

**THE IDENTIFICATION OF ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE
READING DIFFICULTIES IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE
IN THE NORTH-WEST PROVINCE**

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SUMMARY

THE IDENTIFICATION OF ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE READING DIFFICULTIES IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN THE NORTH-WEST PROVINCE

The aim of the study was to establish what knowledge and skills Foundation Phase educators have in the identification and support of reading difficulties in English Home Language (EHL) in the Foundation Phase.

The methodology encompassed a literature study and a qualitative empirical study based on the literature study. The qualitative empirical study was designed by way of an open questionnaire to obtain the personal views of educators in the North-West Province (Potchefstroom) about their own knowledge and skills.

The results indicate that the educators in this study seemingly only have limited to moderate knowledge of and skill in the identification of language, literacy and reading difficulties in EHL.

The knowledge they lack is about learners' difficulties in recognising and identifying letters and/or words, in saying words, and in comprehending sentences and paragraphs. In other words, educators have limited knowledge of reading decoding and comprehension difficulties, and of reading support techniques.

It can therefore be concluded that Foundation Phase educators in this study in the North-West Province seemingly are in need of pre-service, as well as in-service training, in the identification and support of reading difficulties. It is recommended that all Foundation Phase educators be trained (through pre- or in-service training) to identify and support reading difficulties.

OPSOMMING

DIE IDENTIFISERING VAN ENGELS EERSTE TAAL LEESHINDERNISSE IN DIE GRONDSLAGFASE IN DIE NOORD-WES PROVINSIE

Die doel van die studie was om te bepaal oor watter kennis en vaardighede onderwysers in die Grondslagfase beskik om leeshindernisse in Engels Eerste Taal (EET) te identifiseer en ondersteun.

Die metodologie het 'n literatuurstudie asook 'n kwalitatiewe empiriese studie behels, wat gebaseer is op die literatuurstudie. Die empiriese studie is rondom 'n oop vraelys beplan, om persoonlike menings van die onderwysers te verkry oor hul eie identifiserings- en ondersteuningskennis van leeshindernisse in EET.

Die resultate toon dat die onderwysers in hierdie studie klaarblyklik net oor beperkte tot redelike kennis van lees-, taal- en geletterdheidshindernisse beskik. Dit ontbreek hulle aan kennis van leerders wat leeshindernisse ervaar in terme van die herkenning en identifisering van letters en woorde, en van die begrip van sinne en paragrawe. Die onderwysers het dus slegs beperkte tot redelike kennis van leeshindernisse in terme van woorddekodering en begrip, asook van leesondersteuningstegnieke.

Die gevolgtrekking kan dus gemaak word dat die Grondslagfase-onderwysers in hierdie studie in die Noord-Wes Provinsie klaarblyklik vooropleiding asook indiensopleiding benodig in die identifisering en ondersteuning van leeshindernisse in EET.

Dit word aanbeveel dat alle Grondslagfase-onderwysers opleiding ontvang in die identifisering en ondersteuning van leeshindernisse.

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THE IDENTIFICATION OF ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE READING DIFFICULTIES IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN THE NORTH-WEST PROVINCE

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM STATEMENT, AIM OF STUDY, METHODOLOGY, DESCRIPTION OF CONCEPTS, AND PROGRAMME OF STUDY.

1. INTRODUCTION

Being shocked to hear that a learner has learning difficulties is natural. It is when shock turns into denial, a refusal to act or even the incapability to act, that parents and educators let children down (Snow, Burns & Griffen, 1998:14 ; Chronis, 2000:43).

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby, 1991:334) defines a difficulty as "a task requiring effort or skill", "a task not easy", "a difficult problem", "children have problems then", "a state or quality of being difficult, trouble or effort". Landsberg, Kruger & Nel (2005:18) defines a learning difficulty as a problem that may arise when basic scholastic activities are missed. The term learning difficulties refers to a range of difficulties with receiving, processing, expressing or retrieving information, any of which may affect the learner's ability to function effectively in one or more areas (such as reading, spelling, grammar, following directions, spatial relations and numbers) (DOE, 2002a:14). Put simply, a learner has a learning difficulty when he fails to learn to read, write and compute, thereby staying functionally illiterate (Chronis, 2000:43). Learners with learning difficulties take a long time to do their work. Learners with learning difficulties need special encouragement from the educator to help the learner with learning difficulties to complete learning tasks (Winkler, 2005:1).

The causes of learning difficulties can be extrinsic or intrinsic in nature (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:363). Learning difficulties can be the result of physical, emotional, perception,

movement and co-ordination difficulties, language difficulties, spelling and reading difficulties, concentration difficulties, poor educational experiences or the impact of HIV/AIDS on the learners' lives.

Learning difficulties should not be linked with a lack of "brightness" (Excell, 2005:90; Winkler, 2005:9). Learners with learning difficulties are often very bright, but because they experience some barrier to learning, they make many mistakes and get frustrated or feel discouraged (Winkler, 2005:9). Learners with learning difficulties are not mentally handicapped; generally they have some normal intellectual potential (Chronis, 2000:43; Winkler, 2005:1).

If educators treat learners who have a learning difficulty as if the learners were lazy and unintelligent, the educators are breaking down the learners' self-confidence and the educator then make learning very difficult for the learner (Winkler, 2005:9). Learners with learning difficulties will not cope with their schoolwork unless they get extra support in the classroom (Winkler, 2005:1). Most learners with learning difficulties find their school work difficult because they were not well prepared for the demands that are now made on them in school (Winkler, 2005:1). For various reasons, learners with learning difficulties were not able to develop the skills they need in the classroom (Winkler, 2005:1).

The new focus in the South African curriculum on learner participation has made many educators aware of how complex learning really is (Winkler, 2005:viii). The Education White Paper 6 (DOE, 2001:3) makes it clear that there has been a shift in the way the education department thinks about learners with learning difficulties (Winkler, 2005:viii). In the past the learning difficulties were ascribed to the learners only (Winkler, 2005:viii). Educators need to understand how learners with learning difficulties learn (Winkler, 2005:8).

Human learning does not take place on a single level, but learning is a stratified process (Strydom & du Plessis, 2000:77). Strydom & du Plessis (2000:77) suggest that there are certain preliminary skills that need to be mastered first, before any person can learn the skills of any game. The same applies to reading (Strydom & du Plessis, 2000:77). Some learners' reading difficulties are so severe that they are not able to cope with any learning

area at school (Strydom & du Plessis, 2000:77).

Although they reach the outcomes set for a learning area, their achievement is not according to their potential (Strydom & du Plessis, 2000:77). Some learners experience difficulties in only some learning areas or some aspects of the learning areas. The work of a number of these learners improves when educators give more qualitative attention to the learners and to their work (Strydom & du Plessis, 2000:77).

All learners do not learn the same way. Some learners learn through words. Other learners learn by looking and doing. Most learners learn best if presented with a mixture of both verbal and visual activities (Winkler, 2005:75).

Language and communication form the basis of the process of learning. Without the ability to understand language and express messages, learners become isolated and unable to learn (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:91). Learners need to be interested in the activity to engage in the activity (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:91). The engagement will facilitate the mastering of skills in the process. A learner who is not able to engage and get involved has difficulties participating in the learning process. Active participation through action and communication facilitates learning (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:91).

Learners with learning difficulties may experience a number of barriers to learning (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:27). A barrier is an obstacle or circumstance that keeps people or things apart (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:27). A barrier prevents communication and bars access to advancement (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:27).

Barriers to learning in the South African context include:

- Socio-economical deprivation like poverty, lack of access to basic services, exposure to danger, inaccessible environments and unsafe buildings, unplanned urbanization and unemployment.
- Barriers arising from impairments include physical, cognitive, sensory, development and learning impairments.
- Negative attitudes and stereotyping of differences, negative expectations of the future.

- Inappropriate language of learning and teaching.
- Cultural differences.
- Inadequate policies and legislation.
- Lack of parental recognition and involvement and the disintegration of family life.
- The decline of moral, and value systems.
- Violence and child abuse.
- HIV/Aids (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:18,28).

Approximately 40% of young learners in South Africa grow up in conditions of abject poverty. It is well known that learners born and raised in poverty are at risk of delayed development, poor adjustment to school and learning difficulties (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:79). In South Africa, which is a developing country, there is a great number of learners submitted to circumstances such as poverty, malnutrition, poor medical care and intellectual and emotional deprivation (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:15; Dawes and Donald, 1994:98; Palinscar & Perry, 1995:331). These factors contribute to learners in the Foundation Phase experiencing reading difficulties (Palinscar & Perry, 1995:331).

When learners have difficulties with learning, educators usually notice the learners' behaviour difficulties first (Winkler, 2005:6). When learners find it difficult to learn, they usually hide their learning difficulties behind disruptive behaviour (Winkler, 2005:6). Behaviour difficulties may be a mask for learners' coping difficulty, and may manifest as frustration, rebellion, depression, withdrawal or even aggression (Snow, Burns & Griffen, 1998:83). It is very important to pay attention to the quiet learners who never try on their own. These quiet learners may try to hide their learning difficulties by hiding themselves (Winkler, 2005:6). There is evidence to suggest that learners who encounter difficulty with learning to read fall further and further behind their achieving peers (Pikulski, 1997:1). Learners who experience learning difficulties seem to be shy when they have to communicate in class situations. Learners with learning difficulties often give the impression that they are unsure of what they say. Anxiety, insecurity and lack of motivation, hostility, aggression and passive distancing are just a few of the emotional behaviours that are characteristic of learners with learning difficulties (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:130).

Reading difficulties may result in learners experiencing a variety of feelings such as fear; refusing to read; aggression; being unsure; crying; frustration; seeking to escape; depression; feelings of inadequacy; feelings of being stupid; feelings of failure; feelings of letting down parents; afraid to be scolded by parents or educator and lack of motivation. The effect of reading difficulties can be seen in the behaviour of the learner encountering reading difficulties (Hancock & Wingert, 1996a:11; Du Toit, 1996:244; Pikulski, 1997:1; Winkler, 2005:90). The learner receive poor grades; are easily frustrated; have difficulty completing assignments; have low self-esteem; have behaviour problems; have more physical illnesses due to stress; do not like school; grow up to be shy in front of groups and fail to develop to his/her full potential.

Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) makes provision for the development of the unique potential of each learner. The contents of the curriculum, the teacher's teaching strategies and methods as well as classroom management are adapted to suit the potential of the learner (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:75). OBE promotes a vision of "a prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country with literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice" (DOE, 2002d:4). By introducing Curriculum 2005 and OBE the process of learning becomes as important as the content. Curriculum 2005 and OBE emphasize the process of learning by spelling out the outcomes to be achieved at the end of the learning process. OBE is "an education theory that guides curriculum by setting goals for students to accomplish" (Mulholland, 2000:6). The principles of OBE say it all: Design down; Clarity of Focus; Expectations and Expanded Opportunities (DOE, 2002a:5). OBE is aimed at stimulating the minds of young people so that they are able to participate fully in economic and social life, develop and achieve to their maximum ability and to be equipped for lifelong learning (DOE, 2002d:12). Van Loggerenberg (2005:7) states however that both the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) and The White Paper 6 will only come into practice when the in-time delivery of learning material to both educators and learners becomes a priority to the Department of Education (DOE).

The vision of The Education White Paper 6 is to develop an inclusive education system. The vision of The Education White Paper 6 means more than simply fitting learners with

disabilities or with learning difficulties into ordinary classes. It gives schools the responsibility of becoming accessible and caring learning communities (Winkler, 2005:viii), and presents a shift away from labeling learners according to their difficulties, towards accommodating the full range of learner needs (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:18,79). This process will require a phasing in of strategies that are directed at departmental, institutional, instructional and curriculum transformation (DOE, 2001:12).

The focus of the Education White Paper 6 is to support learners who experience barriers to learning with mainstream educational contexts wherever possible. Inclusion requires changing the culture and organization of the school so as to create sustainable systems and structures which develop and support flexible and adaptable approaches to learning. This does not happen automatically. It demands that principles, educators and the school community possess knowledge and skills in educational change and school reform (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:19). In the process of adapting to the new school curriculum, the basic principle for successful learning, which is reading, was however neglected.

Reading is the most important skill a learner can learn at school. Reading is the foundation for all formal learning (Winkler, 2005:83). A "foundation" is the natural or prepared ground or base on which some structures rest (Strydom & Du Plessis, 2000:77). This means that the foundation skills of reading would refer to skills that form the prepared ground or base on which the structure of reading rests (Strydom & Du Plessis, 2000:77). This would further mean that, unless this base has been prepared adequately, no effective reading can take place (Strydom & Du Plessis, 2000:77).

Good reading skills can prevent many learning difficulties in later years (Winkler, 2005:83). In this regard Ostrowiak (1977:3) and Van Loggerenberg (2005:7) also stress the importance of the appropriate foundation for learning and reading in the foundation phase: "A naturally intelligent child who has insufficient foundation will be incapable of reading and thus handicapped in all his school subjects as every subject entails the ability to read and spell".

Learning to read is a sequential process, each new skill builds on the mastery of previously learned skills (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:122). Reading is the understanding of written language (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:122). When learners read they decode the graphic symbols and integrate the information embedded in the orthographic symbols into their inner language system in order to extract meaning from the text (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:122). Reading is a language act, as all the language dimensions are involved while a learner is reading (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:124).

A reading difficulty entails difficulty in identifying letters and/or words, a difficulty in saying and seeing words and difficulty in comprehension (extracting meaning from text) (Bergert, 2000:1). A reading difficulty occurs as a breakdown or disruption in the communication between a reader and an author or between a reader and what is being read (Francis, 1999:1, 5 ; Levine, 2002b:3) or as a result of language problems (De Witt & Booyesen, 1995:95).

Some readers read very fast but inaccurate. They have difficulty giving attention to the reading content while they read and have to reread parts of the text repeatedly and then lose the meaning of the rest of what they have already read. They cannot distinguish between relevant and unimportant information and treat everything in the same detail (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:136).

