, the teacher works with a small group of 6 to 10 students who are all reading at the same level (ibid). This form of learning helps a teacher get to know individual students, identify their reading difficulties, and help them develop reading strategies. Because group-guided reading is such a vital aspect of teaching reading, CAPS (2011:12) recommends that teachers spend at least half an hour per day doing it, working 15 minutes with one group and another 15 minutes with another. Paired reading is discussed below.

2.9.3 Paired Reading

Partner reading is another term for paired reading (DoE, 2011:12). It is a fluency technique for non-fluent readers. This encourages the teacher to pair students up and have them take turns reading aloud to each other. Paired reading can be achieved in the following ways:

- Putting a high-fluency reader with a low-fluency reader in the same group.
- Assembling groups of readers that are on the same reading level.
- Students should be able to choose their reading partners.
- Choose a text that is both interesting and exclusive.
- Choose plays or dialogues for students to read aloud and discuss.

- Advise on how to give meaningful, constructive peer reviews (ibid).

2.9.4 Independent Reading

Independent reading is a teaching technique that encourages students to choose and read content for their own pleasure and consumption (Sandra & Elda, 2015:22). Students who read freely have a greater artistic freedom in terms of what they choose to read and understand (Sandra & Elda, 2015:23). Learners can practice reading for, and to themselves by engaging in independent reading (ibid). They begin reading by reading aloud (quietly to themselves). As they improve at reading, they use their voices less, and by the end of the foundation phase, they should be able to read a text silently without even moving their lips and then discuss what they have read (ibid). Phonics as a strategy for effective teaching of reading is discussed below.

2.9.5 Phonics

Phonics is a technique for teaching people to read and write in alphabetic languages (Sandra & Elda, 2015:29). It is accomplished by illustrating the relationship between spoken language sounds and written language letters, groups of letters, or syllables (ibid).

When learning to read, children need to know a lot during the foundation phase of schooling. They must be able to speak the language they are learning to read, as well as understanding that the language is made up of sounds (ibid). They must recognise and experiment with the sounds of the language and know that they are expressed by letters. Teachers can do this by engaging the students with sound and word games, for instance, clapping hands, for each syllable (ibid). Next, I discuss the FISH strategy.

2.9.6 The FISH strategy

Whitaker, Harvey, Hassell, Lander, and Tutterrow (2006:112-115) highlight finding the rhyme, identifying the rhyme, saying the rhyme, and hooking the new onset to the rhyme (FISH) technique as strategies for increasing successful learning. The FISH strategy stands for:

- Find the rhyme (the first vowel and the rest of the word)
- Identify the rhyme or a word that ends like that.
- Say the rhyme (the word you know without the first sound)
- Hook the new onset (beginning sound) to the rhyme.

When learners reach the full-alphabetic stage, they are ready to be exposed to a specific FISH technique since these strategies move them into the orthographic or consolidated alphabetic stage (Whitaker *et al.*, 2006:112-115). The FISH strategy is taught in the same manner as any other method. The teacher should introduce the method, provide guided practice with relatively easy words using a few known rhymes, and then provide more advanced work with more difficult rhymes utilising the strategy (*ibid*). When adopting the FISH strategy, the following steps should be taken into cognisance:

Step 1: Conduct a pre-test and get an assent to learn: Pre-test is to assess if students understand basic consonants, blends, and diagraphs, as well as if they can replace consonants and are thus ready to learn the technique (*ibid*).

Step 2: Detailed demonstration of the strategy: Give a few examples of unknown words to the learners. Discuss how new words must be deciphered by readers as they are read. Explain that FISH is a method for deciphering unfamiliar words. Demonstrate and explain the FISH steps. Then introduce the phrase “We are looking for new words” (*ibid*).

Stage 3: Model the strategy: Using an unfamiliar word, teachers model each step of the FISH strategy. The teacher demonstrates the thinking process for each stage, referring to the visual chart of the steps as appropriate (*ibid*).

Step 4: Verbalise the strategy: The learners practice reciting the steps in the FISH strategy until they can easily repeat them from memory. To reinforce learning the steps, the teacher should employ several memorisation tactics such as the FISH mnemonic, writing the steps, repeating the steps, and producing a poster (*ibid*).

Step 5: Gradually decreasing scaffolding, controlled practice, and feedback: The teacher should refer to the phases in the technique regularly and take the learners through the process with diverse words. The teacher should begin by teaching one rhyme at a time, starting with simple rhymes such as at, all, and so on. After then, students should decipher a variety of words from that rhyming group, such as bat, cat, and flat, among others. When students have mastered one rhyme group, they should be introduced to another. The teacher should then combine rhymes that the students have learnt, challenging them to utilise the FISH technique to decode the words (*ibid*).

Step 6: Advanced practice and feedback: Once a student has successfully mastered between 6 and 10 different rhymes, the teacher advances them to employing the FISH method with more difficult words, words in context, mixed onsets and rhymes, and new rhymes that have not been explicitly taught (*ibid*).

Step 7: Post-test and commitment: The teacher assesses the students' ability to employ the FISH technique effectively with unknown terms. The teacher seeks learners' agreement to utilise the approach (ibid).

Step 8: Generalisation: As the learners read and come across unfamiliar words, the teacher prompts them to apply the FISH method and monitors their usage of the strategy while reading on their own (ibid).

If the learner is taught for fifteen to twenty minutes per day, most learners will be able to understand the strategy, apply it in words with the rhymes that they have been directly taught, and move on to generalising the strategy and finally starting to apply it with rhymes that they have been directly taught within four weeks (ibid). The repeated reading strategy (RRS) is presented in the next paragraph.

2.9.7 Repeated Reading Strategy (RRS)

Repeated reading is another technique for improving excellent reading skills. Cohen (2011) defines repeated reading as a strategy in which the learner reads and rereads a text two to four times quietly or loudly to achieve a pre-set level of speed, accuracy, and understanding (Cohen, 2011:20). According to Dundar and Akyol (2014:441) repeated reading is one of the best ways for minimising reading challenges among learners and boosting their level of memorising phrases, which would increase their reading fluency and comprehension. On the other hand, Chang, and Millett (2013:126) emphasise the benefit of repeated reading on boosting comprehension levels, particularly when the contents are at the reader's proper level.

According to Gorsuch and Taguchi (2010:27) and Cohen (2011:20), repeated reading has a significant impact on boosting FAL learners' reading comprehension by increasing fluency in their second language (L2). Gorsuch and Taguchi believe that poor word recognition abilities are responsible for L2 learners' poor and arduous reading of texts, and that repeated reading appears to be effective in this regard. This is corroborated by research conducted by Gorsuch and Taguchi (2010:27) on intermediate college-level Vietnamese English learners who aspired to be L2 instructors. Gorsuch and Taguchi discovered that a moderately intense and long-term guided repeated reading treatment increased learners' reading fluency and comprehension. However, in order to be effective in reading classes, the repeated reading technique requires a significant amount of time. Next, I discuss the reciprocal teaching strategy.

2.9.8 The Reciprocal Teaching Strategy (RTS)

Palincsar and Brown (1986) designed the reciprocal teaching technique, and Oczkus used the term “FAB FOUR” in 2005 to describe the four approaches that are emphasised in reading comprehension classes. The four techniques are predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarising (these will be discussed below). According to Ahmadi and Ismail (2012:153), the reciprocal teaching technique is an essential component in improving reading comprehension. Reciprocal teaching’s goal is to teach students specific tactics that they can apply to new texts (ibid). Additionally, Ahmadi and Ismail (2012) emphasise the efficiency of reciprocal instruction in improving both proficient and less-proficient readers' reading abilities (ibid). Stricklin (2011:620) lists a number of benefits of utilising reciprocal teaching technique in reading classes, including being acceptable for usage with all text genres and grade levels, being a tool for enhancing learners' confidence levels, and making reading a source of excitement (ibid). The FAB FOUR is discussed below.

2.9.8.1 The “FAB FOUR”

Castek (2013:38) classifies the “fab four” as follows:

- Predicting stimulates the reader’s background knowledge.
- Questioning supports establishing a clear purpose and encourage positive responsive readers.
- Clarifying encourages learners to self-monitor in identifying new words and ideas; and
- summarising requires learners to identify key words and paraphrase them in their own words.

Stricklin (2011:620) notes that teachers have three vital roles during a reciprocal teaching class:

- Activate prior knowledge of terms or ideas that learners would encounter throughout reading before beginning to read.
- Observe, advise, and inspire individuals or groups in their use of the fab four during reading.
- Encourage learners to reflect after reading and to explain which method helped them the most and why.

When used in a consistent and suitable context, the reciprocal teaching technique is extremely effective. It demands highly qualified teachers who can play multiple roles flexibly and

seamlessly throughout the reading lesson to keep students working productively (ibid). Next, I discuss the co-operative learning strategy.

2.9.9 Co-operative Learning Strategy (CLS)

Co-operative learning is an efficient method for reading classes. Bolukbas, Keskin, and Polat (2011:330) define co-operative learning as a process whereby learners of varying abilities, genders, ethnicities, and levels of social skills work together in small groups to complete their learning tasks. Members of the group can use this exercise to expand each other's knowledge and provide feedback on each other's activities (ibid). Although this technique is learner-centred, teachers regulate the group's organisation and structure. However, it is important that teachers should ensure that every learner in each group is engaged in order to expand both theirs and other learners' abilities. The most crucial part of this method is that it enables them to "ask together and learn together". The first step in using these strategies is to form a group of three to four students. Each group chooses a name to motivate and draw their attention. To ensure that all students engage, they are assigned roles in turn. The teacher may educate the learners of the key topics to consider when reading. Following the session, each student takes a separate exam. The exam points are then tallied, and a group point is calculated. Groups are commended based on how well they match up to pre-determined standards, such as "very good", "good", and "not bad" (ibid). Learners are encouraged to enhance their critical thinking and problem-solving skills with this teaching technique.

The activities of this technique can substantially aid poor readers and can be more beneficial even with a small class size. Hence, Bahanshal (2013:49), stated that "large class size is a major deterrent to effective English teaching and learning". However, with the co-operative learning technique, it is difficult for teachers to manage big class sizes of varied levels. I discuss technology and reading next.

2.9.10 Technology and Reading

According to Park and Kim (2011:2156) for many learners, reading written texts may be demotivating. Teaching reading in such circumstances may be difficult, thus with the advent and rapid growth of technology, teachers must integrate technology and the usage of computers in their classrooms (ibid). Technology has become a necessity in education because it facilitates access to new information (Sachin & Alsancak, 2011:347). On the other hand, Ertmer

(1999:47) identifies some barriers that may impede technology implementation in the classroom. Ertmer (ibid) further noted that these barriers could be extrinsic or intrinsic.

Lack of access, time, training, and institutional support are all examples of external variables. Internal factors include instructors' own ideas such as pedagogical ideals and readiness to modify and employ technology in educational practice (ibid). Furthermore, Tsai and Chai (2012) emphasise the necessity of taking the changing nature of learners and classroom environments into account. Therefore, teachers must reorganise learning materials and activities to meet the instructional needs of various contexts or groups of learners. When technical devices such as computers and tablets are used in learning, it is possible to create and develop learning environments that specifically address individual differences and may be tailored to meet the users' specific needs. According to Dundar and Akçayır (2012:445), many individuals prefer computers to printed materials, because of the accessibility of information, the capacity to adjust text to the appropriate size, simplicity of organisation, the avoidance of paper costs, and environmental benefits from reduced paper consumption (ibid).

Using computers in the classroom to teach FAL learners can boost motivation, raise language awareness, encourage learner reactions to literacy texts, and improve comprehension (Zainal, 2012:234). Similarly, Abdi (2013:557) states that some of the advantages of using the internet in language teaching and learning include motivating learners and teachers, increasing learner participation and interaction in the classroom, allowing a deeper integration with the culture of the target language, and encouraging learners to delve deeper into the topics under discussion. In line with this, Lo, Yeh, and Sung (2013:413) demonstrate that online technology allows FAL readers to interact with the text in ways that are not feasible with printed texts. Spencer (2006:33) also notes that some readers enjoy the smell of paper and prefer to read books that they can hold in their hands rather than spending long periods of time staring at a computer screen. The strategies for promoting reading habit are discussed next.

2.10 Strategies for promoting reading habit

According to Adnan, Akram, and Akram (2016:56), reading is a long-lasting habit that provides the principal access to the knowledge. It is regarded as an unspoken activity that aids in the development of a person's critical thinking abilities as well as their ability to gain inventive powers. There is a strong need for development in reading habits in order to improve

learning because there is a strong correlation between reading satisfaction and reading prosperity, i.e., forcing an individual to read anything s/he does not like to read would not be productive. In order to create a reading habit, it is critical to keep track of one's reading preferences (ibid). In line with this, Siebert 2008 (cited in Adnan *et al.*, 2016:56) points out that there are three factors that can help students acquire effective reading habits. These considerations are described further below:

- **Creating a study plan:** When compared to other students who do not schedule their time to read, a learner who makes better use of his or her time to read consistently proves to be a more successful reader. If a learner waits until s/he has an exam or test before reading, his or her viewpoints will be less clear than if the learner reads daily. It is therefore critical to set aside specified time, duration, and breaks for study because this procedure restores the learner's concentration to study (ibid).
- **Finding a study location:** A conducive environment is required for improved reading and assimilation, which means finding a location free of noise, distraction, and interruptions. Although some people read while watching television or listening to music, the majority of people prefer to read in a calm and quiet environment. As a result, it is critical to select a serene and quiet study location (ibid).
- **Rewarding for reading:** It is tough for students to establish a study routine because it is a long-term process to form a reading habit. Therefore, after reading a book, learners should be motivated with some form of incentive as this encourages them to continue their studies.

In addition, Robinson (cited in Adnan *et al.*, 2016:57) points out that there are other effective ways to improve reading habits, as stated in his SQ3R, which contains five processes such as surveying, questioning, reading, reciting, and reviewing. The preceding is discussed below:

- **Surveying:** Prior to reading, the reader should take a quick glance at the book's headings to gain a broad understanding of the material to be read. This will aid in comprehending the outline, identifying the text's major idea, and organising material (ibid).

- **Questioning:** After acquiring a basic sense of the text, the reader continues on to the next part, attempting to form headings and questions to remember. The questions might be brainstorming as well if the heading is brainstorming (ibid).
- **Reading:** The reader reads a specific section of the material to answer the stated question. The reader can re-read that section of the book 3 to 4 times; throughout this process, the reader can discover more vital information while seeking for answers to the pre-set questions (ibid).
- **Reciting:** To understand the meaning of the text, the reader should recite it aloud, attempting to utilise his or her own words. The learner can also jot down the text's major points for later reference. When the reader has thoroughly comprehended the first part of the text, he or she can go to the next text by repeating the same procedure (ibid).
- **Reviewing:** When the reader reviews, he or she recapitulates his or her memories, using significant points by attempting to rephrase the questions without using the text as a guide. This helps to enhance the readers' views on the key topic and also serves as a means of associating their perspectives on the major idea (ibid).

These procedures aid in the development of beneficial reading habits. Reading performs a friendly and constructive function in daily life through dialogue and activities. In order to help develop these habits in learners, parents and teachers have a significant role to play (ibid).

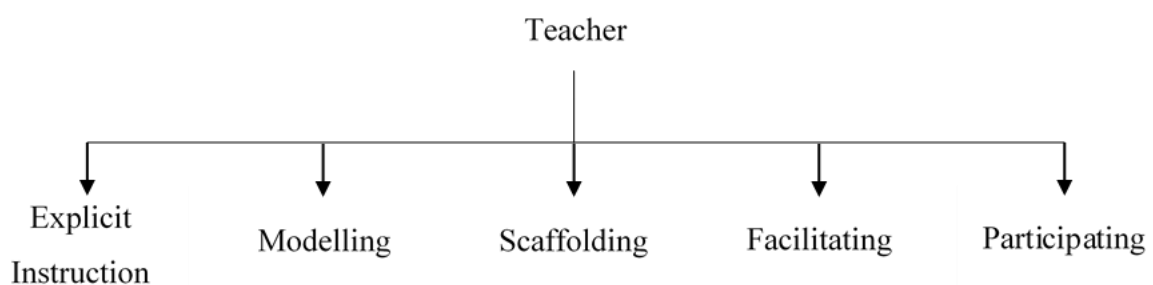


Figure 2.1: Source: Au and Raphael (2002) Sequence of teacher responsibility (modified).

In this way, a teacher demonstrates his or her ability to be a coach by providing direction, modelling to their needs, interests, and challenges, and actively participating in learners' activities to promote their reading habit.

2.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed literature relevant in this study, discussing concepts such as literature review, the meanings associated with reading, purpose of reading, importance of reading, importance of reading in the foundation phase, global issues in reading literacy, issues of reading in Africa, evidence of poor reading in South Africa and the factors influencing the acquisition of reading skills. Lastly, this chapter also highlighted some strategies for effective teaching of reading and strategies of encouraging reading habits in learners. The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework that guided this study.



CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework chosen for this study. While investigating the challenges that foundation phase learners experience when it comes to reading literacy, how teachers in this case study teach reading, and how these challenges have been addressed, this researcher chose the social constructivism theory as the study's theoretical framework. The social constructivist theory is chosen based on the premise that learners come to school with some prior knowledge, and that most learners think about learning, meaning that a learner's social and emotional experiences influence knowledge-building (Vygotsky, 1978:56). Furthermore, the relevance of social group learning, and peer reading is emphasised by social constructivists because as learners' model for and observe one another, they teach and learn skills and build their self-esteem for learning (ibid). In other words, the chosen theory enabled me to understand how learners construct knowledge when it comes to reading.

In this chapter I will start off by, firstly, defining the concept "theory", secondly define the concept "theoretical" framework, and discuss it, and lastly, discuss the principles of social constructivism and its application in this study.

3.1 What is a theory?

A theory is a well-established concept formulated to clarify certain aspects of the natural world (Kivunja, 2018:45). It is a logical form of an abstract thought regarding a phenomenon (ibid). Contemplative and critical thought are often correlated with processes such as retrospective study or analysis (ibid). These theories may be scientific or non-scientific (Abend, 2008:173). Abend (2008:173) further states that in certain instances, theories are formulated to understand, predict, and comprehend phenomena and challenge and extend existing knowledge within the constraints of critical bounding assumptions (ibid). Next, the concept "theoretical framework" is defined.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

Abend (2008:173) defines a theoretical framework as the structure that can hold or support a theory. The theoretical structures explore and introduce the theory explaining why the research problem under consideration exists (Abend, 2008:173). A theoretical framework comprises principles and current theory used for specific research, along with their meanings and references to applicable scholarly literature. A theoretical framework is used to narrow the reach of relevant data by focusing on variables and specifying the specific perspective (framework) that a researcher would use to evaluate and interpret the collected data (ibid).

This study uses Vygotsky's theory of "social constructivism". In the next sections, the theoretical framework, "social constructivism" is, firstly, defined and, subsequently, contextualised, and then the principle of social constructivism is discussed.

3.3 Social Constructivism: Definitions

Social constructivism is a philosophical position that recognises the importance of both social interaction and individual meaning construction in the learning of reading (Ernest, 1994; Ernest, 1998). Thus, social constructivists see knowledge as the essence of social interaction that leads to higher degrees of thinking and learning (O'Connor, 1998). Social Constructivism is defined by Confrey (1990:108) as "a theory involving the boundaries of human knowledge, a notion that all knowledge is inevitably a product of our own cognitive acts". Confrey argues that the world cannot be understood directly in the objectivist sense; rather, people's understanding is built through their experiences (ibid). Similarly, Voss, Wiley, and Carretero (1995:174), note that the 'sociocultural revolution' has been recognised in the last decade. As a result of such a revolution, the emphasis on learning is placed not just on social contact, but also on learning outside of the classroom (ibid). It is suggested that without the social context in which the individual grows up, individuals cannot comprehend the individual's cognitive development (Gärdenfors & Johansson, 2005:17). In the words of Maturana (1978:17-18), "knowledge involves interaction, and we cannot go outside of our confined domain of interactions". We live in a world where subject-dependent knowledge and subject-dependent reality coexist. By living in this world, "we literally create the environment in which we live" (ibid). According to Ernest (1999) and Confrey (1990), knowledge takes place outside the knower's mind. Ernest (ibid) and Confrey (ibid) further note that constructivism, which is a

learning theory of knowledge is actively produced or constructed. Now, we move to the context/s.

3.3.1 Social Constructivism: Contextualised

Vygotsky (1978:56) was a social scientist who was interested in the development of the human mind and the interaction of people and their consciousness in their environment. Vygotsky (1978:57) argues that an individual's cultural awareness is essential for early and later growth stages. According to Vygotsky (ibid), individual cognition and social circumstance are inextricably linked because children need competent people in society to thrive. This highlights the need of providing children with a social setting and a peer who is more knowledgeable than they are for them to learn more effectively. Vygotsky also stresses the need for a mediator to guide the child in transitioning from what s/he already understands to the level that s/he has not yet acquired. Vygotsky (1978:57) notes that in school, a teacher must help students progress from their current developmental level to the stage of developed growth, known as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). On the other hand, a teacher must utilise the appropriate approaches so that the students are keen to learn through concepts and structures in their meaning.

In one's learning and growth, both culture and society are significant. As a result, children begin to learn and develop well before they start school. When children play with other children, they imagine themselves as adults participating in cultural events (ibid). They become more ambitious and replicate adult roles and values (ibid). This implies that teachers must use both cognitive and social constructivism approaches when teaching reading. However, the Social Constructivism theory emphasises that children come to school with some knowledge and that most learners think about learning. In other words, one's social and emotional experiences influence knowledge building (Hein, 1999:15). This means that literacy is socially constructed because children grow up in certain practices that they must learn in their homes. According to Kalina and Powell (2009:241-242), many theorists see constructivism as the ideal technique of teaching, which argues that teachers should know the level of children's knowledge and construct new information on it. Social constructivism's sociological theory of knowledge encourages human growth and knowledge through interacting with others (Hein, 1999:15). It necessitates that teachers provide opportunities for students to interact with sensory input and develop their worlds (ibid). According to Goodman (1979:667) and Hein (1999:15), language is a personal and social invention that children learn by interacting with others.

According to Hein (1999:15), learning is a constructive and ongoing process that learners design for themselves. When we build a learning environment that allows children to engage their thoughts and emotions, we create a critical component of meaning construction. People learn language through conversing with themselves and others about how things are. This suggests that learning is a social activity that involves interaction with peers, family, teachers, and others (Hein, 1999:15). As a result, teachers must recognise their students' degree of prior knowledge and use it to build new knowledge (Ayanda, 2019:35-36).

Vygotsky placed more emphasis on the social context of learning (Vygotsky, 1978:57). The foundation phase, which encompasses grades one, two, and three, is the focus of this study. According to Slavin (2012), to be able to read, a child's intellect must first observe and analyse information before deducing meaning through letter construction. Kalina and Powell (2009) notes that children develop concepts by engaging with the teacher and other students in Social Constructivism. The social constructivist sees reading as an active activity in which students discover concepts. These students make learning meaningful by interacting with one another and the environment in which they live (Schunk, 2012:237-241). According to a social constructivist viewpoint, social group learning, and peer collaborations are beneficial, and learning and development cannot be separated from their content (Schunk, 2012:241). Social Constructivism also holds that instead of lecturing, teachers should plan reading lessons for learners to be actively involved, provide help and direction rather than lecturing, and emphasise reflective teaching (Schunk, 2012:237-241). Furthermore, social constructivists emphasise the importance of social group learning and peer reading because as learners' model for, and observe one another, they teach and learn skills and experience better self-esteem for learning (ibid). These ideas are comparable to those articulated in the outcome-based educational system, which promotes group work and interaction among students.

Jones and Brader-Araje (2002:1-10) and Von Glasersfeld (1989:162) state that the acquisition of intellectual skills is viewed as a collaborative process involving others. According to the social constructivist viewpoint, culture and context play an important part in understanding in order to develop knowledge through this understanding (Derry, 1999:197). Social constructivists view learning, particularly learning to read, as a social construction. This is true not just to the fact that learning has a social or cultural origin, but also to the fact that reading ability is justified on a 'quasi-empirical' basis (Ernest, 1991:346). On the other hand, Ernest points out that there is a lack of agreement on the word "social constructivism", as well as its

theoretical foundations and assumptions (Ernest, 1994:62). Ernest (1999:4) develops a social constructivist epistemology from the two radical constructivist concepts: (a) that knowledge is not passively received through the senses but is actively built by the cognising subject, the learner, and that (b) the function of cognition is organisation of the experiential world rather than revelation of an independent reality.

Scholars such as Ernest (1994), Rogoff (1990), and Wertsch (1985) emphasise that while Piaget acknowledges the social parts of classroom interaction, Piaget also argues that the social aspect is centred on the individual aspects of knowledge formation. Piaget (1970:114) states that “there is no longer any need to choose between the supremacy of the social or that of the intellect: collective intellect is the social equilibrium arising from the interplay of the processes that enter into all collaboration” (ibid). Piaget believes that learners’ activities in connection to their external world produce learning, and that there is no place for instruction in this situation (Jaworski, 1994:209). In terms of inter-subjectivity, Piaget’s theory emphasises the independent effort of the person as well as equality of the other’s point of view (Rogoff, 1999:69). In addition, Piaget notes that social interactions, such as discussions between learners with opposing viewpoints, is highly likely to generate cognitive conflict, which aids individual cognitive progress and so restores equilibrium (Palincsar, 1998:345). From this point of view, other perspectives that may contradict with their own pre-existing perspectives can be seen through such logical conversations, resulting in dis-equilibration, which leads to the individual restructuring and rebuilding cognitions in order to settle the difference (Tudge & Rogoff, 1999:32). According to Piaget (1985), “disequilibrium forces the subject to go beyond his existing state and strike out in new directions” (Piaget, 1985:10). In line with this viewpoint, intellectual development is an active process of dis-equilibration and re-equilibration that results in the continuous reconstruction of knowledge (ibid). Furthermore, Piaget suggests that in order for social connection to be most efficient, equals’ cooperation is required, resulting in comprehension of each other’s characteristics with reciprocity of their various thinking (Rogoff, 1999:70).

Vygotsky’s perspective on the connection between social and individual processes differs significantly from Piaget’s. To begin with, Vygotsky emphasises the importance of social and linguistic impacts on learning and meaning construction, stating that “the social dimension of consciousness is paramount in time and reality”. Individual awareness has a secondary and derived dimension (Vygotsky, 1978: 30). Similarly, Davydov (1998) points out that “thought”

(cognition) must not be limited to a subjectively psychological activity (Davydov, 1988:16 cited in Cobb, 1994:13). Vygotsky (1978) further states that if learners are guided by a more skilled peer or adult, social interaction through participation in a number of joint activities and internalisation of the influences of collective working provides intellectual development and the acquisition of knowledge of the culture and the world. Vygotsky also established the idea of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) to account for this social and interactive learning with a teacher or more informed peer (Vygotsky, 1978:86). In addition, Vygotsky described “the gap between the actual developmental level as determined by individual problem-solving and the degree of potential development as determined by problem solving under adult supervision or in partnership with more capable peers” (ibid). According to Bruner (1997:63), “the ZPD is where pedagogy and intersubjectivity enters the Vygotskyian picture”. Lerman (2000:210) also characterised the ZPD as a tool for analysing individuals’ contributions to the learning setting, as well as the role of intersubjectivity in scaffolding participants. According to Vygotsky, “every function in the child's cultural development emerges twice: first, on the social level, and then, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological), and then within the child (intrapsychological). All higher functions arise from actual human-to-human relationships” (Vygotsky, 1978: 57).

The integration of social interactions into constructivism is supported by a number of researchers. Cobb, Wood and Yackel (1992:28) argue that these theories are complementary. Cobb et al. propose an explanatory paradigm for social interactions, highlighting the complementary nature of acculturation and cognitive components. It was emphasised that the cognitive side of learning to read is learners’ constructive efforts. It is then clear that we must supplement the explanation by mentioning that learning is also a process of acculturation (Cobb *et al.*, 1992: 28). Cobb (1994) further argues that learning to read should be viewed as a process in which an individual actively constructs information as well as an acculturation process into reading practices. On the other hand, Confrey (1995) emphasises the importance of the individual constructivist perspective. In its absence, access to the diversity of individual constructs, which plays an important part in the learning process, is lost (Confrey, 1995:219). According to Confrey, “exclusive reliance on ‘mathematizing’ as ‘the interactive constitution of a social practice may lead social constructivist researchers to overlook much of what Piaget demonstrated and underestimate or under-investigate the strength and diversity of individual students’ constructive processes” (ibid). Thus, Confrey argues that Vygotsky’s theories are inadequate to explain individual creativity, which is a clear flaw. To mitigate for this flaw,

Confrey integrated Piaget's theories into Vygotsky's. On the contrary, Rogoff (1990) describes herself as a Vygotsky advocate, arguing that incorporating social interaction into Piaget's individualistic method cannot achieve Vygotsky's perspective that it is critical to understand cognition within a social context.

Interpersonal interactions in classroom discussion and discourse are viewed as significant instruments for the development of individual cognition from a social constructivist approach. Cobb et al. (1993: 93) examined the extent to which students engaged in inquiry mathematics when they worked together in both small groups and whole class settings over a year-long teaching experiment in one second grade classroom. Their initial viewpoint was focused on the individual, as they stated that "social interaction was a catalyst for autonomous individual cognitive development" (Cobb *et al.*, 1993: 92), but as their research progressed, they articulated that "mathematical activity can be viewed as intrinsically social in that what counts as a problem and as a resolution has normative aspects" (*ibid*). They do not, however, tend to make the person secondary because they were "aiming to prevent any tendency that subordinates the individual to the social and loses sight of the reflexive relationship between the two" (Cobb *et al.*, 1993: 96). Cobb et al. (1993:96) believe that there are several ways in which individual learning can be developed through social setting. A large focus of their study is on how mathematical meanings are negotiated jointly by the instructor and students, as well as the negotiation of discourse norms and "socio-mathematical norms", which involve collectively performing mathematics in the classroom.