Most other readers however read very slow and cannot remember what they have read. Poor readers do not know how to pick out information from a book and give up when they try to read a whole book at once. Many learners struggle with reading longer passages and never read for enjoyment. As a result, these learners with reading difficulties avoid reading.

Educators often feel that they do not have enough knowledge to support learners with learning difficulties (Winkler, 2005:105). Through pre-service and in-service training, educators can acquire instructional and technical skills to identify and support learners with reading difficulties. Educators often underestimate the importance of their role in determining a child's future success, especially in the Foundation Phase (Strydom & Du Plessis, 2000:15). However, educators and staff in the schools as well as the school

auxiliary services in the North-West Province specifically, report that they are not equipped to perform appropriate identification, assessment and support activities (TTA, 2002:3). It will therefore be necessary to train educators in the appropriate identification, assessment and support of learners with learning difficulties, and especially reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase.

According to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) of the Department of Education (DOE, 2002d:8) educators of Foundation Phase learners should be capable of identifying any difficulties and stumbling-blocks learners may experience. Educators of Foundation Phase learners should also be capable of supporting these difficulties that they identify. Merton (2005:17) states however, that “educators do not receive enough support and guidance from the education department and that educators struggle to cope with the different needs of too many learners in the classrooms”.

Educator development is more powerful in encouraging improved teaching practices when it is set within the school context and addresses day-to-day concerns of educators. These kinds of experiences cannot be obtained from only attending workshops. The ability to transfer knowledge into everyday classroom practice requires planned application and “on-the-job” support. This requires that time be set aside for educators to work in teams and support one another (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:20).

Educators need systematic and intensive training, either as part of their initial training or as well-planned in-service training by competent and experienced people (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:61). Educators also need additional educator assistants who can support them in identifying as well as supporting learners with reading difficulties. They also need adequate learning support materials and assistive devices appropriate for the needs of learners with reading difficulties.

The White Paper 6 stresses that: “We will require that all curriculum development, assessment, and instructional development programmes make special effort to address the learning and teaching requirements of the diverse range of learning needs, and that they address barriers to learning that arise from language and the medium of instruction,

teaching style and pace; time frame for the completion of curricula; learning support materials and equipment; and assessment methods and techniques (DOE, 2001:49).

The White Paper also clearly states that educators (in the Foundation Phase) are primarily resources for achieving the goal of inclusive education. Support to learners in inclusive education is a team approach but the educator should be in the centre of that team (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:67).

Rohl and Rivalland (2002:19) state the importance of early identification of literacy difficulties, early intervention and other forms of support. The insufficient achievement of school beginners (Lemmer, 1996:332), disappointing numbers of primary school learners that leave school early (Vermaak, 1995:12), and the insufficient language efficiency to learning (Hargrave & Senechal, 2000:88) are identified as acute education difficulties, or barriers to learning (Hay & Hay, 1999:89). These difficulties or barriers can be decreased by the early identification of learning difficulties (Snow, Burns & Griffen, 1998:83).

This study forms part of a greater research project of which the ultimate goal is the in-service training of Foundation Phase educators in the North-West Province teaching Grade 1, 2 and 3 learners on the identification of learning difficulties in the Foundation Phase. For inclusive education to be successfully implemented, purposeful in-service training of all Foundation Phase educators in the identification of learning difficulties should be dealt with first. But, even before this in-service training can be dealt with, it must be established how learning difficulties are currently being identified by educators in the Foundation Phase. This study will focus on reading difficulties only in English Home Language.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The research question that is going to be investigated in this study can be stated as follows:

What are the knowledge and skills of Foundation Phase educators in the North-West Province concerning the identification of English Home Language reading difficulties?

From this main question the following sub-questions can be derived:

- What reading difficulties are being experienced by Foundation Phase learners with English as home language in the North-West Province?
- How effectively do Foundation Phase educators identify reading difficulties?

Following from the above sub-questions, another sub-question needs to be established on how Foundation Phase educators in the North-West Province can be trained to support these reading difficulties.

3. AIM OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is to determine-

what the knowledge and skills of Foundation Phase educators in the North-West Province are concerning the identification of English Home Language reading difficulties.

From this main aim the following sub-aims can be derived:

To establish –

- what reading difficulties are being experienced by Foundation Phase learners with English as home language in the North-West Province.
- how effectively Foundation Phase educators identify reading difficulties.
- how Foundation Phase educators in the North-West Province can be trained to support these reading difficulties?

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Literature overview

A literature overview concerning the nature and scope of the identification of English Home Language reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase in the North-West Province will be

conducted. The literature overview in Chapter 2 will deal with the educational dispensation in South Africa in the Foundation Phase. The literature overview in Chapter 3 will deal with language, literacy, reading, reading difficulties and support for reading difficulties for EHL in the Foundation Phase.

4.2. Empirical study

4.2.1. Empirical design of this study

An empirical study will be conducted, concerning the identification of English Home Language reading difficulties by Foundation Phase educators. This empirical study will be conducted in a qualitative manner by using questionnaires with open-ended questions. The questionnaires are based on the literature study in Chapter 2 and 3, concerning the identification of language, literacy and reading difficulties, and the possible support for such difficulties in the Foundation Phase.

The aim of this qualitative study is to obtain detailed data from various Foundation Phase educators, and to analyse this data to reach a rich and meaningful picture (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:147) concerning the identification of reading difficulties that are being experienced by Foundation Phase learners with English as home language in the North-West Province, how Foundation Phase educators identify these reading difficulties, and how these educators can be trained to support these reading difficulties with this empirical aim in mind.

The qualitative study is chosen by the researcher as the best and most efficient way to gather information for this particular study. Types of qualitative approaches are case studies, ethnographies, phenomenological studies, grounded theory studies, content analyses and historical research. This study will consist of phenomenological and content analysis. The identification of reading difficulties by educators in specific North-West primary schools (the sample) will be analysed as they provide their own data. This qualitative study is characterized by intensive analysis of the data from the questionnaires, leading to descriptions of events and interpretations of meanings (Schunk, 1996:6). Qualitative research can range from microanalyses of verbal and nonverbal interactions, within single to in-depth observations and interviews, over shorter or longer periods

(Schunk, 1996:6). A qualitative study is chosen when the problem needs a:

- **description** : which reveals the nature of certain situations, settings, processes, relationships, systems or people.
- **interpretation** : to gain insight about the nature of a particular phenomenon, to develop new concepts or theoretical perspectives about the phenomenon and to discover the problems that exist within the phenomenon.
- **evaluation** : to provide a means through which a researcher can judge the effectiveness of particular policies, practices or innovations (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005:148).

4.2.2. Aim of Empirical study

The aim with the empirical study is to collect data concerning the knowledge and skills of educators in the Foundation Phase in the North-West Province in the identification of EHL reading difficulties experienced by Grade 1, 2 and 3 learners.

The purpose of this empirical research is to determine-

what the knowledge and skills of Foundation Phase educators in the North-West Province are concerning the identification of English Home Language reading difficulties.

4.2.3. Measuring instrument

Educators will fill in open-ended questions on questionnaires concerning their abilities and skills towards the identification of EHL reading difficulties. There is a separate questionnaire for each Foundation Phase grade 1, 2 and 3 (see Addendum A). The questions in the questionnaire are about learners in grades 1, 2 and 3 manifesting observable reading difficulties in a video, which the educators have to view and then fill in the questions about their knowledge of the identification and support of reading difficulties.

A questionnaire with open-ended questions was deemed applicable for this study as it

leaves space for the respondent to answer in any way he or she feels is appropriate (Cates, 1985:97). This method of open-ended questions is ideal for this study as open-ended questions' answers yield data about educators' own knowledge and skills in the identification of reading difficulties in the classroom.

The aim with the questionnaire in this study is to establish-

- what reading difficulties are being experienced by Foundation Phase learners with English as home language in the North-West Province;
- how effectively Foundation Phase educators identify reading difficulties;
- how Foundation Phase educators in the North-West Province can be trained to support these reading difficulties.

4.2.4. Data analysis

Organizing and analysing data in his study will be done by (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005:161)-

- organization** : breaking large units into smaller ones;
- perusal** : getting an overall sense of the data, jotting down preliminary interpretations;
- classification** : grouping the data into categories or themes, finding meanings in the data;
- synthesis** : offering hypothesis or propositions.

The answers to questions that are obtained from the questionnaires will be qualitatively analysed according to themes, how educators identify and support reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase in the North-West Province, or as these themes progressively reveal themselves from the answers.

4.2.5. Population and sample

The target population for this study is educators in the Foundation Phase of primary schools in the North-West Province, with learners who have English as Home Language, and with

English as medium of education and instruction. English Second Language difficulties are not investigated in this study.

Since it is not possible to reach the total population of Grade 1, 2 and 3 educators in the Foundation Phase of all the primary schools in the North-West Province, a convenience sample of the population is selected. The convenience sample consists of Foundation Phase educators in the Potchefstroom district only, because the learner as well as the educator population in this district is representative of the wider population of Foundation Phase learners and educators in the North-West Province with English Home Language as medium of instruction.

Three educators per school, one each in Grade 1, 2 and 3 in each of these sample schools, will be required to complete the questionnaire.

5. LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The result of this research will be representative only of EHL Foundation Phase educators in the Potchefstroom district of the North-West Province, and not the whole of South Africa.

6. DESCRIPTION OF CONCEPTS

The theoretical concepts dealt with in this research are described as follows for the purpose of this study:

6.1. English

One of the official 11 (eleven) languages used in South Africa, as a language of education.

6.2. English Home Language (EHL)

The language which learners learn through, being immersed in it in their home and/or community. More than one language can be learned in this way, so learners can have more than one Home Language (DOE, 2002d:138). The recommendation is that the learners' home language should be used for learning and teaching in school. This is particularly

important in the Foundation Phase where children learn to read and write (DOE, 2002d:5).

6.3. Identification of reading difficulties

Recognition of a difficulty according to its defining characteristics or nature (literacy in the case of this study) (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:319). It is critical for early identification of any difficulties to take place (DOE, 2002d:32). Reading difficulties and the identification thereof, will be described in chapters 2 and 3.

6.4. Reading difficulty

Reading difficulties refer to a difficulty in learning to read. This entails difficulties in identifying letters and/or words, difficulty in saying or seeing words and difficulty in comprehending sentences and paragraphs (Bergert, 2000:1). A reading difficulty occurs as a breakdown or disruption in the communication between a reader and an author or between a reader and what is being read (in text) (Francis, 1999:1, 5 ; Levine, 2002a:3) or as a result of language difficulties (De Witt & Booysen, 1995:95). Reading difficulties will be described in chapter 3.

6.5. Foundation Phase learners

The Foundation Phase is the first phase of the General Education and Training Band: (Grade R, 1, 2 and 3), (DOE, 1997a:31 ; DOE, 2002d:134 ; DOE, 2003:19). There are three Learning Programmes in the Foundation Phase: Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills (DOE, 2003:19). Foundation Phase focuses on learners' primary skills, knowledge and values in so doing laying the foundation for further learning.

Learners in the Foundation Phase could, according to Notice No. 2432 of 1998, and the National Education Policy Act (Act No 27 of 1996), range between 5 and 10 years of age (they can be admitted to Grade R the year they turn 6 (DOE, 2003:19). According to law it is compulsory for children to attend school as learners from Grade R to Grade 9. This Foundation Phase policy will be described in chapter 2.

6.6. North-West Province

The North-West Province is one of the official nine provinces in South Africa. The target

population for this study is educators in the Foundation Phase of primary schools in the North-West Province, with English as Home Language and English as medium of education and instruction. A convenience sample is taken of Foundation Phase educators in the Potchefstroom district, which is a town in the North-West Province.

6.7. Educator

The educator primarily has the opportunity to educate learners on a daily basis. The educator is a decision-maker and sets goals for learners to achieve. The educator is an accompanist and from time to time replaces the role of the parent. The educator is an expert in the field of instruction, manages the classroom, acts as a model for the learner, acts as an administrator, is a leader in the community and is professional in all aspects of life (De Witt & Booysen, 1995:184).

7. CHAPTER DIVISION

In Chapter 1 the introduction to the study, the problem statement, the aim of the study, the research methodology of the study, and the limitations of the study were described.

In Chapter 2 the literature overview concerning the educational dispensation in South Africa in the Foundation Phase is presented.

In Chapter 3 language and language difficulties, literacy, reading, reading difficulties and the support for reading difficulties for EHL in the Foundation Phase, is described.

In Chapter 4 the empirical research and the results will be discussed.

In Chapter 5 the conclusions and recommendations are presented.

CHAPTER 2

ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN SOUTH AFRICA

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the researcher will describe the language education policy in South Africa in terms of Learning Areas, Learning Programmes and Learning Outcomes, and the Language Learning Area specifically. Assessment in the Foundation Phase will also be described.

2. THE LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICY IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1. Introduction

The Foundation Phase (Grade R, 1, 2 and 3) is the first phase of the General Education and Training Band (DoE, 1997:31 ; DoE, 2002d:134 ; DoE, 2003:19). By focusing on primary skills, knowledge, and values, the Foundation Phase lays the foundation for further learning.

Learners in the Foundation Phase (Grades R – 3) could range between five and ten years of age. They can be admitted to Grade R the year they turn six, but Grade R is not compulsory (DoE, 2003:19). Learners usually go to school in the year that they turn seven (Winkler, 2005:52).

Due to this wide age range, all learners of school-going age tend to show uneven development (Winkler, 2005:55). The physical, emotional and intellectual development of Foundation Phase (Grades R – 3) learners does not necessarily progress in a fixed manner, but happens in spurts (DoE, 2003:19). Although we can be aware of general stages of development in learners, we have to accept that learners develop at their own rate. Parents and educators can support and encourage development, but they cannot make it happen (Winkler, 2005:52). The different developmental processes are also not

synchronised. A learner's physical development may well be in advance of his or her emotional development (DoE, 2003:19). Many Grade 1 educators find that the learners in their classes have developed well in some areas, but need a lot of help in others. This uneven development between the body, the mind and the feelings of a learner is common during the first two years of the Foundation Phase (Winkler, 2005:52). Moreover, some learners are also late developers and therefore the growth pattern of the individual learner needs to be taken cognizance of.

In general, Foundation Phase learners come to school with an eagerness to learn (DoE, 2003:19). Pre-school development gives learners the foundation for the skills they learn in the Foundation Phase. If this pre-school foundation is not very strong, learners could develop difficulties in the classroom (Winkler, 2005:55).

Difficulties with motor skills may include that learners are unsure about the position of their bodies in space, unsure whether to use their right or their left hands, seem clumsy and slow, avoid active games, have bad posture, get tired easily, struggle to hold a pen and control writing movements, write very slowly and get tired easily, or often be untidy.

Learners with poor motor skills will also not be asked by other learners to play games on the playground, be teased if they drop things or do untidy work, be left behind because they are slow, feel confused and unconfident in their environment, and have little confidence in themselves. These may lead to other social difficulties like withdrawal and isolation.

Emotional difficulties may include aggression and frustration, cognitive difficulties may include poor listening, thinking and organising their thoughts, and perceptual difficulties may include poor visual and auditory skills.

Over the last ten years education in South Africa has undergone numerous and radical changes (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:15). The 1990's and the advent of change characterized by negotiations, saw the education system enter the current period where changes in education reflected systematic initiatives, research-based programmes and policy-driven, large-scale transformation (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:16). In South

Africa's progress towards a democratic society over the past few years, more major policy documents on education have appeared than at any time in the past. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No 108 of 1996) provides the basis for educational curriculum transformation and development (DoE, 2001:11; DoE, 2002c:6; DoE, 2002d:1).

In fulfillment of the Constitution, The Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:5,6) expresses the commitment of the education ministry to protect the constitutional rights of all learners and to provide quality education for all (Winkler, 2005:viii). This fundamental right to basic education is described in the Constitution in Section 9 (2), which commits the state to the achievement of equality, and Section 9 (3), (4) and (5), which commits the state to non-discrimination (DoE, 2001:11; DoE, 2002d:1). These clauses are particularly important for protecting all learners, whether the learner has any difficulty or not (DoE, 2001:11; DoE, 2002d:1).

In building our education system, our Constitution provides a special challenge to us by requiring that we give effect to the fundamental right to basic education for all South Africans (DoE, 2001:11; DoE, 2002b:1). The ten fundamental values of the Constitution identified by The Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (DoE, 2002c:7) are:

- Democracy
- Social justice and equity
- Non-racism and non-sexism
- Ubuntu (human dignity)
- An open society
- Accountability (responsibility)
- Respect
- The rule of law
- Reconciliation

The Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (DoE, 2002c:7,8) further identifies 16 strategies for familiarising young South Africans with the values of the Constitution. These strategies are:

- Nurturing a culture of communication and participation in school

- Role-modelling: promoting commitment as well as competence amongst educators
- Ensuring that every South African is able to **read, write, count and think** (own accentuation)
- Infusing the classroom with a culture of human rights
- Making arts and culture part of the curriculum
- Putting history back into the curriculum
- Learning about the rich diversity of cultures, beliefs and world views within which the unity of South Africa is manifested
- Making multilingualism happen
- Using sport to shape social bonds and nurture nation-building at schools
- Ensuring equal access to education
- Promoting anti-racism in schools
- Freeing the potential of girls as well as boys
- Dealing with HIV/AIDS and nurturing a culture of sexual and social responsibility
- Making schools safe to learn and teach in and ensuring the rule of law
- Promoting ethics and the environment
- Nurturing the new patriotism, or affirming a common citizenship.

The Constitution (Section 28 of the Bill of Rights, 1996) states that a learner's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the learner. In the preamble to the White Paper 6 of 2001, the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET), and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS), provided a framework for future education in South Africa. This framework was provided by using the Constitution and the principles of social justice, a healthy environment, human rights and inclusivity, as underpinned by the White Papers (5 and 6) on Education and Training (DoE, 2002b:5). At the centre of changing the process in education is the need to change the values, understanding and actions of individual people – parents, members of the community, learners and educators (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:17).

The White Paper 6 framework outlines the Ministry's commitment to the provision of educational opportunities, in particular for those learners who experience barriers to learning (DoE, 2001:11 ; Winkler, 2005:viii). Barriers to learning are factors that lead to a

learning breakdown (Burden, 2000:29) and can be caused by various factors.

Barriers to learning could be situated *externally* in the learning context, i.e. inflexible methodology, lack of resources, or in the social context, i.e. poverty, violence, HIV/AIDS or difficult home conditions (DoE, 2003:15 ; Winkler, 2005:2).

Barriers can also be situated *internally* or in the learners themselves, i.e. sensory, physical, intellectual disabilities, or disease and illness. Sensory disabilities include inter alia not seeing clearly, not hearing properly, and speech difficulties (DoE, 2002d:32). Physical barriers include cerebral palsy and epilepsy. Intellectual barriers inter alia include a lack of thinking skills (DoE, 2003:34). These barriers to learning have their origin in poor development of the pre-school skills as mentioned above. Barriers to learning may prevent learners from achieving the outcomes of the curriculum.

Curriculum is at the heart of education according to Katzin, Krige and Kok (2000:1). Curriculum is a broad term that covers both the content and the process of what takes place in schooling. The content of the curriculum should be contextualised for the learner to gain better understanding (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:76).

The National Curriculum flowing from the Education White Paper 6 (2001) is particularly sensitive to diversity, poverty, inequality, race, gender, barriers to learning, language and age. The National Curriculum takes an inclusive approach, which means that all diversities of all learners should be accommodated (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:xiv). The aim of the curriculum is to adapt to the needs and level of each individual learner.

The kind of learner that is envisaged by the RNCS (DoE, 2002b:3) is confident and independent, literate, numerate, multi-skilled, compassionate, with a respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen.

The kind of educators that is envisaged by the RNCS (DoE, 2002b:3) see themselves as key contributors to the transformation of education in South Africa. The RNCS (DoE, 2002b:3) envisions educators who are qualified, competent, dedicated and caring. Educators should be able to fulfill the various roles outlined in the Norms and Standards for

Educators. These Norms and Standards for Educators include being mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of Learning Programmes and materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, community members, citizens and pastors, assessors and Learning Area or Phase specialists (DoE, 2002b:3 ; DoE, 2002c:4).

Educators, school management teams, department officials, educator unions, non-government organizations, community-based organizations and service providers should use the RNCS Guidelines from the Teacher's Guide for the Development of Learning Programmes (DoE, 2002b) as an enabling mechanism that will contribute to the delivery of quality, life-long learning (DoE, 2003:1).

The Learning Areas and the Learning Programmes in the Foundation Phase are described next.

2.2. The Learning Areas

The RNCS (DoE, 1997b:14 ; DoE, 2002c:14) describes eight Learning Areas. These eight Learning Areas form the foundation of the RNCS and therefore also forms the foundation for all education that takes place in the Foundation Phase (DoE, 1997b:14,15 ; DoE, 2002c:4). A Learning Area is a field of knowledge, skills and values which has unique features as well as connections with other fields of knowledge and Learning Areas. In the RNCS the eight Learning Areas are described as follows:

- **Language, Literacy and Communication**

People interact with the world and each other through language. The more we are able to communicate, the better we are able to understand each other. Improved communication can only lead to a South Africa free of intolerance, misunderstandings and prejudice, which is the focus of Language, Literacy and Communication (DoE, 1997b:14 ; DoE, 2002c:4).

- **Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Science**

Numeracy and Mathematics is a way of understanding the world. Mathematics

encourages logical thinking, problem solving and teaches people analytical skills that will allow them to make critical decisions. Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Science will equip learners to cope with a rapidly changing technological environment (DoE, 1997b:14 ; DoE, 2002c:4).

- **Natural Sciences**

In order to manage the resources of the world effectively, people need to understand the universe – both natural and created by people. Natural Sciences will equip learners with the ability to understand our natural resources and to manage our natural resources effectively (DoE, 1997b:14 ; DoE, 2002c:4).

- **Technology**

We live in a technically advanced society. Without accessing this new technology, we will be unable to compete internationally. Technology will promote all aspects of technology: planning, design and manufacturing (DoE, 1997b:14 ; DoE, 2002c:4).

- **Human and Social Sciences**

South Africa needs responsible citizens who are able to operate in a culturally diverse, democratic society. Human and Social Sciences are therefore an important area of study. Human and Social Sciences will teach learners to interact with each other and to interact with their environment (DoE, 1997b:14 ; DoE, 2002c:4).

- **Arts and Culture**

Culture and the arts are important areas of life. Through developing creativity and exploring the diverse cultures that exist, the spiritual, the intellectual and the emotional aspects of our personalities will be promoted (DoE, 1997b:14 ; DoE, 2002c:4).

- **Life-Orientation**

We live in a rapidly changing society. To cope with these changes, learners need to develop life skills. Life Orientation includes the building of a learners' self-esteem and a healthy lifestyle (DoE, 1997b:15 ; DoE, 2002c:4).

- **Economic and Management Sciences**

South Africa needs to have a sustainable economic plan in order to survive. The Economic and Management Sciences develop all people into economically active citizens able to participate in and lead the economic development of our country (DoE, 1997b:14 ; DoE, 2002c:4).

Of the above eight only the following three Learning Areas are applicable in the Foundation Phase: Language, Literacy and Communication, Mathematical Literacy, and Life-Orientation. Only the Language Learning Area is the focus of this study.

Each Learning Area has its own Learning Programme. Learning programmes are described next.

2.3. Learning Programmes

The Learning Programmes are based on national guidelines and replace what we used to know as the “syllabus” or “syllabi” (DoE, 1997a:13 ; DoE, 2003:59).

The RNCS is implemented in schools by means of Learning Programmes. Whereas the RNCS stipulates the concepts, skills and values on a grade-by-grade basis, Learning Programmes specify the scope for teaching, learning and assessment for the phase (DoE, 2002c:15). The underlying principles and values of the RNCS underpin the Learning Programmes (DoE, 2002c:15).

Educators will be free to develop their own Learning Programmes, as long as they take into account the various kinds of outcomes, and that these outcomes should complement the needs of the learners (DoE, 1997a:13). Learning Programmes are structured and systematic arrangements of activities that promote the attainment of Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards for the Foundation Phase (DoE, 2002c:15). The Department of Education (1997a:13) views a learning programme as being “...a set of learning and teaching activities and ways of assessing a learner’s achievements”. There are three Learning Programmes in the Foundation Phase. These are Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills (DoE, 2003:27). Only the Literacy Learning Programme will be dealt with in this study.

A Learning Programme is a phase-long plan, for the whole phase (DoE, 2003:2 ; DoE, 2002c:15), that provides a framework for planning, organising and managing classroom practices for each phase (DoE, 2003:2). A Learning Programme will in turn be translated into yearlong, grade specific Work Schedules and shorter activity-long Lesson Plans (DoE, 2003:2).

A Work Schedule is a yearlong programme that shows how teaching, learning and assessment will be sequenced and paced in a particular grade. The following steps are suggested by the Department of Education (2003:11,12) when developing a Work Schedule:

- Details about the sequencing of Lesson Plans, the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards may want to be amplified.
- The educator should decide when to use each of the assessment forms, demanded by the Department of Education as Assessment Guidelines for each Learning Area, to be completed by each learner in each grade. This will ensure that the learners' most appropriate application is selected and that the assessment demands on the learners are spread evenly across the year.
- Educators will need to consider the resources that will be required for each Lesson Plan and educators may need to re-sequence units according to the availability of those resources that they selected.
- Educators need to plan integration. In the case of integration across Learning Areas, it may be necessary to meet with educators from other Learning Areas to ensure that the anticipated integration is workable in terms of their respective Work Schedules.

A Lesson Plan is the next level of planning and is drawn directly from the Work Schedule. The Lesson Plan describes concretely and in detail teaching, learning and assessment activities that are to be implemented in any give period of time. A Lesson Plan could range in duration from a single activity to a term's teaching, learning and assessment and, in terms of actual time, may last from a day to a week or even a month. A Lesson Plan includes how teaching, learning and assessment activities (i.e. style, approach and methodology) are to be managed in the classroom (DoE, 2003:3). A Lesson Plan is

assumed to be a complete and coherent series of teaching, learning and assessment activities.

The Department of Education (2003:12,13) lists learning styles, teaching methods, barriers to learning, resources, what learners already know and school policies, as a few realities of the classroom that may have an impact on the planning of a Lesson Plan, as described as follows:

- **Learning styles**

Since different learners have particular and preferred learning styles, every class is certain to contain groups of learners who assimilate information and develop understanding in different ways. Before an educator is able to develop a Lesson Plan, he or she must have a sense of those activities that are likely to succeed with particular individuals or groups and those activities that are unlikely to succeed. The educator must plan to accommodate all learners in the class (DoE, 2003:12,13). Winkler (2005:75) suggests different learning styles that are being used by learners:

- Visual learning style
 - Learners learn by observing people, objects and pictures
 - Learners like puzzles, maps, posters, etc.
 - Learners remember what they have seen
- Auditory learning style
 - Learners learn by listening and speaking
 - Learners like group work, asking and answering questions, doing oral reports, etc.
 - Learners remember what they have heard
- Tactile learning style
 - Learners learn by touching objects or doing experiments
 - Learners like building models, making maps, tracing pictures, doing experiments, etc.
 - Learners remember what they have done
- Kinesthetic learning style
 - Learners learn when they are active and moving around
 - Learners like playing games, building models, doing experiments, acting out stories

➤ Learners remember what they have experienced.

- **Teaching methods**

Educators must decide how they will approach their teaching and what methods they will use. The nature of the Learning Area often determines what approach and which methods will best support the teaching, learning and assessment activities in the particular Learning Area (DoE, 2003:12,13).

- **Barriers to learning**

The educator must have a clear sense of which barriers to learning exist in a specific class so that they can overcome these through the way in which they structure and select activities (DoE, 2003:12,13).