By the same token, Jaworski's (1994) initial perspective was that of a radical constructivist, emphasising on individual knowledge creation. Jaworski, however, articulates her observations in the classrooms in terms of learners' learning from a social constructivist perspective after recognising multiple perspectives on the social side of classroom learning. Jaworski (1994: 211) argues that the social factor significantly influences individual learners' meaning construction as a consequence of her research, which focused on both individual and social aspects. It presented itself in language, discourse, and physical action within the classroom walls, the activities introduced by the teachers, group work and discussions, and general emphasis on a supportive and courteous classroom attitude (*ibid*). According to Jaworski (1994:209), social interaction and mediation offers established conventions that may be regarded as knowledge resulting from student discussion, namely 'intersubjective' knowledge.

Jaworski (1994:209) highlighted classroom discussion in a Vector's lesson as an indication of how it encouraged students to articulate their knowledge; through this discussion, students contested their beliefs and views. Although a radical constructivist perspective would suggest that each individual has their own autonomous understanding, the teacher and learners discussed and contested their views for the shared meaning and established a common understanding. As the discussion went, classroom meanings emerged (interpsychologically), and these students' personal meanings emerged (intrapsychologically) (Jaworski, 1994:210). As a result, it appeared that the meaning in the classroom was as a result of social interaction. Jaworski (1994:209) notes that "there appears to be no doubt that the discourse and its language were effective in learners' acquisition of meaning". This is in line with Vygotsky's theory that individual understanding increases as a result of language and social interaction.

Consequently, Mercer and Sams (2006:525) investigated teachers' roles in aiding students in developing their collective use of language as a tool for efficient reasoning, therefore enhancing individual learning and mathematical knowledge during mathematical activities in primary schools in Year 5. This investigation involved a "Thinking Together" intervention teaching program that incorporated both group-based peer group activities and teacher supervision. The findings of Mercer and Sam's (2006) study revealed that collaborative activities encouraged learners to create answers for themselves through conversation, which supported the findings of Yackel et al. (1991:400). The evidence from Mercer and Sam's research also showed that the teacher plays an important role in children's use of language while working on mathematical tasks and reasoning, and that talk-based group activities can aid in the development of individuals' mathematical reasoning, understanding, and problem-solving abilities. The Vygotskyian perspective, which states that language-based, intermental activity, such as social interaction, has a developmental impact on intra-mental activity, such as individual thinking, was also validated by empirical findings in this study. As a result of Mercer and Sam's research, it indicates that "if teachers provide children with an explicit, practical exposure to the use of language for collective reasoning, then children learn better methods of thinking collectively as well as better ways of thinking alone" (Mercer & Sam, 2006:525).

Steffe and Tzur (1994:99) examined social interaction in the context of children's fraction learning in computer micro-worlds and discovered that not all social interaction between students aided learning. Thus, the researchers proposed that mathematics educators should establish mathematical communication with children as well as among them and foster

independent mathematical activity in learners while interacting with others. Furthermore, Steffe and Tzur proposed that educators should generate learning positions in which the development of perturbations that appear to aid learning is critical. In addition, Sfard and Kieran (2001:70) analysed the interactions between two 13-year-old boys learning algebra in a two-month course in order to better understand how arithmetic is learned through social interaction. They realised that “the benefits of talking-based learning cannot be taken for granted” (ibid). According to these researchers, the two students’ teamwork did not appear to be beneficial because their communication was ineffective. Based on theoretical reasoning and considerable evidence from other research, they continue to believe in the didactic potential of spoken mathematics (Sfard & Kieran, 2001:71).

There is a tendency to believe that a radical constructivist viewpoint ignores, or at best underemphasises, social interaction and the role of language in cognitive development (Lerman, 1994:45). As a result, social constructivism is gaining momentum among some researchers in mathematics education psychology as an alternative viewpoint to radical constructivism; educators have focused on the relationship between social interaction and cognitive development from a social constructivist perspective.

According to Vygotsky (1978:58), individual cognition is encouraged through cooperation in an individual’s zone of proximal development, and a more skilled peers or adults play a vital role in the development of individual cognition. However, Piaget (1985:11) considered that individuals work alone to construct knowledge using the physical, logical, and mathematical material of their surroundings despite the fact that development can be aided by interaction between peers rather than adults by virtue of resulting in cognitive conflict (Tudge & Winterhoff, 1999:311). However, the differing opinions of certain writers make the situation arguable. Bauersfeld (1980:23-41), have attempted to reconcile social interaction into constructivism by incorporating individual cognition with social dimensions of teaching and learning. Next, the principles of Social Constructivism are discussed.

3.4 Principles of Social Constructivism

According to Kiraly (2014:35) there are six key principles of social constructivism, namely, multiple realities and multiple perspectives, collaborative/co-operative learning, appropriation, the zone of proximal development (ZPD), scaffolding, and situated learning.

Below, I discuss the key principles of social constructivism.

3.4.1 Multiple Realities (MR) and Multiple Perspectives (MP)

Kiraly (2014:34) argues that people learn through interaction, and, therefore, that when individuals exchange their thoughts and contrast their opinions with other members of the group they belong to, they are learning through the principles of multiple realities and multiple perspectives. Through active interaction, social interaction leads to discussion, bargaining, and a shift in individual perspective. This means that learning is an intrapsychological process, and culture and social change can be influenced by encounters and diverse perspectives. Furthermore, rather than the traditional method of transmitting knowledge from teacher to learner, the MR and MP principles emphasise that teaching should be a mutually beneficial process for both the instructor and the learner (ibid).

This principle illustrates that people do not learn in solitude. However, while teaching reading, this principle encourages the practice of shared reading. This allows the teacher to model the reading process and then the exchanging of ideas between learners. It also stimulates social interactions among learners rather than solitary work, which can aid in the development of creative thinkers and collaborative readers. Collaborative/co-operative learning is discussed below.

3.4.2 Collaborative/co-operative learning

The collaborative/cooperative learning concept emphasises that learning is a collaborative activity. According to Dagnev (2017), learning cannot be delivered by the teacher; rather, learners generate their own learning through group activity and discussion. The social constructivist theory holds that knowledge is co-constructed in a given context, and individual knowledge is a product of knowledge that was co-constructed throughout the cooperation process (Churcher, 2014). However, Amineh and Asl (2015), argue that in social constructivism growth begins first at the social level and then subsequently moves to the individual level. This is in accordance with Pritchard and Woollard's (2013:1-8) argument that social constructivism allows people to communicate with one another and subsequently develop creative thinking. This means that learners may discuss and compare ideas with other learners in the classroom, community, and society. Learners may work in groups when learning to read. Each group member will internalise the information and utilise it to explain the concept either vocally or in writing. As indicated in Chapter 2, group-guided reading allows the teacher

to support learners in small groups who are reading at the same level to read a text independently while simultaneously allowing the teacher to assess each student's abilities. When students work in groups, they engage with one another, gain knowledge about real-life situations, develop their own explanations for why things are the way they are, and gain a greater comprehension of the subject. The teacher's responsibility is to display his or her ability as a coach, model, guide, and participate in the activities of the learners in order to foster a reading habit.

Collaborative or cooperative learning leads to appropriation, which is a mutually productive process of constructing meaning that involves communication between the individual and his/her social, cultural, and physical surroundings (Kiraly, 2014:38). Next, we discuss the principle of appropriation.

3.4.3 Appropriation

The appropriation principle emphasises that learning should not be centred on the teacher, but rather should be a collaborative activity involving both the teacher and the learner. Appropriating content to learners based on their skills allows them to internalise sociocultural knowledge, which becomes part of their intra-personal knowledge (Kiraly, 2014:38). In the context of this study, learners may engage in a variety of reading experiences and print materials that will help them to apply their knowledge in practical reading. For example, in shared reading, students could take turns reading aloud and pointing to what they are reading on the chalk board while others read along. Teachers can also read stories aloud to these learners and have them participate orally, in writing, or in a practical activity related to the story. The implementation of this principle, aids in modelling, teaching reading skills, piquing learners' attention, and allowing them to apply their own thinking and creativity when reading. The Zone of Proximal Development as a principle is discussed next.

3.4.4 The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is an opportunity that is constructed in a particular circumstance that can aid in knowledge building (Kiraly, 2014). The ZPD allows for appropriate interaction in each situation (Vygotsky, 1994:42). A more experienced person, such as a peer, parent, or teacher, should support the learner, according to Social Constructivism theory. The teacher, for example, is the more knowledgeable person who

models reading during shared reading, group-guided reading, independent reading, and paired reading.

When a learner has mastered the reading of a particular text, support can be minimised. In other words, as task competence increases, support diminish (Vygotsky, 1994; Kiraly, 2014; Amineh & Asl, 2015). This implies that the ZPD is only a temporary window of opportunity for learning. For example, if the child is unable to read, the teacher, parent, or peer could use resources that will mediate learning, such as pictures from a story read in class, flash cards, rhymes, and so on. These resources aid in the formation of meaning.

The ZPD's goal is to advance the learner's knowledge from a low level to a higher level. In ZPD, it is believed that the learner has some knowledge, but the teacher helps the learner acquire the expected level of skill. The learner's prior knowledge is acknowledged, and the scaffolding structure aids in linking existing knowledge to new knowledge, resulting in a thorough understanding of new knowledge. As a result, ZPD is an interactive process that allows for the construction of knowledge between the learner and the teacher. The principle of scaffolding is discussed below.

3.4.5 Scaffolding

In the social constructivist school of thought, scaffolding is a key idea. It is a malleable structure that emerges in the ZPD as an ongoing function between the teacher and the students. It takes the form of teacher assistance to help students complete a task that they would be unable to complete on their own (Vygotsky, 1994:43). The teacher assists students in the collaborative construction of their mental representations (ibid). When learners are able to complete the task without the assistance of the teacher, the level of support is then reduced (Boss & Larmer, 2018).

As a result, one discovers that a social constructivist teacher does not simply assign task to learners, but also provide learners with the appropriate level of support, and then reducing it when they are able to complete the activity on their own. For instance, if learners are working in groups, the teacher may move from one group to another and offer verbal scaffolds to aid in helping each group resolve specific issues. While learners may be able to narrate their stories but not yet read them, the teacher could still help them read logically by giving them printed

materials and flashcards. The teacher should then allow learners to read from their textbooks once they have mastered telling a narrative story.

The temporary scaffolding structure, on the other hand, should be utilised over again when learners learn new skills of reading an informational text (a letter, recipe, invitation, etc.). This means that scaffolding should be incorporated in a teacher's teaching strategies because all new tasks require assistance from a more knowledgeable person. Therefore, I agree with Yuvita's (2018) viewpoint that scaffolding should be tailored to the needs of each learner. This is because each learner has a distinct learning style. Situated learning as a principle of social constructivism is discussed below.

3.4.6 Situated learning

According to the Situated Learning Principle, learning should be embedded in an authentic, real-life context (Kiraly, 2014; Vygotsky, 1994:43). Knowledge should be presented in the context in which it is involved. Situated learning aids in the formation of meaning. Authenticity is linked to active learning and does not support the transmission teaching method. It considers learning to be a process rather than an outcome of a process (ibid). Teachers' experiences cannot be the only truth that must be accepted; learners must be allowed to experience and discover things for themselves (Kiraly, 2014). This implies that learners should actively participate in their own learning.

3.5 The application of Social Constructivism in this study

In the context of this study, Social Constructivism theory is relevant because it recognises that learning takes place in a social context for optimal meaning making. I used this theory as a tool to understand the challenges that foundation phase learners experience with regards to reading. In other words, I set out to examine the factors that inhibits reading ability in English language for FAL learners. Chapter 5 of this thesis shows how these factors affects the learner's reading ability, and how these teachers cope with FAL learners of English. The Vygotskian ideas of social constructivism are significant to my study because they help us understand how children learn, how individuals collaborate to create objects, and how an individual's learning is influenced by his or her social interactions. The social constructivism theory is beneficial because it allows a person to use existing knowledge to generate new meanings (Kalina & Powell, 2009:243). Vygotsky's ideas specifically promote the various phases of reading

comprehension development and learning to read. They are useful for comprehending the numerous forms and models of literacy and how reading comprehension is mediated with diverse tactics and approaches.

When learners participate in discussions and shared reading, they compare their ability with others. It can be argued that Social Constructivism promotes guesswork and natural thinking. When teachers allow learners to do guesswork, they accommodate the learners' prior knowledge, which helps them in their co-construction of knowledge. Natural thinking allows learners to think about or reflect on their thinking, i.e., to engage in metacognition. Teachers should ask questions that develop metacognition. Social Constructivist theory views learning as a continuous process in which learners move from a current level to a higher level. This is done through social interaction that takes place in the ZPD (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Social Constructivism recognises that each learner is unique and encourages learners to develop their own version of the truth, influenced by their own experiences, background, culture, and knowledge. The cognitive skills of the child develop when they interact with their peers, adults, and environment. Social Constructivism complements the Vygotskian emphasis on integrating cognitive and social learning.

Upon reviewing the research literature from social constructivist perspectives, it can be concluded that because discussion is the primary mediational instrument for cognitive development from social constructivist perspectives, studies of interactions through classroom activities and discussions generally contribute to the development of learning and understanding. Researchers such as Cobb, Ernest, and Bauersfeld discovered that teachers have a critical role in supporting individual learning by scaffolding, using language, and participating in classroom discourse, as well as recognising constitutive features of teaching such as providing mathematical communication. As a result, while communication through social interaction has the potential to be ineffective, and thus contribute less to learning than expected, learning to read in an interactive manner is generally supportive of individual cognition, as many research empirical and theoretical evidence confirmed (see Lampert 1990; Goos, 2004; Cobb *et al.*, 1993; Mercer & Sam 2006).

The concept that learners should be assisted in constructing meaningful and useful information in their lives underpins the social constructivism theory (Makhubele, 2015:18). It is not so much about “what” they learn as it is about “how” they learn (*ibid*). The social constructivist

theory fosters co-operative teaching while promoting the learner-centred approach. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that poor reading skills can be improved through co-operative teaching and learning.

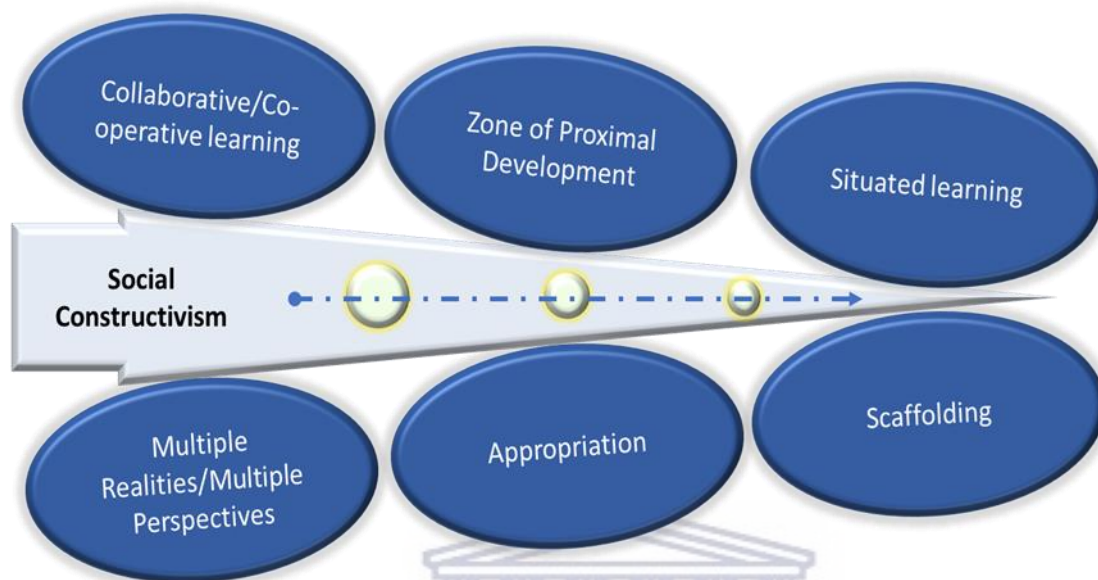


Figure 3.1: The diagrammatic representation of the theoretical framework that guided this study.

3.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter defined and discussed the theoretical framework chosen for this study, that is the social constructivist theory. The social constructivism theory was chosen based on the theory that learners begin schooling with little knowledge and that most of these learners want to learn. In other words, a learner’s social and psychological experiences have an impact on his or her ability to acquire knowledge because they observe, teach, and learn skills from one another and build their self-esteem for learning. Hence, Hirtle (1996:91) argues that a Social Constructivist approach of education aspires to offer learners a democratic learning experience. This is consistent with the principles of post-apartheid language curricula such as RNCS, NCS, and CAPS, which all acknowledge education as a tool to encourage social change, independent and engaged learning, social equality, environmental and social justice, and the value of indigenous knowledge systems (DoE, 2002; DBE, 2011). The next chapter deals with the Research Design and Methodology chosen for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology used in this study, and the data instruments selected for this research are explained. This chapter is organised into the following sections: Also outlined are the study objectives, the research site, the type of sampling and the sampling population, the data collection instruments chosen for obtaining the relevant data, research generalisability, validity, and reliability, ethical considerations, the data analysis strategy.

4.1 Purpose of this research

This study investigated the challenges of reading faced by learners in the Foundation Phase that is Grades 1, 2, and 3. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, various factors influence the development of reading skills in Grades 1, 2, and 3. The research sought to investigate the reading challenges experienced by the Foundation Phase learners and how such challenges are being addressed.

4.2 Researcher's Positionality

My age, gender, race, class, cultural, religious, and political beliefs, education, home language, personal experiences, professional experiences, and social standing are all influencers on my values and hence can influence them. For example, how I pose questions and how research participants respond to them. Recognising the subjective in research contributes to its credibility. However, I was different from the participants in this study in many aspects. I am a middle-aged English-speaking lady who grew up in Nigeria economically, socially, and politically privileged and highly literate environment. I believe that it is essential for growing learners to have a variety of rich and enjoyable reading experiences, and I am a voracious reader myself.

4.3 The Definition and Importance of Research

Although research can imply different things to different people, it is frequently characterised in the same way by many researchers. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012),

research is defined “the methodical collection and evaluation of information with a clear objective to find things out” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2012:680). Similarly, Creswell (2012:375) defines research as “a set of phases used to collect and analyse data to gain a better insight into a topic or situation”. In the same vein, Bryman (2012:3) notes that research is a systematic investigation that assists a researcher in identifying the issues to be addressed, deciding on objectives, and finally drawing conclusions based on the facts. Kumar (2018), on the other hand, defines research in a slightly different way; Kumar points out that research is a set of abilities and a way of thinking whose purpose is to find answers to research questions. Research plays a vital role in uncovering new ideas and ensuring that existing ideas or knowledge are utilised in the most effective ways possible (Barcelona, 2020:517). Research is important not only for students but for the entire academic community (ibid). Research can help find answers to unanswered questions, address knowledge gaps, improve critical thinking and analytical abilities, assist students to learn how to identify a problem and reach a viable solution or establish a point of view on a specific issue. Students learn how to organise their ideas logically, pose questions, and build analytical abilities by analysing vast amounts of data by writing an academic paper (ibid). Below I discuss the research design.

4.4 Research Design

A research design, according to Saunders et al. (2012:680) is “a framework for the collecting and analysing of data to answer research questions and achieve research objectives, providing reasoned rationale for data sources, collection methods, and analysis techniques”. Creswell (2014) defines research design as a specific plan of action that should be defined for data to be gathered, analysed, and interpreted to achieve the study’s objectives (Creswell 2014:3). A research design is also a plan and procedure for research that covers the decisions from general assumptions to precise data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2003:8). Similarly, Johnson and Christensen (2019:296) point out that a research design is the outline, plan, or strategy used to answer a research question. However, McMillan and Schumacher (2010:20) define research design as a process for carrying out the analysis, including where, from whom, and under what conditions data will be collected. The research design creates a blueprint for how research should be carried out. It also contains the theoretical and philosophical foundations that are used to conduct research (ibid).

For this study, a case study research design was adopted. Below, I discuss the Case Study research design.

4.4.1 Case Study

A case study design was used for this study. According to Hafiz (2008:544), a case study is a research design that allows for the study of a phenomenon within its context using a range of data sources such as interviews, observations, or questionnaires. Similarly, Yin (2009:18) defines a case study as an empirical investigation that studies a current phenomenon in depth and within its real-life environment, particularly when the borders between phenomenon and context are not readily visible. Furthermore, Green and Thorogood (2018:284) define a case study as an in-depth study performed for one specific case, which could be a site, an individual, or a policy. As a result, Hafiz (2008:545) emphasises that a case study design allows the participant and the researcher to work closely together while allowing the participant to tell their own story. The experiences allow the participants to convey their perspectives on reality, allowing the researcher to better understand the individuals.

I used a case study to investigate the challenges of reading faced by learners of English as a First Additional Language in the Foundation Phase (Grades 1, 2 and 3), and to understand how teachers teach reading in the foundation phase. I chose the case study because it allows the researcher to gather concrete, contextual, and in-depth knowledge about a specific real-world subject while also investigating the primary problems experienced by the learners. Below, I discuss the Research Methodology.

4.5 Research Methodology

A research methodology is a set of approaches or strategies used to identify, collect, process, and analyse data on a certain subject (Bhat, 2020:3). A research methodology answers two major questions: how is data acquired or generated, and how is it analysed? What method will be used to analyse it? (ibid). Similarly, Novikov and Novikov (2019:2) define research methodology as the arrangement of activity, that is, organising it as an integral system with clearly defined characteristics, a logical structure, and the accompanying process of its realisation, as well as the temporal structure. However, a research methodology entails collecting information from the participants through various instruments and analysing and interpreting the data in preparation for discussion and presentation of the findings.

Furthermore, there are three main types of research methodologies: the quantitative research methodology, the qualitative research methodology, and triangulation or mixed method approach. Below, the researcher will, firstly, define and differentiate between the three research methodologies stated above, and then explain the researcher's choice of the research methodology.

4.5.1 Quantitative Research Methodology

According to Creswell (2003:3), quantitative research methodology refers to approaches that use numbers to describe results. Creswell (2003:3) further describes the study procedures as “experiments” and “quasi-experiments”, with the collected data being statistical. Furthermore, Creswell (2003:3) states that this form of research methodology is used when a researcher wants to study how one variable influence another while ignoring the influence of another variable (ibid). Quantitative research, according to Creswell (2017:32), is an approach for investigating relationships and variables in order to test objective ideas. These variables can then be measured using instruments, resulting in numbered data that can be analysed using statistical processes. This type of research method involves systematic investigation using mathematical, calculation, and statistical technique. The Qualitative Research Methodology is discussed next.

4.5.2 Qualitative Research Methodology

According to Creswell (2017:32), qualitative research is an approach for investigating and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups attach to a social or human situation. This type of research involves developing questions and procedures, data collected in the participant's setting, data analysis that builds inductively from specifics to broad themes, and the researcher's interpretations of the data.

The study followed a qualitative approach which Walker (1987:51) define as a systematic study of phenomena for the purpose of recognising, investigating, or describing that phenomenon. Creswell (2014:10) defines qualitative research as an approach that is used to understand key features or aspects in a specific organisational structure and/or event from the participants' perspectives through narrative descriptions and direct data collection. Thus, it allows the researcher to create a deeper and richer picture of what is going on in a particular setting. In the same line of thought, Bhat (2020:3) defines a qualitative research approach as a market research methodology that focuses on gathering information through open-ended and

conversational interaction. However, Lichtman (2014:335) argues that the strength of a qualitative approach is inductive thinking that allows the researcher to create a deeper, richer, and better picture of what is going on in a particular setting. Qualitative research adopts a common view of generalisability so that the reader is left to make their own decision on how far the evidence collected can be used to offer information about the same topic in a similar setting (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:20).

In addition, McMillan, and Schumacher (2010:20) points that the qualitative research methodology focuses not only on “what” individuals think, but also on “why” they think that way (ibid). Therefore, qualitative research methodology allows for more in-depth probing and questioning of respondents based on their responses, with the researcher or interviewer attempting to understand their reason and sentiments (ibid). According to Creswell (2003:9), qualitative research methodology is essentially inductive, with the researcher extracting interpretation from field data. As a result, this approach is useful when the researcher wants to get a general understanding from the participants, analyse a situation, and explain it (ibid).

The essential element in qualitative research is that it does not presuppose only one right interpretation of reality or information (Clarke & Braun, 2013:3). Instead, it advocates for the employment of diverse interpretations of reality intimately related to the context in which they occur (ibid). It provides a clear and complete explanation of activities and representations of actions to provide a better knowledge of the world and how it may be used to effect social change (ibid). It also tries to discover the depth of the phenomenon from several perspectives, with participants expressing their opinions and demonstrating their activities (ibid). Participants in qualitative research participate in the study and share their perspectives (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). Researchers perform qualitative field research to gain an insider’s perspective on the subject under investigation (Auriacombe & Mouton, 2007:441). A qualitative approach allows for the use and collection of a wide range of empirical resources, including case studies, interviews, personal experiences, observations, and visual texts that represent people’s lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009:139). Qualitative researchers study how people interact and understand the social world (Meriam, 2019:54). The variables affecting the acquisition of reading skills were investigated using qualitative research in this study.

4.5.3 Triangulation or Mixed Method Approach

Mixed method research is a form of investigation that includes both qualitative and quantitative data collection (Creswell, 2014). Integrating the two types of data through a unique design that may include philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks, this research methodology provides a more comprehensive grasp of a study problem than either approach on its own (ibid). This research approach is also referred to as triangulation by Patton (2002) and Dawson (2009). However, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012:683), defines triangulation as the utilisation of two or more independent sources of data or data-collection methods within one study. In addition, Flick (2004:182) defines triangulation as an approach that leads to a deeper comprehension of the problem under research, and thus as a step toward greater knowledge, but less validity and objectivity of interpretation.

The qualitative research methodology was chosen for this study because it allows for more in-depth probing and questioning of respondents based on their responses, with the researcher or interviewer attempting to understand their reason and sentiments. Hence, Creswell (2003) states that a qualitative research methodology is inductive with the researcher extracting interpretation from field data (Creswell, 2003:9). This approach was useful for this study in that it assisted the researcher get a general understanding from the participants, analyse a situation, and explain it. However, since qualitative research is all about language, which gives context and understanding of social or human problems. Therefore, qualitative research can explain why people feel the way they do, why they act the way they do, what their views are, and what motivates them.

This qualitative methodology was utilised to acquire insights into the pedagogy of Grades 1, 2, and 3 teachers, their way of teaching reading, the challenges they face when teaching reading, and how they cope with students who are learning English as a First Additional Language (FAL).

Qualitative methodology and a Case Study were used to achieve the target objective set. In addition, the researcher employed a combination of interviews and observations to collect data, a technique known as triangulation. Triangulation is a term used in social research to describe the observation of a research topic from at least two different perspectives (Flick, 2004:178).

4.5.4 Reiteration of the study's Research Question

The primary research question that guided this study is:

- What are the challenges of reading faced by learners of English as a First Additional Language in the Foundation Phase (Grades 1, 2 and 3)?

The study also considered the following sub-questions to address the main research question.

- How do these challenges impact the development of the learners' reading skills?
- What strategies do teachers use to deal with these challenges?

To answer the research questions, the study has set the following objectives:

- To investigate the challenges that hinder learners' reading for effective learning.
- To investigate the strategies used for teaching reading in the foundation phase.
- To investigate how these challenges affect the development of reading skills.
- To investigate the strategies used by teachers in dealing with these challenges.

By investigating these issues, I hope that the study's findings will contribute to reading in South Africa by constructing an account of early reading pedagogy.

4.6 Data Collection

According to Bhat (2019:23-28), data collection is "the act of acquiring and measuring information on variables of interest in a consistent manner that allows one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes". The gathering, measuring, and analysing reliable standard validated approaches is referred to as data collection (ibid). As a result, data collection is the first and most critical phase in conducting a study.

I used primary data to accomplish the objectives of this study. To answer my study questions, data from foundation phase teachers was gathered through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The data for this study was gathered in order to understand better the factors that impede the acquisition of reading abilities during the foundation phase of schooling. These data collection approaches were also utilised to investigate reading instruction techniques in the foundation phase.

Prior to collecting data, I obtained permission from the principal, participants, and learner's parents to use a tape recorder and take notes throughout the classroom observation. Teachers' strategies for teaching reading to learners of English as a First Additional Language (FAL)

were studied through classroom observations. Interviews were also used to supplement classroom observation data. The following section discusses the research techniques used, namely, interviews and observations.

4.6.1 Interviews

According to Creswell (2012:217), interviews are a process in which a researcher asks open-ended questions to participants. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011:506) defines an interview as “a two-person dialogue initiated by the interviewer, asking questions from an interviewee for a specified goal”. It is more than just a discourse; it is an opportunity for the interviewee to share lived experiences or expertise (ibid). The purpose could be to collect information on the research, emphasising the topic indicated by the research objectives (ibid). Interviews can help both the interviewer and the interviewee articulate how they see the world and situations relating to the research (ibid).

According to Grill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008), there are three major types of interviews in qualitative research: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews. Structured interviews are conducted verbally, and the interviewer usually has a list of pre-set questions to ask (ibid). Unstructured interviews, on the other hand, are performed with little to no organisation. The interviewer asks a question and then follows up with more questions depending on the initial response. However, unstructured interviews are difficult to handle and time-consuming (ibid). Similarly, Remler and Van-Ryzin (2021), note that a semi-structured interview is a technique of questioning participants with the help of an interview guide that includes a series of open-ended questions. In addition, Punch and Oancea (2014:182) and Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011:506) state that interviews are a useful tool for understanding others and allowing participants to express their thoughts and understanding of the context in which they work. The interview, as a data collection tool, is adaptable and powerful, allowing for interaction and allowing for sincerity (Cohen et al., 2011:506). Likewise, Rowley (2012:162) states that interviews are beneficial when "the research objectives is centred on understanding real-life experiences, opinions, attitudes, values, and processes." Semi-structured interviews were conducted for this study to learn about the teachers' perspectives on the reading challenges faced by these students when teaching reading literacy.

I chose semi-structured interviews in this study because they are flexible and allow for information elaboration. According to Grill et al. (2008:291), the researcher can employ pre-set open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews. I was able to gather information on the foundation phase's reading challenges and observe their classroom practices.

4.6.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are based on a core set of organised questions from which the interviewer deviates to explore in-depth (Omari, 2011:162). According to Remler and Van-Ryzin (2021), semi-structured interviews are a sequence of open-ended questions, occasionally accompanied by probes, that help, direct, or shape the discussion. Although the guide is designed to be a flexible tool rather than a set script, semi-structured interviews help to ensure that each interview covers roughly the same subjects. However, some respondents may have a lot to say about certain topics while having little to say about others, and the sequence in which topics are discussed during the interview may differ (ibid).