- **Resources**

Educators will need to consider the resources that will be required for each Lesson Plan and educators may need to re-sequence units according to the availability of those resources that they selected (DoE, 2003:12,13).

- **What learners already know**

What learners already know becomes an important point of departure for planning what will happen next in an activity. At times educators may wish to perform some form of baseline assessment to be able to establish the level of prior learning and accordingly plan appropriate support for the learners (DoE, 2003:12,13).

- **School policies**

In the same way that national education policy will impact on Learning Programme design, so too will the policies of the school impact on both the design of the Lesson Plan and its execution (DoE, 2003:12,13).

The planning of a Learning Programme should show clear continuity and progression across the phase, but should also make provision for some overlap between the Grades in a phase to ensure a smooth transition from one Grade to the next (DoE, 2003:29). There

are three Learning Programmes in the Foundation Phase as indicated above – Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills. These three Learning Programmes should be seen as related and reinforcing each other. Through these three Learning Programmes, Foundation Phase learners are holistically developed and prepared to engage with the next phase of learning, which is the Intermediate Phase (DoE, 2003:29). Each of the three Learning Programmes should be planned to cover the full period (Grade R – Grade 3) of the Foundation Phase. As indicated, only the Literacy Learning Area will be described in this study, in paragraph 2.5.

The Literacy Learning Programme from Grade R – 3 has as its main focus language acquisition and language development, and various kinds of communication for both the Home Language and a First Additional Language. It enables learners to think creatively, critically and reflectively, and to access, process and communicate information while building the foundation for a range of additional literacies. In this way, it also supports and promotes competency in Life Skills and Numeracy (DoE, 2003:28). In order to meet the multilingualism policy, two languages will have to form part of the Literacy Learning Programme from Grade 3 onwards (DoE, 2003:29).

The formal teaching time for Foundation Phase learners are set out by the Department of Education (2002c:17 ; 2003:31) as:

- Grade R, 1 and 2: 22 hours and 30 minutes per week
- Grade 3: 25 hours per week.

This formal teaching time allocation for the Learning Programmes in the Foundation Phase is presented by the Department of Education (2002c:17 ; 2003:31) as percentages of the times given above:

- Literacy: 40%
- Numeracy: 35%
- Life Skills: 25%

Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSMs) in the Foundation Phase play an important role in the teaching, learning and assessment processes of the school curriculum (DoE, 2003:37). What is important in the teaching, learning and assessment process is to allow learners to develop from the concrete to the abstract paradigm. LTSM's should play a

role in providing the concrete paradigm (DoE, 2003:38).

Educators are encouraged to use a variety of LTSMs to address the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards prescribed for the Foundation Phase.

The success of LTSMs are determined by the educator's ability to use it appropriately and effectively in the learning context. The mere presence of LTSMs in a learning activity does not mean that the LTSMs are effective learning tools (DoE, 2003:37). Careful selection of LTSMs is therefore critical.

Educators are encouraged to collect and develop their own resource banks from a range of sources (DoE, 2003:37). It is important that educators are able to select and use existing LTSM's effectively.

Many factors need to be taken into account when educators start selecting and developing the LTSM's they want to use to support teaching, learning and assessment in the classroom (DoE, 2003:37). These factors include the ability of the LTSM's to:

- support and enrich classroom-based activities;
- address the individual needs of learners;
- reinforce learner-centeredness in the classroom;
- provide expanded opportunities for enrichment as well as support;
- assist educators and learners in accessing the RNCS;
- clearly indicate the educational paradigm and how this has influenced the selection of topics;
- encourage the educator to be an innovative thinker and practitioner;
- be applicable to a range of learning contexts (i.e. rural, urban and peri-urban areas);
- capture and maintain the interest of learners and motivate them;
- take account of learners' varying levels of abilities within a single Grade;
- provide for differentiation so that each individual learner can be supported to experience success and develop to his or her full potential;
- be appropriate to the age, interest and diverse needs of the learners;
- encourage respect for diversity by reflecting all aspects of diversity in appropriate,

sensitive and positive ways. This includes diversity regarding gender, level of ability and beliefs;

- stimulate active participation in and enjoyment of learning, teaching and assessment;
- support educators in the systematic development of appropriate Lesson Plans;
- ensure that assessment is systematic, inclusive and on-going;
- be flexible or adaptable to a range of contexts and needs;
- provide a range of suggestions for educators to be innovative and creative in developing their own resources.

The range of LTSMs for Literacy could include story books, picture books, sound cards, word games, books with rhymes and verses, and readers (DoE, 2003:38).

A Learning Programme promotes the attainment of Learning Outcomes for each Learning Area in each phase (DoE, 2002b:1 ; DoE, 2003:2). Learning Area Outcomes are described next.

2.4. Learning Area Outcomes

Outcomes Based Education (OBE) emphasises the learning process as a whole and does not focus merely on the information that is being taught. OBE considers the process of learning as important as the content, by spelling out the outcomes to be achieved at the end of the learning process (DoE, 2002d:12 ; Katzin, Krige & Kok, 2000:3).

The RNCS builds its Learning Outcomes for the General Education and Training Band for Grades R – 9 on the critical and developmental outcomes that were inspired by the Constitution and developed in a democratic process (DoE, 2002c:14 ; DoE, 2002d:1).

The critical outcomes designed by the DoE (2002c:4; 2002d:1) envisage learners who will be able to:

- identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
- work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community;.
- organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively.
- collect, analyse, organize and critically evaluate information;

- **communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes** (own accentuation);
- use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others;
- demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognizing that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

Educators are required to focus on the outcomes of education rather than merely teaching information, and to translate the learning programmes into something that is achievable by all learners. There is now a shift away from content-based programmes where educators aim to cover the curriculum in a predetermined amount of time.

OBE educators are encouraged to find ways of providing conditions of success in the classroom. Educators will become facilitators rather than transmitters of knowledge. Educators will use a variety of methods of instruction to help each learner to learn. Learners will be assisted to succeed, but at their own pace. OBE educators are encouraged to broaden their perspectives, be proactive, interactive and share their ideas with one another. Educators might even be able to teach jointly with others in some Learning Areas. Educators will no longer feel the pressure of having to be the “source of all knowledge”. Learners will be trained to take responsibility for their own learning which will ease the load on educators (DoE, 1997a:28, 29).

There are six main Learning Outcomes in the Literacy Learning Area in the Foundation Phase. The six Language Learning Outcomes in Home Language are:

- **Language Learning Outcome 1 : Listening**

The learner is able to listen for information and enjoyment and respond appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations (DoE, 2002b:20 ; DoE, 2003:43).

- **Language Learning Outcome 2 : Speaking**

The learner is able to communicate confidently and effectively in a spoken language in a wide range of situations (DoE, 2002b:20 ; DoE, 2003:44).

- **Language Learning Outcome 3 : Reading and Viewing**

The learner is able to read and view for information and enjoyment and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts (DoE, 2002b:20 ; DoE, 2003:44).

- **Language Learning Outcome 4 : Writing**

The learner is able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes (DoE, 2002b:20 ; DoE, 2003:45).

- **Language Learning Outcome 5 : Thinking and Reasoning**

The learner is able to use language to think and reason and access, process and use information for learning (DoE, 2002b:20 ; DoE, 2003:46).

- **Language Learning Outcome 6 : Language Structure and Use**

The learner knows and is able to use the sounds, words and the grammar of a language to create and interpret texts (DoE, 2002b:20 ; DoE, 2003:47).

The first four Learning Outcomes cover five different language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, viewing and writing.

Outcome 5 deals with the use of languages for thinking and reasoning, which is especially important for the language of learning and teaching. Outcome 5 is not included for second additional languages, since its aim is not to prepare learners to use this language as a language of learning and teaching.

Outcome 6 deals with the core of language knowledge – sounds, words and grammar – in texts. This language knowledge is put into action through the language skills described in the other five Learning Outcomes (DoE, 2002b:6). When we use language we integrate knowledge, skills and values to express ourselves. A central principle of the Language Learning Area is therefore the integration of these aspects of language through the creation and interpretation of texts (DoE, 2002b:6).

All six the Home Language Learning Outcomes are equally important, as one Language Learning Outcome cannot function without the others. When we use language, we integrate knowledge, skills and values to express ourselves. A central principle of the Language

Learning Area Statement is therefore the integration of knowledge, skills and values through the creation and interpretation of oral, written or visual texts. When designing a Learning Programme, the Learning Outcomes will usually be integrated.

Learning Outcomes 1 and 2 (Listening and Speaking) are always grouped together. Learning Outcomes 3 and 4 (Reading and viewing, and Writing) are often linked while Learning Outcomes 5 and 6 (Thinking and Reasoning, and Language Structure and Use) give the knowledge base without which the first four Learning Outcomes would make no sense (DoE, 2003:47). This means that Reading and Writing, Listening and Speaking, knowledge of Thinking and Reasoning, and Language Structure and Use can be integrated through the use of texts, which in turn link Literacy with other Learning Programmes. The learner could read and view a picture book on animals or food types, which would form a link with the Natural Science and/or Life Skills Learning Areas (DoE, 2003:48).

A Learning Programme promotes the attainment of Assessment Standards for each phase (DoE, 2002d:1 ; DoE, 2003:2). Assessment Standards emphasise participatory, learner-centered and activity-based education (DoE, 2002c:12). Each Grade has its own Assessment Standards, and the Assessment Standards differ for each Learning Outcome. The researcher will therefore provide the Grade-to-Grade Assessment Standards related to Learning Outcome 3: Reading and Viewing, as stipulated in the RNCS (2002b:32,44).

Learning Outcome 3: Reading and Viewing

The learner will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts

Learning Outcome 3 (Reading and Viewing) will be closely linked with Learning Outcome 4 (Writing). Learners acquire the ability to write and design a variety of texts largely through Learning Outcome 3 (Reading and Viewing) a variety of texts. At the same time, Writing and designing texts enhances the ability to Read and View texts. Learning Outcome 3 (Reading and Viewing) may also be integrated with Learning Outcome 1(Listening) and Learning Outcome 2 (Speaking). It will make use of the knowledge gained from Learning Outcome 5 (Thinking and Reasoning) and Learning Outcome 6 (Language Structure and Use) (DoE, 2003:44).

The Assessment Standards for Learning Outcome 3: Reading and Viewing, are as follows:

GRADE 1

We know this Outcome has been achieved when the learner is able to -

- use visual cues to make meaning:
 - predict from the cover of a book what the story is about
 - use illustrations to interpret the meaning of stories and tells a story
 - interpret information including simple tables and graphical images found in print media and advertising such as calendars and rosters, HIV/AIDS posters;
- role-play reading:
 - hold a book the right way up
 - turn pages appropriately
 - look at words and pictures
 - use pictures to construct ideas;
- make meaning of written text: read a story with the educator and -
 - discuss the main idea
 - identify the details
 - say whether the story was liked and why;
- recognise letters and words and makes meaning of written text:
 - read simple written materials
 - read own writing and the writing of classmates
 - use phonic and word recognition skills to decode new and unfamiliar words in context;
- develop phonic awareness:
 - recognise and name letters of the alphabet
 - understand the difference between letter names and letter sounds.
 - understand that letter names remain constant but sounds they represent may vary.
 - understand the letter-sound relationships of most single consonants and short forms of vowels in words like “hat” and “mat”
 - segment simple words with single initial consonants and short vowels into onset and rhyme, e.g. “c-a-t”, “m-a-t”, “h-a-t”, “s-a-t”
 - group common words into word families, e.g. “cat”, “mat”, “hat”, “sat”

- recognise the “silent e” in common words such as “cake”
- recognise two letter blends at the beginning of words, e.g. “gr-eeen”, “bl-ow”
- recognise common consonant digraphs at the beginning and end of words, e.g. “sh”, “th”, “ch”
- recognise some high-frequency sight words such as “the”, “a”, “to”, “my”, “your”, “like” and his/her own name and print in the environment;
- read for information and enjoyment:
 - read picture books with simple captions.

GRADE 2

We know this Outcome has been achieved when the learner -

- uses visual cues to make meaning:
 - expresses personal response to print and media images
 - predicts from the cover of a book what the story is about
 - in relation to images, print media and advertising -
 - interprets the main message
 - identifies purpose, audience and where it will be found;
- makes meaning of written text:
 - reads simple instructions in the classroom
 - reads texts at a slightly more complex level
 - reads a story on own or with the educator and -
 - describes the main idea
 - identifies the key details
 - identifies and discusses cultural values in the story
 - identifies cause-effect relations
 - draws conclusions
 - express whether the story was liked and why;
- recognises and makes meaning of letters and words in longer texts:
 - reads with increasing speed and fluency
 - reads aloud and uses correct pronunciation and appropriate stress
 - uses phonic and other word recognition and comprehension skills such as phonics, context clues and making predictions in order to make sense of text

- uses self-correcting strategies such as re-reading, pausing and practicing a word before saying it out loud;
- develops phonic awareness:
 - recognises vowel sounds spelled with two letters, e.g. "ea", "ee", "ay", "ai", "ar", "er", "or", "ir", "ur", "ou", "oo", "oi"
 - recognises single consonants spelled with two letters, e.g. "wh", "th", 'sh", 'ph', 'll', "ss", "zz"
 - recognises two-letter and three-letter consonant blends at the beginning and ends of words, e.g. "bl", "str", "lp", "nds"
 - recognises the first sounds and last syllable in more complex patterns, e.g. "dream", "cream", "stream", "scream"
 - recognises more complex word families, e.g. "dream", "cream", "stream", "scream"
 - recognises known rhymes, e.g. "fly", "sky", "dry"
 - recognises some more complex suffixes, e.g. "zz+es", "-ies", "-ly"
 - recognises the increasing number of high-frequency sight words;
- reads for information and enjoyment:
 - reads picture books and simple stories of own choice
 - shows appreciation of stories from different cultures
 - starts to use the dictionary to check spelling and meaning of words
 - reads a variety of texts for enjoyment such as magazines, comics, non-fiction books.