A semi-structured interview is a verbal interchange in which one individual, the interviewer, tries to elicit information from the interviewee by questioning them (Robyn, 2003:143). Semi-structured interviews are conducted in a conversational style, allowing participants to discuss issues that are significant to them (ibid). According to Brinkmann (2014:437), semi-structured interviews can make better use of the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues by allowing much more flexibility to follow up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee; additionally, the interviewer does have a higher probability of becoming visible as a knowledge-producing participant in the process itself, rather than concealing behind the pre-set interview schedule. When compared to unstructured interviews, the interviewer has (in semi-structured interviews) more leeway in focusing on issues that are crucial to the study project (ibid).

A semi-structured one-on-one interview is used to get a detailed picture of a participant's ideas regarding perceptions or accounts of a specific issue (Greeff, 2006:296). Semi-structured interviews are particularly useful when one is interested in the complexities or processes of a subject, or when the subject is contentious or personal. Semi-structured interviews are defined as direct conversation between the interviewer and the interviewees, with talks of interest about the topic under investigation (Creswell, 2014). Conducting semi-structured interviews has various advantages, including the capacity to examine what cannot be directly observed (i.e.,

individuals' intentions) and gaining access to an interviewee's perspective "with respect to understanding the significance of the described phenomena" (Kvale, 1996; Patton, 1990 in Garcia, 2016:48). As a result, the researcher had a list of questions she wanted to ask the foundation phase educators in this study. The semi-structured interview focused on factors impeding the acquisition of reading abilities, methods of teaching reading, how teachers promote reading, what strategies they use to stimulate reading in the foundation phase, and the resources available to help with the teaching of reading.

In this study, participants from two Western Cape Province schools assisted in identifying the challenges to reading skill acquisition. Capturing all data during interviews may be challenging, if not impossible. As a result, the researcher captured information to gather the information precisely, which is why I used a tape recorder. Teachers' permission was obtained to record their comments. The researcher relied exclusively on information acquired from participants and what was observed and interpreted to draw inferences based on the findings. Below I discuss the concept of observation.

4.6.3 Observations

According to Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011:376), observations are "a set of techniques that allows the researcher to observe and document the behaviours, actions, and interactions of participants in a systematic manner". Similarly, Creswell (2014) defines observation as gathering data through observing behaviour, supervising activities, or identifying physical characteristics in a natural setting, all of which offer the researcher open-ended first-hand information. The researcher simply listens to and observes what people say and do.

In qualitative research methodologies such as case study, ethnography, grounded theory, historical, and qualitative action research, observations are a common type of research approach. According to Sharan, Merriam, and Tidshell (2015:137), observations should be conducted in an environment where the phenomenon of interest naturally exist rather than in an interview location. Similarly, Yin (2014) argue that case studies are frequently conducted in their natural setting, with the researcher observing directly.

The Grade 1, 2, and 3 classrooms in both schools served as the natural setting for this study. Observation can be used to validate data collected from interviews (Silverman, 2013:41). According to Koshy (2010), information from observation provides the researcher with

additional information about the study under investigation. After conducting interviews with the selected teachers, I conducted classroom observation as the second phase of my data collection. I spent time in schools A and B observing the teachers' strategies for teaching reading and how they dealt with challenges. Six reading lessons were observed, three in school A and three in school B.

Before commencing the research, I designed a checklist to help me keep track of what I would observe in the classroom (See Appendix I). This is covered in chapter six when the research findings are discussed. The checklist proved to be a useful reminder of what to look for during the classroom observation. According to Yin (2014:117), participants' observations are pertinent for case study research. Observation may take the form of participant observation or non-participant observation. However, in this study, I was a non-participant observer because I was observing participants without actively participating in order to better comprehend the phenomenon, and I concentrated on reading lessons.

The research focused on a non-participant observation. Non-participant observation is merely viewing people's actions and behaviours without engaging in their activities (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013). Data is collected in the form of visual, spoken, or written language, and is then transcribed into texts (ibid). This means that the participants' ideas and thoughts are subsequently transcribed into written texts. The observation was aided by audio recordings that were later transcribed and interpreted by observer notes, and a checklist of metalanguage used in the classroom. To provide a comprehensive description, shared reading, group guided reading, paired reading, individual reading, gestures, postures, and time were all observed.

4.6.4 Teacher interview following a classroom observation

Although interviews can be classified using various criteria; they are most typically characterised by their degree of structure. Merriam (2009:89) classifies interviews into three types: highly structured, unstructured, and semi-structured. Because I was not attempting to compare data obtained across classes in this situation, a highly structured standardised interview method was not applicable for my research. While structured interviews provide for faster data processing, they are generally rigid and may limit the kind of responses a participant can provide (ibid). Rather, I employed a semi-structured, more open-ended interview style to acquire more personalised, distinctive, and nuanced information. In the semi-structured

interviews, questions were written in advance as a reference only, as I determined what specific words to use and in what order during the interview.

Following each observation, semi-structured interviews were held with the six teachers. Although standards for the interviews were created, these interviews were very informal (Interview schedules are included in Appendix H and J). Each interview lasted about thirty minutes. Teachers were asked to analyse and justify their teaching practices in the observed lesson in each interview.

4.7 Data Transcription

This research was conducted using a qualitative research approach, as I explained in Chapter four of this study. Miles and Huberman (1984:21) note that data reduction, data display, verification, and conclusion are used to analyse qualitative data. The researcher selects, simplifies, summarises, and interprets data from written field notes during data reduction (ibid). According to Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, and Redwood (2013:2) transcription is a written exact (word-for-word) account of a verbal interaction, such as an interview or conversation. Hence, Butler-Kisber (2018:45), points out that transcribing interviews aids the researcher in generating rich field text. This is in line with Swartz, De la Rey, Duncan, and Townsend (2008: 32), who state that researchers must transcribe the entire interviews rather than selecting what they believe is pertinent. The researcher transcribes all of the information gathered, categorise for themes, and reflecting on the data in order to analyse the data (Miles and Huberman (1984:21).

For each participant, I transcribed the entire interview by listening to the audiotape and writing word for word on the computer. I double-checked the transcriptions after I finished typing by reading them while listening to the audiotape. This took time because I had to do it several times to ensure that the data was captured accurately and completely in order to derive meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge, as well as place them in context with the research objectives and main research question. I created a three-column table for the transcription. The first column was for the interview questions, the second for school A teacher's responses, and the third column for school B teacher's responses. This helped me check if their perspectives were similar or contradicted each other.

For the observation data, I took field notes of the observations made on each lesson I observed, which helped me keep accurate information. This is in line with Butler-Kisber (2018:45) who states that it is ideal to transcribe observation data as soon as possible after the observations to avoid forgetting all of the details.

Swartz et al. (2008: 32), note that transcribed data collected should be segmented into meaningful units. I created themes from the data by categorising transcribed data into units of meaning. Hence, I was able to make sense of the data in relation to my research question, as stated in Chapter one. I focused on the teachers' perspectives on the interviews for this study and transcribed them word for word.

4.8 Sampling

Merriam (1998) defines sampling as the act, process, or technique of selecting a representative portion of a population to decide criteria or qualities of the total population. This entails identifying which people, contexts, events, and social processes will be employed in the study to select a sample that is representative of the target community (ibid).

4.8.1 Sampling Design

According to Mishra and Ashok (2017:8-9) the sampling design is divided into two basic categories: probability sampling (also known as random sampling) and non-probability design (also called purposive sampling) (ibid). Probability sampling is a technique in which the researcher selects samples from a wider population using a procedure based on probability theory (ibid). Non-probability sampling is a technique in which it is unknown which individual from the population will be chosen as a sample (ibid). The non-probability technique employs a subjective method of selecting units from the universe, and it is generally simple, quick, and cost-effective (ibid).

Purposive sampling, also known as decision, selective, or subjective sampling, was used in this investigation. Sampling is a strategy in which a researcher selects people to participate in a sample based on their personal preferences (Mishra & Alok, 2017: 9). Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which the “components considered for the sample are chosen based on the researcher’s discretion” (ibid).

4.8.2 Sampling population

A population is a collection of people who have a common attribute that the researcher is interested in (Hartas, 2010). Thus, Neuman (2011:241), defines population as “the abstract idea of a vast group of various cases from which a researcher chooses a sample and to which conclusions from a sample are generalised”. The respondents in this study can be divided into two groups: learners (who participated in the classroom observation) and teachers (who were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews).

4.8.3 Selection of participants

Given the preceding, the participants in this study were purposefully chosen from two schools based on their availability and desire to engage in the study. One educator from each of the two schools' grades, namely grades 1, 2, and 3, was chosen because they had extensive experience teaching reading to learners of English as First Additional Language (FAL) in the foundation phase. Thus, they were expected to provide profound insights on the issue. The six teachers had between 5 and 10 years of foundation phase teaching experience and were able to provide rich and relevant information about the learners' reading difficulties. The criteria for selecting individuals included availability, accessibility, and desire to engage in the study.

I opted to utilise one educator from each grade level to acquire detailed information and examine the instructional methods used by these teachers to teach reading. The other participants were grade 1, 2, and 3 learners from the two schools observed during the teaching and learning process.

4.9 Research approaches: inductive and deductive

The data collection procedure is guided by the research approach, which ensures that the criteria and strategies utilised result in the correct data organisation. According to Greener (2011), inductive research builds a framework from evidence, while deductive research tests a theory using quantitative data. When a researcher begins with a hypothesis and develops a research method to test it, they use a deductive approach; alternatively, when a researcher begins by collecting data to investigate a phenomenon and develops a hypothesis, they are using an inductive approach (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Inductive reasoning is concerned with effectively discovering patterns in enormous amounts of data, while deductive reasoning works from the more general to the more specific (Hair *et al.*, 2007).

Saunders et al. (2009) address the contrasts between the deductive and inductive approaches as follows: the deductive approach is well-structured, emphasising scientific concepts such as the researcher's independence from the subject of study and a concentration on collecting quantitative data from large samples to generalise the findings. The inductive approach, on the other hand, has a more flexible structure in which qualitative data is collected and the researcher is a part of the research process with less concern for generalising the conclusions, as well as a deep understanding of the research context and the meanings humans attach to events. For this study, however, the inductive approach was used. Below, I discuss the Research site.

4.10 Research Site

This study was conducted in two primary schools in South Africa's Western Cape Province. Both institutions were chosen for their accessibility, and they are both Government-owned schools, and are classified as quintile 3 schools.

To address the issue of socioeconomic status and educational disparities, the South African government has divided the country's public schools into five quintiles for the purpose of allocating financial resources (Dass & Rinquest, 2017; Graven, 2014 cited in White & Van Dyk 2019:1). The classification is based on a school's socioeconomic status, which is determined by average income, unemployment rates, and general literacy levels in the school's geographical area. Quintiles are used to establish cut-off points for a specific population (ibid). A quintile is one of five values that divide a set of data into five equal parts, each of which is one-fifth of the total (20 percent of the range). A quintile is a statistical data set value that represents 20% of a given population. As a result, the first quintile represents the lowest fifth of the data, the second the second fifth of the data, the third the third fifth of the data (average), the fourth the fourth fifth of the data, and the fifth the highest data value. In this study, quintiles are a factor used by the government for pro-poor targeting of per learner state funding to schools, which is determined by the socioeconomic status of the community surrounding the school (ibid).

Both schools are part of the same cluster and are overseen by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). They do, however, differ in terms of learner enrolment. At the time of this study, school A had 20 educators and 261 students, whereas school B had 36 educators and 1,430 students. School A is a special needs primary school in the Western Cape Province

that was well-known for teaching learners with difficulties learning in Afrikaans, English, and isiXhosa. In contrast, School B is popular and considered as one of the best primary schools serving the children of that settlement in the Western Cape Province based on academic success, socioeconomic, and cultural diversity.

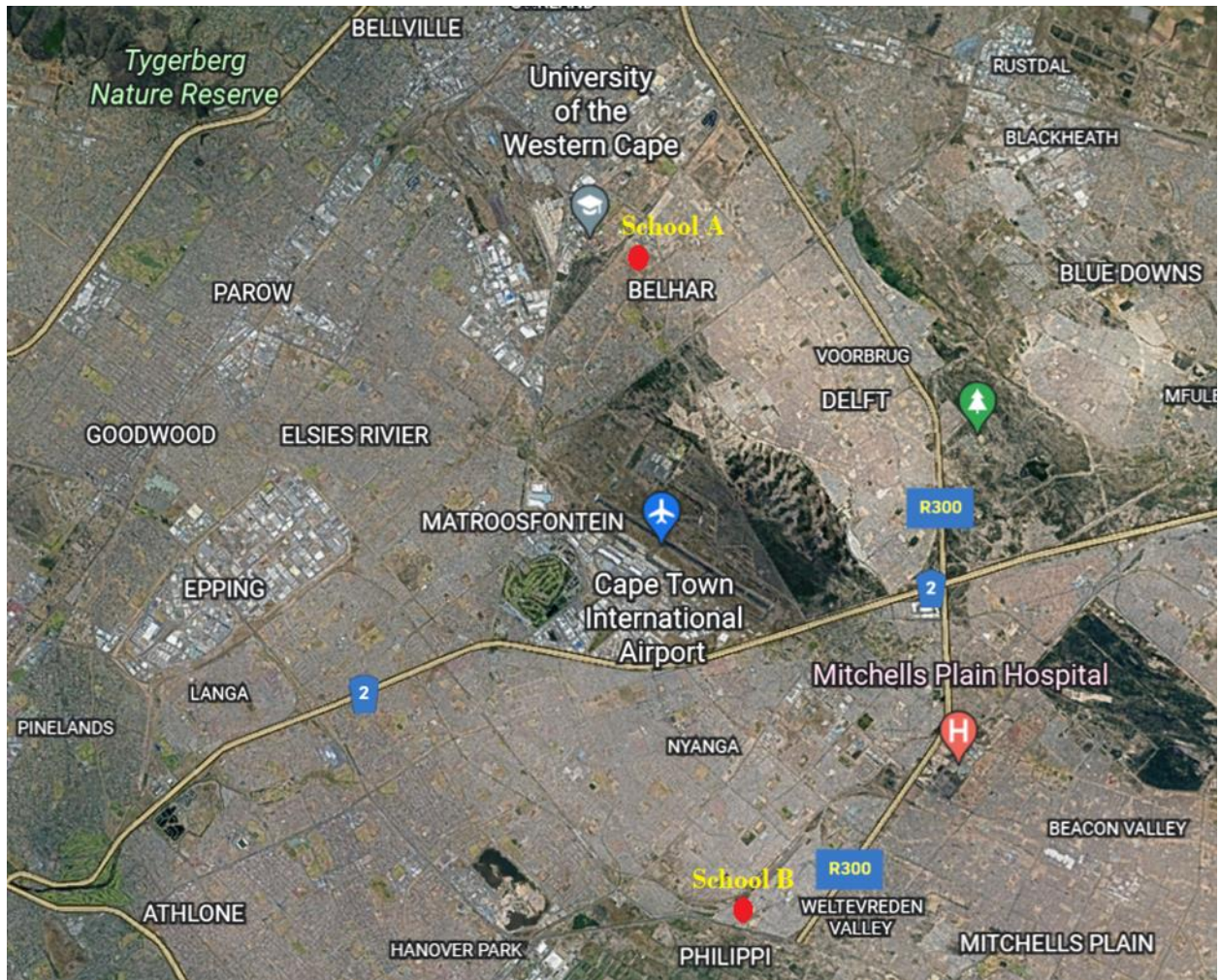


Figure 4.1: A map depicting the geographic location of the research site
Source: Google earth map.

4.11 Research Generalisability

The extent to which the obtained results apply to different scenarios and can be generalised to a large group is referred to as research generalisability (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The generalisability of a study's findings is determined by the validity and reliability of the instruments employed in the investigation.

This study focused on two schools in the Western Cape Province, so the findings are limited in their generalisability; however, given the similarities, problems, and learning environments among the schools in the Western Cape, the findings may be generalisable to other schools in the province. Recommendations will most likely benefit all foundation phase learners.

4.11.1 Validity and Reliability

According to Saunders and Lewis (2012:127), validity is “*the extent to which the data collecting method or procedures accurately measures what they were intended to measure, and the research findings are truly about what they purport to be about*” (emphasis added). Hair, Money, Samouel, and Page (2007) connect validity with the phrase accuracy; that is, a construct measure what it is designed to measure. However, as Nuan (2006) points out, there are two validity sorts: internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to the research’s interpretability, whereas external validity refers to the amount to which the results may be generalised.

On the other hand, there are some situations in which the validity of a research is negatively impacted, such as an event that alters participants’ perceptions, the impact of testing on participants’ viewpoints, the impact of changing a research tool at various stages, which affects the results, a lack of clarity, and the impact of a participant withdrawing from the study.

The term “reliability” refers to “*the extent to which data collection methods and analysis procedures will yield consistent results*” (emphasis added) (Saunders & Lewis, 2012:128). It is also the research’s consistency and replicability. Gray (2014:100) defines reliability as a measure of consistency that includes measurements of stability and equivalence. According to Nunan (2006), there are two types of reliability: internal reliability and external reliability. Internal reliability refers to the consistency with which data is collected, analysed, and interpreted. In contrast, external reliability refers to obtaining similar outcomes when other researchers replicate the study (ibid).

The reliability of this study was determined by verifying transcripts with the teachers. After transcribing the data, I showed it to the participants and asked for their feedback. Validity was assessed using various data collection approaches, including interviews and observation data. This was done to gain a thorough knowledge of teachers’ perceptions of reading challenges in Grades 1, 2, and 3 learners of English as a First Additional Language (FAL).

4.11.2 Validity and Reliability of Interviews

According to Cohen et al. (2011), some principles of validity in qualitative research are as follows: the primary source of data in a natural setting; the key instrument of the research (who is part of the researched world) rather than the research tool; data are descriptive, and context bounded; the focus is on processes rather than outcomes; data are analysed inductively and presented in terms of the response.

When the question context is focused on the study aims and the interviewer impact is avoided, the validity and reliability can be attained (Gary, 2014:102). Even when making suggestions or clarification, the respondent's response should not be influenced.

4.11.3 Trustworthiness and credibility

According to Nieuwenhuis (2011:113), trustworthiness is attained through testing, data analysis, findings, and conclusions. It entails participant or member checks, verifying and validating findings by providing participants with draft reports, controlling for bias, avoiding generalisation by seeking to understand from the participants' perspective, carefully selecting quotes, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, and stating the study's limitations upfront (ibid). However, Schurink et al. (2011:420) complement the preceding observation by presenting numerous tactics for boosting trustworthiness and credibility, including triangulation, which they describe as the utilisation of multiple sources of data to confirm, elaborate, or illuminate the study (ibid). The data acquired from the literature review, interviews, and classroom observations provide evidence of triangulation in this study. The data sources as mentioned earlier were employed to improve the study's utility (ibid).

4.12 Ethical Considerations

When researching in an academic or a professional setting, one needs to be aware of ethics behind the research activity (Blackwell 2013). According to Blackwell (2013), ethical considerations recommended by any organisation or institutional review boards are necessary for any research. Ethics are moral and legal requirements that allow individuals to voluntarily engage in or withdraw from research at any point (Tere, Blanche, & Durrheim, 1999:66). This research was designed following widely accepted philosophical principles concerning research ethics, namely: the principles of autonomy and respect for human dignity (voluntary and informed participation and rights to autonomy in research publication), non-maleficence

(inflicting no physical, emotional, social, or other harm), and beneficence (designing the research to be beneficial to the participants and/or the society) (ibid).

Prior to collecting data, I obtained permission from the University of the Western Cape's Ethical Code in Research, I obtained clearance from the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) of the University of the Western Cape (UWC), and the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) (Approval letters are included in Appendix B). Also, the Covid-19 regulations was also observed during the interview and observations (Covid-19 protocols is included in Appendix A).

The study process began with a meeting with both the school principal and deputy principal to explain the aim of the research, and permission was requested to conduct the study in Grades 1, 2, and 3 classrooms (See Appendix C). The deputy principal discussed this with the educators and sought their permission to participate in the study. I then met with the educators from Grades 1, 2, and 3 to discuss the aim of the research and answer concerns about the research procedure. Teachers were given written documentation about the research study to read at home before deciding to participate by signing declarations of informed consent. Participating learners' parents also signed written consent forms for their children to take part in a study entitled “reading challenges experienced by learners of the foundation phase”, and the aim of the research was carefully described to the learners (See Appendix D, E and F for information sheets for teachers and parents, informed consent forms for teachers and parents and assent forms for learners).

The methods were authorised by the School's Governing Body (SGB) after I notified them about my research. Despite the consent forms' anonymity, the school principal and educators involved had no objections to the school or individual teachers being recognised in this thesis. Nonetheless, because their names are not critical to the study, I have decided to use pseudonyms to refer to the school and the participating teachers. I further assured the participants that the information they provided would be utilised just for research reasons and would not be shared with any other researcher.

It will be noted, here, that in this section, I did not refer to the Protection of Personal Information Act (PoPIA), which is now a requirement of the UWC's Ethical considerations. When I applied for ethical clearance to the UWC and WCED, this was not a requirement at the

time. Even, then, in terms of archiving the material, I am going to comply with the PoPIA requirements.

4.13 Pilot study

According to Bernard (2013) and Saunders et al. (2009), a pilot study should be carried out before doing a bigger study. A pilot study is also referred to as a feasibility study by Kumar (2014). The pilot study must be conducted with people comparable to the target participants to check for poorly prepared items, ambiguity, or misunderstanding, as well as to fine-tune the interview schedule so that the participants have no difficulty answering the questions (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). However, Bryan and Bell (2007) suggest that “the purpose of piloting such instrument is not primarily to do with trying to guarantee that interview questions operate well, rather piloting also has a role in ensuring that the research instrument as a whole functions properly”. As a result, the researcher can identify flaws in their approach. A preliminary interview schedule was also prepared and given to colleagues to confirm that the phrasing and meanings of the questions are clear, as well as to identify the learners’ issues with reading acquisition.

4.14 Chapter Summary

The discussion on the research methodology determined that an inductive technique was the most suited because collected data is investigated in its phenomena. As a result, utilising a qualitative methodology was justified. There was a focus on interviews and classroom observations as data collection instruments because they were the tools used by the researcher to gather the data needed to answer the research questions and achieve the study’s objectives. The validity and reliability of interviews, the pilot study, trustworthiness, and credibility were all reviewed. The following chapter presents the data from interviews and classroom observations.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

5 Introduction

In this chapter, this researcher has performed two tasks in one chapter. The first task is data presentation. Data presentation is drawn from field work during which this researcher employed two research techniques in gathering data, namely semi-structured interviews, and non-participant observation. Data gathered will be presented in this chapter in that order, namely, interviews and observations. The researcher first observed the school's environment before the interviews were conducted and then the classroom observation of the teaching and learning processes. Also, a post observation interview was conducted with the teachers from both schools.

The second task in this chapter is the data analysis. Data analysis was exercised by employing this study's theoretical framework, namely, social constructivism.

According to Bryman and Bell (2007), data must be processed, analysed, and interpreted to be understood. Similarly, Bernard (2013:394) writes that "*analysis is the search for patterns in data and for concepts that help explain why those patterns are there in the first place*". Neuman (2011), on the other hand, illustrates some of the parallels between quantitative and qualitative data analysis: both infer from empirical facts to abstract notions; both employ a public procedure; both conduct comparisons; and both avoid errors and erroneous conclusions. The researcher used the theoretical framework as a tool of analysis.

To validate the findings of the semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, a teacher interview was conducted after the classroom observations to investigate the teachers' perspectives on the process of teaching and learning reading in the foundation phase. There was an assessment of the teachers' perspectives on their teaching of English as FAL, their perceptions of the teaching and learning environment, and their perspectives on some issues related to their roles in motivating students to read.

This chapter (data presentation and data analysis) is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the background context and observations of the two schools involved in the study.

The second section presents the biographical description of participants in the study. In order to present the data based on empirical findings from the study, the researcher holds the view that a brief background context and observations of the schools, and the biographic data of participants be given. The third section presents data from the six selected teachers and learners from the two schools chosen for the study through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and interviews after classroom observations, and lastly, the data presented will be analysed using the theoretical framework.

5.1 Section one: Background context and observation of the schools

In this section, the researcher presents the background context of the two schools and observations made. The two schools involved in the study were labelled school A and school B, and observations such as the school's characteristics, location/site, phases at the school, human resources, infrastructure, environment, transportation, daily routine at the school, learning and teaching support material (LTSM), academic support, extra-curricular activities, and national school nutrition programme (NSNP) made of the two schools are also presented. These will be discussed as outlined above.

5.2 School A

A brief background context and observation made of school A is discussed below.

5.2.1 The school

Established in 1952, School A is a special school for learners with intellectual disabilities who were unable to attend regular schools. School A provides severely intellectually impaired students who were excluded from mainstream school with specialised professional education. School A is a special need primary school in the Western Cape province with SID and ASD learners, and it is well known for teaching learners with difficulties in learning Afrikaans, English, and isiXhosa. School A is a public specialised quintile 3 school.

5.2.2 Location/Site

School A is situated in the city of Cape Town, Cape Town local municipality. It is based in the Metro North Education district in Western Cape province. The school is classified as an urban education institution by the Western Cape Education Department. The school is about 23.5 kilometres from the Western Cape Education Department head office.

5.2.3 Phases at the school

School A is a primary school comprising three phases, namely, the foundation phase which includes Grade R (also known as reception class) up to Grade three, the intermediate phase which comprises Grades four to six, and the senior Grade which comprises Grades four and five. The school also has a senior phase but an occupational group (also known as school learners).

5.2.4 Human Resources

School A has a principal, deputy principal, HODs, administrative assistant and non-academic staffs (cleaner, nurse, and dietician). The school also has an enrolment of 261 learners and 20 educators. The school management team comprising of five (5) members and a fully constituted school governing body (SGB) comprising of ten (10) members.

5.2.5 Infrastructure

The school has three blocks of a storey building with 21 classrooms. One of these classrooms is used as a library, and another as a computer laboratory. The school has an administrative block which is at the left entrance aside the other three blocks, and it consists of the principal's office, the deputy principal's office, administrative assistant's office, school nutrition program's office, and a conference room for staff meetings. The school also has a large hall where events are being held.

The buildings are well looked after, the classes are neatly kept with bulletin boards displayed on the walls, a chalk board, either a sink or a basin with water and a clean towel by the side of the classroom. The school's surrounding is neat, there is a playground for soccer, table tennis, net ball, and cricket. The school also has a school choir. The school has a palisade fence and an open area used as a car park close to the main entrance.

5.2.6 Environment

The school's environment is very quiet during lessons, thereby providing a conducive environment for teaching and learning to take place. The contact time for the foundation phase learners starts at 08H00 and ends at 13H00, and the intermediate phase, and senior grades starts at 08H00 and ends at 14H00.

5.2.7 Transportation

The school has nine (9) coaster buses. There are ninety learners who use private transportation to and from school, and the remaining one hundred and seventy-one learners use the school's buses to and from school. However, the ninety learners who use private transportation are on the school's waiting list.

5.2.8 Daily routine at the school

Teachers report at the school 15 minutes before the commencement of morning devotion which last for 20 minutes, and they sign the daily register. However, if a teacher fails to report at school at the appropriate time, s/he will sign the late coming register stating reasons for being late. Learners assemble in front of their blocks. They sing religious songs and choruses, followed by a scripture reading, motivational talk, prayer, and the national anthem after which they all march to their various classrooms and the teaching and learning ensues.

The language used for teaching and learning in the foundation phase is Afrikaans and English. However, majority of the learners are learning English as their first additional language (FAL).

5.2.9 Learning and teaching support material (LTSM)

School A has sufficient furniture's for both learners and teachers. The DBE textbooks and workbooks are seen in the classroom in the shelves provided. Teaching aids are observed on the walls and are labelled accordingly for different areas in the foundation phase. A library is available, but at the time of the study, the library was not in use due to the Covid-19 pandemic for safety of the learners. There are nineteen (19) computers, six (6) overhead projectors, and one (1) television in the school.

5.2.10 Academic support

The school has a government subsidy for academic support for learners. However, this subsidy is dependent on the number of learners in the school.

5.2.11 Extra-curricular activities

The school engages learners in extra-curricular activities such as soccer, cricket, netball, and table tennis. The school also has a functioning school choir. However, these extra-curricular activities have been on hold due to Covid-19 pandemic, but the school is hopeful that these activities will resume soon.

5.2.12 National school nutrition programme (NSNP)

The school has a working national school nutrition programme (NSNP) that serves learners daily with healthy and nutritious foods. The menu/diet plan must be consistent for all learners.

5.2.13 Summary: Background context and observation, school A

My observations revealed that in school A, discipline, safety, and security were a priority. The school's principal is a disciplinarian and hospitable, with teachers reporting to duty 15 minutes before the commencement of morning devotion and failure to do so result in signing the late coming register and stating reasons. Learners were encouraged to come to school early and assemble in a designated location for their morning devotion.

School A is well known for teaching learners with difficulties learning Afrikaans, English, and isiXhosa, with the school management team comprising of the principal, deputy principal, and head of departments (HODs). There were twenty educators in the school, twenty-one classrooms, with an enrolment of two hundred and sixty-one learners.

5.3 School B

The background context and observations made of school B is discussed below.

5.3.1 The school

Founded in 1998, but formally commissioned in 2011. School B is an urban/rural public primary school that falls under the quintile 3 schools, and it is not a section 21 school. School B is one of the ordinary schools in the Western Cape province that serves children of the community and the surrounding informal settlement.

5.3.2 Location/Site

School B is situated in the city of Cape Town, Cape Town local municipality. It is based in the Metro South Education district in Western Cape province. The school is classified as an urban/rural education institution by the Western Cape Education Department. The school is about 23 kilometres from the Western Cape Education Department head office.

5.3.3 Phases at the school

School B is a primary school comprising three phases, namely, the foundation phase which includes grade R (also known as reception class) up to grade three, the intermediate phase which comprises of grades four to six, and the senior grade which is grade seven.

5.3.4 Human Resources

School B has a principal, two deputy principals, five HODs, one administrative secretary, five administrative assistant and non-academic staffs (cleaners, nurse, and chefs). The school also has an enrolment of 1,430 learners and 36 educators. The school management team comprising of eight (8) members consisting of the principal, deputy principals and HODs, and a fully constituted school governing body (SGB) comprising of nine (9) members.

5.3.5 Infrastructure

The school has five blocks with 37 classrooms. The school has an administrative block which is at the left entrance of the school premises aside the other five blocks, and it consists of the principal's office, two deputy principal's office, administrative assistant's office, bookstore, sick bay, and a sport room. The school's library and nutrition program's offices are also at the left side of the school premises. There is a well-equipped computer laboratory. However, it was not functional at the time of this study.

The buildings are well looked after, the classes are neatly kept with bulletin boards displayed on the walls of the classrooms and the walkways, with quality chalk boards in the classrooms, and cupboards where all workbooks and textbooks are kept. The school's surrounding is neat and has a palisade fence and an open area used as car park close to the main gate and the administrative block.

5.3.6 Environment

The school's environment is very quiet during lessons, which makes it conducive for teaching and learning to take place. The contact time for the foundation phase learners, that is, grades R to 2, starts at 08H00 and ends at 12H.30, grades 3 starts at 08H00 and ends at 13H.30, while the intermediate, and senior grades (grades 4 to 7) start at 08H00 and ends at 14H.30.

5.3.7 Transportation

The school does not have school buses. Majority of the learners commute to and from school, while most of them use public transport to and from school.

5.3.8 Daily routine at the school

Teachers report to the school 15 minutes before the start of morning devotion which lasts for 15 minutes, and they sign the daily register. If a teacher fails to report at school at the appropriate time, s/he will sign the late coming register stating reasons. All learners assemble in front of their blocks for morning devotion. They sing religious songs, listen to scripture readings, and motivational talk, pray, and then sing the national anthem after which they all march to their classrooms and the teaching and learning commence.

The language used as a medium for teaching, learning and communication in the foundation phase is both isiXhosa and English. However, most of the learners are learning English as their FAL.

5.3.9 Learning and teaching support material (LTSM)

School B has sufficient furniture for both learners and teachers, but most of the classrooms are overcrowded. The DBE textbooks and workbooks are placed in the lockers provided in the classroom, but it is not sufficient for all learners. Teaching aids are observed on the walls and are labelled accordingly for all phases. A library is available and well equipped, but it is small and can only take less than twenty (20) learners at a time. There is a computer laboratory with twenty-five (25) computers, but it is not functional due to lack of internet connectivity. There are no televisions, or overhead projectors. However, the school has fifteen (15) radios used as teaching aid in the foundation phase.

5.3.10 Academic support

The school has no government subsidy for academic support of the learners.

5.3.11 Extra-curricular activities

The school engages learners in extra-curricular activities such as soccer, baseball, volleyball, netball, and chess game. However, the school does not have playground for these activities, hence learners are taken outside the school premises for practice.

5.3.12 National school nutrition programme (NSNP)

The school operates a feeding scheme for all learners- a mid-morning meal is cooked outside on a fire and distributed to children in their classrooms in buckets.

5.3.13 Summary: Background context and observation, school B

From my observations, in school B, discipline, staffs and learners' safety, and security were a priority. The school's principal is a disciplinarian and welcoming, with teachers reporting to duty 15 minutes prior to morning devotion and failure to do so resulting in signing the late coming register and stating reasons. Learners were encouraged to come to school early and assemble in the designated location for their morning devotion.

School B is an ordinary school known for accommodating learners from various parts of the city, with the school management team comprising of the principal, deputy principals, and head of departments (HODs). There were thirty-six educators in the school, thirty-seven classrooms, with an enrolment of one thousand four hundred and thirty learners.

5.4 Characteristics of the two schools in the study

Below is a table in comparison of the two schools involved in the study.

Table 5.1: Comparison of the two schools involved in the study

Characteristics, demographics, and governance	School A	School B
School characteristics	A special need school with Severe Intellectual Disability (SID) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) learners specialised in teaching learners with difficulties learning Afrikaans, English, and isiXhosa, classified as an urban quintile 3 school.	An ordinary school, classified as an urban/rural quintile 3 primary school.
Number of learners	261 learners.	1,430 learners.
Number of educators	20 educators.	36 educators.

School Management team	Principal, deputy principal, and three HODs.	Principal, two deputy principal, and five HODs.
Number of school governing body members	10 fully constituted members.	9 fully constituted members.
Number of phases at school	Three phases: Foundation phase (grades R to 3). Intermediate phase (grade 4 to 6). Senior grade (grade 4 and 5). Senior grade (occupational group).	Three phases: Foundation phase (grades R to 3). Intermediate phase (grades 4 to 6). Senior phase (grade 7).
Type and level of school	A quintile 3 public school with no school fees.	A quintile 3 school with no school fees.
Student representative body/council	None.	None.
Infrastructures		
Number of classrooms	21 classrooms.	37 classrooms.
School library	There is a library, but it has not been in use due to the Covid-19 pandemic.	There is a well-equipped library.
Administrative block	The school's administrative block consists of the principal's office, deputy principal's office, administrative assistant's office, national school nutrition programme office, and a conference room.	The school's administrative block consists of the principal's office, two deputy principal's office, administrative assistant's office, bookstore, sickbay, and a sports room.
Security/fencing	The school is well secured with palisade fencing.	School well secured with palisade fence.
Carport	No carport, but there is an open area for cars to be parked.	No carport, but there is an open area for cars to be parked.
Transportation	Easily accessible.	Not easily accessible.
Environment	Clean, tidy, and conducive for teaching and learning.	Clean, tidy, and conducive for teaching and learning.
Location/site	Urban area.	Urban/Rural area.
Resources		

Learning and teaching support material (LTSM)	All learners have access to the learner support materials (workbook and textbook) provided by DBE.	Not all learners have access to the learner support materials (workbook and textbook) provided by DBE.
Teaching and learning aids	Well equipped with teaching and learning aids such as stickers, pictures, key cards, and audio books.	Well equipped with teaching and learning aids such as stickers, pictures, newspapers, games, radios, and flesh cards.
Television	One television.	None.
Computers	19 computers.	25 computers.
Chalk board	Good quality chalk boards are installed in all classrooms.	Good quality chalk boards are installed in all classrooms.
School furniture	Sufficient for all learners.	Sufficient for all learners.
Radio	None was in sight.	15 radios.
Overhead projector	Six projectors.	None.
Learner support		
Extra-curricular activities	Soccer, net ball, table tennis, cricket, and school choir.	Soccer, baseball, volleyball, netball, and chess game.
Academic support	The school has government subsidy for learner's academic support. Special attention is given to SID and ASD learners.	There is no government subsidy for the learner's academic support.
National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP)	School nutrition programme is in full operation.	School nutrition programme is in full operation.

Source: Field Survey (2022).

The next section presents the biographical description of participants in this study.

5.5 Section two – Description of participants from semi-structured interviews

The previous section presented the background context and observations made of both schools involved in this study. This section presents the biographical data of participants from both school A and school B.

5.5.1 Introduction

The researcher found that it is imperative to gather information on the background and biography of the participants. This is because such information would determine the ability of the participants to offer rich and reliable information that will enable the researcher to establish the influence of their biographical data on the study under investigation.

5.5.2 Participants' biographies

The background areas of concern to the researcher included the following: the years of teaching experience, teaching experience in the foundation phase, grade presently teaching, age, number of learners in the class, qualification, and gender.

Ms. L is a 40-year-old female grade 1 educator that has been teaching for twenty-eight (28) years. She speaks English fluently, but her home language is Afrikaans. She has a cordial relationship with both learners, academic and non-academic staffs. She holds a B.Ed. in Special Education (SPED). She successfully maintains order in her class without shouting.

Mr. M is a 54-year-old male grade 2 educator whose home language is isiXhosa but speaks English Language fluently. He holds a B.Ed. in Special Education (SPED) and a master's degree in HIV/AIDS study, and he has been teaching for twenty-three (23) years. Mr. M is a quiet, gentle but a firm teacher and has a good relationship with his learners and colleagues.

Mr. K a 31-year-old male grade 3 educator whose home language is English and Afrikaans but speaks isiXhosa fluently. He holds a B.Ed. (Hons) in Sport Science, and he has been teaching for five (5) years. Mr. K has a very good relationship with learners and colleagues. He is also gentle and easy going and manages to keep his learners calm in the classroom without raising his voice.

Ms. V is a 50-year-old female grade 1 educator who has been teaching for twelve (12) years. However, this is her first-year teaching in grade 1. Ms. V speaks English language fluently, but her home language is isiXhosa. She holds an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) (Foundation Phase). She has an easy, almost motherly relationship with students, but often raises her voice to achieve discipline in her classroom.

Ms. M is a 34-year-old female grade 2 educator. She speaks English fluently; however her home language is isiXhosa. Ms. M has been teaching in the foundation phase for eight (8) years, but this is her first-year teaching grade 2 learners, and she holds a B.Ed. (Hons) in Foundation Phase management study. She appears to be a calm and dedicated teacher but finds it difficult to maintain a quiet atmosphere in the classroom, but she has a good relationship with both learners and colleagues.

Ms. D is a 35-year-old female grade 3 educator. She has a very cordial relationship with both learners and colleagues and can maintain quiet and orderliness in her classroom. Ms. D holds a B.Ed. in Foundation Phase Education. She is an isiXhosa-speaking person but speaks English language fluently. Ms. D has been teaching in the foundation phase for seven (7) years. The biographical data of these participants are summarised in the table below.

Table 5.2: Biographical data of participants (Educators interviewed)

Educators	Years of teaching experience	Grade presently teaching	Teaching experience in the foundation phase	Age across the age gap	No. of learners in class	Qualification	Gender
Ms. L	28 years	Grade 1	28 years	41-50	13	B.Ed. SPED	Female
Mr. M	23 years	Grade 2	20 years	51-60	13	B.Ed. SPED, and Master in HIV/AIDS study	Male
Mr. K	5 years	Grade 3	5 years	31-40	14	B.Ed. (Hons) Sport science	Male
Ms. V	12 years	Grade 1	12 years	41-50	38	ACE (FP)	Female
Ms. M	8 years	Grade 2	8 years	31-40	41	B.Ed. FP Mgt.	Female
Ms. D	7 years	Grade 3	7 years	31-40	40	B.Ed. FP	Female

Source: Field survey (2022).

The following section presents the data collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations from the two schools.

5.6 Section three – Data Presentation

The previous section has presented the biographic data of participants from both school A and school B. This section presents the data gathered by means of semi-structured interviews and classroom observations.

5.6.1 Introduction

In this section, an account of the interviews with the six selected teachers of the foundation phase and classroom observations from both schools is given. Firstly, I present the data from the interviews I conducted with the selected teachers of the foundation phase on the reading challenges experienced by grades 1, 2, and 3 learners of English as FAL, secondly, I present data from the lessons that I observed in grades 1, 2, and 3 classrooms and lastly, the data gathered from interview after classroom observations from both schools are presented.

The six participants from Grades 1, 2, and 3 from both schools whose practice forms the basis of this study are referred to as Ms. L, Mr. M, Mr. K, Ms. V, Ms. M, and Ms. D in this study. As a starting point, I present the data gathered by means of semi-structured interview.

5.6.2 Data from Interviews

In the previous chapter, it was mentioned that interviews are a part of qualitative research. Interviews served as a relevant approach for this study because it enabled me gather information about the challenges learners of English as FAL experience. I interviewed six Foundation Phase teachers, three from each school. I used semi-structured interviews, and an open-ended question was prepared.

This section therefore presents the teachers' perspectives on the reading challenges experienced by learners of the foundation phase and how they cope with these challenges. In chapter 4, I explained why interviews are used in qualitative research, and why they are appropriate for this study. To recap, interviews helped me to understand the teachers' views with regards to teaching reading to learners of English as FAL. The interviews also gave me the opportunity to obtain primary data from the participants, which included personal views, ideas and possible challenges encountered. I transcribed each interview word for word, and there was no need for translation because the language that was used for the interview was English Language. I conducted a semi-structured interviews at separate times each with the participants. The six

participants in this study, as stated earlier, are referred to as Ms. L, Mr. M, Mr. K, Ms. V, Ms. M, and Ms. D. First, I present the interview data from school A.

Data from Interviews

According to Coombes (2001:154), information that is recorded can be examined and replayed if at some point the information becomes confusing. In order to understand the teachers' perspectives on the reading challenges faced by foundation phase learners, it was necessary in this study to listen to the audiotaped interviews several times to present my data. After transcribing the recorded interviews, I concentrated on responses that answered my research questions. This section, therefore, presents the teachers' perspectives and understandings of the challenges that the foundation phase learners of English as FAL experience with regards to reading.

School A.

On the question of how their qualification is relevant for teaching in the foundation phase, the participants from school A had these to say:

Ms. L mentioned that her study is not basically on the foundation phase, but because the language used in the foundation phase in a special school is mostly the same used in the senior phase, and also applying her teaching experience over the years, she is able to teach the foundation phase learners.

Mr. M stated that his master's degree is not in education; however, it links with his first degree in special education. He noted that he oversaw HIV/AIDS program and taught life orientation. Hence, he said he can confidently teach foundation phase learners with these experiences because the school is a special school, and they also have learners who are affected with HIV/AIDS.

Mr. K said his qualification is not pertinent for teaching in the foundation phase, but because he is an English-speaking person, and can also speak isiXhosa fluently, he is able to teach in the foundation phase.

The above responses revealed that the participants from school A were not specifically trained for teaching in the Foundation phase of schooling. However, they rely on their ability to speak

English Language fluently or their teaching experiences over the years to teach learners of the foundation phase.

When asked about the size of their class, and if the class size affect the teaching of reading, the participants had these to say:

Ms. L said that her class size is thirteen (13) and that the class size does affect her teaching of reading because in a special school, one learner is equal to three (3) learners i.e., by this calculation she has thirty-nine (39) learners, and she must teach them according to their level or learning abilities, hence the class size is an issue.

Mr. M reported that he has thirteen (13) learners, and the class size does not affect his teaching of reading because the learners are few and it makes the teaching of reading easy for him, and the learners also learn to read easily.

Mr. K mentioned that he has fourteen (14) learners, and that the class size does not affect his teaching of reading because he has a lower number of learners compared to if he had 30 to 40 learners. So, he can get the content through to the learners because they are few.

The above responses indicate that class size can either affect the teaching of reading positively or negatively, and it is dependent on how the content is put across to the learners.

When asked how they teach reading, the participants had the following to say:

Ms. L stated that she teaches reading mostly in a practical way by using pictures and symbols. Mr. M mentioned that he teaches reading only with pictures because the learners cope and do better with picture reading.

Mr. K said that he teaches reading using key cards, word cards, and often read aloud to the learners. He further mentioned that he teaches reading according to their groups and abilities, and sometimes does shared reading by taking a group of six (6) learners and do reading with them, while at other times they read as a whole class.

The above responses shows that Ms. L, and Mr. K have almost similar ways of teaching reading using pictures, while Mr. K employs various methods in order to put the content through to learners.

When asked if their method of teaching reading affects the learner's reading ability, the participants had the following to say:

Ms. L indicated that her method of teaching affects her learners positively because she does practical reading with them most of the time, and she does not rely solely on pictures because most children are now more focused on the media, so she tries to introduce them to something new.

Mr. M revealed that his method of teaching reading has a positive effect on the learners because most of the learners are intellectually disabled, so the use of pictures and the symbiotic method of putting them together enables them to grasp the content and help them understand better when they read.

Mr. K indicated that his methods of teaching reading to the learners have a positive effect on them because he tries not to use just one method, but uses various teaching methods such as pictures, key cards, word cards, doing shared reading and reading aloud together as a whole class to accommodate all learners.

From the above responses, pictures, word cards, key cards, symbol, and practical teaching are effective when teaching reading because the images from the pictures, key cards, and word cards draw their attention and enhances the learners' imagination. It is evident that the various methods employed by the teachers for the teaching of reading in the foundation phase has positive effects on their learners.

On the question of how reading is being promoted in the school, the following responses were given by the participants:

Ms. L responded by saying that reading is mostly promoted in a practical way, and they are always reminded that whatever subject one teaches, reading must be incorporated.

Mr. M stated that they are encouraged as teachers to always give learners a total reading, reading that will be on their level because learners are of different levels when it comes to understanding concepts.

Mr. K reported that they are encouraged as teachers and learners to always use the library, posters, key cards, pictures, and lots of signage to promote reading in their classrooms and school.

The above reflections indicate that reading is being promoted in the school. However, Mr. K pointed out that the school library has not been in use since the era of Covid-19 this means that learners have not been allowed access to the library since 2020 till date.

When asked what challenges they experience when teaching reading to FAL learners, the following responses were given by the participants:

Ms. L mentioned that the major challenge she experiences is in the learners' home language because after teaching these learners to read in English language at school, they go back home to parents, friends and family members who only speak either isiXhosa, Afrikaans, isiZulu etc because there is no one to reinforce what was taught at school to the learners and this is quite challenging to her.

Mr. M stated that it is difficult to teach reading to these learners in English language because of their home language. He further noted that most learners tend to forget what was taught, this being because when he is teaching a learner and moves to the second and third learner and so on, by the time he goes back to learner one, s/he would have forgotten all that was said and that is the reason he relies mostly on symbols and pictures so that they can relate and remember what was taught.

Mr. K noted that the learners were unable to identify words when being taught how to read, and most of them were not able to write or identify their names. Also, their home language is a challenge when learning to read in English. However, he mentioned that the main challenge he encountered was the physical disability associated with the actual reading.

The above responses revealed that the major challenge experienced by all three teachers when teaching reading to learners of English as FAL was their home language. However, Mr. M also noted that forgetfulness was also a challenge on the part of the learners, while Mr. K noted that another challenge on the part of the learners was word recognition that is, they were unable to identify or recognise words.

On the question of what resources are available to facilitate the teaching of reading, the participants gave the following responses:

Ms. L stated that DBE books are provided for learners, and there is also a library and computer laboratory to facilitate the teaching of reading. However, they are not in use due to the Covid-19 outbreak in 2020.

Mr. M indicated that the DBE books are provided for learners, and that sometimes he downloads book from online to facilitate the teaching of reading.

Mr. K mentioned that the resources available for the facilitation of reading is the library which had not been used due to the Covid-19 plague in 2020, but he, however, makes posters, key cards, word cards, pictures, and signage.

From the responses above, aside the DBE books there are not a lot of resources to facilitate the teaching of reading in the school. Educators have to improvise or source for resources to assist them in the teaching of reading.

When asked if the home languages of learners affect the teaching of reading in English and the reading abilities of learners of English as FAL, the following responses were given by the participants:

Ms. L responded by saying that the home language of learners does affect their reading abilities because they code switch during reading exercises, and she sometimes code switched for them to understand and then they can read, and this hinders them from reading effectively in English language.

Mr. M stated that the learners' home language affects their reading abilities especially when reading in English language because I have to code switch for them to get a better understanding of the content.

Mr. K mentioned that the home language of learners affects their reading abilities when reading in English language, and it is challenging for him. He further, noted that since the rise of Covid-19 in 2020, FAL has been removed from the school's curriculum and they have been focused only on home languages.

It is evident from the above responses that learners' home language does affect their reading abilities especially when reading in English and this is challenging for both the teacher and the learners.

When asked if parents support their children in reading, the participants gave the following responses:

Ms. L noted that parents do not support their children in reading because when they are given homework to do or study at home, they come back to school without doing the work or studying, and they do not reinforce what they were taught in school at home or practice reading at home, so it becomes a habit to these learners.

Mr. M said that parents of his learners do assist the learners when given homework and reading exercise to do at home and they sometimes leave comments for him as the teacher in their workbook.

Mr. K also said that parents do assist the learners with their homework and reading exercise at home and they do write comments to him stating the shortfalls of the learners.

The above responses indicate that not all parents are involved or interested in their children's schoolwork. However, some parents are fully involved in the growth and learning process of their learner.

On the question of how they cope with learners of English as First Additional Language (FAL), the following responses were given by the participants:

Ms. L mentioned that it is quite challenging to cope with learners of FAL as she tries to learn the basics of the major languages used for communication in the school because learners of English as FAL communicate most times in their home language. She further stated that she puts up signs and word cards at the back of the classroom in both English, Afrikaans, and isiXhosa. So, this also assist the learners.

Mr. M responded by saying that it is easy for him because most of his learners understand some words in English, however they are unable to read or spell in English, so he puts up words both in English, Afrikaans, and isiXhosa which assist them in reading.

Mr. K reported that he copes well with the learners because he is an English-speaking person, and he is able to translate words from isiXhosa and Afrikaans to English for better understanding of the learners.

5.6.3 Summary: Interview data, school A

The above responses indicate that learning to read in English language is quite challenging for the learners because of their home language. However, the teachers are able to cope because they understand the learners' home language and are able to translate words from their home languages to English language to them for better understanding.

School B.

In school B, same questions that were asked in school A were also asked and responses given by the participants are presented below.

Also, on the question of how their qualification is relevant for teaching in the foundation phase, participants from school B had these to say:

Ms. V mentioned that she is specifically trained to teach in the foundation phase, thereby making her qualification relevant for teaching in the foundation phase.

Ms. M responded by saying that her qualification was relevant for teaching in the foundation phase because she has been trained to teach foundation phase learners.

Ms. D reported that she was specifically trained to teach in the foundation phase of schooling.

It is evident from the above responses that educators from school B are trained specifically to teach learners of the foundation phase.

When asked about their class size, and if their class size affects the teaching of reading, the participants had these to say:

Ms. V responded by saying that her class size is thirty-eight (38) and it does affect her teaching of reading negatively because while being busy with one group, the other groups are busy distracting the entire class.

Ms. M mentioned that she has forty-one (41) learners in her class and the large class size does affect her teaching of reading negatively. She further stated that because she has a large class size, the learners are divided into groups and while she is busy with one group, the other groups are busy disturbing the class.

Ms. D stated that she has forty (40) learners and yes it does affect her teaching of reading negatively because it is quite difficult for her to control the class especially when she has to teach them based on their abilities. She further noted that sometimes when she is busy teaching group A, group B and C are busy making noise and distracting others.

The responses above indicate that all three teachers are faced with the issue of large class size which makes the teaching of reading ineffective and unproductive.

When asked how they teach reading, the participants had the following to say:

Ms. V responded by saying that she uses pictures and flash cards. She further noted that she matches flash cards and pictures to enable learners have a better understanding of the content being taught, and then do practical with learners by doing cutting and pasting.

Ms. M said that she uses pictures, flash cards, and cutting and pasting to teach reading. She also stated that she does shared reading, group reading, paired reading, and one-on-one methods to teach reading.

Ms. D mentioned that she teaches reading according to their groups and abilities, and she sometimes does shared reading with them by taking ten (10) learners and do reading with them, other times they read as a whole class, and she often reads aloud for them to follow along.

From the above responses, it is revealed that the educators use various approaches in the teaching of reading and their methods are almost similar.

When asked if their method of teaching reading affects the learners' reading ability, the participants had the following to say:

Ms. V said her method of teaching sometimes affect learners positively and at other times negatively even though she tries to apply the shared reading, group guided reading, paired reading, and reading aloud approaches. This is because those learners that did Grade R do better compared to learners that have not done Grade R. So, most learners that have not done Grade R struggle to read and this is really a challenge.

Ms. M stated that her method of teaching reading affects her learners positively because she employs various methods for teaching reading like the hared reading, group-guided reading, paired reading, and reading aloud, and she also tries to make reading fun for the learners.

Ms. D mentioned that her method of teaching reading does have a positive effect on her learners because she is an avid learner, so she tries to make reading fun for them and instil in them a good reading habit, so now they enjoy reading in English language.

From the above responses, the educators' methods of teaching reading to these learners have a positive effect on them. However, Ms. V pointed that most learners who did not do Grade R makes her method of teaching reading ineffective for her.

On the question of how reading is being promoted in the school, the following response were given by the participants:

Ms. V stated that learning is promoted because learners are being engaged in the “drop all and read” campaign as directed by CAPS, the use of library, provision of flash cards, pictures, print materials, and charts. These are all means of promoting reading in the school.

Ms. M also affirmed that reading is being promoted by encouraging the learners to participate in the “drop all and read” campaign as directed by CAPS and the use of library.

Ms. D mentioned that charts are available to promote reading. There are weeks assigned for reading as directed by CAPS, and the Nal’ibali program provides the school with newspapers to promote reading.

The responses provided by the educators above indicate that reading is being promoted in the school and learners are encouraged to read and develop their reading skills.

When asked what challenges they experience when teaching reading to FAL learners, the following responses were given by the participants:

Ms. V mentioned that most learners in Grade 1 have not done Grade R and it affects the teaching of reading. Also, the learners’ home language is one of the challenges experienced because they speak either isiXhosa, isiZulu, or Afrikaans at home with no assistance to reinforce what has been taught in English to the learners at home. In addition to parents that are illiterate, and they are easily distracted. Code switching is also a challenge when teaching reading to FAL learners because I have to code switch for them to understand the concept better.

Ms. M responded by saying that there are a few challenges when teaching reading to FAL learners. Ms. M stated that learners code switch when reading in English especially when doing alphabets, hence she has to code switch as well to remind them each time and show them the picture in addition to the flash card this however helps them read. For example, they pronounce the word “stone” as “amalitye” rather than “ilitye”. She further mentioned that most of the learners have not done Grade R, yet they are in Grade 2, and they do not know how to hold a pencil, write their names, how to read or even copy from the board. Lastly, when teaching one group, the other groups are busy playing and making noise, yet the DoE in 2020/2021 said that schools should follow the new rules of “pass one, pass all” and this a challenge because most learners are not prepared to move to the next grade.

Ms. D mentioned that most learners do not understand isiXhosa which is their home language and to be able to read in English language, one should be able to understand the home language and then translate it to English for better understanding. Because of these challenges

experienced by learners, she must show them pictures, and then use flash cards, then break words into syllables before making simple sentences which is quite challenging for both the learners and the teacher.

On the question of what resources are available to facilitate the teaching of reading, the participants gave the following responses:

Ms. V mentioned that aside the library, there are DBE books although they are not sufficient for all learners.

Ms. M mentioned that there is a library. However, it is small, though well equipped. She further noted that aside the library, there are DBE books but insufficient for learners. Flash cards, charts and billboards are available to facilitate the teaching of reading.

Ms. D stated that there are English readers, library, games, and DBE books. However, the DBE books are not sufficient for all learners.

From the responses above, it is evident that there are available resources to aid the teaching of reading. However, all three teachers from school B mentioned that the DBE books provided by the Department of Basic Education are insufficient for learners which is also a challenge when teaching reading.

When asked if the home languages of learners affect the teaching of reading in English and the reading abilities of learners of English as FAL, the following responses were given by the participants:

Ms. V mentioned that the home language of learners affects the teaching of reading in English and the learners' reading abilities as well because they speak for example isiXhosa at home and learning how to read in English language is a challenge for them so she always code switch.

Ms. M said that the home language of learners affects the teaching of reading in English because she has to correct them by speaking isiXhosa when teaching them to read in English: "So, when I teach reading in English, I have to code switch for them to understand".

Ms. D responded thus, when teaching learners to read, she has to code switch when they do not understand what to say or do. She further stated that because they do English every day, they have become used to it, so when it is time for English lessons, she only speaks English because it is not proper for her to speak isiXhosa in an English class: “If I keep code switching, they will not learn or know English”. However, their home language does affect the teaching of reading in English language, but most of the learners enjoy reading in English language.

It is evident from the responses above that the home language of learners does affect the teaching of reading in English language and this is a challenge to all three teachers and learners.

When asked if parents support their children in reading, the participants gave the following responses:

Ms. V responded by saying that parents do not support or encourage their children because most of the parents are either illiterate, working and returning home late at night. She further said that although messages are sent across to inform them of the homework and how to assist these learners, they still do not assist them.

Ms. M indicated that 20% of parents assist but 80% of parents do not assist. She said that the “majority of the parents whose children need assistance do not ask me as a teacher what they can do to improve their child’s reading ability even if I send them messages”, they are not concerned about whether the child is struggling or not. Most of the parents do not know how to do the homework given to the learners because they are illiterate. The parents are not supportive of their children when it comes to reading.

Ms. D responded by saying that 30% of parents do assist their children with reading while majority of them do not. She said and I quote “I gave them a passage to study at home, and you see it is obvious they did not study it hence they are struggling to read it now”. This proves that parents do not assist them even after sending them private messages and sending messages in the class chat group with instructions on what to do. Some of these parents return very late from work and do not have the time to assist while others are illiterate.

From the above responses, most of the parents do not have time to support their children either because they are illiterate, return late from work and are unable to assist with their homework while some of them are just not concerned about their children's struggle at school.

On the question of how they cope with learners of English as First Additional Language (FAL), the following responses were given by the participants:

Ms. V mentioned that it is difficult for her to cope because they always code switch while reading, and in addition, most of the learners did not do Grade R before coming to Grade 1, so she tries to group them according to their abilities and give them the necessary assistance while trying to make reading fun for them.

Ms. M said that because they are unable to read, spell, and blend words. So, when she teaches spelling, she starts with blending words, then move on to reding, and then to writing. She further stated that she works with them in groups according to their abilities as most of them did not do Grade R as well, so it is quite challenging.

Ms. D said that some learners cannot read in English, so she groups them according to their abilities and give them books to read according to their level and she tried to make reading fun for them because she loves reading. She further noted that she used games, flash cards and pictures for learners of FAL and they cope well with those.

5.6.4 Summary: Interview data, school B

It is quite challenging for all three teachers to cope with learners of English as FAL as seen from the above responses. However, these learners are grouped by their teachers according to their abilities and level in order to make reading fun for learners of English as FAL. I present the observation data below.

5.7 Data from Classroom Observations

According to McNiff (1988), "when a researcher observes, s/he has the opportunity to take notes about action and reactions that are important in constructing the study". As stated in chapter 4, I was a non-participant observer. In this case, a non-participant observer entailed observing all reading lessons in Grades 1, 2, and 3 classrooms without taking active part in the

situation or topic under study. At the time of this observation, it was the first term of school resumption. Lessons were observed during the second period before mid-morning break and first period after mid-day break as stated in the timetable because the first periods were for numeracy lessons.