GRADE 3

We know this Outcome has been achieved when the learner -

- uses visual cues to make meaning:
 - reads graphical texts such as photographs, maps, flow diagrams, charts, and -
 - explains orally or in writing their meaning and purpose
 - uses the information in appropriate ways
 - evaluates the image for design features and effectiveness;
- makes meaning of written text:
 - reads instructions related to real life interests and needs
 - reads a wide variety of fairly complex texts such as fiction and non-fiction books, tables of contents and indexes

- comments on a story or poem the learner has read and demonstrates understanding by answering questions on -
 - the main idea
 - key details such as main characters, sequence of events, settings and cultural values
 - identifies and discusses cultural values in the story
 - cause-effect relations
 - conclusions
 - whether or not the story was liked and why;
- reads texts alone and uses a variety of strategies to make meaning:
 - reads a printed text fluently and with understanding
 - pronounces words with accuracy when reading aloud
 - reads aloud with expression, using appropriate stress, pausing and intonation
 - uses word recognition and comprehension skills to read unfamiliar texts
 - uses a range of automatic monitoring and self-correcting methods when reading such as re-reading, reading on, pausing and practicing a word before saying it out loud;
- consolidates phonic knowledge:
 - recognises that the same sound can be spelled in different ways, e.g. “play”, “pain”, “plate”
 - recognises that the same spelling can represent different sounds, e.g. “bread”, “read”
 - recognises some more vowel sounds spelled with two letters, e.g. “ea”, “ee”, “ay”, “ai”, “ar”, “er”, “or”, “ir”, “ur”, “ou”, “oo”, “oi”, “oa”, “aw”
 - recognises the use of “gh”, and “ght” at the end of words
 - recognises vowels with two sounds, e.g. “ere”, “air”, “are”, “au”;
- reads for information and enjoyment:
 - chooses fiction and non-fiction books and says what was liked or not liked about them
 - reads and appreciates books written by authors from different cultures about a range of different contexts and relationships
 - reads different kinds of texts such as magazines, comics, newspapers

- develops vocabulary by using a dictionary and keeping a personal dictionary
- sees table of contents, index, key words, headings, captions and page numbers as a way to find information
- plays word games that draw on reading, vocabulary knowledge and skills
- identifies and finds information sources such as community members and library books
- starts to analyse oral, written and visual texts for socio-cultural values, attitudes and assumptions.

The Literacy Learning Area, as the main focus of the study, is described next.

2.5. The Literacy Learning Area in the Foundation Phase

Literacy is the medium through which all learning takes place (DoE, 2003:21). Being literate is defined as being “acquainted with letters; educated and learned (DoE, 2003:41).

Literacy covers all 11 official South African languages (Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu) (DoE, 2002d:19). These 11 official languages are used as both Home Language and First Additional Language in the Foundation Phase, to make provision for the rich language diversity that exists in South Africa. In a multilingual country like South Africa it is important that learners reach high levels of proficiency in at least two of these 11 official South African languages, and that learners are able to communicate in other languages (DoE, 2002d:20).

In terms of the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the Government and the Department of Education have to promote multilingualism and the development of the eleven official South African languages as named above (DoE, 2002c:19 ; DoE, 2002d:4 ; DoE, 2003:20). The Department of Education also has to promote respect for all languages used in the country.

This shift is in line with the fact that multilingualism is the norm today, especially on the African continent. An important underlying principle of the promotion and the development of multilingualism, is to maintain Home Language(s) (DoE, 1997b:22). However, many

learners in South Africa are learning in a language that is not their Home Language.

Learners do not always understand the language that is used at school. There are often many Home Languages spoken in one class, which makes the classroom a multilingual classroom (Winkler, 2005:77).

In the empirical study in this research, the learners in the sample receive instruction in English, which is their Home Language. This will be further explained in the empirical research in chapter 4.

To reiterate, language is the key to learning (Winkler, 2005:73). Learners begin their language development at birth and the development of language continues through their lives. By the time learners go to school they should be able to understand and use at least one language fluently (Winkler, 2005:73). If learners are fluent in their Home Language they will not have a difficulty with language development (Winkler, 2005:78). Foundation Phase learners arrive able to understand and speak their Home Language. The learners read their names even if they are not yet able to read (DoE, 2002d:9 ; DoE, 2003:19).

Without language there is no communication, and without communication there is no learning. Language and learning cannot be separated. At school learners are involved in language for communication and thinking. Language is the main tool for thinking critically about the world and how it works. Educators rely on language to bring new knowledge to the learners. Learners who struggle to understand the language of teaching in a classroom, will also find it difficult to learn. Learners who have limited language skills will not understand what they read. It is a challenge for educators to meet the language needs of learners in such a way that learners can use language effectively to think and learn (Winkler, 2005:80).

Winkler (2005:80) mentions a few difficulties that learners with limited language skills may experience. Learners -

- get confused about order and forget important words;
- cannot listen well when the educator speaks quickly;

- do not know the meanings of words used in the instruction;
- do not understand the language used by the educator;
- struggle with reading because they do not know the meanings of words;
- do not know many interesting adjectives or verbs;
- are slow at learning and using new words;
- are not confident when they talk about ideas or when they have to tell stories;
- describe objects because they do not know the name for them.

The Language in Education Policy based on Section 3(4)(m) of the National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996) states the following:

- All learners shall offer at least one approved language as a subject in Grade 1 and Grade 2.
- From Grade 3 onwards, all learners shall offer their language of learning and teaching and at least one additional approved language as subjects (DoE, 2003:20).

The Language-in-education policy has three components:

- **Admission requirements**
 - No public school shall apply admission requirements which discriminate on the grounds of language.
- **Languages of learning and teaching**
 - A learner in a public school shall have the right to instruction in the language of his/her choice where this is reasonably practicable.
 - The governing body of a public school may determine the language policy of the school subject to -
 - the national policy determined by the Minister under the National Education Policy Act 1996; and
 - the provincial policy determined by the Member of the Executive Council, provided that no form of racial discrimination may be practised in exercising this policy.
 - Schools shall provide for more than one language of teaching where the need arises.

- **Languages as subject**

- All schools shall offer at least one approved language as a subject in Grade 1 and Grade 2.
- All schools shall offer at least two approved languages, of which at least one shall be an official language, from Grade 3 onwards.
- All language subjects shall receive equitable time resource allocation.
- The following promotion requirements apply to language subjects in the Foundation Phase:
 - in Grade 1 to Grade 4 promotion is based on performance in one language and Mathematics (Numeracy);
 - subject to national norms and standards as determined by the Minister of Education, the level of achievement required for promotion shall be determined by the provincial education departments (DoE, 1997b:22,23).

The Literacy Learning Programme in the Foundation Phase has as its main focus language acquisition, language development, and various kinds of communication for both Home Language and First Additional Language. The Literacy Learning Programme enables learners to communicate effectively, either in spoken, written or visual format (DoE, 2003:42). The Literacy Learning Programme creates opportunities for learners to -

- develop positive attitudes towards language learning and the development of literacy skills;
- communicate effectively, both verbally and non-verbally;
- think critically, creatively and reflectively;
- gather and make sense of information using a variety of processes, techniques and tools;
- understand, respect and appreciate their identity and culture, and that of others;
- learn and work effectively, both dependently and with others;.
- understand that their bodies, societies, and the world itself, operate as a set of interconnected systems;
- make sense of their world;
- establish relationships.

The Literacy Learning Programme helps learners discover and use techniques and strategies (i.e. grammatical components) given by the RNCS (DoE, 2003:51) to learn to read and write by showing the learner how to unlock the “code” of written words or symbols.

There are -

- phonemic awareness (sensitivity to the sounds of a language);
- phonics (knowledge of letter-sound correspondences);
- putting together two or three letters to make a word (morphology);
- semantics;
- syntactics.

These grammatical components are further described in chapter 3.

The Literacy Learning Programme in the Foundation Phase enables learners to think creatively, critically and reflectively, to access, process and communicate information while building the foundations for a range of additional literacies (DoE, 2003 :21). These are -

- cultural literacy: cultural, social and ideological values that shape our ‘reading’ of texts;
- critical literacy: the ability to respond critically to the intentions, contents and possible effects of messages and texts on the reader;
- visual literacy: the interpretation of images, signs, pictures and non-verbal (body) language;
- media literacy: the ‘reading’ of TV and film as cultural messages;
- numerical literacy: the ability to use and interpret numbers;
- computer literacy: the ability to use and access information from computers.

The Literacy Learning Programme enables learners to-

- **process information:**
through the Literacy Learning Programme learners are provided with opportunities to comprehend and respond to a range of texts, including both print and non-print media;
- **communicate ideas and information:**
the Literacy Learning Programme provides learners with opportunities to manage and exchange ideas and to communicate these with precision, clarity and creativity;

- **establish relationships between self and society:**

the Literacy Learning Programme allows learners to develop an understanding of themselves and their world by becoming aware of how people use language for various purposes such as working with others and establishing relationships within the school and community;

- **access information:**

Reading, Viewing and Writing, provide access to information, life long learning and work opportunities;

- **creative expression and performance presentation:**

the Literacy Learning Programme allows learners to experience themselves through various art forms and to develop their ability to express their creative thoughts and ideas.

The rights and duties of the provincial education department, according to the Norms and Standards regarding Language Policy published in terms of Section 6(1) of the South African School Act (1996), states that “it is reasonable to provide education in a particular language of learning and teaching (LoLT), if at least 40 learners in Grade 1 to Grade 6, or 35 learners in Grade 7 to Grade 12 in a particular grade, request it in a particular school”. The particular LoLT requested may however not be all the learners' home language, and therefore may prove to be a scarce commodity in that school. The human resources must then be found to supply that scarce commodity. The provincial department must explore ways and means of sharing scarce human resources. The provincial department must also explore ways and means of providing alternative language maintenance programmes in schools and or school districts which cannot be provided with and/or offer additional languages of teaching in the Home Language of learners (DoE, 2003:20,21).

The Literacy Learning Area, also referred to as the Language Learning Area, underlies all other learning areas, as language is the medium through which all learning takes place. Thus without language, no other learning can exist. The Foundation Phase educator should ensure that language is used across the curriculum in all three the Learning Programmes (Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills) in the Foundation Phase. Sufficient time and attention need to be given to the LoLT across the three Learning Programmes in the Foundation

Phase (DoE, 2003:21).

The Language Learning Area Statement follows an additive or incremental approach to multilingualism (DoE, 2002d:20). Suitable types of texts are set out for each phase in the Language Learning Area Statement. The same types of texts may appear in every grade. It is important that the level of the vocabulary and the ideas in the texts should be appropriate for each Grade. The level of the types of texts that are being used should be understandable, but the texts that are being used should also challenge learners in terms of both vocabulary and ideas. Reading will then become a means of developing language and the experience of a wider world than in which the learners find themselves. Important social issues can be encountered and explored from early on in the language learning process (DoE, 2003:49).

All learners learn their Home Language and at least one additional official language. Learners become competent in their additional language, while their Home Language is maintained and developed (DoE, 2002b:20). The Language Learning Area Statement covers all 11 South African official languages as Home languages, First additional languages and Second additional languages (DoE, 2002b:20). Learners' Home Language should be used for learning and teaching whenever possible. This is particularly important in the Foundation Phase where learners learn to read and write (DoE, 2002b:20).

Where learners enter a school where the LoLT is not their Home Language, the educators and the school should provide support and supplementary learning in the Additional Language until such time that learners are able to learn effectively through the medium of that particular Additional Language.

The provision of support and supplementary learning in the Additional Language is the responsibility of each individual educator to ensure that LoLT does not become a barrier to learning (DoE, 2003:22). The trend in language teaching, learning and assessment is towards the communicative approach. Communicative language teaching is a method of teaching language, based on the idea that language is a means of communication. The purpose of any communication is to make meaning, to make sense or to bring about

understanding of a message. Some of the most important principles of communicative language teaching presented by the DoE (2003:49,50) are:

- Language is acquired through a gradual and mainly subconscious process; it cannot be quickly and consciously learned.
- Language acquisition is sustained by experiencing large amounts of input (listening, reading and viewing) and language acquisition is developed by output when using or producing language (speaking, writing).
- The level of the language used in the output is important; it should be familiar enough for the learner to make sense of it, but have enough new elements (vocabulary or structures) to promote development.
- Learners learn their home language by hearing it, making sense of what they hear, and trying it out for ourselves when they communicate.
- All languages are acquired in much the same way, but the Home Language is further advanced in the developmental process than the Additional Languages are.
- Semantic mistakes are an expected part of the acquisition process. For a language to be acquired, mistakes must be made.
- Language is acquired holistically in all learning and not only in the language class.
- The ideal conditions for language learning to take place are those in which the learner is relaxed and enjoying the process.

The Home Language of the learner should be used as the language for teaching, learning and assessment (DoE, 2003:21). This is particularly important in the Foundation Phase where learners learn the basics of how to listen, speak, read, write, think and reason. It is during the Foundation Phase that learners practise the use of sounds, words and language and learn to create and interpret texts (DoE, 2003:22). Young learners learn their Home Language by listening to and interacting with others in their environment. Young learners practise, develop and perfect their Home Language skills through play, stories and varied opportunities to interact with the world (DoE, 2003:50). Foundation Phase learners develop their Home Language spontaneously, by listening to and interacting with others in their environment. A learner learns his Home Language by hearing the Home Language as his parents talk to him. The more the learner's parents talk to him, repeating the same words, the same phrases, the same structures over and over, the sooner the learner will learn his

Home Language (Strydom & Du Plessis, 2000:85).

All the Learning Programmes interpret and sequence the Assessment Standards as spelt out in the RNCS into planned teaching, learning and assessment activities for a phase (DoE, 2003:2). The aim of a Learning Programme is to design and sequence teaching, learning, and assessment activities that will result in meaningful and relevant learning (DoE, 2003:5). When planning assessment activities, recording learner performance, and reporting on learner progress, the educator will look to the Assessment Standards for descriptions of the level at which learners should demonstrate their achievement of the various Learning Outcomes. Assessment in the Foundation Phase is described next.