School A

Reading Lessons

In Ms. L Grade one class, all 13 learners were seated on their separate chairs with a desk attached to it. Ms. L started her lesson by revising the previous lesson and then introduced the topic for the day. She then pasted a picture on the chalkboard and asked questions on the pictures this was to check learners' prior knowledge. Some of the learners were able to identify the pictures but had difficulty reading them in English language. Ms. L read aloud and pointing to the words and the picture/symbols representing the word while the learners listened. After a while, Ms. L asked learners to read along while she led the whole class, and all learners were involved. The teacher read the words and learners read after her. Learners were also asked to read individually, but this was challenging for some of them. After some minutes of reading and learning of words and identification of symbols, the teacher handed out worksheets to all learners and learners were asked to identify the symbols on their worksheet while listening to the sounds as the teacher pronounced the words.

After the practical identification of words by learners, at the end of the lesson, learners were asked to read the words, and circle the picture/symbol that matches the word.

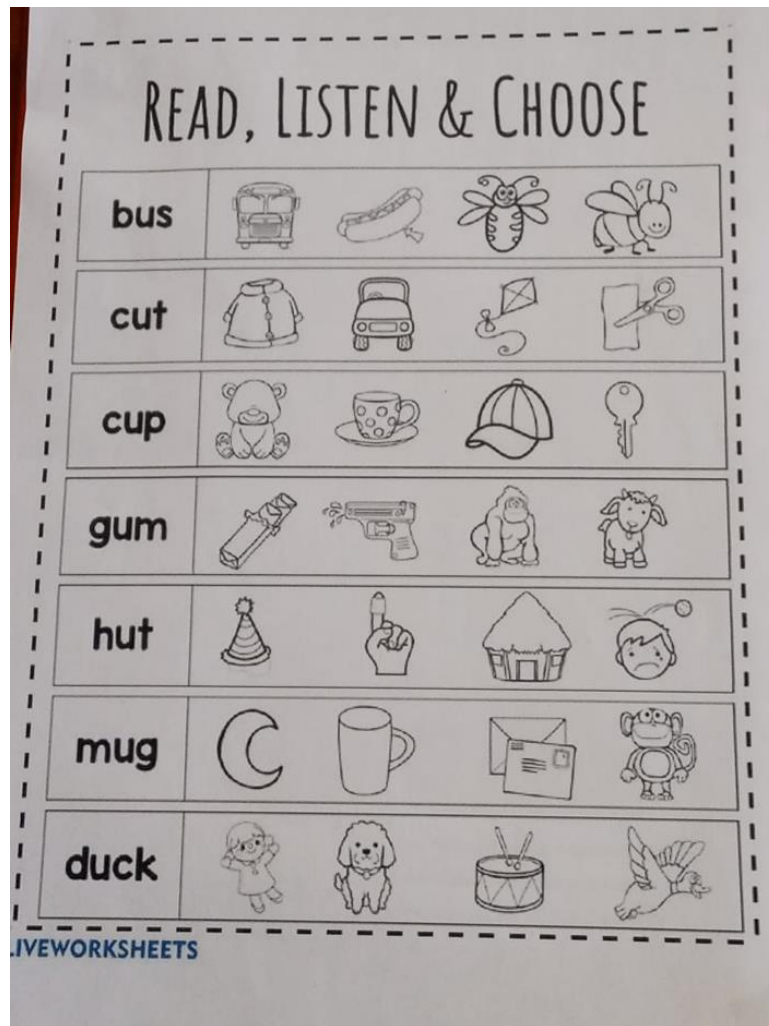


Figure 5.1: A picture of classroom activity for reading lesson in Grade one class (Read, Listen, and Choose).

I observed that, even when they read along and pictures were pointed at, some learners were struggling to read, and it was quite difficult for most of the learners to identify the pictures/symbols. Also, I observed that the teacher had to code switch in isiXhosa even while teaching reading in English language because the learners had difficulty understanding English language, hence code switching helped the learners understand better what was being read and how to do the activity given by the teacher. However, the teacher was observed moving around to help struggling learners by assisting and telling them what they should do. I noticed that while the learners worked individually trying to identify the pictures/symbols and circle them in their worksheet, some of them were struggling to identify the right picture to circle, and a few of them knew what they were asked to do. It was also observed that the teacher was there as a model to guide the struggling learners in completing their task.

The above lesson showed that the question-and-answer method was used to test learner's prior knowledge, and the shared reading and independent reading strategies were used to teach reading, while the class activity was done independently.

Reading Lessons

In Grade two class, Mr. M had 13 learners all seated on their chair with a desk attached to it. Mr. M started the lesson by pasting a picture on the chalkboard and then introduces the topic of the day. He started off by asking learners to identify parts of their body as he mentioned them both in English and Afrikaans even though it was an English reading lesson and they all participated actively by reading aloud. I observed that while he was mentioning the body parts in English language, he also mentioned them in Afrikaans to help learners gain a better understanding of the topic. The teacher then points to the words next to the picture and read out the words while showing them on his body and asked them to touch the parts of their body as well. All learners were actively involved in the reading lesson.

Learners were paired and asked one after another to identify various parts of the body in the picture that was pasted on the chalkboard, read the parts, and identify the part on their body and also on their partners. I observed that even with the pictures, it was still a struggle for some learners because it was challenging to say it in English language, but when the teacher codeswitched and explained in isiXhosa and Afrikaans it was easier for them to respond in Afrikaans while a few of the learners were able to identify words but reading in English was difficult, and they also forget easily and needed to be reminded before they could continue. From my observations in Grade two class, it was evident that the learners enjoyed reading in Afrikaans to English language.

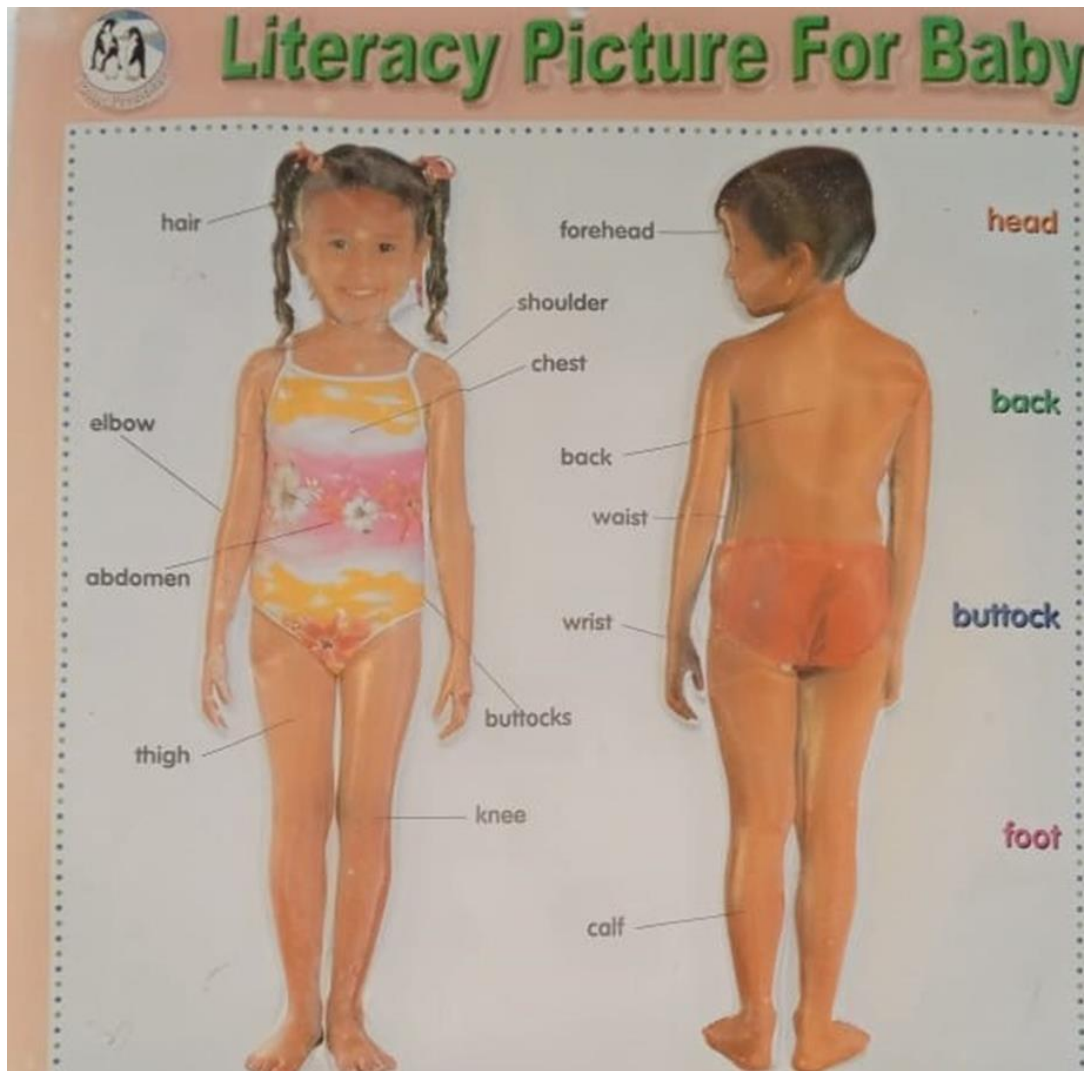


Figure 5.2: A picture for the reading lesson in Grade two class (Parts of the human body).

At the end of the lesson, the learners were asked to write the words (names of the body parts labelled in figure 2 above in the correct spaces in figure 3 below). This was done independently with the teacher guiding struggling learners in their activity with the picture still on the chalkboard. (See picture of classroom activity below).

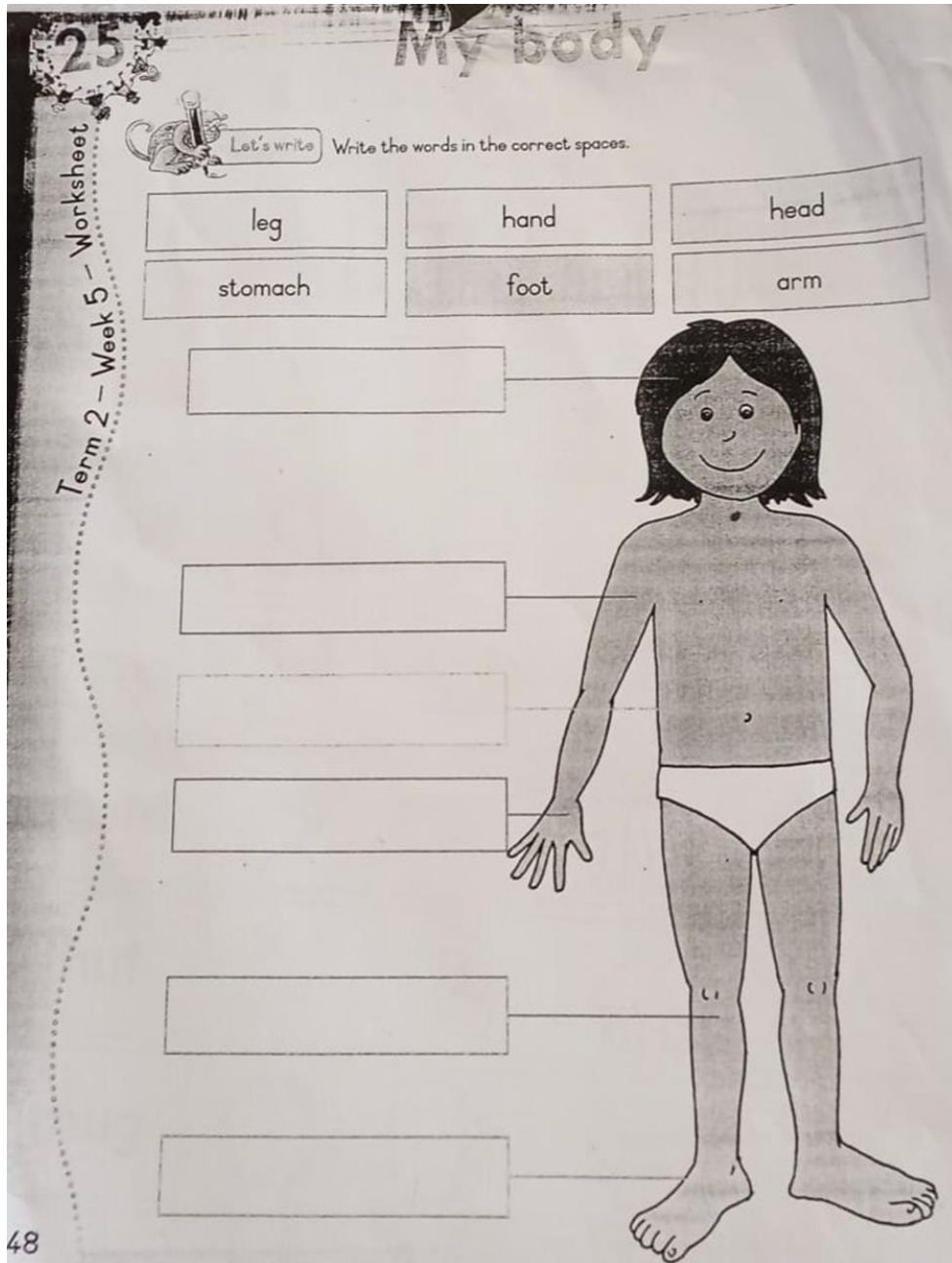


Figure 5.3: Picture of classroom activity for Grade two class.

The above lesson shows that the teacher used the question-and-answer method, and this was done to test the learner's previous knowledge of the topic, the shared reading and group guided reading strategies was utilised by the teacher to teach reading.

Reading Lessons

Mr. K had 14 learners in his class, each learner had a chair and a desk to themselves with their name written on it. Mr. K started the lesson by writing a comprehension passage on the chalkboard and then introduced the topic. He started off by reading aloud to the learners and

then asked learners to repeat after him. It was observed that during the teaching of reading, most learners were not involved in the activity while some were already asleep. The teacher then asked the learners to take note of few new words because he would ask them at the end of the lesson. I also observed that the Grade three learners were able to read as a whole class with the teacher leading and only a few of them were able to read independently when asked to, however most of them tend to forget easily this is because when they were asked the new words mentioned earlier by the teacher, most of the learners could not remember.

Learners were then asked to write the comprehension passage on the chalkboard into their notes, and this was also a challenge to some learners. This is because I observed that some of them could not write properly although they were in Grade 3.

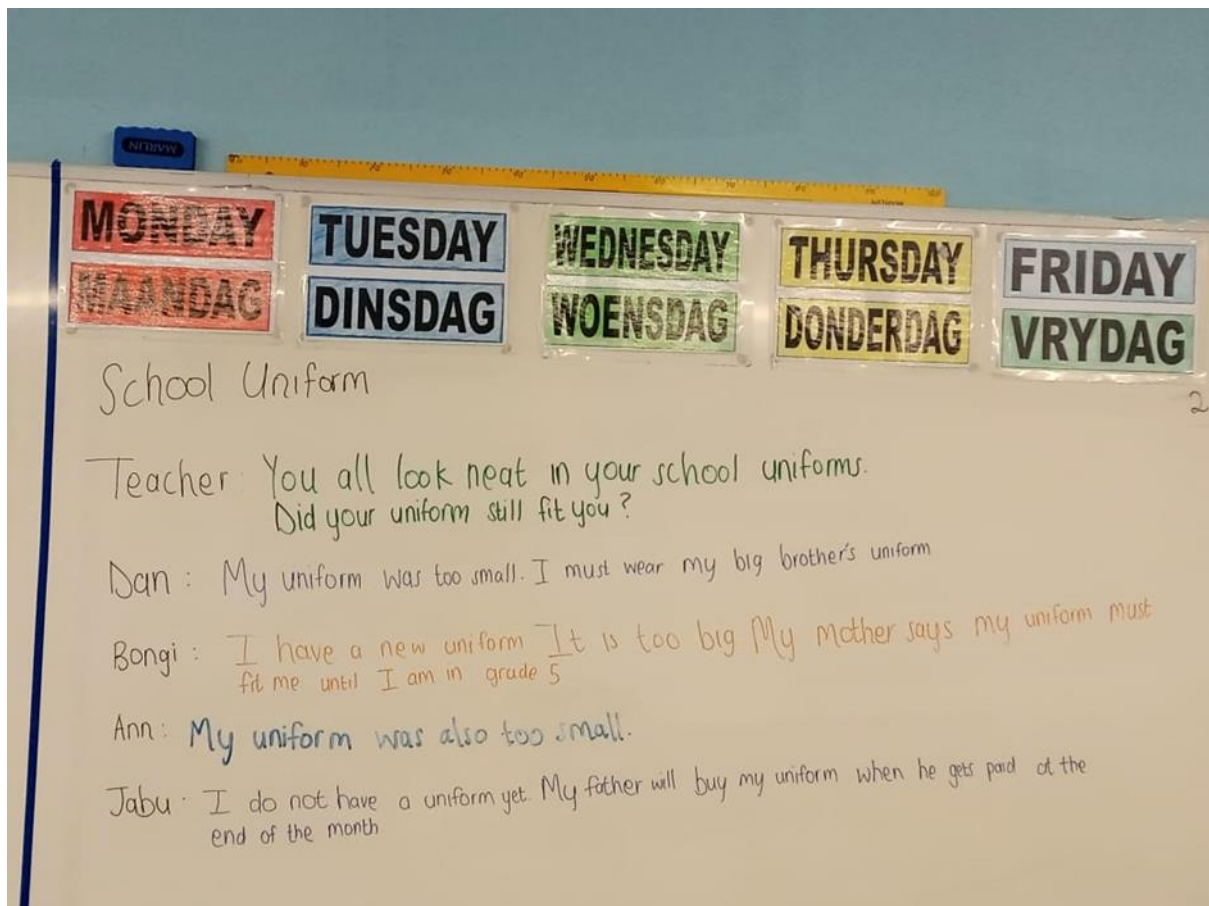


Figure 5.4: Picture of Comprehension passage on the chalkboard for Grade three class.

Learners were asked to go to the chalkboard and identify new words and read sentences. It was observed that the majority of the learners were able to read and identify new words while it was challenging for a few of them, they could neither read nor identify words on the

chalkboard. Even when asked to write the comprehension into their note, it was challenging for some of them as they were unable to write.

The above lessons reveal that one of the strategies for effective learning which is FISH that explains how new words are decoded by readers as they read was used. Also, shared reading approach was used by the teacher to teach reading.

5.7.1 Summary: Observation data, school A.

In school A, all observations were done during the second period as stated in the school timetable because the first periods were set aside for numeracy lessons. It was observed that the teachers used similar methods in teaching reading, that is shared reading, independent reading, group guided reading and the question-and-answer methods. They also model to their learners how to read. All teachers gave classroom activities at the end of the reading lessons, and this was done to check their understanding of what was taught.

School B

Reading lesson

After the mid-morning break, the 38 learners in grade one returned to the class with noise all over the classroom. All learners had a desk and a chair. Ms. V managed to keep the class calm and asked the learners to stand up and started a rhyme led by her “If you are happy and you know, clap your hands” while the learners sang along. By the end of the recitation, the teacher was able to arouse learners’ interest by getting them prepared for the reading lesson. The teacher then asked one of the learners to get the textbooks and workbooks and hand it to the various owners, and for those who did not have, the teacher provided for them. The DBE books for English as FAL were used in the teaching and learning of reading. The DBE book used by the teachers to teach reading was good because it was relevant for Grade one learners especially those learning English as FAL, and each page had a picture and a sentence.

The teacher started the lesson by asking them to turn to a particular page in the textbook. However, this was a struggle for most learners. I noticed that some learners who had already opened the page as instructed by the teacher also assisted the teacher in helping those who were struggling with the pages. The teacher then asked questions based on their previous lesson, and answers were given though not all answers were correct. The teacher then introduced the topic and asked learners to identify the things found in the picture. However, most of them found it

difficult to identify the pictures while some of the learners who were able to identify them were unable to read the words in English language, but they were able to read the words in isiXhosa. I observed that the learners were eager to learn these words in English language even if it was challenging for most of them.

The teacher then read the words out while the learners read along. I observed that while others read along, some of the learners were distracted and others were not concerned about what was going on in the class, as the teachers was unable to spot these ones to ask what the issue was, because she could not attend to all learners individually due to the large class size.

While reading, the teacher showed them what she was referring to by doing practical on herself for better understanding. Nevertheless, it was still challenging for some learners because they could not understand the English language properly, so she had to code switch for the learners to be able to comprehend better.

The teacher continued by asking them to identify pictures in the text as she read the words in English. This was a challenge still to some learners as they could only understand what was said if she code switched for them thereby helping them to identify the pictures. The teacher went further to ask questions regarding the text and most of the learners were able to provide answers. The teacher applied the Reward for Reading Strategy (RRS) by motivating the learners who participated actively in the lesson with some form of incentives, and this encouraged other learners to want to participate actively in class activities.



Figure 5.5: A picture for reading lesson Grade one class.

At the end of the lesson, the teacher asked learners to mention some of the items found in the bathroom, and responses were given.

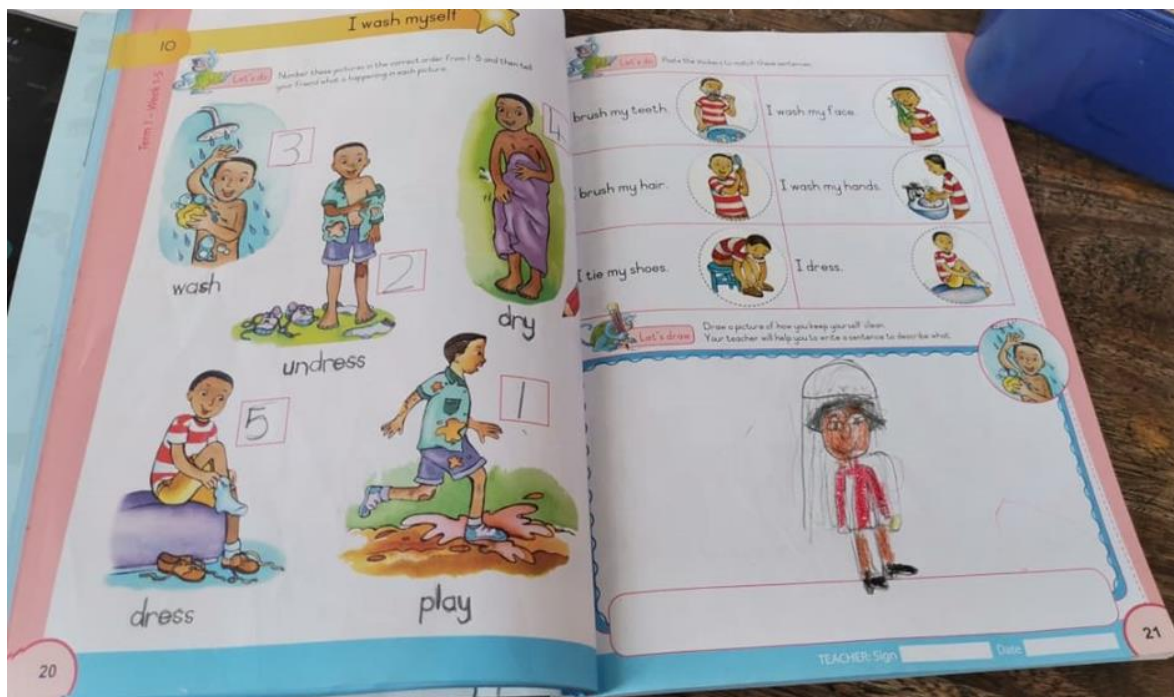


Figure 5.6: A picture of classroom activity Grade one class.

The learners were paired by the teacher and asked to do the following classroom activities:

- Paste stickers in the correct spaces and say the name of each picture.
- Number the pictures in the correct order from 1-5 and tell their friend what is happening in each picture.
- Cut pictures and paste them next to the correct sentence in their workbook.
- Draw a picture of how they can keep themselves clean.

While in the classroom, I observed that there were struggling learners finding the activity challenging because they were unable to identify the right sticker to paste next to the word, numbering pictures in the correct order, pasting the pictures next to the correct sentence, but they were able to draw a picture of how to keep themselves clean. I noticed that it was a challenge for the teacher to assist all those that were struggling with the activity because of the large number of learners, and some of the learners also had challenges with recognising words and pictures.

The above lesson shows that Ms. V used the rhyme-based play strategy as suggested by Bloch and this was done to arouse the learners' interest for the reading lesson. The shared reading, reward for reading strategy, group guided reading, and the question-and-answer methods were all utilised by the teacher to teach reading.

Reading lesson

During my observation in Grade two class, it was mid-day and all 34 learners had just returned from break. The class was noisy, and everyone was trying to settle in and get ready for the reading lesson. However, it was difficult for Ms. M to maintain quiet and orderliness. After a while, the whole class became calm. The teacher then asked learners questions based on the previous lesson. The previous lesson was the same content as the one being observed. However, it was taught in isiXhosa, but most of the learners were reluctant in giving answers to the question asked by the teacher. I observed that the teacher was not pleased with their attitude to learning. I also noticed a group of learners by the corner of the class writing, when I enquired from the teacher, she said that those group of learners were still busy with class activity that was done in the morning, hence they will not be joining in for the reading lessons.

In Ms. M's class, before the reading lesson began, the teacher and learners first discussed the pictures of the phonemic sounds and related it to the previous lesson. The discussion piqued

learners' interest and they were ready to learn. The pictures clearly showed the phonemic sounds 'a' 'z' 'w' 'e' 'o' and 'u' and examples were also displayed with pictures to help the learners understand what phonemic sounds are. The learners were able to see that each sound had words next to it. The teacher then asked if anyone could read any of the phonemes and the words for the class to listen, and a learner stood up and read however there were little mistakes, but the teacher applauded the learner for her courage and encouraged the others to also do same. Another learner read the sounds to the hearing of the whole class and was also commended for her effort. The sounds were read aloud by the teacher while the learners read along. After they had read the sounds and words twice, learners were grouped and asked to read in their groups and thereafter read together as a whole class. The teacher then gave each learner their DBE book and were asked to turn to a particular page. In teaching the reading from this page, the teacher used questions to access the learner's prior knowledge about the pictures and the phonemes in the page.

The teacher read sentences in the workbook while the learners listened, after the teacher had read the sentences twice, she asked the learners to repeat after her while she leads the class. Learners were also asked to read in their groups and thereafter as a whole class while the teacher listened. This was group one doing Grade one content. At the end, those in group two doing Grade one activity were asked to form words with the sounds 'at' and 'en' in their workbook, while the teacher moved on to attend to the other group of learners.

There were other groups of learners in the class who were taught a content different from phonemic sounds. They were taught alphabets, and this was group one doing Grade R content. The teacher placed the picture with alphabets and diagrams representing each of these alphabets with names of the diagrams written on it. This made me curious to ask why they were taught a different content. When I enquired from the teacher why she had different group of learners learning different content, she said "I group the learners based on their abilities, so the content differs, some are doing Grade R, some Grade one while the others are doing Grade two". This shows that in Ms. M's reading class, although it was a Grade two class, there were three groups of learners; group one were learners doing Grade R content, group two were those doing Grade one content, and group three were those doing Grade two content.

Ms. M pointed at the alphabets and read to the learners while pointing to the diagrams in the picture as well. She then asked learners to read the alphabets in group twice, and then she read

the alphabets randomly asking the learners to point at the correct diagram of the alphabet as she read it aloud. I observed that although the teacher was trying to get the contents through to the various group of learners, it was however distracting group two learners who were working on their classroom activity at the time and group three were waiting for the teacher. However, the teacher had an assistant who was guiding group two with their activity.

At the end of the lesson, learners were given classroom activity based on their content and abilities. Those in group two doing Grade R activity, were asked to cut and paste stickers provided next to the alphabets as seen in the picture.

The third group of learners that is those doing Grade two content also had a different content which was on word pronunciation. The teacher placed the picture of the words on the chalkboard and asked the learners to read one after another which they did. I noticed that these group of learners were able to read on their own without the help of the teacher.

At the end of the lesson, learners in group three who were doing Grade two work were given printed copies of words containing some vowel sounds to study, and then take them home and make sentences with them in preparation for the next reading lessons. Activities were done independently by the learners in group three, while those in group one and two were grouped by the teacher to work together.

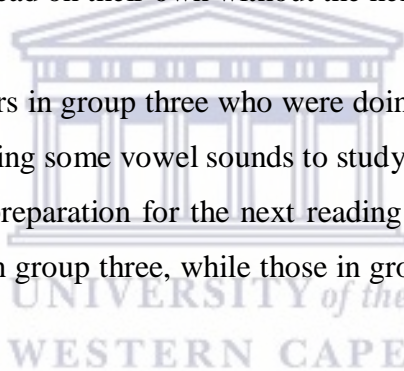




Figure 5.7: A picture of reading lesson in Grade two class (Group two – Grade R content).

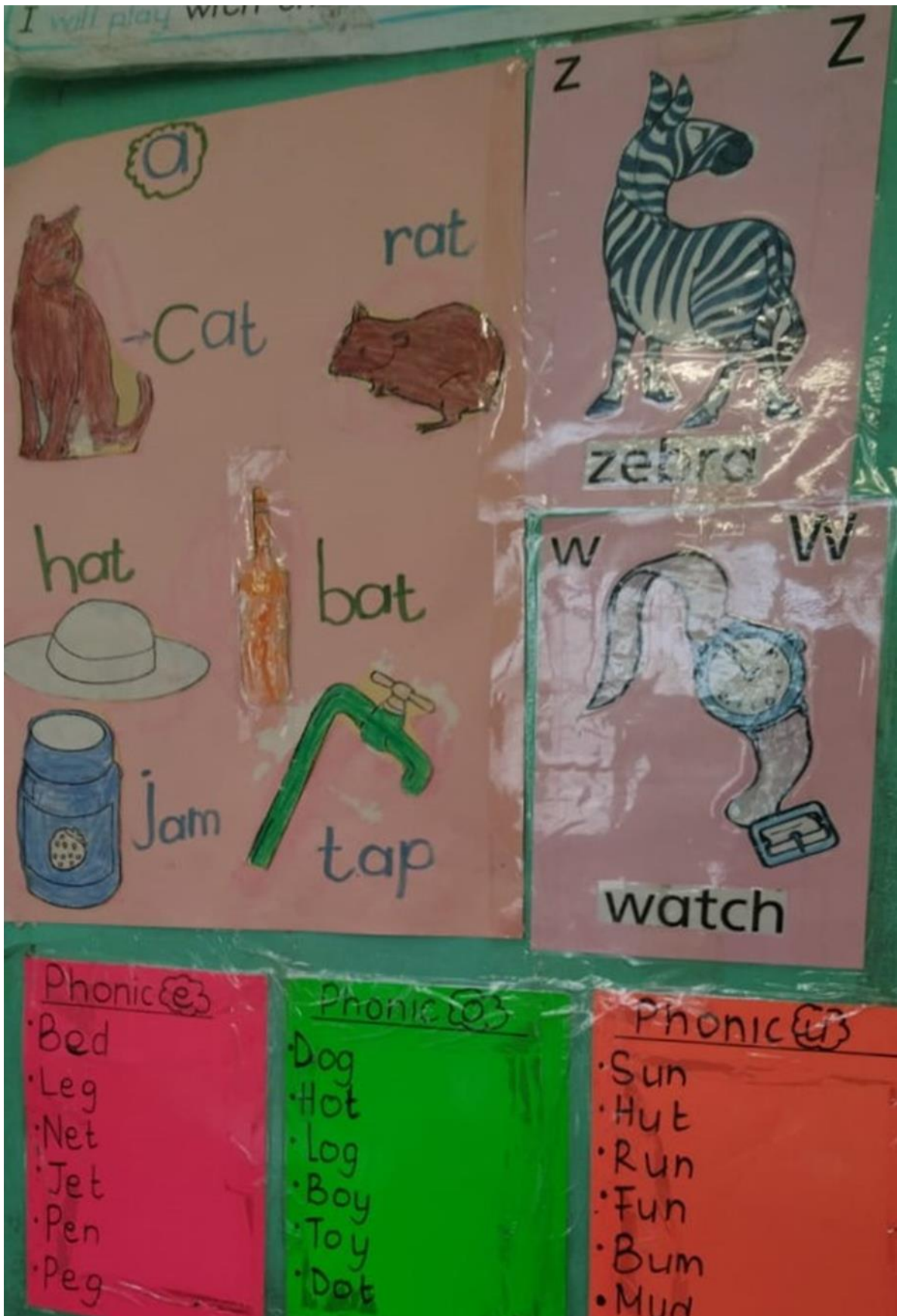


Figure 5.8: A picture of reading lesson in Grade Two class (Group one- Grade one content).

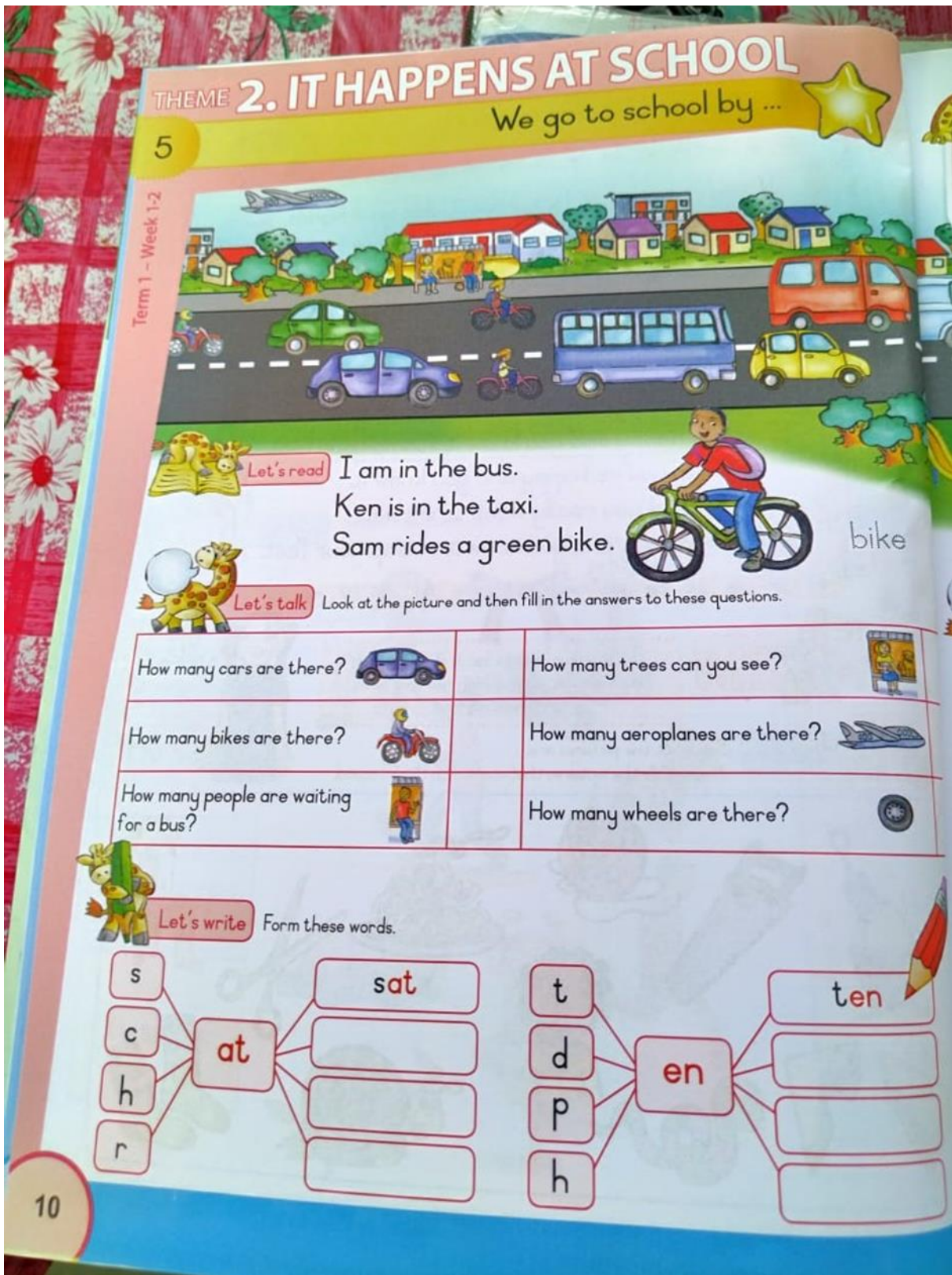


Figure 5.9: A picture of reading lesson and classroom activity in Grade Two class (Group One-Grade One content).

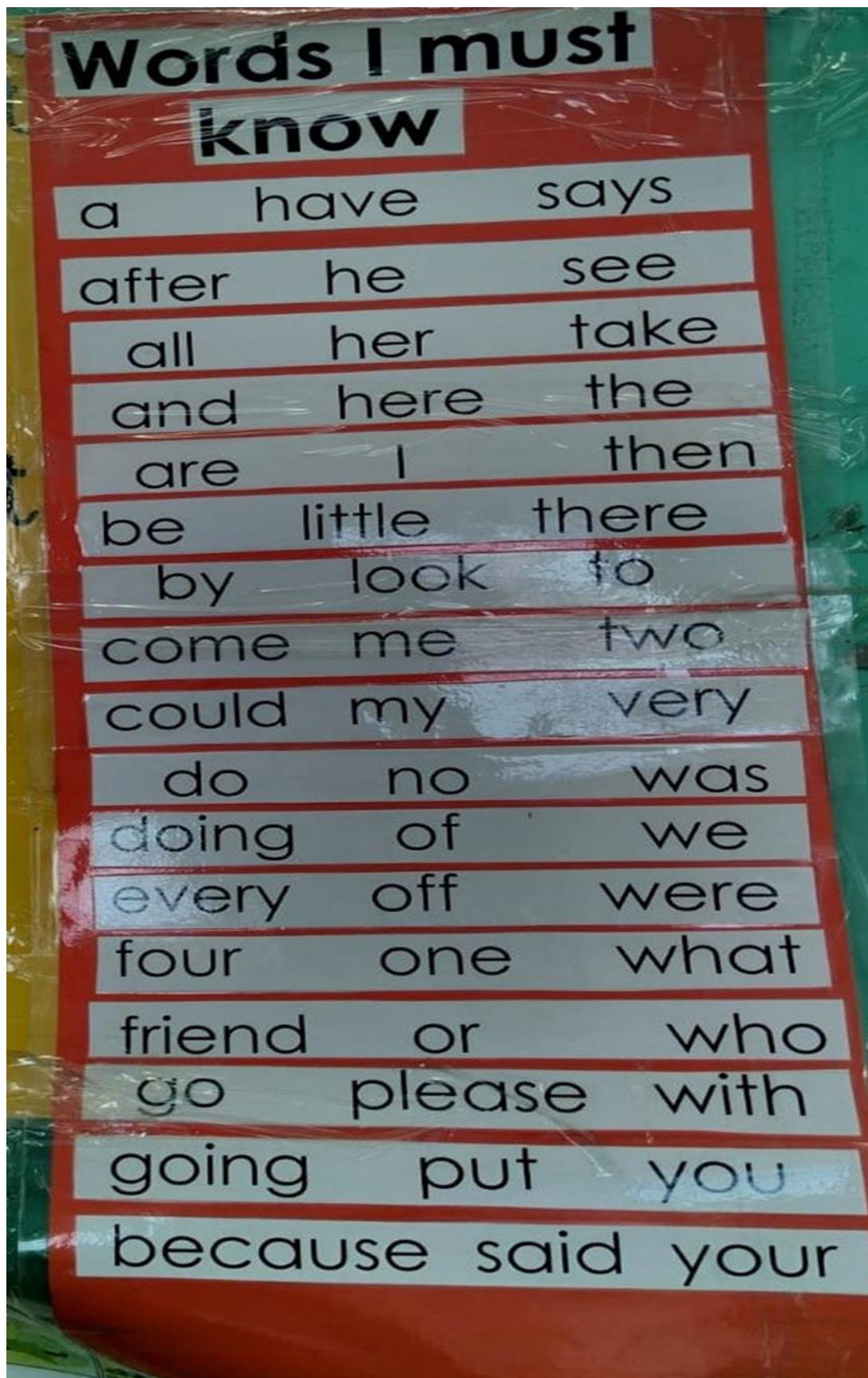


Figure 5.10: A picture of reading lesson in Grade two class (Group Three-Grade Two content).

read		everyday		
a	e	i	o	u
bat	bed	big	cot	bud
cat	fed	did	dog	fun
dad	hen	fig	fog	hut
fan	leg	hit	hot	nut
hat	met	lid	log	run
jam	get	pin	mom	sun
man	net	sin	not	tub
pan	jet	wig	jog	cup
rat	pen	six	rod	bun

Figure 5.11: A picture of classroom study activity in Grade two class (Group Three – Grade Two content).

It was observed that when the teacher asked the learners questions at the beginning of the lesson, some of them were shy, while others were reluctant to answer the questions posed to

them. The teacher did not ask why they were acting in that manner to know what the issue could be. I also noticed that due to the large class size, the teacher did not notice that some learners were not reading along when asked to. They were either busy playing or doing something to distract the class. On the other hand, those that were at the corner of the class were busy disturbing as well. It was also observed that while the teacher was busy teaching the various groups, she had to codeswitch in-between so the learners of each group could get a proper understanding of the alphabets, phonemic sounds, and the sentences in the passage while some learners still had difficulty doing the activity. However, both the teacher and the assistant tried in making sure that most of the struggling learners were attended to.

The above lesson revealed that the teacher used both the shared reading, group guided reading, independent reading, and the question-and-answer methods as an approach to teach reading to these learners of English as FAL, and learners were taught according to their level and abilities with both teachers assisting struggling learners as the need arises.

Reading lesson

In Ms. D's Grade three class, observation was done during the second period after the mid-day break. All 40 learners returned to the classroom with noise and all over the place. However, Ms. D managed to maintain orderliness and quiet in the classroom. Prior to the days reading lesson, learners were given a passage to study at home, so the teacher asked learners to bring out the pamphlet that they were given previously which they did. The teacher then asked the whole class to read the passage aloud and this was based on their previous lesson. However, I observed that some learners were struggling to read. This is in line with the teachers' response during the interview as reported above that there is lack of parental support to the learners when it comes to reading because according to the teacher, parents were sent messages to assist their children in studying the passage. The teacher then asked the learners to take the passage home for a second time to study and get ready to read it individually in the next reading lesson.

The teacher then introduced the topic for the day which was "getting ready for a trip", it was a continuation from their previous lesson. The teacher asked the learners questions on things needed when preparing for a trip and few responses were given this was to assess learners' previous knowledge about trips. The teacher then explained to the learners what it meant to get ready for a trip, and what is needed for a trip. The teacher then displayed flash cards for better understanding of the topic. Learners were asked to read words on the flash cards that were

displayed, and some of them did read the words accurately. I observed that some learners, however, wanted to give their response but were unable to say it in English language but did say it in isiXhosa and the teacher then assisted them with reading the words in English. All learners were then asked to read after the teacher while she led the class. It was an interesting class because all learners participated fully in the teaching and learning process.

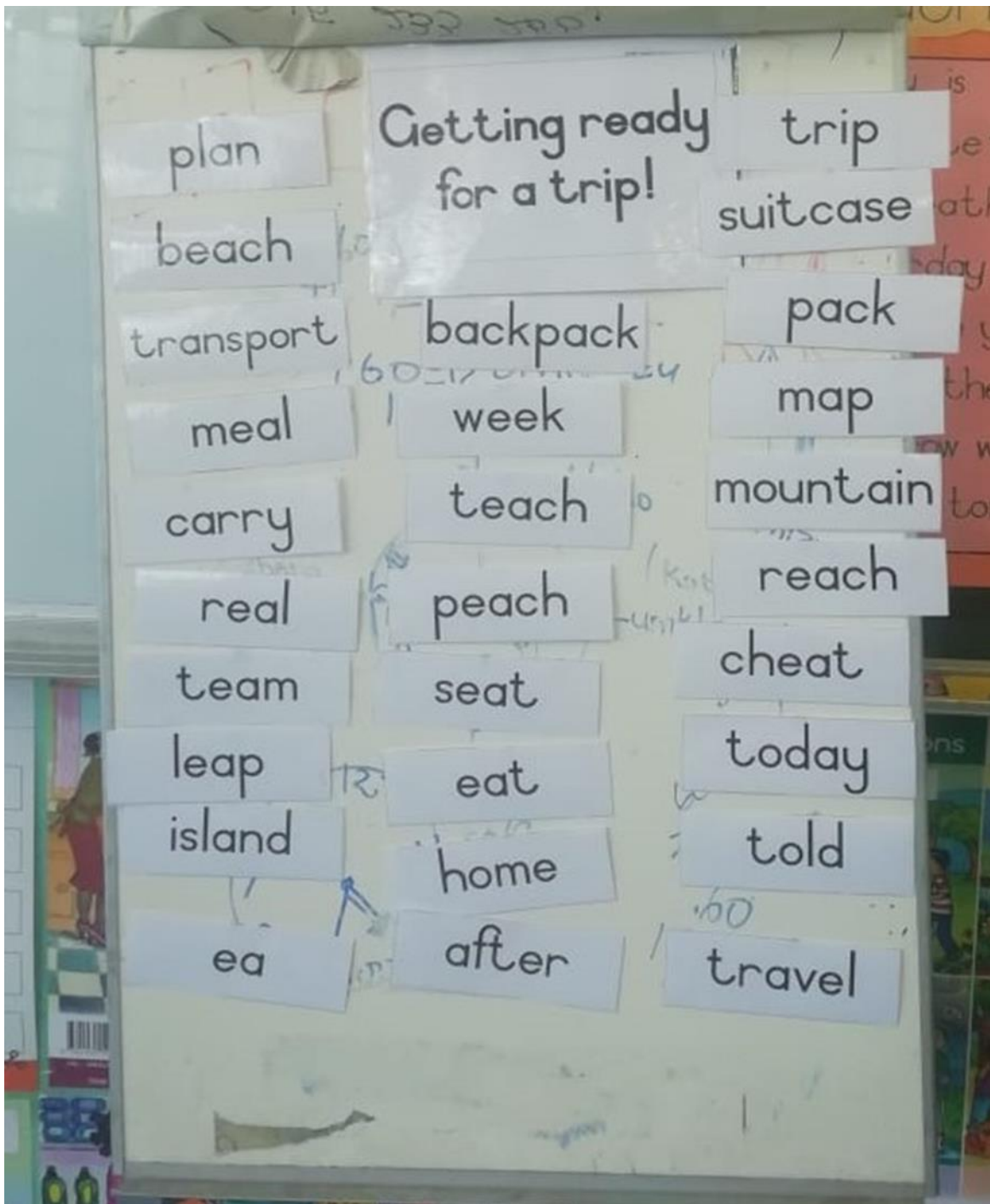


Figure 5.12: Displayed flash card for reading lesson.

At the end of the lesson, the teacher gave a class activity and learners were asked to choose the correct words of things needed when getting ready for a trip from the flash cards displayed and write down them in their notebooks. I noticed that majority of the learners understood what they were asked to do, and they were so engrossed in their class activity, while a few of them struggled to choose the correct words from the displayed flash cards.

It was observed from the above lesson that the teacher in Grade three class used the shared reading and question and answer methods to teach reading, and she had a total control of her classroom.

5.7.2 Summary: Observation data, school B

In school B, all observations were done at different times according to the school's timetable. It was observed that the teachers used similar methods in teaching reading, that is, shared reading, independent reading, group guided reading and the question-and-answer methods, aside Ms. V who utilised a few other methods such as the RRS, and rhyme-based play method. All teachers also gave classroom activities at the end of the reading lessons, and this helped to check the learners' understanding of what was taught.

5.8 Interview data post classroom observation

This section presents data gathered from the interviews conducted with the participants post classroom observations.

School A

When asked what the main content of the reading lesson was, the teachers had these to say:

Ms. L said that the main content of her reading lesson was “identification of symbols and sounds”.

Mr. M indicated that the main content of his reading lesson was “Identification of the various parts of the human body”.

Mr. K stated that “Comprehension passage on school uniform” was the main content for his reading lesson.

On the question of how they choose their content when teaching, the following responses were given by the participants:

Ms. L said that her contents are chosen based on her learner's level and abilities to accommodate all of them.

Mr. M mentioned that he took a baseline at the beginning of the year to see their level of understanding, then he prepared the content based on what will suit them, so they are able to understand when being taught.

Mr. K indicated that the content is chosen based on the CAPS curriculum for each week.

When asked if they had prepared the class for that content or given them an exercise on the content before, the participants responded thus:

Ms. L said the learners have not been taught the content before and that it was the first time teaching that content.

Mr. M noted that they have done the content previously, however it was in Afrikaans, but it was the first time the content will be taught to the learners in English language.

Mr. K mentioned that the content had been done in the previous year, so it was a repetition of the content.

On the question of why they chose the approach/method utilised, these were the responses from the participants:

Ms. L responded by saying that she chose the method because teaching reading in a practical way using pictures and symbols help the learners to focus more and comprehend better.

Mr. M mentioned that he chose the method because what they will be doing is a continuation because they already learnt it in Afrikaans, but now they are doing it in English language. So, using pictures and doing practical will help them remember and comprehend.

Mr. K said he chose to use the shared reading and writing on the chalkboard as an approach to teaching reading comprehension to see if learners could identify words, and then from there they will read the comprehension together as a whole class.

On the question of whether the literacy content for one learner differs for another or if they use same content for everyone, these were the response from the participants:

Ms. L noted that there are different amounts of content for different learners based on their level and ability.

Mr. M mentioned that there is different content for different learners which is based on their abilities.

Mr. K said that the content will be the same for all learners, but it will differ in grade, that is, they are grouped as low functioning, medium functioning, and high functioning learners. The low functioning learners will have the same content but in Grade R level which will be mostly on cutting and pasting, the medium functioning learners will have the same content but in Grade one level which will be more of colouring in and a little bit of words, while the high functioning learners will have same content but doing the actual activity of reading and writing.

When asked how the reading lessons taught are being followed up, the participants had these to say:

Ms. L said that they do practical's so that all learners can have a better understanding of the topic, and she does not go back words because sometimes words can be abstract to the one group, and she does not want to ignore the other groups.

Mr. M mentioned that at the beginning, he starts with the pictures, then the follow up the next day by putting the words next to the pictures, and he does that for almost two weeks to make sure that they understand the words because the lesson takes two weeks.

Mr. K noted that he just does follow up questions just to ensure that they do understand what was taught. So, with books closed, he ask questions on the comprehension passage just to make sure that they have an understanding.

5.8.1 Summary: Interview data post observation, school A.

In school A, the data gathered from the post observation interview indicated that both Ms. L and Mr. M chose their contents based on their learners' level and ability, while Mr. K gets his content from the CAPS syllabus. It is also evident that Ms. L and Mr. M have similar reasons for choosing the methods used to teach reading, while Mr. K had his own specific reasons for choosing the method used to teach learners reading. With regards to the content taught to learners', Mr. K gives the same content to all learners, but they differ in grade level, while Ms. L and Mr. M uses different content for different learners based on their level and ability. However, the responses given showed that all three teachers have similar ways of following up reading lessons with the learners.

School B

Same questions that were asked in school A were also posed to teachers in school B, and *when asked what the main content of their reading lesson was, the participant had these to say:*

Ms. V mentioned that the main content was on "Cleaning Myself".

Ms. M said her main content was on "Alphabets, phonemic sounds, word formation, and sentence formation".

Ms. D indicated that the main content of her reading lesson was "Getting ready for a trip".

On the question of how they choose their content when teaching, the following responses were given by the participants:

Ms. V said the content was chosen based on the previous lesson, and according to CAPS syllabus.

Ms. M also mentioned that the content was chosen because it is based on the CAPS syllabus.

Ms. D also indicated that she chose this content because according to CAPS the week's content is about beach/zoo and trip.

When asked if they had prepared the class for that content or given them an exercise on the content before, the participants responded thus:

Ms. V said they have not been prepared for that particular content before and that is was the first time the learners are being taught about the content.

Ms. M indicated that she has done that content with the learners previously, however it was in isiXhosa, but it was the first time they are doing it in English language.

Ms. D noted that she has done the content with the learners previously and that it is a continuation of the previous lesson.

On the question of why they choose the approach/method utilised, these were the responses from the participants:

Ms. V stated that she chose the practical and picture method to teach reading because all learners will be accommodated all despite their learning abilities.

Ms. M said the approach was chosen to accommodate all learners and enable learners of each group learn the alphabets properly, use letters word formation, and study words for the formation of sentences.

Ms. D noted that the shared reading and use of flash cards method was chosen to accommodate all learners.

On the question of whether the literacy content for one learner differs for another or if they use same content for everyone, these were the response from the participants:

Ms. V indicated that the content being taught is the same for all learners, however the time frame for doing their classroom activity differs because of their ability and most times content may be different for different learners.

Ms. M stated that because learners are grouped according to their level and abilities, the content therefore differs because some are doing Grade R activity, some Grade 1 activity, and others Grade 2 activity.

Ms. D responded by saying that the content is the same for all learners.

When asked how the reading lessons taught are being followed up, the participants had these to say:

Ms. V mentioned that she will do a follow up with practical activities because according to CAPS, this content should last for two weeks.

Ms. M said that a follow up will be done by giving the learners practical activities. They should do cutting and pasting by putting the letters next to the pictures, word formations, and sentence formations. These activities will be done for two weeks.

Ms. D indicated that a follow up will be done with the learners because it is a continuous process that should be done for two weeks according to CAPS. So, she will give classroom activities and homework, and then make corrections.

5.8.2 Summary: Interview data post observation, school B.

In school B, the data collected revealed that all three teachers chose their content as prescribed by CAPS syllabus, they all have similar reasons for choosing the strategies used in teaching reading. Ms. V and Ms. D uses same content for all learners, while Ms. M uses different content for different learners', and they are grouped according to grades, level, and abilities, however, Ms. V noted that sometimes content may differ for different learners based on the topic to be taught. The data also showed that all three teachers have similar methods of following up with learners' reading lesson.

5.9 Summary: Interview data and Observation data

This section has presented the data gathered by means of semi-structured interviews and non-participant classroom observations. The data collected from the interviews shows that there are a number of factors that impedes the learners reading abilities in English language such as learners home language, lack of parental involvement, Working Memory Deficit (WMD) (word recognition/identification), large class size, and insufficient teaching and learning resources etc. However, in school A, two teachers Mr. M and Mr. K indicated that the class size is not a challenge to them, and the parents do support the learners with reading and their homework. However, one of the teachers Ms. L indicated that the class size is a challenge to her because she sees one child as equal to three. In school B, all three teachers noted that the

aforementioned factors inhibit their learners from learning and reading effectively when it comes to teaching learners of English as FAL reading.

The data gathered through classroom observations from both schools, reveals that the teachers pedagogical strategies such as pictures, flash cards, group-guided reading, shared reading, independent reading, reward for reading strategy, rhyme-based play strategy, question and answer, and codeswitching were very useful strategies for teaching reading in the foundation phase because they help these learners to be motivated, to cope, do better, and have a better understanding of what they are being taught and to read them properly. All these strategies will be analysed in the next section.

Data collected from the second phase of interview after classroom observation from both schools indicates that each reading lesson had a particular content to be taught, all content were chosen either based on the learner's ability, level, or CAPS syllabus, they all had unique reasons for using the strategies employed in teaching reading. It also showed that content are taught to learners based on their grade, level, and abilities. However, when the learners are of same functioning level, they are given same content on reading lessons. The data also revealed that the practical, pictures, question, and answer methods are effective pedagogical strategies for teaching reading to FAL learners of the foundation phase. The following section presents an analysis of data collected.

5.10 Section four: Data Analysis

In the previous section, I presented data collected from semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. Also, in chapter four, it was mentioned that the theoretical framework chosen for this study that is, "social constructivism theory" will be used as a tool of analysis. Interviews were conducted with educators one from each grade, namely grades 1, 2, and 3. Three from each of the two schools' grades. The teaching of reading lessons was observed. I observed how teaching and learning took place to get insight into the strategies used by teachers of grades 1, 2, and 3 to teach reading. The answers to the questions are therefore analysed with link to the relevance of the chosen theoretical framework. This section deals with data analysis, which is a logical search for meaning. In order to decipher patterns, identify themes, discover connections, or generate theories from the data, the researcher classifies and probes the collected data (Hatch, 2002:142). According to Galleta (2013:119), data analysis entails

identifying and labelling patterns, also known as codes, that reflect ideas about the data. The aim of data analysis is to simplify large data sets so that the gathered information can be understood. I had to choose, simplify, and summarise only data that answered my research questions when writing this section.

5.10.1 Theoretical Framework Analysis

For this study, the theoretical framework (social constructivism) was employed. Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, and Redwood (2013:2) points out that a framework technique for analysis provides clear steps to follow and produce highly structured outputs of summarised data and for managing large data sets were obtaining a holistic, descriptive overview of the entire data set is desirable. A theoretical framework analysis is a set of codes organised into categories that have been developed by a researcher that can be used to manage, organise, and analyse the data (Gale *et al.*, 2013:1).

Using the theoretical framework as a tool of analysis was appropriate for this study because it helped me in creating a new structure for the data, identify themes, summarise/reduce the data in a way that supported in answering the research questions, discover relationships, analyse, and interpret the data collected. The theoretical framework technique is mostly used for the thematic analysis of semi-structured interview transcripts, including documents, such as meeting minutes or diaries, or field notes from observations (Gale *et al.*, 2013:2).

As stated earlier, data collected through semi-structured interviews and field notes from non-participant observations were transcribed by the researcher. Six themes emerged from the data collected from participants through semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. They are as follows:

1. Home Language (HL)
2. Parental Involvement (PI)
3. Class Size
4. Teaching and Learning Resources
5. Working Memory Deficit (WMD)
6. Teachers Pedagogical Practice

Each is discussed in detail below.

5.10.2 Interview Data Analysis

This study investigated the reading challenges experienced by learners of the foundation phase at two selected primary schools in Western Cape. These themes emerged from the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers from school A and B. As stated in chapter 4, data collected from interviews were audio taped. The interview with the six participants from both schools gave the researcher an in-depth understanding of the teachers' perspectives on challenges that learners experiences when teaching them reading in English. Data collected from semi-structured interviews are analysed below based on the emerging themes.

5.10.2.1 Home Language

As stated in chapter 2, language learning is important for the educational readiness and achievement of the child, hence the mother tongue should be used as a medium of instruction in the foundation phase of schooling according to CAPS and English as FAL. The interviewed participants from both schools believed that the learners home language is a challenge to learners of English as FAL. The language spoken by learners at home influences their reading abilities, and this has a strong influence on these learners because they speak isiXhosa, isiZulu, and Afrikaans at home. After teaching these learners to read in English language at school, they go back home and are confronted with parents, friends and family members who only speak either isiXhosa, Afrikaans, isiZulu etc and because there is no one to in fact support them in emphasising what was taught at school to the learners in English language, this hinders them from reading effectively and for comprehension.

Anita and Dyers (2016:523) argue that language plays a vital role in epistemological access. This also corroborates with Vygotsky (1978), that language is a cultural tool that helps individuals to share their knowledge which in this study could be the learners home language. This is aligned with the statement made by UNESCO (2006) that learners who learn in their HL perform well because it is their cultural linguistic asset. The data collected from interviews and observations indicates that the learners' home language helped learners to understand better and were able to easily access the content when introduced to them. For example, after the contents were introduced and discussed in English language, learners were only able to comprehend better when the teachers code switched and explained in their home language. This implies that learners home language served as a mediating cultural tool to scaffold

learners' comprehension, and this facilitate epistemological access as they began to read for meaning. The use of home language as a cultural tool, is of course a hallmark of an approach shaped by social constructivism which stresses that the importance of language as a cultural tool in knowledge building as is the case in this study.

From the data collected, it is evident that codeswitching by teachers were useful, and learners were able to read effectively and read for comprehension although, all six teachers believed that the learners' home language is a major challenge that impedes learners reading ability. This implies that the use of home language does not preclude the learning of English for FAL learners; on the contrary, the data gathered shows that it enhances such learning and creates epistemological access to new knowledge.

5.10.2.2 Lack of Parental Involvement

Most learners whose parents tend to have little or no education, do not perform well when compared to those whose parents have acquired higher level of education. This view is consistent with Kainuwa and Yussuf's (2013) research findings which shows that if the learners' parents are illiterate, poor, and unemployed, some of these parents do not place much value on their on their children's education. This is in line with the view of Vygotsky (1978) which emphasises the guidance of a more skilled person which in this case is the parent. Furthermore, Vygotsky (ibid) also points that the child's developmental level is determined by the individual problem solving and the degree of the problem-solving skills by an adult (parent) or a teacher (ibid).