3. ASSESSMENT IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

3.1. The nature of assessment

During the past decade in South Africa, much advocacy, training and effort have been devoted to changing the approach and practice of professionals regarding assessment from an orientation of achievement towards a focus on constructive support for learning (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:46). The Department of Education (2004:14) defines assessment as the process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about a learner's achievement as measured against nationally agreed outcomes for a particular phase of learning. Assessment is the major component of the teaching-learning cycle since assessment maintains the focus on the learners, the learners' needs, the learners' progress and the learners' learning outcomes (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:46).

Continuous Assessment (CASS) is a process of gathering valid and reliable information about the performance of the learner on an on-going basis, against clearly defined criteria, while using a variety of methods, tools, techniques and contexts (DoE, 2003:32 ; Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:76). Continuous assessment could contribute significantly to the timely identification of learners in need of learning support (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:58) – the aspect which the empirical part of this research focusses on. Assessment provides constant feedback and gathers evidence of learners' achievement with regard to the Assessment Standards of the Learning Outcomes (DoE, 2003:32).

Assessment can be performed in the following ways:

- **Norm-referenced tests** compare an individual learner's performance with that of a norm of the same age or grade level. Such tests however do not represent all the essential criteria contributing to a particular level of skill or knowledge needed to compare the learner to other learners of the same age or grade level (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:57).
- In **criterion-referenced tests** particular outcomes are targeted in a level-appropriate way and the learner's competence is examined in more detail. Criterion-referenced tests are less global and typically more closely linked to a particular curriculum or set of competencies. A learner's score is not compared to a norming population. The learner's score is compared to a predetermined criterion. In the Foundation Phase, criterion-based assessment, also known as an outcomes-based system, ensures that assessment is open and fair to everyone. Assessment is on-going, which means the learner's progress is monitored continuously (DoE, 1997a:19 ; DoE, 2003:32). Assessment in an outcomes-based system (or a criterion-based system) enables both learners and educators to determine whether learners are achieving the applicable outcomes or not (DoE, 1997a:19 ; DoE, 2003:32).

The Foundation Phase educator ensures that all learners are aware of what is expected of them, prior to attempting a task, by communicating to the learners what the criteria for the task is. Assessment is especially important in Foundation Phase, as the educator needs to diagnose barriers of learning and address them as they arise. It is the intention of the grade-by-grade Assessment Standards to guide educators in diagnosing barriers of learning (DoE, 2003:32).

To support learner development, educators must have a good sense of what can reasonably be expected of learners at different ages and levels in the Foundation Phase (DoE, 2003:32). Learners must understand the assessment process and the criteria to be applied (DoE, 1997a:19). The educator should be aware of the following hints as to simplify the assessment process (DoE, 2003:32):

- Daily activities could be used to assess Foundation Phase learners' competence and performance.

- Activities usually address a number of Learning Outcomes at a time, but the assessment itself could focus on one or two key Learning Outcome and their related Assessment Standard(s).
- It is difficult to assess all learners at the same time in large groups or classes. Smaller groups of learners can be targeted on a daily basis. This is particularly applicable to observations of learners. Comments can therefore be expected on a few learners per day.
- Some learners will need to be assessed more often than others, depending on the rate of progress of individual learners.
- Feedback and evidence should cover all the Learning Outcomes, so it needs to take on different forms.
- Formative assessment is on-going and takes place whenever a suitable situation arises.

According to the Department of Education (2003:15) and Burden (2000:38) assessment should -

- enhance individual growth and development, monitor the progress of learners, assist learners to reach their full potential and facilitate learning;
- find out what a learner knows, understands and what a learner can do;
- make judgement based on valid and appropriate evidence – these judgements should then enable us to make well informed decisions about what learners need to learn next;
- give an indication of the success of the programme of learning including how appropriate resources have been;
- include a variety of assessment techniques by a variety of persons including the educators, learners themselves, peers and the community to be recorded properly;
- encourage learners to go beyond simple recall of data or facts and move away from memorisation;
- close the gap between the classroom and the real world by involving learners by actively using relevant knowledge in real life contexts;
- include opportunities for learners to perform tasks and solve problems;
- make provision for adaptive methods of assessment;
- be participative, democratic and transparent;

- be criterion-referenced;
- be integrated throughout the teaching and learning process and in different settings and manners;
- give constant feedback to learners about their assessment and progress;
- assess the process and the product;
- be formal and informal;
- combat bias;
- safeguard equality and standards.

It is the intention of the grade-by-grade Assessment Standards to guide educators in this regard (DoE, 2003:32). Assessment Standards describe the level at which learners should demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcome(s) and the ways of demonstrating their achievement and progress (DoE, 1997a:32 ; DoE, 2002c:14 ; DoE, 2002d:14 ; DoE, 2003:15). Assessment Standards are Grade specific and show how conceptual progression will occur in a Learning Area. Assessment Standards embody the knowledge, skills and values required to achieve Learning Outcomes. Assessment Standards do not prescribe method (DoE, 2002c:4 ; DoE, 2002d:14).

A Learning Outcome is different from an Assessment Standard, in the way that a Learning Outcome can and will, in most cases, remain the same from Grade to Grade, while Assessment Standards change from Grade to Grade (DoE, 2002b:14 ; DoE, 2002c:4). The Literacy Learning programme has as its basis the six Home Language Learning Outcomes, along with their related Assessment Standards, as previously described in this chapter, which are required to demonstrate the achievement of the Learning Outcomes (DoE, 2003:47).

3.2. Planning for assessment

Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005:59) state that Ysseldyke (2001:306) concluded as a reflection on his 25 year research career on assessment that “we should work to have all assessment practices make a difference to learners’ lives rather than assessment be a prediction about their lives.”

The core of any learner (reading) support programme is captured in five procedures (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:75):

Procedure 1: Assess the learner to determine what he has already mastered.

Procedure 2: Formulate the outcomes, i.e. what the learner should have achieved by the end of the support programme.

Procedure 3: Select the contents of the curriculum or learning programme.

Procedure 4: Choose the support strategies and methods.

Procedure 5: Assess the learner's progress.

Continuous Assessment should be planned and the recording should mainly focus on broad assessment planning. Continuous Assessment does not imply continuous recording. Educators and learners need to know what and why they want to assess, and what needs to be recorded. Educators need to guard against falling into an assessment only mode. This assessment only mode gives the learners less time to work and participate in class. Educators should use continuous assessment to support learner development and to support individual learners with a specific challenge they wish to master or achieve (DoE, 2003:32,33).

Planning for assessment should specifically include the assessment of learners who experience barriers to learning (DoE, 2003:15). It is certainly nowhere more important to break away from performance-oriented assessment than when dealing with learners who experience barriers to learning (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:46). It is likely that in every classroom there are some learners who experience barriers to learning. When planning an assessment activity, the educator should have a clear sense of the wide range of barriers to learning that may inhibit learning and the achievement of the Learning Outcomes, and how to address these barriers to learning (DoE, 2003:15). The educator should not be engaged in the assessment of the learner or even in the assessment of learning – the focus should at all times be on assessment *for* learning (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:46). The key is to determine what exactly is being assessed, i.e. concepts, application or skill, and to develop assessment tasks in such a way that learners can demonstrate their learning (DoE, 2003:15).

3.3. Assessment strategies

Evidence collection for use in assessment is on-going, linked with the normal process of learning or working and not from one-off assessment occasions (DoE, 1997a:19). Educators can select assessment strategies depending on the purpose of the assessment. The purpose of the assessment will also depend on a specific Learning Area. The forms or types of assessment strategies chosen must provide a range of opportunities for learners to demonstrate attainment of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes (DoE, 2003:17).

The following are some of the assessment tools and techniques or strategies that could be used in the Foundation Phase to assess learner achievement (DoE, 2003:17, 33; Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:59):

- **Observation**

Educators observe learners informally and watch closely as the learners participate in individual, pair and group activities, and listen to their conversations and discussions. Observation refers to the monitoring of learning behaviours and emotional responses.

- **Written work (including worksheets)**

Activities presented by learners in writing should be planned in such a way that learners' writing is reflected clearly.

- **Performance-based assessment:**

Learners demonstrate skills, knowledge or values and deals mainly with observable tasks. Learners are asked to create, produce or demonstrate something. The criteria for the task should be clearly spelled out to the learners beforehand. The end product, as well as the process that the learners use to complete the task, are assessed. Such tasks could include individual or group projects which integrate different activities and a range of skills, presentations (drawings, paintings, recitals, constructions), investigations, practical exercises or demonstrations in which learners demonstrate manual or behavioural skills, singing and movement activities (games), and role-play (rehearsed or unrehearsed).

- **Interviews (Aural/Oral questions)**

Evidence is obtained on a learner's ability to listen, interpret and communicate ideas and knowledge during a dialogue or conversation between the educator and the learner. The educator should make notes of the learner's responses.

- **Self-assessment or Self-report assessment:**

Learners get the opportunity to reveal what they think and how they feel about themselves, how they feel about their work and how they have met the criteria for the task. Self-assessment is useful especially if linked to metacognitive awareness and goal setting.

- **Pair and group assessment:**

The number of group members can vary from two to approximately ten. The size of the group is determined by the activity that needs to be performed.

- **Portfolio assessment:**

Portfolios contain an assortment of the learner's work and the portfolio gives an idea of what the learner can or cannot do.

- **Continuous assessment:**

Continuous assessment identifies a difficulty in the early stages and provides a more comprehensive picture of learning as a process.

- **Tests; Structured Questions:**

Tests are valuable especially if utilised for positive feedback concerning correct and good answers.

- **Assignments; Projects; Practical exercises or demonstrations:**

Assignments or work sampling are often used for error analysis and is useful for identifying the learner's strengths, work habits and learning style.

- **Role-plays; Interaction; Simulations; Case studies:**

This is one step further than observation. Interaction, role-play and simulation consist of direct communication and give the greatest understanding of progress. Interaction, role-play and simulation challenges, encourages and stimulates the learner and is mostly informal.

- **Questionnaires; Checklists:**

These often focus on problem areas but the items can also be formulated in a positive way.

- **Task accommodation to improve performance:**

Examples of this are balancing tasks in order to keep the learner's interest, shortening tasks or breaking the tasks down into smaller components, allowing breaks when necessary and relating tasks to familiar experiences and situations.

- **Assessment in a specific learning area:**

Examples for reading include word reading *versus* running text; reading aloud *versus* reading silently; comprehension questions *versus* executing instructions.

4. SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher discussed aspects concerning the Foundation Phase in South Africa. These aspects included the Learning Areas, Learning Programmes, Learning Area Outcomes, Outcomes Based Education, and Assessment in the Foundation Phase. In the next chapter language and reading development, as well as reading difficulties, will be described.

CHAPTER 3

LANGUAGE AND READING DIFFICULTIES IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the researcher will discuss the development and difficulties in, and support for language, literacy and reading, in the Foundation Phase. It must be made clear however, that literacy, language and reading are not separable or different from each other, but that they are merely discerned in this study for the sake of description, as well as to indicate the close relation among them. The assumption of this study is that educators ought to be aware of these language and reading difficulties, to be able to identify and support such difficulties in the classroom.

Support for reading difficulties is also described in detail, although the title of this study is the *identification* of reading difficulties only. In the empirical part of the study, the questionnaires however contain questions about reading support too, because identification should lead to support as well. Moreover, the assumption is that if educators have knowledge about the reading difficulties and can identify those in learners, they should have knowledge about support too.

The identification of language, literacy and reading difficulties will be described first.

2. LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

2.1 Language and literacy development

Literacy is referred to as “the ability to read and write”, “the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way”, “any method of expression or communication”, and the “ability to read and use written information and to write for different purposes” (Hornby, 1991:728 ; DoE, 2003:41).

Literacy is also part of a general ability to make sense of one's world (DoE, 2002b:139). Literacy should be viewed as the resource or a toolkit to break the code of written, visual or multi-modal texts.

Literacy should focus on the meaning of texts and should provide learners with the social understanding and critical awareness to make use of these texts within appropriate contexts (Rivalland, 2005:1).

Young learners begin their literacy development from their first interactions with reading, writing, print and audio-visual media in the environment in which they grow up. Literacy development involves a gradual process of improving various language-related skills.

Learners' literacy skills will become accomplished when they are given the opportunities to use and develop these literacy skills (DoE, 2003:50). Literacy is linked to personal empowerment and is essential for social and cultural interaction. Learners need to develop the ability to use language to communicate their thinking, ideas, feelings and experiences, and to use a variety of communication forms to do this, including the use of audio-visual media and technology.

The history of teaching literacy tells us that there has been a continual search for the "right" methodology of teaching literacy. Teaching literacy requires highly skilled educators who have the knowledge, sensitivity and capacity to adapt their teaching methodologies to the differing contexts and conditions in which learners grow up.

Educators need to be able to help learners participate in learning to be literate in ways that are joyous, significant and engaging for all learners – not just joyous, significant and engaging for those learners who already receive a great deal of support at home. This process of participation needs to be done in such a way that learners are not "turned off".

The learners' tenuous early steps towards literacy should not become the focus of competing interests or tedious and repetitious activities (Rivalland, 2005:1). Educators should create an environment that stimulates learners' imagination and foster enjoyment of

all aspects of Literacy (DoE, 2003:49). The learning experience provided must encourage learners to understand and respect diversity. Learners need to be encouraged to link classroom experience with language and cultures in their homes (DoE, 2003:49).

Foundation Phase learners begin their literacy development from their first interactions with reading, writing, print and audio-visual media in the environment in which they grow up (DoE, 2003:50).

The principle guiding the teaching and learning of literacy, is that literacy development involves a gradual process of improving various language-related skills. Mistakes made by the learner should be viewed as a natural part of a learning process. Learners' literacy skills will become increasingly accomplished when they are given the opportunity to use and develop these skills (DoE, 2003:50).