The data collected from the interviews indicates that lack of parental involvement in in the learners' educational activities when it comes to reading. The analysed data shows that Ms. L, Ms. V, Ms. M, and Ms. D showed a negative response about parents' involvement in their children's education. All four teachers stated that parents do not involve, encourage, or assist these learners in their schoolwork in order to improve their reading ability. These teachers revealed that this is because most of the parents are either illiterate, and therefore, they cannot speak, read, or write in English language, thus disempowering students and parents as well and thus affecting effective learning. Also, they are unemployed, working and returning home late at night, or are not just concerned if the learners are struggling or not. Furthermore, two of the

teachers Mr. M and Mr. K, showed a positive response that parents do encourage and assist their children with schoolwork and reading activities.

Parental involvement, attitudes, and beliefs are crucial to the learner's development of reading ability. This is because parents have significant role to play in the lives of their children by being a part of their learning process and educational activities. Similarly, the social constructivism theory of Vygotsky (1978) emphasises that children can interact with their parents, internalise, and develop their knowledge through interaction and participation in reading activities at home when they are under the supervision of an adult, which is the parent in this study. This is also in line with the South African Education Law and Policy of 1999 which encourages parental involvement in the learner's education which includes reading. If parents are involved in their children's educational activities, they can re-enforce and explain better the text, graphical elements, complex comprehension passage, stories, and other challenges that the child might encounter that hinders him/her from reading effectively.

As stated in chapter two, reading is a socially constructed form of human activity with learning that connects with the social environment and the guidance of a more knowledgeable individual. This corroborates with the philosophical position of the social constructivism which recognises the importance of reading as both social interaction and individual meaning construction. The theory of social constructivism stresses that individual cognition and social context are intricately linked because children need a more knowledgeable person to guide them which in this case are parents (Vygotsky, 1994:42). This implies that the parents must help the child as a mediator to progress from his/her current level to a stage of developed growth which is known as ZPD.

Parents can use model text to scaffold for the child until s/he is able to read independently. This support can then be reduced when the learner has mastered the text, which means that support declines as the learner's competence increases because the ZPD is a temporary window of opportunity in learning and an interactive process that shows the construction of knowledge between a teacher, parent, and learner.

It can be argued therefore that 80% of parents are not involved in their children's educational activities such as reading, and because of the lack of involvement, most learners are unable to read effectively because these parents are not there to guide or model them. Parents are seen as

first educators and their involvement in their children's education is important. However, most parents are not actively involved in their children's education because they are unaware of the impact they have on their children, and the role they play in their education and their responsibilities towards learning. I believe that if parents show the right attitude and involve in their children's educational activities at home especially with reading, it will help minimise the factors that impede reading skills.

5.10.2.3 Large Class Size

As discussed in Chapter two, group guided reading allows the teacher to support learners in small groups who are reading at the same level while simultaneously allowing the teacher to assess each learner's abilities. Hence, for an effective teaching and learning of reading to take place, educators require a small class size. The class size has an influence on the teacher-learner interaction. This is consistent with the research findings of Spark (2010) which shows that the performance of learners in a small or medium class was considerably better when compared to learners in a large class. Also, the findings of a study conducted by Yara in 2010, revealed that the performance of learners of large class sizes was poor when compared to learners in small class sizes. This implies that class sizes have a significant impact on the teaching and learning process.

Due to large numbers of learners in a class, educators and learners are faced with challenge to engage in group guided reading, because it is impossible to call two groups per day as per CAPS curriculum. If the class size is small, the teacher is able to model the reading process and then exchange ideas which stimulates social interactions among the teacher and learners which can aid in the development of critical thinkers and collaborative readers. This corroborates with the principles of MR and MP which stresses that people do not learn in solitude especially when learning to read because it encourages the practice of shared reading which is of mutual benefit for both the educator and learner, and this can only be achieved with a reduced class size because if the class size is large, the teacher is unable to reach out to every learner.

According to Pritchard and Woollard (2013:1-8), the social constructivism principle of collaboration and co-operative learning emphasises that learning is a collaborative activity which in this case is between the teacher and learners because social constructivism allows

people to communicate with one another and subsequently develop creative thinking and these can be achieved in a small class where the communication and interaction between the teacher and learner is effective. This can therefore be argued that a large class size can hinder effective teaching and learning process, while a smaller class size can enhance teaching and learning process especially when it comes to the teaching of reading.

5.10.2.4 Insufficient Teaching and Learning Resources

Learning an additional language especially for learners of English as FAL can be tremendously challenging. Therefore, it is essential that appropriate teaching and learning materials are provided and readily available for use so that learners are able to effectively cultivate a good habit of reading especially in FAL class.

The data collected revealed that in school B, there is inadequate teaching and learning resources for the teaching of reading in English as FAL in the foundation phase. However, CAPS suggests the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in the foundation phase of schooling yet, the DBE textbooks and workbooks provided for the teaching of English to FAL learners are rare in terms of availability and this becomes a challenge for both the teacher and learner. The analysed data indicates that both schools received teaching and learning resources such as the DBE workbooks and textbooks to facilitate teaching and learning. This is consistent with the research findings of Siyothula (2019) which shows that learning tools are received by schools from the DBE to assist teachers in the teaching and learning of reading literacy as stated in chapter 2. However, the data showed that these resources received by school from the DBE are insufficient for all learners.

This social constructivism principle of appropriation emphasises that learning should not be teacher-centred but a collaborative activity that involves both the teacher and the learner (Kiraly, 2014:38). In this case, the availability of teaching and learning resources is a means of appropriating content to learners which could help them engage in a variety of reading experiences from print materials such as the DBE textbooks and workbooks which will help learners apply their knowledge in a practical way.

Also, the social constructivism theory states that learning should be embedded in a practical context which in this case is situated learning (Kiraly, 2014; Vygotsky, 1994:43). This implies

that knowledge should be presented in an original context which, in this situation, is the availability of teaching and learning resources, and print materials because situated learning helps in meaning-making, where learners should be allowed to experience, discover things, and create meaning on their own with the help of these resources. The application of these principles aid in modelling, pique learner's interest and attention, and encourage reading.

In light of the above, this suggests that if the appropriate teaching and learning resources are made available and sufficient for all learners, it will contribute to an effective teaching and learning of reading and enhance the learners' abilities and allow learners to apply their own thinking and creativity when reading.

5.10.2.5 Working Memory Deficit (WMD)

Most learners experience challenge in recalling what they have been taught, learned, or read long enough to discuss it immediately after reading and are unable to identify words. The data gathered indicates that Mr. M, Mr. K, and Ms. M had learners who had the working memory deficit as a challenge. However, Ms. M explained that some learners experience the challenge of word identification/recognition because they have not done Grade R, yet they are in Grade 2. This coincides with Ms. V's observation who also revealed that some of the learners in Grade 1 have not done Grade R.

As indicated in chapter two, learners with difficulty reading such as word recognition, recalling, identification of words and alphabets, need to be understood at an early age so that the necessary assistance can be provided to the learners to overcome these challenges. It is believed that teachers make reading possible, and if learners are to learn how to read and overcome these challenges, the teacher should consider the learners' belief and feelings because they are vital.

Teachers and parents' attitudes and expertise must serve as an important tool for motivation in order to encourage these learners this is because motivation is a significant component in education and knowledge building. If these learners are not encouraged or motivated to see beyond their challenges, it might lead to fear, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Therefore, teachers and parents must be a mediator to the learner as suggested by the social constructivist to

develop their ability to endure and overcome their challenges and develop the readiness to take risks.

Reading entails using cognitive skills such as identification of words, and recognition of letters, however some foundation phase learners experience challenges in this regard according to the data gathered. For an effective teaching and learning to occur, the learner must be able to decode, comprehend, and be able to read the word without forgetting or unable to identify. According to the ZPD, the teacher or parent should assist such learner to scaffold by acting out stories, and model out reading until learners are able to recall and identify easily (Vygotsky, 1994; Kiraly, 2014; Amineh & Asl, 2015). For example, if the learner is unable to recall or identify words or symbols, the teacher or parent can make use of concrete materials such as classroom furniture, acting out stories, pictures from a story which was read in class, flash cards, composing rhymes with alphabets etc. During the observation, I observed that the teachers from both schools utilised some of these strategies such as pictures, and flash cards to teach learners with difficulty reading, recalling, and identifying letters and words to enhance their reading ability, memory in recalling and identifying especially learners in school A. These resources were a mediating tool for teaching and aided in facilitating the teaching of reading to such learners.

The ZPD in such cases helps learners to master skills of recalling and identifying words with the support of the teacher. The quality of these concrete resources and the social interaction between the teacher and the learner is significant in that the situation in which they are used assist the teacher to determine the impact of the given learning opportunity. Furthermore, teachers could provide printed materials. Flash cards, and pictures and use them to narrate a story, this story will help the learners recall easily and the pictures and flash cards will aid the learners in recalling and word recognition, and then they could try retelling the story in their own words thereby making them active in their own learning. Once they have mastered the story and the pictures the teacher should allow them to read. By so doing, the challenges faced by the learners of the Foundation Phase are addressed, and the learners reading skills will also be developed in the process.

5.10.2.6 Summary: Interview data analysis

The analysed data indicates that the learners' home language, lack of parental participation in the learners' education, large class size, insufficient teaching and learning resources and Working Memory Deficit (WMD) are possible variables that could hinder learners of English as FAL from developing good reading skills and read for comprehension. However, it is worth noting that the learners' home language might also lead to creating access to new knowledge as well as enhancing the learners' reading ability. This is because Vygotsky (1978), states that language is a cultural tool that helps individuals to share and gain knowledge. Hence the incorporation of the learners' home language while teaching reading in English language could be beneficial because during the observation of reading lessons in both schools, the home language of the learners helped them in understanding the content better when they were introduced to it, because they were able to access the content easily.

5.11 Observation Data Analysis

This study investigated the challenges that hinder learners reading for effective learning, the strategies used for teaching reading in the foundation phase, how these challenges affect the development of reading skills, and the strategies that are used in dealing with these challenges as stated in chapter 1. In this study, six lessons were observed in both schools three each, one from each grade. The research objectives were considered during the observation process.

In all the lessons that were observed, four out of the six teachers revised the previous lessons with learners before introducing the new lesson. The revision was done to access learner's prior knowledge, and these teachers utilised similar strategies in the teaching of reading. These strategies followed the socio-cultural practice which argues that reading is a social practice according to Gee (2008). This is consistent with the MR and MP social constructivism principles, according to Kiraly (2014), which state that people learn through social interaction and social practices such as sharing and contrasting their ideas with others. As a result, these social practices generate discussion and a shift in individual perspectives.

All the observed lessons were done in a social setting which in this study is the classroom, and it was an interaction between the teacher and learners. These interactions were guided by the mediation, apprenticeship, and scaffolding tools according to the social constructivism theory

which involves guiding the learners to reach a higher level of understanding in learning. It was an in-contact interaction session with the teacher as the more knowledgeable person.

5.11.1 Teachers Pedagogical Practice

Data collected from observed lessons enabled me to analyse the teachers' pedagogical practices. I observed that the common teaching strategies among these teachers were the use of pictures and flash cards, question and answer method, shared reading, group-guided reading, and independent reading except for Ms. V who also utilised the rhyme-based play and reward for reading strategies in her classroom to teach reading. The section below will analyse the strategies used by the teachers to teach reading.

5.11.1.1 Use of pictures and flash cards as mediating tools.

The observation data revealed that the use of pictures and flash cards was an effective tool for teaching reading in the foundation phase. Learners have unique styles of learning, and as such teachers should employ various strategies and the appropriate resources to accommodate all learners when teaching reading, and this is consistent with the social constructivism principle of ZPD which emphasises that learning occurs through social interaction (Amineh & Asl, 2015). The data gathered shows that these teachers used scaffolding to assist learners in reaching their ZPD in the form of pictures, flash cards, and DBE books. These resources helped learners to derive meaning, improve their reading skills and develop creative thinking.

This affirms that learners learn better when pictures, and flash cards were used as mediating tools. This implies that the use of pictures and flash cards was appropriate for teaching English reading to FAL learners in the foundation phase, which supports the view of Wening (2017) that pictures and flash cards are effective tools for the teaching of reading. This is also consistent with the findings of Singh, Tan, Abdullah, and Mostafa's (2017) study which shows that pictures and flash cards motivated learners to enjoy reading in English and also supported their creative skills. Furthermore, Singh et al. (2017), suggested that teachers should plan pictures and flash card-based reading activities so that learners can develop greater enthusiasm for reading.

Contents were introduced to learners during reading lessons by showing them pictures and the flash cards representing words of the pictures, and learners were able to identify and match

words to the correct picture. These pictures captivated learners' attention, and this was used creatively by the teachers to get learners to participate actively in the reading lesson. This affirms that pictures and flash cards were effective mediating tools to scaffold the learner's knowledge for identification and matching of words. It was observed that the use of pictures and flash cards significantly helped learners with difficulty identifying words because they were able to learn better with the pictures and flash cards. This observation conforms with the findings of Mehrpour and Mansourzadeh (2017) who investigated the use of pictures and short stories to teach EFL learner's English idioms. This therefore indicates that pictures, and flash cards are mediation tools that enhance learners understanding during reading lessons.

5.11.1.2 Question and answer method

The question-and-answer method assisted the teacher in recognising learner's prior knowledge about the content of the reading lesson. Fusco (2015), notes that the questioning strategy is a systematic technique to decipher learners' prior knowledge. This suggest that learners should be given an opportunity to guess answers. This is because the learners' prior knowledge is crucial, and it is used to *construct* meaning when linked to new knowledge. This knowledge is drawn from the learners' socio-cultural practices, and this supports the view of Beck and Kosnik (2012:9), which argues that learners construct their knowledge by linking new knowledge to existing knowledge, which in this study is the question-and-answer method.

According to Moodley (2013), there are three kinds of question-and-answer techniques that can be used in the classroom namely, literal, inferential, and meta-cognitive questions. The literal kind of question seeks for information, an inferential kind of question is used to help learners understand the meaning of complex texts, while the meta-cognitive kind of question encourages the learners to rely on their ability to think and learn (ibid). The gathered data shows that not all three kinds of questions was used. However, the commonly used question by the teachers was the meta-cognitive question which was used to aid the learners to creatively think while looking at the pictures, flash cards, and diagrams from the DBE books that were used to teach reading. This was done to elicit the learner' prior knowledge about the reading content. The question-and-answer method had both teachers and learners engaged during the teaching and learning process as learners were able to co-construct their knowledge and express their thoughts and ideas aloud. This is in line with the view of the social constructivism theory of ZPD which encourages learners to present their views and remain open to the opinion of others

(Vygotsky, 1994; Kiraly, 2014; Amineh & Asl, 2015). In this way, each learner can contribute to knowledge construction.

Therefore, it can be argued that the question-and-answer method was an appropriate strategy for teaching reading in the foundation phase because it allows learners to express their thoughts and a mutual understanding of the answer to the right question was reached.

5.11.1.3 Shared reading

The observation data revealed that shared reading was done in both schools during the shared reading, teachers led the class by reading aloud while learners read along. When learners were either unable to read, or identify pictures or words, the teacher used examples to explain to them. These examples and explanations as a strategy for teaching reading assisted the learners in identifying the pictures, symbols, and words. The role of the teacher here was to facilitate learning and not transfer knowledge because they wanted learners to use their prior knowledge to build on the new knowledge. This supports the view of Amineh and Asl (2015) which states that when teachers facilitate learning, their goal being to help learners *construct* their own understanding.

As indicated in the previous section, teachers first read either the comprehension passage, words, or pointed to the pictures or posters when they read aloud. After the reading, the questions that followed were explained to the learners and they were asked to answer them. This approach helped learners to do their classroom activities as instructed by the teacher. This may be argued that the teachers' explanations and reading aloud helped the learners to read better and understand how to go about their activities. This validates the argument of Doolittle (1999), which states that when teachers guide their learners, their responsibility is to motivate, provide the necessary examples, facilitate teaching, and challenge the learners rather than being a channel of knowledge. The above data shows that knowledge was not just transmitted by the teachers, but shared reading and explanations assisted learners to discover correct answers and read for understanding. This may be related to the principles of social constructivism which states that learning is a human activity that is mediated by tools or humans in order to accomplish an object as discussed in chapter 3 (Vygotsky, 1978:57).

Also, the data revealed that appropriate pictures, flash cards, shared reading, group-guided reading were used as mediating tools to enhance learners reading abilities. This is line with the principle of appropriation which states that shared reading aid learners to read in a practical way while engaging with variety of reading experiences and print materials and also building their knowledge. In chapter 2, it was stated that shared reading is a class wide activity which aids in the teaching of reading skills with the teacher being a model and a motivator. Furthermore, it was mentioned that repeated reading (RR) is significant for enhancing reading skills among FAL learners this is because it increases their fluency in a second language (L2). However, for a learner to be able to read effectively, just like the shared reading technique, the RR technique is also vital in a reading lesson classroom this is because both techniques help increase learners reading fluency and comprehension. This, therefore, suggests that to teach reading, teachers could incorporate the shared reading and RR techniques.

The findings from both schools correlate with the principles of social constructivism which suggests that the use of variety of mediating tools can be used in the teaching of reading. In addition, the principle of MR and MP encourages the practice of shared reading while teaching reading (Kiraly, 2014:34). It is recommended by Fredericks (2013) that group-guided reading takes place after the learners must have been exposed to shared reading. This can therefore be said that shared reading is useful for all learners irrespective of their reading abilities.

5.11.1.4 Group-guided reading

In group-guided reading, the teacher works with small groups of learners who are at the same reading level. The observation data shows that in school B, Ms. V and Ms. M used the group-guided reading technique while teaching reading. This type of technique helps the teacher to easily identify struggling learners, the difficulties they experience and help them develop their reading skills.

The group group-guided reading stimulates interaction between peers which leads to developing reading ability and also encourage collaborative learners. This is in line with the MR and MP principles of social constructivism which encourages the practice of group reading among learners rather than working in solitude because through active interaction, there is a social interaction which leads to a shift in the individual perspective (Kiraly, 2014:34). This

therefore implies that learning is a process that can be influenced by social and cultural change by means of diverse perspectives and encounter.

In chapter 3 of this thesis, it was stated that learners generate their own learning through group activities and discussions. The social constructivist is of the view that knowledge is co-constructed in a given context and that the individual knowledge is a product of that which was co-constructed through co-operative process and learning which in this case is the group-guided reading (Churcher, 2014). This view supports the collaborative/co-operative learning principle of social constructivism which encourages learners to work in groups when learning to read this is because when learners work in groups, they engage with each other, gain more knowledge about the content, and develop their own explanations and gain a better understanding of the context. The teacher's responsibility here is to foster reading habit among learners, guide, model, and participate in the activities of learners. The application of these principles when teaching reading can be argued to be a productive process for both the teacher and learners.

5.11.1.5 Paired reading

In chapter 2, it was mentioned that paired reading is a fluency technique which inspires teachers to pair non-fluent and fluent learners to work together, that is, putting a high fluent reader and a low fluent reader together or a group of readers who are of same level and reading ability. This view corroborates the socio-cultural perspectives of Vygotsky (1978) which states that children learn from a more knowledgeable person who could be a parent, teacher, or a peer. This then suggests that teachers can use group-guided or paired reading for learners of different reading abilities.

The social constructivist is of the opinion that children learn more when they construct and share their ideas with others, and this was observed in Mr. M, Ms. V, and Ms. M's classroom. In this study, paired reading was used as a tool that mediated the reading activities of learners. However, learners did not practice the independent reading, and neither did the teachers utilise the independent reading technique.

5.11.1.6 Rhyme-based play method

As stated in chapter 2, according to Bloch's (1999) observations, that there is lack of classroom practice such as narrative reading, rhyme-based play, and role play in the foundation phase which are relevant to the child's learning process. Classroom literacy practice such as rhyme-based play in the foundation phase reading classroom is crucial because it is centred on interaction between the teacher and learners, and this is a literacy practice that is relevant to learners, because fact that learners come to school with these potentials that they have learnt from their homes and communities. Hence the social constructivist theory stresses that in school, teachers must assist learners progress from their current level to a stage of developed growth which is known as ZPD (Vygotsky, 1994; Kiraly, 2014; Amineh & Asl, 2015). This means that teachers must utilise various approaches that are appropriate so that learners are eager to learn. From the analysed data, it was observed that the teachers lack the skills to get learners aroused or pique their interest for their reading lesson.

As stated in chapter 2, if the learning environment is not conducive and learners are not interested in the teaching and learning process, the level and quality of learners' performance is low, hence teachers must stimulate their learners with various classroom practices which in this case is the rhyme-based play in order to pique their learners' interest to learn and read. The social constructivism theory highlights that children begin to learn and develop their knowledge before they start school (Vygotsky, 1978:57). Furthermore, the social constructivist also stresses that children come to school with some prior knowledge which in this study is rhymes they have learnt from home, and these experiences stimulates and influences their knowledge building and the zeal to learn (ibid).

This therefore implies that the learner's prior knowledge must be recognised by the teacher in order to build new knowledge on it because if the learners' prior knowledge is acknowledged, they become keen to learn and more ambitious hence teachers should use both the cognitive and social approaches when teaching reading. This is in accordance with the research findings of Jaworski (1994) which argues that the prior knowledge, social and physical actions of the learners with the classroom and the activities they are introduced to by the teacher stimulates, supports, and enhances learning activities in the classroom. Furthermore, Jaworski (ibid) also notes that these social activities in the form of rhyme-based play, act as a mediating tool to support learning. This indicates that rhyme-based play helps in arousing learners' interest and

as learners participate in this activity. It fosters a learning and reading practice which can be described as appropriation. From my own teaching experience, appropriation in this context is engaging learners in a rhyme-based play for a special purpose. The principle of appropriation according to the social constructivist theory stresses that learning should not be teacher-centred but that, rather, it should be a collaborative activity between the teacher and the learner (Kiraly, 2014:38). In the context of this study, appropriation engages the learners in a variety of activities such as pictures, flash cards, rhymes, narrative reading, role play and other literacy activities that are relevant in the child's life when teaching reading.

5.11.1.7 Summary: Observation Data analysis

The analysed data above indicates that the teachers' pedagogical practices followed the recommendations of CAPS for the foundation phase of schooling which divided the reading specifications into shared reading, group-guided reading, paired reading etc. This shows that the use of pictures, flash cards, and the CAPS reading specifications were very useful mediating tools for the teaching of reading.

5.11.1.8 Summary: Data presentation and data analysis

In this chapter, I have presented the background context and observations made of both schools, the biographic data of the participants were also presented, and the data gathered from participants and learners by means of semi-structured interviews and non-participant classroom observations were presented and analysed. The data presented from the interviews revealed that there are several factors that could inhibit learners of FAL from reading effectively, develop good reading skills, and also read for comprehension. These factors included the learners home language, lack of parental involvement in the learners' educational activities, large class size, insufficient teaching and learning resources, and WMD. In addition, the data from classroom observation shows that the teachers' pedagogical strategies were useful mediating tools for teaching reading to FAL learners. The following chapter discusses the research findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Chapter Six

Research findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

6 Introduction

This chapter presents this study's research findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Research findings are drawn from data presentation which was analysed using the study's theoretical framework as a tool of analysis. Flowing from the foregoing, this researcher, then, presents her conclusions and recommendations.

The background context and observations made of both schools, and the participants biographical data were presented in the previous chapter. Also, the data collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were also presented and analysed. This chapter therefore focuses on the research findings. The findings of this study are drawn from data collected from semi-structured interviews and observations from Grade 1-3 classrooms in two selected schools situated in Western Cape. The research findings will be consolidated and the new knowledge that has been generated through variety of research techniques will be identified. I present the research findings below.

6.1 Research Findings: A Summary

As mentioned above, the findings are drawn from the analysed semi-structured interviews and observation data. The findings are informed by the study's research questions and objectives as indicated in chapter 1 of this thesis. The key findings of this study are:

- (i) The teaching of English reading to FAL learners revealed that the incorporation of HL, while teaching reading in English, was effective and facilitated learning.
- (ii) The use of mediating tools such as pictures and flash cards to teach reading, enhanced the reading skills and comprehension of FAL learners.
- (iii) The teaching of reading through shared reading, group-guided reading, and paired reading promotes learners centred pedagogical practices which enhance reading skills.
- (iv) The effect of lack of parental involvement and negative attitude towards the learners' educational activities.
- (v) The negative effect of insufficient DBE textbooks and workbooks for learners.

- (vi) Rhyme-based play and RRS motivates and arouses learners' interest during the reading lessons.

Each of these findings is discussed below.

6.2 Discussion of Research Findings

The research findings as stated above are drawn from the analysed data that was gathered by means of semi-structured interviews and observation. These findings will be discussed in detail below.

6.2.1 The teaching of English reading to FAL learners revealed that the incorporation of HL while teaching reading in English was effective and facilitated learning.

The findings from the interview revealed that teachers perceived the learners' home language as a challenge for learners of English as FAL. However, the finding from the observation contrasted with the teachers' viewpoints; this is because the observation of the reading lessons revealed that the learners' HL was a bridge to knowledge building and aided the facilitation of teaching reading which brings about better comprehension and developed reading skills for these learners. This finding supports the viewpoints of Aina et al. (2011) that a learner's first language serves as a solid foundation for the acquisition of a second language. Also, these findings corroborated the findings of Howie et al. (2008) which argued that English is spoken by less than 10% of the South African population and learners are taught English in schools which is a second language to most of them and mastering this L2 becomes a challenge for them. This implies that learners are taught in a language that is strange to them, and this contributes to poor reading skills and comprehension. This is consistent with the viewpoints of Admiral et al. that instructions given to learners in a language foreign to them which in this case is English language leads to the poor reading skills of learners.

Furthermore, the National DoE language policy promotes multilingualism and promotes home based education, that is learners of the foundation phase (Grades 1 to 3) should receive instructions in their HL. Therefore, the incorporation of HL in teaching reading to FAL learners played a crucial role in their literacy teaching and learning. In addition, the theory of social constructivism learning activity should be mediated by cultural tools, and in this study, the cultural tool of the learner is the HL which enhanced the interactions in the classroom.

6.2.2 The use of mediating tools such as pictures and flash cards to facilitate teaching enhanced the reading skills and comprehension of FAL learners.

The findings from the analysed data shows that learners learned and comprehend better when pictures and flash cards were presented. The findings suggest that the use of these mediating tools supported the and enhanced learner's comprehension and reading abilities. This implies that it is important to use such instructional materials to accommodate different learners learning styles and reading abilities. Additionally, the pictures and flashcards captivated and motivated learners, and the teachers were able to pass the content across to all learners despite their level and abilities. This is in line with Stutz et al. (2016) who argue that when learners are motivated to read, it can improv their reading ability by allowing them to decode words and build on their knowledge thereby improving their reading performance.

The pictures and flashcards were displayed during the reading lessons and were used as model texts to guide learners in reading. These resources helped learners to familiarise with the reading content. This finding is consistent with the studies of Grabe and Stroller (2002) that the efficacy of reading is dependent on the instructional and motivational factors including the relevance of the lesson's objective, the activities done in the classroom, suitable instructional materials, and the teachers' sensitivity to learners needs and motivation. Hence, Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism emphasises the use of cultural mediating tools which in this case is the use of pictures and flashcards which encourages learners' participation. Findings from observation in both schools shows that there is enough print materials, and learners have good agency with the print experiences.

Therefore, the use of pictures and flashcards increased learners literacy skills and comprehension and are effective resources for teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. This is because learners increase their reading abilities when the appropriate guidance and instructional resources that promotes cognitive and meta-cognitive skills are provided.

6.2.3 The teaching of reading promotes learners-centred pedagogical practices which enhance reading skills.

The findings of this study revealed a seemingly interesting fact that the use of CAPS reading specifications for teaching reading in the foundation phase promoted a learner-centred practice which was evident in the various leaner-centred approaches that teachers utilise in order to teach reading. The question and answer, shared reading, group-guided reading, paired reading

strategies was utilised. In a learner-centred strategy, learners are actively involved in the teaching and learning process, and there are variety of opportunities for interaction and collaboration/co-operation. These strategies were evident during the observation of reading lessons.

The learner-centred approach seemed to enhance the Foundation Phase learners reading skills. The learner-centred strategy encourages an active participation of the learner with the teacher responsible as a facilitator. This finding is in line with Amineh and Asl (2015) that facilitation by the teacher helps learners to construct their own understanding of new knowledge in a reading lesson class and are able to apply it to the content. This could be argued that the learner-centred approach was effective in enhancing learners reading skills and epistemological access to new knowledge. This approach aligns with the social constructivist theory which emphasises that learners should co-construct knowledge. The learner-centred approach was an effective way to teach reading because the teachers used scaffolding tools such as pictures and flashcards to support learning. In this way, teachers allowed the learners to co-construct knowledge and did not just transfer knowledge during the teaching of reading. Therefore, the role of the teacher here was to enhance learners creative thinking by utilising the learner-centred approach.

6.2.4 The effect of lack of parental involvement and negative attitude towards the learners' educational activities.

The analysed data from the previous chapter revealed that the lack of parental involvement in the learners' educational activities have a negative effect on their educational success. This is in line with the view of Motitswe (2013) that learners whose parents do not involve in their education perform poorly when compared to those whose parents are actively involved in their education. This means that active parental participation and positive attitudes in the teaching and learning process of their children aids in the successful process and it is essential for growth and development.

Additionally, the lack of parental involvement and negative attitude towards their children's education could be detrimental on the learner's performance. This corroborates the view of Adnan et al. (2016) that parents are obliged to assist their children with the schoolwork such as reading. This is because parents serve as a mediator for their children's' reading development. The findings, therefore, implied that when parents are not involved in their

children's school activities specifically with reading. These learners perform below expected and this could impede the learners' reading skills.

6.2.5 The negative effect of insufficient DBE textbooks and workbooks for learners.

Findings from the analysed data in the previous chapter indicated that the insufficient provision of teaching and learning materials such as DBE textbooks and workbooks that are used for teaching English to FAL learners had a negative effect on the teaching and learning process of reading and this can affect the learners' reading ability. This is because when learners do not have access to reading materials, their interest to learn and read diminish. This conforms with the view of Siyothula (2019) that learning materials received by schools from the DBE to assist teachers in teaching reading are not sufficient for all learners.