Research as reported on by Rivalland (2005:2) points towards the following conclusions concerning the teaching of literacy:

- Learners who become literate with ease have had a great deal of experience with numerous written texts from the time that they were young. These learners have been read to frequently, they have been given the opportunity to examine the nature of a range of texts and have been able to explore the meaning of those texts with a supportive mentor.
- Learners' literacy development is strongly linked to knowledge of how words are made up of different sounds and how these sounds can be mapped onto written symbols. Successful literacy learners have phonological awareness, as well as code breaking skills, and they can use the alphabetic principle (the idea that written spelling systematically represents the sounds of spoken words) in reading and writing.
- Learner's literacy development is dependent on their ability to fluently use comprehension and composing strategies to get meaning from text and to compose their own texts. Without fluence, learners cannot cope with the cognitive demands of complex texts.
- Learner's literacy practices are shaped by the social interactions of those around them and the different ways learners are able to take what is available to them when they go

to school, is strongly mediated by the literacy and social experiences they have from the time they are born.

- Reading of texts involve understanding linguistic and symbolic codes specific to the technology of written language. Texts have specific attributes that learners must consciously understand if they are to become effective literacy learners. Effective literacy learning requires the conscious awareness of sounds, letters, the ways in which texts provide meaning and the conscious awareness of knowledge about forms of text.
- Learning about the technology of literacy also includes the capacity to recognize the ways in which texts shape particular values about topics. This is necessary because we want our learners to grow up learning how to resist exploitation by commercial and political interests and to accept differences in race, language, ethnicity, gender, age and political views.

In order to survive in an ever increasingly complex world, where literacy not only focuses on written texts, but also visual, computer and internet texts, learners will need to develop a "literacy toolkit" (Rivalland, 2005:2) which enables them to -

- make meanings of and compose a range of different forms and modes of texts, including multi-modal texts;
- decode and encode effectively, including the icons and symbols of technology;
- read and write fluently;
- critically analyse texts to recognize whose views are being presented in texts;
- adapt reading and writing processes to the many different text forms used by different subject areas and the different modes of texts, such as written, visual, computer and internet texts.

All people communicate by means of language in their social interactions (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:49). De Witt and Booysen (1995:94) defined language as a general term for verbal symbols. Language is culturally bound and no universal language exists (De Witt & Booysen, 1995:94). By means of educational assistance, each learner must acquire the meanings of his language's words as well as the grammatical correct combinations of these words (De Witt & Booysen, 1995:95).

We have two separate masses of language knowledge: our passive knowledge (also called our receptive language) and our active (expressive) language. When we listen or read, we make use of our passive vocabulary and when we speak or write, we make use of our active vocabulary. A learner's passive vocabulary comes into being through constant repetition of words, phrases or structures. Once a word, phrase or structure has been repeated often enough, it becomes part of the learners' active vocabulary. A learner must hear a word about 500 times before it will become part of his active vocabulary. Long before that it will form part of the learners' passive vocabulary. This implies that a learner's active vocabulary can only be improved *via* the passive vocabulary (Strydom & Du Plessis, 2000:86).

Language ability develops gradually while interrelating with others and as their perception, speech motor skills develop and knowledge increases.

Learners' reading abilities develop after they have mastered a certain level of spoken language. This certain level of spoken language is when they are able to express themselves and understand what others are saying. Their receptive and their expressive language abilities must be at a certain level of development before they are able to read (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:122). Spoken language is learned incidentally, while reading is taught purposefully to learners.

Learners learn to read by themselves, or by watching others read and by asking questions about the text and the written letters (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:122). Written language is a more complex use of language than spoken language or reading. The development of written language takes place concurrently to reading, although learners first become aware that the signs or scribbles on paper have meaning. Most learners are able to use written language adequately after they have mastered reading (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:122).

When a person is speaking, he utters successive speech sounds. The order in which these sounds are uttered forms meaningful words and sentences, which enable the listener to understand the speaker's messages (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:120). The structure

and patterns of spoken language are different from those of written language. Spoken language is interactive and makes use of a variety of non-verbal strategies that add to the meaning (DoE, 2003:51). Learners are not formally taught to use spoken language (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:122).

Educators need to give special attention to developing learners' language skills. They should make explicit the difference between written and spoken language (DoE, 2003:51).

This can be done by -

- encouraging and supporting learners to do a wide range of reading (both by themselves and with others);
- reading and performing stories, songs and poems to help make language come alive for young learners;
- giving learners frequent opportunities for writing and representing thoughts graphically or in other creative ways;
- developing learners' vocabulary and language use.

In written language the writer makes an appeal to the reader's sense of vision. The reader uses his visual perceptual skills to convert the perceptual stimuli of the graphic symbols into spoken language. Readers interpret the written text in their thoughts and convert them into the ideas and messages embedded in the words and sentences. To convey a message clearly to a reader the written language must be correct. This includes the prescribed letter formation as well as the correct spelling and language structures (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:127).

Language development involves a gradual process of improving. Mistakes are a natural part of the language development process, and with support learners' language will become increasingly more accurate as they have more opportunities to use and develop their language knowledge and skills (DoE, 2002b:9).

For learners to become increasingly more skilled readers, the classroom needs to be changed into an environment that encourages language development. Learners need to be encouraged and supported to do wide reading.

Learners should receive frequent opportunities for developing their vocabulary and language use and learners should receive help to discover techniques and strategies that unlock the code of the written word (DoE, 2002b:9).

Language is central to peoples' lives. We communicate and understand our world through language. Language shapes our identity and knowledge. Language serves a variety of purposes, which are reflected in the Language Learning Area Statement. These purposes according to the Department of Education (2002d:5) and Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005:119) are:

- personal: to sustain, develop and transform identities; to sustain relationships in family and community; for personal growth and pleasure;
- communicative: to communicate appropriately and effectively in a variety of social contexts;
- abstract: a system of signs and meaningful symbols that represent something;
- rule-governed: the rules determine the order of sounds in words and words in sentences;
- social: language enables a person to interact with other people;
- versatile: language can be rearranged and combined limitlessly, and can be used to communicate future information;
- educational: to develop tools for thinking and reasoning and to provide access to information;
- aesthetic: to create, interpret and play imaginatively with oral, visual and written texts;
- cultural: to understand and appreciate languages and cultures, and the heritage they carry;
- political: to assert oneself and challenge others; to persuade others of a particular point of view; to position oneself and others; to sustain, develop and transform identities;
- critical: to understand the relationship between language, power and identity, and to challenge uses of these where necessary; to understand the dynamic nature of culture; and to resist persuasion where necessary.

Language plays a vital role in reading. The role of language in reading can be compared to the role of running in a game of soccer. The learner cannot play soccer if he cannot run. The learner cannot read a book in any language unless the learner knows that particular language. If a learner's knowledge of English is poor, then the learner's reading will be poor.

This means that the cause of a reading difficulty can go deeper than merely that the foundation skills of reading have not been adequately mastered (Strydom & Du Plessis, 2000:84). If a learner's grasp of the English language as his Home Language, is inadequate, the only way through which his reading could be improved, would be by not only teaching the skills foundational to reading, but by also improving the learner's command of the English language as his Home Language.

The five grammatical components of any language are the following (De Witt & Booysen, 1995:100 ; Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:121 ; Francis, 1999:9, 12 ; Hancock & Wingert, 1996a:3 ; Strydom & Du Plessis, 2000:6), which all learners have to grasp and command in their Home Language:

Phonology:

Phonology is the basic sounds used in any spoken language. A phoneme on its own has no meaning. Phonemes deal with the position of a sound in a word. Each language has a specific sound system. Each language system has its own set of rules that determines the order of sounds (phonemes) in words and words in sentences.

Morphology:

Morphology is the smallest unit in a word that has meaning. Morphology is the system of meaningful forms in words. If a morpheme is broken up into smaller sound units, the morpheme becomes phonemes without meaning. Words are constructed of phonemes and morphemes. There are four different types of morphemes.

- free morphemes are single root words such as "book", "water", "key";
- bound morphemes become meaningful when used as a prefix or affix to a free morpheme;

- derivative morphemes change the meaning of the root word;
- inflexion morphemes do not change the meaning of the word but indicate time.

Syntax:

Syntax refers to the order in which words are combined to form a sentence. A sentence always contains a subject and a verb. The words in a sentence are combined according to fixed rules. This combination of words in a sentence may change to transform the sentence into another type of sentence.

Semantics:

Semantics refer to the meaning attached to words in sentences. There are four forms of semantics:

- lexical semantics refer to the literal meaning of each word in the sentence (*The blue sky*, meaning the sky is blue);
- sentence semantics where the meaning lies in the whole sentence and not in individual words (*He is cool*, meaning he is smart);
- semantic relations where each word in a sentence has a particular function that expresses the relations between the ideas in the sentence (*He puts on his jacket before leaving home*, meaning it is cold outside);
- interpretive semantics refers to the various ways in which the same thought may be expressed (*The boy is naughty*, and the boy is impossible).

Pragmatics

Pragmatics deal with the social and cultural aspects of language use. Pragmatics include the non-verbal behaviour of persons and refer to the different ways in which persons express themselves in a particular situation.

Language difficulties may involve any of the above-mentioned grammatical components of language. Language difficulties can contribute to poor reading comprehension (Hancock & Wingert, 1996a:3). Comprehension – to understand the meaning of the content of the whole written text – depends on the ability to decode and master sight words, as the learner has to decode words according to their knowledge of these grammatical components above.

Learners with positive attitudes towards language learning are more likely to become good readers, speakers, listeners, readers and writers (DoE, 2003:49). Some of the factors that influence the development of language are the environment, the education situation, methods of education, socio-economic status, the educator as a model, intelligence, motivation, contact with other learners, and a learner's personality (De Witt & Booyesen, 1995:102,103,104). These factors are however not dealt with in this study.

Language difficulties and the identification thereof, is described next.

2.2 Language and literacy difficulties

A literacy difficulty is the inability to read, write and communicate. Since literacy is the medium through which all learning takes place (DoE, 2003:21), learning would not necessarily take place for a learner experiencing a literacy difficulty.

Language difficulties refer to problems with communication, including reading and writing. This includes difficulties with receptive language (listening and reading), and expressive language (speaking and writing). The learner has trouble using words or understanding words in the context of a conversation or assignment (Gregg, 1998:2).

The following are symptoms of language difficulties which the educator has to be aware of to be able to *identify* them when a learner experiences such difficulties:

receptive language difficulties:

- difficulty learning new words;
- difficulty understanding questions;
- slow learning of the correspondence of sound to letter;
- difficulty remembering basic sight words.

expressive language difficulties:

- inability to retell a story in sequence;
- substitutes words when reading;
- gets stuck on familiar words;

- guesses when reading;
- omissions in reading (reads “cat” instead of “cart”);
- can sound out the letters, but unable to say the correct word (sounds c-a-t but then says “cold”);
- letter or word reversals when reading (was/saw, b/d, p/q);
- letter or word reversals when writing. (“left” as “felt”, “are there” as “there are”);
- writing syllables in the wrong order. (“enemy” as “emeny”);
- reversing letters or words when spelling words that are presented orally;
- grammatical errors (was/were, is/are) when reading;
- slow development in speaking words or sentences;
- pronunciation problems;
- difficulty rhyming words;
- lack of interest in story telling;
- consistent errors in reading or spelling.

Receptive and expressive language difficulties may involve any of the grammatical components of language as described in paragraph 2. Language difficulties can contribute to poor reading comprehension (Hancock & Wingert, 1996a:3). Comprehension – to understand the meaning of the content of the whole written text – depends on the ability to decode and master sight words.

When the educator has succeeded in identifying language difficulties in a reader, the educator has to be able to render applicable support for these difficulties. This aspect is described next.

2.3. Support for language and literacy difficulties

The following ideas may be put into practice with regard to language support (Niemann & Monyai, 2006:35,36,37,38,39):

- at the end of the day, allow learners to summarize what they have learnt;
- give learners the opportunity to discuss their understanding of concepts and ideas with other learners, thus ensuring that the learners not only understand the concepts correctly, but that they can also communicate these ideas and concepts to others;

- it is important that the educator should break up complex tasks and present these complex tasks to the learners in digestible chunks;
- when learners find it difficult to understand concepts, the educator should devote some extra time to helping the learners master key concepts;
- the educator's own language usage should be logical and of a high standard. The educator should be a model to the learners at all times;
- create ample opportunities for learners to speak in their Home Language. If the educator speaks most of the time the learners do not have the opportunity to make mistakes themselves, to practice pronunciation and learn their Home Language through repetition;
- when learners do an experiment or any activity, the educator should ask the learners to explain each step aloud as they go along;
- allow learners the opportunity to interact with learning material written in their Home Language. This is a dual process that helps learners learn new content, but learners also have to perform activities that help them develop the ability to think and argue in their Home Language;
- during group work arrange the groups so that weak learners and proficient learners work together. Research has shown that learners learn much more about a language by communicating with their friends than with the educators;
- the educator should draw up a vocabulary list before a lesson starts and the educator should write important concepts on the chalkboard. The educator should refer to these concepts when they are used in the classroom;
- repeating the most important learning points is an important support mechanism;
- speak slowly, look at the learners when you speak, and watch the learners carefully so that a learner's body language can tell you if he does not understand;
- give learners extra time when they need to read something;
- help learners to distinguish the important information from the unimportant information;
- help learners to read actively by underlining key words in a text, shade main ideas, and highlight important words by writing these important words in the margin;
- revise prior knowledge by asking them what they have already learnt and achieved;
- help learners develop self-confidence to speak in class;

- remind learners to be constant, active listeners;
- help learners structure information.

The role of language and literacy in the support of reading decoding difficulties, is described below in more detail in paragraph 3.2.3.2 of this chapter.

The development of reading and reading difficulties are described next.

3. READING

3.1 Reading development

What does it take to read? Hancock and Wingert (1996a:3) describe reading as simply “talking on paper”, while Hornsby (2004:7) says that reading is a social practice. Learners learn to read because they realize that they communicate through the written word (Winkler, 2005:84; Hornsby, 2004:28).