This is consistent with my findings that learners of English as FAL experience challenge with reading because the appropriate teaching and learning resources was not sufficient for all learners thereby making learners not to effectively develop their reading habits especially in an FAL reading classroom owing to the fact that learning an additional language with no available resources is challenging.

The findings from the observation showed that some learners were unable to do their homework or even participate in class activities because they had no access to the DBE textbooks and workbooks provided for them by the DBE, and this is because it was insufficient for all learners due to the large class size. However, the teachers made provision for the learners', and they had to share among themselves.

The availability of these resources could help learners engage in a variety of print experiences and learn in a practical way. This conforms with the social constructivism theory which emphasises that learning should be rooted in a practical context, and that learning should not be centred on the teacher rather, it should be a collaborative activity between the teacher and the learner. Therefore, this implies that if the DBE provides sufficient resources for all learners, it will enhance the teaching and learning of reading especially to FAL learners of English.

6.2.6 The use of Rhyme-based play and RRS as a teaching strategy to motivates and arouse learners' interest during reading lessons.

The analysed data indicates that most teachers lack the skills to apply a variety of classroom practice when teaching reading specifically in the Foundation Phase. This finding is in line with the observations of Bloch (1999) that South African reading classrooms lack classroom practices such as Rhyme-based play. This study found that in Ms. V's classroom in school B, rhyme-based play, and reward for reading strategies was utilised to motivate learners' interest during the reading lesson. This strategy was effective because I observed that learner's interest aroused before the reading lesson commenced and this was due to the rhymes that was used to introduce the content by the teacher and learners were also engaged to respond to questions asked by the teacher and this was because learners got rewards for answering questions in form of applauds and praises by both teachers and learners.

The findings indicate that the use of rhyme-based play and reward for reading strategies in a reading classroom piqued learners' interest and motivated them to learn and participate in class activities such as question and answers. Given that there is no explicit rhyme with regards to teaching reading in the Foundation Phase, the study findings therefore contribute to new knowledge on teaching reading and could inform policy makers about the benefits of rhyme-based play and the reward for reading in enhancing young learners' motivation and willingness to learn.

The findings presented above have implications for the teaching and learning of reading specifically in the Foundation Phase (Grades 1 to 3). These findings inform not only the pedagogical practices of teachers, but also provide an innovative insight on how rhyme-based play and reward for reading strategies could be used to motivate learners to read. I elaborate the importance of my findings regarding learners HL, pedagogical implications, lack of parental involvement, insufficient teaching and learning resources and lack of classroom practices.

Firstly, the findings show that the learners HL when incorporated during the teaching of reading specifically for FAL learners of English have a great influence and a positive effect on the teaching of literacy. The HL enhanced the teaching of English language reading. It could be said that based on this study, the learners HL incorporation in an English reading lesson for AL learners enhanced comprehension. This HL could therefore be regarded as a cultural tool that effectively mediate reading literacy teaching and learning.

Secondly, the result indicates that pictures and flashcards as mediating tools enhanced learners of the Foundation Phase reading and comprehension. Similarly, the study results align with the principles of social constructivism which advocates for the use of cultural mediating tools (Vygotsky, 1978). This implies that the use of pictures and flashcards for scaffolding could mediate teaching and learning, specifically for FAL learners and learners with WMD. Furthermore, if these scaffolding tools are adequate and learner-centred pedagogical approach is used, they can serve as effective, cultural, cognitive, and meta-cognitive tools for learning. In addition, the results also shows that shared reading, group-guided reading, and paired reading enhanced learners' ability to engage during the teaching and learning process, express their thoughts and ideas, built new knowledge on their existing knowledge, and developed their reading skills. Also, the use of question-and-answer exposed learners to critical thinking.

Thirdly, the findings also reveal that most parents do not support their neither do they involve in their children's education, and this could be due to illiteracy, unemployment, either working late or returning late from work, or may not just be concerned about their child's educational success. Likewise, the study's findings shows that due to the large class sizes, and insufficient teaching and learning resources, learners were unable to participate in classroom activities if the teacher was unable to make provisions for textbooks and workbooks. Also, most learners were unable to do their homework because they had no access to these resources.

Finally, the findings reveal that most Foundation Phase teachers do not know how to apply variety of strategies such as the rhyme-based strategy to motivate and arouse learners' interest particularly when teaching reading to Foundation Phase learners. Additionally, the findings also shows that a learner-centred approach enhances the acquisition of reading skills in the Foundation Phase. Next, I present the conclusion which emanated from the findings of this study in the next section.

6.3 Conclusions

As stated in chapter one of this thesis, reading literacy is still a world-wide issue (Ligembe, 2014:1). Also, in chapter two, it was mentioned that South African schools are still confronted with the crisis of reading literacy (Pretorius & Lephalala, 2011: 10). The poor reading literacy level of learners are shown in the DBE's Annual National Assessments. In addition, research

shows that generally in South Africa, learners reading skills are poorly developed which applies from primary school to tertiary institutions (Pretorius & Mampunu, 2007:47). This implies that many young learners experience difficulties when it comes to reading. It is for this reason that this study investigated the reading challenges experienced by the Foundation Phase learners at two selected primary schools in the Western Cape.

The main research question and sub-questions that guided this study were stated in chapter one. Literatures that are pertinent to this study were reviewed in chapter two, and the theoretical framework that guided this study, the social constructivism theory, was discussed in chapter three. I employed the qualitative research methodology as discussed in detail in chapter four. The previous section of this chapter has presented the findings of this study; therefore, the focus of this section is on the conclusion and recommendations of this study.

The analysed data from the themes that emerged shows that in contrast to the teachers' perspectives that learners home language is a challenge that hinders learners reading development and skills, the home language of learners enhances the learner's comprehension for a better reading skill. Also, it was revealed from the analysis that the lack of parental involvement, large class size, insufficient teaching and learning resources, WMD, were all factors that hinder the learners of English as FAL in the foundation phase from developing their reading skills, reading effectively, and for comprehension. Additionally, the data from the observations also indicated that the common teaching strategies that used by these teachers were question and answer, use of pictures, flash cards, shared reading, group-guided reading, and paired reading. In addition to these strategies, the rhyme-based play and reward for reading strategies were also used by Ms. V, and these were also effective strategies which motivated learners to learn.

These physical tools which were pictures, and flash cards strengthened the learner's knowledge and comprehension when incorporated with the psychological tools which included the language, questions, answers, explanations, and rhymes. The analysis showed that reading skills are not developed in isolation rather it could be achieved and developed during shared reading, group-guided reading, and paired reading. Furthermore, the data analysis revealed that learners can learn better when they are presented with multiple learning opportunities. Therefore, teachers should utilise variety of teaching techniques, and learner level and

intelligence should also be considered this is because only one teaching technique does not accommodate all learners.

A learner-centred approach was implemented by teachers at both schools through question-and-answer, shared reading, group-guided reading, and paired reading. However, In my opinion, I believe that if the independent reading was used along with the paired reading, it might have gone a long way to assist learners who needed more support to read independently. The findings of this study indicate that HL could be used effectively in the teaching of reading to FAL learners. Also, the study found that rhyme-based play and reward for reading strategies are effective ways to motivate learners of the Foundation Phase (Grades 1 to 3) in a reading lesson classroom. The use of pictures and flashcards in this study scaffolded learners to read for comprehension. Therefore, the findings of this study will contribute to new knowledge because the rhyme-based play and reward for reading strategies are not recommended in the Grade R-3 curriculum by CAPS.

Furthermore, the social constructivist theory that guided this study is consistent with the learner-centred approach in that it encourages the co-construction of knowledge by learners. This theoretical framework suggests that learning should be scaffolded using cultural tools which afford learners an opportunity to be practically involved in the teaching and learning process. Learner-centred approaches enhance reading when learners are presented with variety of opportunities to practice reading. The findings of this study reveal that reading specifications such as shared reading, group-guided reading, and paired reading enhanced the reading comprehension and reading skills of learners in the Foundation Phase. This, therefore, implies that all reading specifications as recommended by CAPS should be implemented to support learners of English as FAL.

Finally, In the light of the above, I believe that the implementation of rhyme-based play as a mediating tool in classroom practice for the development of reading skills in the foundation phase will assist the teacher in modelling, teaching reading, and awaken learners' interest in the teaching and learning of reading. Furthermore, I believe that reading could also be taught to learners of FAL in the Foundation Phase with integration of modern technologies such as computers and tablets. This is because we live in the 21st century of emerging technologies. Therefore, learning and teaching of reading could be done through technological devices, and this could facilitate teaching, develop learners' access to new knowledge, promote and enhance

learners' creativity. Additionally, when technical devices such as computers and tablets are used to teach reading, it is possible to create and develop a good learning environment that particularly addresses the individual differences and could be tailored to meet the specific needs of the learners. According to Zainal (2012: 234), using computers in classrooms to teach FAL learners can boost motivation, encourage learner reaction, and improve comprehension. In this way, digital technologies could play a crucial role in the transformation of reading literacy practices and pedagogies in the Foundation Phase of schooling and respond to the needs of the digital world.

6.4 Recommendations

Considering the findings of this study, it is evident that there is still some research to be done regarding the development of reading skills in the Foundation Phase of schooling. Guided by these findings, I recommend the following:

6.4.1 Mandatory attendance of Grade-R class for learners

From the data gathered in school B, teachers expressed their concern on the need for learners to attend Grade-R, this is because Grade-R forms a part of the learner's schooling foundation. Also, the teachers mentioned that learners who did not attend Grade-R experienced much more difficulty which resulted in the challenge that both the learners and teachers experienced when it came to the teaching and learning of reading because they had to teach Grade-R content to these learners even though they were either in Grade 1,2, or 3.

6.4.2 Encouraging multimodality and use of scaffolding in teaching reading.

The findings of this study shows that the learner-centred approach assist learners to read with comprehension when mediating tools were used to scaffold learning. Teachers should, therefore, be encouraged to scaffold learning by utilising various tools such as pictures and flashcards. This is because pictures and flashcards are very useful stimulating learners creative thinking. Teachers could also use tasks to help learners comprehend text better as implemented by teachers in this study. Furthermore, these pictures and flashcards should illustrate the reading content and convey the message of the lesson adequately as learners have different ways of learning, and learners with WMD should be encouraged.

6.4.3 Adequate supply of English literacy resources for Foundation Phase learners

The study findings shows that there is insufficient DBE textbooks and workbooks for the teaching and learning of English language in the Foundation Phase. Therefore, the DBE should provide appropriate and sufficient textbooks and workbooks for all learners as this will aid in the teaching and learning process of reading, help learners develop their reading habit, and help parents to support their learners at home.

6.4.4 Promotion of the integration of home language in English reading classroom

The incorporation of HL in an English reading classroom should be promoted, and teachers encouraged to integrate the HL when teaching. The findings of this study reveal that learners of English as FAL read and comprehend better when the content was presented and explained to them in their HL. Hence, I argue that the incorporation of HL enhanced reading and comprehension.

6.4.5 Integration of technology into the teaching of reading

We live in a world where digital technologies are emerging fast. Therefore, digital technologies could be used for the teaching of reading to FAL learners. The reading skills of FAL learners could also be developed with these technologies. Literacy goes beyond reading and writing and its practices include the use of these technologies. This implies that the use of computers and tablets could promote digital literacy and add more value to reading and motivate learners if teachers could infuse the use of technology into their pedagogical practices.

6.4.6 Promotion of the incorporation of rhyme-based play and Reward for Reading strategies in the teaching of reading

The findings of my study reveal that Foundation Phase learners were motivated and eager to learn when the rhyme-based play and reward for reading strategies were used by a teacher in school B. In line with this finding, therefore, I would recommend that rhyme-based play and RRS be incorporated into the strategies used by teachers in an English reading lesson classroom to motivate and arouse learners' interest. Furthermore, I suggest that the rhyme-based play and RRS be incorporated because if the learners are motivated and the teaching and learning environment is conducive for learning, learners will be more interested in the teaching and learning process.

6.4.7 Sensitisation of parents on the significance of their involvement in their child's education

The DBE, school management team, and school governing body (SGB) should sensitise parents on the need to have a positive attitude towards their children's education and the significant role they play in the development of reading skills, good reading habits, and the educational growth and success of their children.

6.4.8 The pass one, pass all policy by the DBE should be abolished

The study finding also reveals that one of the major challenges experienced by teachers of the Foundation Phase is that most learners are moved to the next class at the end of the term even if they are not prepared or ready for it. This is because the teachers expressed their worries that the DBE in 2020, came up with the policy of "pass on, pass all" without considering if these learners are fit for the next grade or not. Therefore, I would suggest that the pass one, pass all policy be reconsidered and abolished as it has a negative effect on both the teachers and learners.

6.5 Suggestions for further research

The findings of this study suggest that more empirical research could be conducted in the teaching of reading to FAL learners in the Foundation Phase. The following are feasible studies.

- The significance of rhyme-based play and reward for reading as strategies for motivating and enhancing learners reading skills.
- Action research on the incorporation of Home Language in teaching FAL learners reading in the Foundation Phase.
- The role of parents in the development of learners reading skills.
- The importance of Grade- R for young learners.

6.6 Contribution to new knowledge

As stated in chapter one, the purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges experienced by learners of English as FAL. Although the study was conducted in two selected primary schools in the Western Cape Province of South Africa, its findings are relevant and useful in the broader South African setting as they provide insights on how teachers teach reading and

how scaffolding, CAPS specifications of reading, rhyme-based play, and RRS could be used to enhance reading skills and motivate learners of the Foundation phase.

This study has contributed to new knowledge particularly about the incorporation of HL in the teaching of English to FAL learners, and the use of rhyme-based play as strategies to motivate and arouse learners' interest because most teachers lack these skills and are unaware of its positive effect in an FAL classroom and are unable to utilise these strategies. This study therefore provides a new perspective on how teachers can motivate FAL learners through rhyme-based play and RRS and enhance reading and comprehension through the incorporation of HL.

This study has added more value to the body of knowledge on teacher pedagogies, especially with regards to the use of mediating tools to scaffold learning. In addition, this study has shown that the sensitisation of parents on the significant role they play in their child's educational success is crucial. Furthermore, teachers also should understand that learners' levels and abilities differ and so, different pedagogical approaches and appropriate resources to scaffold learning should be utilised.

Finally, this study also revealed that the learner-centred approach enhances learning and comprehension through co-construction of knowledge and teacher guidance. It is crucial for teachers to acknowledge that learners come to school with prior knowledge that is gained from their socio-cultural environment, and that they should assist learners to build new knowledge on the existing one.

In light of the above, I conclude that the incorporation of HL is an effective cultural tool that mediate and enhance reading and comprehension in the FAL English reading classroom. Also, the use of rhyme-based play and RRS are effective pedagogical strategies to motivate and pique learner's interest in an FAL English reading classroom.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: COVID—19 PROTOCOLS

COVID-19 PROTOCOL



Department of Language
Education
Faculty of Education
University of the Western Cape
Bellville
8000

Title of the research project

Reading challenges experienced by the foundation phase learners.

GUIDELINES ON RESEARCH STUDY: DATA COLLECTION DURING COVID-19

NATIONAL LOCKDOWN PERIOD (IN THE EVENT OF AN ONLINE INTERVIEW).

Interviews and observations assist as a part of data collection tools in a study. Therefore, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, to enable me gather data for my postgraduate studies (M.Ed. data collection), the following protocols will be adopted:

IN THE CASE OF A FIELD DATA COLLECTION (FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPANTS AND CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS).

The COVID-19 protocols will be strictly observed by the researcher and participants, that is, wearing of nose mask at all times within the school premises, sanitising of hands, and 1.5 meters apart from each other (social distancing) during the interview session and the classroom observations.

INTERVIEWING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS ONLINE.

To conduct an online interview with the participants, the platforms that might be used for this study will include MS Teams, Google meetings, and Zoom. Participants will be provided with the link to join these meeting prior to the actual meeting. This is to inform participants of what is expected of them and to ascertain to the following:

- If the participants have any questions about these platforms.

- To test if the online platforms to be used are working properly, and that it would not give any problems. However, if there is, an alternative platform will be recommended for use.
- Participants will be informed that they would need to turn off their camera/video as this is not needed for the study.

INTERNET ACCESS FOR PARTICIPANTS (TEACHERS).

- The researcher will be liable for the data to be used by the participant during the interviews.

PREPARATION.

- The meeting links to be used for the interview, will be shared with the participant prior to the interview by the researcher.
- The researcher must ensure that participants are aware of the exact date and time for the interview.
- Participants will be informed to choose a quiet space for the interview to avoid any background distraction.

EXPECTATIONS FROM BOTH THE RESEARCHER AND PARTICIPANT.

- There is need for the researcher to explain to the participant why the interview is conducted online rather than a face-to-face interview.
- The researcher will be expected to notify the participant in advance when the interview will be scheduled, the platform to be used, and a reminder on the day of the interview.
- Participants will be allowed to ask questions in advance regarding the interviews. This is to avoid any anomalies that the participant might have.

PARTICIPANTS HEALTH.

Although the study would be conducted online, the participants health must be considered. If the participant is not feeling well at the time of the interview, they are allowed to reschedule another appointment.

IN A CASE WHERE THE PARTICIPANT DECIDES TO WITHDRAW OR REFUSE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY.

When a participant decides to withdraw or refuse to participate in the study, s/he should let the researcher know that they wish to withdraw. However, a participant may decide to provide the researcher with reason(s) for leaving the study.

APPENDIX B: RESEACRCH APPROVAL LETTERS

I Research approval letter from the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics (HSSREC) Committee of the University of the Western Cape.



UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE



20 October 2021

Ms A Oyowe
Language Education
Faculty of Education

HSSREC Reference Number: HS21/8/22

Project Title: Reading challenges experienced by the Foundation Phase learners at two selected primary schools in the Western Cape

Approval Period: 20 October 2021 – 20 October 2024

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology, and amendments to the ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

Please remember to submit a progress report by 30 November each year for the duration of the project.

For permission to conduct research using student and/or staff data or to distribute research surveys/questionnaires please apply via:
<https://sites.google.com/uwc.ac.za/permissionresearch/home>

The permission letter must then be submitted to HSSREC for record keeping purposes.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse events and/or termination of the study.

*Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape*

NHREC Registration Number: HSSREC-130416-049

Director: Research Development
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X 17
Bellville 7535
Republic of South Africa
Tel: +27 21 959 4111
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.

II Research approval letter from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED)



Directorate: Research

meshack.kanzi@westerncape.gov.za

Tel: +27 021 467 2350

Fax: 086 590 2282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20211104-7336

ENQUIRIES: Mr M Kanzi

Ms Anthonia Oyowe
Aurora Place, Unit 49
Suikerbos Road
Belhar 7
7493

Dear Ms Anthonia Oyowe,

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: READING CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY THE FOUNDATION PHASE LEARNERS AT TWO SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE WESTERN CAPE.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **02 November 2021 till 31 March 2023**.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Mr M Kanzi at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards,
Meshack Kanzi

Directorate: Research

DATE: 4 November 2021

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'MK' or similar initials, written over a horizontal line.

Lower Parliament Street, Cape Town, 8001
tel: +27 21 467 9272 fax: 0865902282
Safe Schools: 0800 45 46 47

Private Bag X9114, Cape Town, 8000
Employment and salary enquiries: 0861 92 33 22
www.westerncape.gov.za

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION LETTERS

I Permission letter to the school's principal



LETTER OF PERMISSION TO PRINCIPAL

Dear Sir/Madam,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSISON TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL.

I am a master's student at the University of the Western Cape, currently doing my research under the supervision of Prof Simphiwe Sesanti, a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education, Department of Language and Literacy Studies. My research is to investigate the challenges of reading faced by learners in the foundation phase.

The aim of this study is to examine the reading challenges experienced by the foundation phase learners, and to explore how these challenges have been addressed.

I am therefore asking for your permission to allow me to conduct this research in your school, which would involve both the students and teachers. The experience and expertise of your teachers in relation to the research topic would be of utmost importance for this study. Also, a letter requesting permission from the teachers as participants as well as the parents of the students in this study will be sent to them after your permission is granted. Also, an information sheet stating the purpose of this study will also be sent to the participants. The study will involve an interview of about 30 minutes with the participants, which will take place in a mutually agreed location, and at a time convenient for them. An observation will also be done during the teaching and learning process with the students.

Their participation will be voluntary, and they may withdraw at any point without any consequences. All information provided by the participants will be treated as confidential and anonymous. Also with your permission, I would like to use an audio recorder during the interview and a camera to capture teaching aids used during the observation of teaching and learning process. Also, the COVID-19 protocols will be strictly adhered to during the interviews and observations. If you would like to know more about this research project, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor using the details given below.

Sincerely,

Date: 18/08/2021

Researcher: Ms. A. Oyowe

Tel: 0826417553

Email: an.oyowe@gmail.com

Supervisor: Prof. Simphiwe Sesanti

Tel: 0833943211

Email: ssesanti@uwc.ac.za

Website: www.uwc.ac.za

II Permission letter to the school's governing body (SGB)



LETTER OF PERMISSION TO THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

The Chairperson,
School Governing Body (SGB),

Dear Sir/Madam,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL.

I am a master's student at the University of the Western Cape, currently doing my research under the supervision of Prof Simphiwe Sesanti, a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education, Department of Language and Literacy Studies. My research is to investigate the challenges of reading faced by learners of English in the foundation phase i.e., Grades 1, 2 and 3 in Western Cape.

The aim of this study is to examine the reading challenges experienced by the foundation phase learners, and to explore how these challenges have been addressed.

I am therefore asking for your permission to allow me to conduct this research in your school, which would involve both the students and teachers. My research involves observing the teaching of reading in a Grades 1, 2 and 3 classrooms. The class teacher will be interviewed. Class activities will be audio recorded with the teacher's permission. All participants in the research will get consent forms. Participation is voluntary. This means that participants can withdraw from the research at any time they choose to do so. The names of all participants will be kept anonymous.

The research process will not hinder teaching and learning. I will adhere to ethical standards, COVID-19 protocols, and respect learners, teachers, and the school. Parents will sign on behalf of their children. The information about the school, teachers and learners will be kept confidential. The information provided will only be used for the purpose of the study. Lastly, I will give you a hard copy of the research findings before they are published. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Date: 18/08/2021

Researcher: Ms. A. Oyowe
Tel: 0826417553
Email: an.oyowe@gmail.com
Supervisor: Prof. Simphiwe Sesanti
Tel: 0833943211
Email: ssesanti@uwc.ac.za

HSSREC Research Ethics
Tel: 0219594111
research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

Website: www.uwc.ac.za

University of the Western Cape, Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, South Africa.

APPENDIX D: INFORMATION SHEETS

I Information sheet for teachers



INFORMATION SHEET TO TEACHERS

Dear Teacher,

I am a master's student at the University of the Western Cape, currently doing my research. My research is to investigate the reading challenges experienced by the foundation phase learners.

The research aims to examine the challenges of reading in the foundation phase and to explore how such investigations have been addressed.

Your qualification, years of service, and expertise in relation to the research topic would be of utmost importance for this study. Your participation will involve an interview of about 30 minutes, which will take place in a mutually agreed location, and at a time convenient for you.

Your participation will be voluntary, and you may withdraw at any point without any consequences. All information provided by you will be treated as confidential and anonymous. Although, there are no foreseeable risk, however, in the case of any unforeseen circumstance, you are entitled to refuse or withdraw from the study. Also with your permission, I would like to use an audio recorder during the interview.

If you are willing to participate, I will like you to sign the consent letter which follows on the next page.

If you would like to know more about this research project, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor using the details given below.

Sincerely,

Date: 18/08/2021

Researcher: Ms. A. Oyowe
Cell: 0826417553
Email: an.oyowe@gmail.com

Supervisor: Prof. Simphiwe Sesanti
Tel: 0833943211
Email: ssesanti@uwc.ac.za

HSSREC Research Ethics
Tel: 0219594111
research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

Website: www.uwc.ac.za

University of the Western Cape, Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, South Africa.

II Information sheet for parents



INFORMATION LETTER TO PARENT

Dear Parent,

I am a master's student at the University of the Western Cape, currently doing my research under the supervision of Prof Simphiwe Sesanti, a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education, Department of Language and Literacy Studies. My research is to investigate the challenges of reading faced by learners in the foundation phase.

You are kindly invited to participate in a research project entitled, **“Reading challenges experienced by the foundation phase learners”**.

The aim of this study is to examine the challenges of reading in the foundation phase of the learner, and to explore how these challenges have been addressed.

I am therefore asking for your permission to allow your child to participate in my research in the school. An observation of the teaching and learning processes will be done in the classroom, and your child's participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw your child from the study at any anytime without any negative consequences. All information provided by your child will be considered completely confidential. Also with your permission, I would like to use a camera to capture the teaching aids used by the teacher and an audio recorder during the observation.

If you have any questions or would like to know more about this research project to assist you in reaching a decision, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor using the details given below.

If you are willing to allow your child to participate in this study, I will request you to sign the consent letter which follows on the next page.

Sincerely,

Date: 18/08/2021

Researcher: Ms. A. Oyowe
Tel: 0826417553
Email: an.oyowe@gmail.com

Supervisor: Prof. Simphiwe Sesanti
Tel: 0833943211
Email: ssesanti@uwc.ac.za

HSSREC Research
Tel: 0219594111
research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

Website: www.uwc.ac.za

University of the Western Cape, Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, South Africa.

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I Consent form for teachers



CONSENT FORM TO TEACHERS

I (full name and surname).....
hereby confirm that I have been fully informed about the nature, purpose, and procedures for the study entitled,
“Reading challenges experienced by the foundation phase learners”.

I have received, read, and understood the written information about the research project. I understand that I will have anonymity in the final report and information collected will be used for the sole purpose of the study.

I also understand that I may withdraw from the research project at anytime, and without any consequence.

Signature of participant

Date

Sincerely,

Date: 18/08/2021

Researcher: Ms. A. Oyowe
Tel: 0826417553
Email: an.oyowe@gmail.com

Supervisor: Prof. Simphiwe Sesanti
Tel: 0833943211
Email: ssesanti@uwc.ac.za

HSSREC Research Ethics
Tel: 0219594111
research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

Website: www.uwc.ac.za

University of the Western Cape, Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, South Africa.

II Consent form for parents



CONSENT FORM TO PARENT

I (full name and surname).....Parent to (full name and surname).....In grade..... hereby confirm that I have been fully informed about the nature, purpose, and procedures for the study.

I have received, read, and understood the written information and the contents of your letter requesting me to allow my child to participate in your research study entitled, “Reading challenges experienced by the foundation phase learners”.

I also understand that you will be expected to observe him/her in the classroom, and I may withdraw my child from the research study at anytime, and without any consequence. I have decided as follows:

Option A

I give my permission for my child to participate in the study.

Signature..... Date.....

Option B

I do not give permission for my child to participate in the study. My reasons are:

.....
.....

Signature..... Date.....

Sincerely,

Date: 18/08/2021

Researcher: Ms. A. Oyowe
Cell: 0826417553
an.oyowe@gmail.com

Supervisor: Prof. Simphiwe Sesanti
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APPENDIX F: ASSENT FORM

I Assent form for learners




ASSENT FORM FOR LEARNERS

PROJECT TITLE: "Reading challenges experienced by the foundation phase learners".

I, Oyowe Anthonia wish to inform you that there is a study that I will conduct in your school particularly with the Foundation Phase learners and their teachers. The study is about reading challenges experienced by Foundation Phase learners of English as First Additional Language (FAL). The researcher will work with all learners from Grade 1-3. You are free to discuss this with your parents before getting involved in the study. By writing my name down on this form, I, _____, understand that my parent or guardian have given permission for me to take part in the above research project carried out by Ms. Oyowe Anthonia from the University of the Western Cape in South Africa. She has told me what the project is all about and has also read the Information Sheet to me. I understand what the project is all about. By saying YES, I give the researcher permission to:

- Watch my teacher teach while I am in the classroom

All information given in the study will be private and will be used only for research by the researcher, Ms. Oyowe Anthonia. This means that no one else who is not part of my school will know that I took part. This will be done by not giving my name or by disguising it. I know that I can say YES if I want to take part in the project. I also know that I can say NO if I want to leave the project at any time without getting into any trouble.
Learners Signature..... Date.....

Researcher's Signature... 

Date 18/09/2021

Researcher: Ms. A. Oyowe
Cell: 0826417553
an.oyowe@gmail.com

Supervisor: Simphiwe Sesanti
Tel: 0833943211
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APPENDIX G: BIOGRAPHIC DATA

I Teachers biographic data questions



BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Please tick x in the appropriate box.

Age: 20 – 30 31 – 40 41-50 51-60 Other Specify

Sex: Male Female

Highest Academic Qualification: Diploma B.Ed. Honours B.Ed.

M.Ed. PhD

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APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS

I Sample of interview schedule for teachers



INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS

- 1) How many years have you been teaching?
- 2) How is your qualification relevant for teaching in the foundation phase?
- 3) What is your class size, and how has your class size affected your teaching of reading?
- 4) How do you teach reading?
- 5) Does your method of teaching reading affect the learners' reading abilities? If yes, how? If no, why?
- 6) How is reading promoted in your school?
- 7) What kind of challenges do you experience when teaching reading to learners of English as First Additional Language (FAL) in your school?
- 8) What kind of resources is available to facilitate the teaching of reading in your school?
- 9) How does the home language of learners affect the teaching of reading in English language, and the reading abilities of the learners?
- 10) How do parents support their children in reading?
- 11) How do you cope with learners of English as First Additional Language (FAL)?

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APPENDIX I: CHECKLIST FOR CLASSROOM OBSERAVTION

I Sample of classroom observation checklist (learners)



CHECKLIST FOR CLASSROOM OBSERVATION (LEARNERS)

- 1) Amount of print experience.
- 2) Type of print experienced.
- 3) Nature of print experiences: Student agency with print.
- 4) Type of classroom activity.

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APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE, POST CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

I Sample of guidelines for teacher interview, post classroom observation



INTERVIEW SCHEDULE, POST CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

- 1) What would you say was the main content of the lesson in terms of reading literacy?
- 2) Why did you choose to teach this particular content?
- 3) Have you prepared the class for this lesson content? That is, have you done any other lessons involving the literacy content?
- 4) Why did you choose the method used in teaching the student?
- 5) Was the literacy content different for different children? If so, how?
- 6) How will you follow up this lesson?

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