Reading is also a complex set of processes – physical, neurological and cognitive – set into motion, the moment our eyes fall on a word. These physical, neurological and cognitive processes enable us to convert print into meaning (Levine, 2002a:1).

Strydom and Du Plessis (2000:77) state that the reading act is a unitary occurrence, meaning that the processes taking place while one is reading occur simultaneously. While reading, the reader is generally unaware of the multitude of complex neurological and muscular processes he is successfully completing (Francis, 1999:19).

The above events sound very complex, and indeed must be recognized as being just that. In reality these processes take place all the time – at lightning speed – while a learner is reading. A good reader is however unaware of these processes because they have been automatised.

Reading is however not a passive act, though it becomes automatised at some stage. Reading is an interactive activity. Learners have to get involved with the text as they are reading. Learners should make predictions, identify main ideas, draw conclusions and

agree or disagree with statements that they read (Du Toit, Heese & Orr, 2002:4; Hornsby, 2004:6).

If a learner tries to use reading skills that have not become automatic, he will necessarily have to divide his attention between the content of the story and the skills of reading. There is no point in letting learners read books that are too difficult for them (Winkler, 2005:84).

The poor reader is forced to apply all his concentration to the reception of the message, and therefore has no concentration left to decode the message (Strydom & Du Plessis, 2000:81). This reader will read haltingly and with great difficulty (Strydom & Du Plessis, 2000:81).

English reading requires the knowledge of the symbols of the English language. Learners who were ready to start reading before starting school, become the best readers (Hornsby, 2004:28). Therefore parents have a lot of influence over their children's reading. Parents who read to their children and who set a good example of reading themselves, will find that their children learn to read quickly and easily (Winkler, 2005:84 ; Hornsby, 2004:28). Parents can prepare their children for reading by telling them stories or reading to them or looking at the newspaper together (Winkler, 2005:84 ; Hornsby, 2004:28). By reading to learners parents and educators help learners to imagine worlds they would never dream about (Hornsby, 2004:28).

Strydom & Du Plessis (2000:77) divide the development of reading skills into steps: step 1: reception; step 2: decoding; and step 3: learning. These foundational skills are not dormant, they need to be taught and learned (Strydom & Du Plessis, 2000:86 ; Hancock & Wingert, 1996c:4), by educators and parents.

Reading must always be meaningful. If reading is not meaningful, readers will not read (Winkler, 2005:84). Learners bring to the act of reading their general as well as subject specific knowledge, their reading, their educational experiences and their life experiences, their cultural background, beliefs and values, their interests and their feelings. All of these elements that the learners bring to the reading process help the learner to construct

meaning of what he is reading (Du Toit, Heese & Orr, 2002:4).

Nothing is more important to academic achievement than being a good reader (Gisler & Eberts, 2005:1). There is no doubt that reading competence is closely linked to academic success (Du Toit, Heese & Orr, 2002:3).

Studies show that learners who develop early reading skills are often more successful in school and beyond. Plus, these learners feel great about themselves (Hancock & Wingert, 1996c:6). Ostrowiak (1977:3) and Van Loggerenberg (2005:7) stress the importance of the appropriate foundation for reading in the Foundation Phase: "A naturally intelligent child who has insufficient reading foundation will be incapable of reading and thus handicapped in all his school subjects as every subject entails the ability to read and spell".

Competent readers should be able to demonstrate the following reading skills (Du Toit, Heese & Orr, 2002:6 ; Hornsby, 2004:20):

- understand what they read;
- remember important information correctly;
- read efficiently;
- undertake reading tasks with confidence;
- evaluate what they read;
- do independent reading;
- read widely for relaxation and enjoyment.

Learners can only learn to read by reading. Through experience, readers fine-tune their reading skills and learn to use these reading skills in increasingly coordinated ways (Hornsby, 2004:15). Learning to read is a sequential process as described by Levine (2002a:1) and by Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002:288). This sequential reading process has already been further divided into eight skills by Francis (1999:4):

Skill 1: Communication skill

Communication comes from the Latin word *communicare* which means to share or make common (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:171). For a learner to be able to read the learner

should have communication skills (Du Toit, 1996:157). In general, any intentional or unintentional transfer of information about needs, desires, perceptions, knowledge or emotions might be considered to be communication (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:171). Defined in its academic sense, communication generally needs to be intentional, meaning that a person who communicates intends to convey something to another person.

Reading is a highly interactive activity between the concepts being communicated by the author and those concepts already held by the reader, as well as between the printed text and the reader's knowledge of the world and the language elements (Francis, 1999:4). Reading must be regarded as an act of communication (Strydom & Du Plessis, 2000:78,79) – there is the communicator (the author of the book that the learner is reading), there is the message (transferred to the reader via symbols on paper), and there is the recipient of the message (the reader). Receptive and expressive language are applicable in this instance again.

The main functions of communication are (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:120, 127, 129, 135):

- informing or to give information about content to others by means of essays, lectures, reports, demonstrations, discussions;
- expressing feelings by communicating feelings verbally or non-verbally, about oneself to others. These are feelings such as love, appreciation, admiration, disappointment and frustration;
- imagining includes creative communication activities like dramatisation, fantasy and story-telling;
- ritualising covers ordinary speech acts like greeting, introducing, teaching;
- controlling is when one person tries to influence the thoughts and actions of another through threats, commands or arguments.

Communication difficulties may inter alia be caused by speech difficulties where there is an absence of speech sound or poor speech production or quality, articulation difficulties where speech sounds are uttered incorrectly or not fluently as what happens when a learner is stuttering or pronunciation difficulties. In South Africa with its 11 official

languages, there are numerous pronunciation differences of the letters of the alphabet. This may also cause difficulties in a learners' spoken language and reading.

Skill 2: Comprehension skill

Giving meaning to written text enables the learner to comprehend what he is reading. Comprehension is the understanding of words and information as the words and information is stated in the text. De Witt and Booyesen (1995:96) state that "the highest form of any language skill is to read with comprehension". The whole purpose of reading is to understand the meaning of what is being read. Opportunities for daily, independent reading result in higher levels of comprehension and better levels of reading achievement overall (Hornsby, 2004:34).

Where a learner has a difficulty with understanding, the reading progress becomes severely restricted (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:342). Comprehension ultimately depends on the ability to decode and master sight words. Learners who cannot do this, have to sound out every word and thus lose the meaning of the whole word. Learners then find it difficult to understand the meaning of the full sentence, or even the underlying information in the whole text. They forget the beginning of the story before they get to the end.

Reading comprehension initially starts with visual perception. Perception skills necessary for comprehension *inter alia* are figure/ground perception, putting information and sounds into sequence, and filing all the comprehended information into short term memory. Discrimination skill is another perceptual skill – to recognise different shapes and words. Learners with discrimination difficulties will struggle to read or notice differences between sounds and they will not be able to follow instructions or to understand what the educators in class are saying.

Skill 3: Critical thinking skill

Critical thinking skill includes the ability to analyse, draw inferences, synthesise and draw conclusions from the text (Francis, 1999:4).

Skill 4: Interaction skill

Interaction is essential to successful reading and is when the brain accesses previously learned knowledge of the world to predict and respond to phonetic conceptual information (Francis, 1999:4). This phonetic conceptual information comes from the visual shapes and other order of letters in written words, as well as their relation to sounds in spoken words (Donald, Lazarus, Lolwana, 2002 :342). This phonetic conceptual information further comes from the putting together and the combination of sounds and letters, and also to sound the letters that make up the word before actually saying the word itself (Lerner, 2000:403,404 ; Hancock & Wingert, 1996c:7 ; Winkler, 2005:84). This matching of letters with sounds (sound-symbol association; phoneme- grapheme association) can be described as a kind of interaction between new information and existing knowledge. The learner is not easily confused by new information because he or she already knows the different sounds that make up the word of the new information, he or she just needs to put the sounds together to make up the whole word (Lerner, 2000:403,404).

The decoding of the message is a very important aspect of the reading act. Without being able to decode the message, the receiver (or the reader) cannot understand the message. This explains why some learners can technically read a story without understanding what they are reading. Decoding implies that the reader is able to decipher the message. In other words, the reader is able to ascribe meaning to the written word. Deciphering becomes possible first by integrating the message that he is reading with his foreknowledge (Levine, 2002a:1 ; Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:126).

Decoding is done by breaking up words into their component sounds or phonemes so that the learner can sound the words out. For example, the word “bag” is made up of three phonemes – “buh”, “aah”, and “guh”. The learner also needs to know that a word can be a combination of a prefix and maybe a suffix that is added to a root word to make up a new word, for example “repetition”.

Learners with reading difficulties have difficulty segmenting words into individual syllables or phonemes and have trouble blending speech sounds into words. Storage of phonological information during reading involves creating a sound-based representation of written words

in working memory – interaction of sounds and letters. Learners who experience reading difficulty may have difficulty with this interaction of phonological and visual information (Frost & Emery, 1995:2).

Skill 5: Skill to obtain knowledge of the world

Knowledge of the world is everything that is known (Francis, 1999:4). As learners read, they connect the information of what they are reading to what they already know of the subject or world (Levine, 2002a:2). Foreknowledge can be defined as the range of one's existing knowledge and past experiences. If the learner reads something that cannot directly be connected or tied in with knowledge that the learner already possesses, the learner cannot decode or decipher the contents of the message. "What a learner gets from a book is often what the learner brings to the book" (Strydom & Du Plessis, 2000:82). Learning can only take place after the learner has decoded the message about the world from the text.

Skill 6: Prediction skill

Prediction is used to characterise all communication into semantics (meaning) and syntactics (form and grammar) of language structures (Francis, 1999:4). Learners make predictions and confirm or reject their predictions as they read (Hornsby, 2004:6). Because reading involves understanding the flow of written language, the form, grammar and meaning of the written language have to be understood. If not, it will lead to slow, laboured and disconnected word-calling, or what is sometimes called "barking at print" (Donald, Lazarus, Lolwana, 2002 :342 ; De Witt & Booyesen, 1995:100 ; Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:121 ; Francis, 1999:9, 12 ; Hancock & Wingert, 1996a:3).

Skill 7: Integration skill

Integration is required to combine information in very specific proportions in order to get meaning from the text (Francis, 1999:4). Learners integrate new information from the text with their current knowledge to help them comprehend the text (Hornsby, 2004:6). To help the learner give meaning to a text, the learner needs contextual clues. These contextual clues help the learner to identify familiar words of which the meaning is already known to the learner. From these intermittent contextual clues with meaning, the learner can give integrated meaning to either a whole sentence or a whole paragraph. By giving meaning to

a sentence, each word in that sentence also gets meaning (Lerner, 2000:404).

Skill 8: Language skill

Language elements such as vocabulary ('labels' for words), word structure (morphology), sentence structure (rules for relating the labels to one another; syntax), cadence (rhythmic pace, tonality, emphasis; semantics), and sound-symbol relations (phonetics), are used to construct language (Francis, 1999:4). (Also see the components of language as described in paragraph 2.1 above).

A Foundation Phase learner can build his/her own vocabulary from reading, or may already have his/her own reading vocabulary. Reading vocabulary is words which a reader recognises on sight. Some of these words will be part of the reader's active vocabulary (words they use when speaking).

The other part will be a passive vocabulary (words they can understand in context but do not know well enough to use (DoE, 2002b:140). Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005:127) divide vocabulary into meaning vocabulary (words a learner understands) and utility vocabulary (words a learner actually uses).

A learner's meaning vocabulary is always larger than his utility vocabulary because the learner understands more words than he actually uses (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:127). According to De Witt and Booyesen (1995:96) reading is dependent on a good vocabulary. Where a learner has a vocabulary difficulty, the reading progress becomes severely restricted (Donald, Lazarus, Lolwana, 2002 :342). The larger a learner's vocabulary is, the easier it will be for the learner to follow the content of a piece of written text. It is useful to read daily newspapers and magazines as this will improve a learners' vocabulary (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:141).

Learners usually learn to read and write during the Foundation Phase in South African schools. This implies that the above skills of communication, comprehending, critical thinking, interaction, knowledge of the world, prediction, integration and language components such as vocabulary and language structure which are basic to the reading act,

should be mastered by the learner at the end of the Foundation Phase (see chapter 2). If a learner is unable to learn to read after the Foundation Phase, it means that not enough instruction was given in these language skills in the Foundation Phase.

The learner should be able put all the above reading skills into use to identify words. The learner will need lots of practice in using reading skills to recognise words before this identification will become a fluent skill (Lerner, 2000:404). Actual reading only takes place when both word recognition and reading comprehension are simultaneously involved while the learner is reading (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:124).

The sequence in which these skills or components of reading are involved, is not fixed because readers use these skills randomly as required by a text. Word recognition is taught mainly at Foundation Phase level. Games are useful as learners enjoy playing with letters and words. Games allow for repetition without boring the learners (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:140).

Sight words attached to objects in the classroom should be given in full sentences placed under the words (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:140). Understanding the written word ultimately depends on the ability to decode and master sight words (Levine, 2002a:2). It is important for the learner to have knowledge of sight words. Basic sight words are high-utility words appearing frequently in text and are recognised instantly. Basic sight words are generally short and easy to recognise, such as "he", "she", "it" and "were" (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:126; Winkler, 2005:85). The mastery of sight words enhances reading speed. Repetition is one method to teach sight words to learners. Sight words should however always be taught in context.

Fluency can be encouraged by allowing enough opportunities to read. It may take the whole of the Foundation Phase before a learner reads fluently. Learners who have fluency difficulties, read word by word, forget the meanings of the words, find it difficult to find the main ideas in a paragraph or to pick out important details, and do not understand what they read (Winkler, 2005:90). Reading stories, poems and other information aloud, may help learners become aware of the correct phrasing and pronunciation (Landsberg, Kruger &

Nel, 2005:141).

Reading difficulties are described next.

3.2 Reading difficulties

Pikulsky (1997:1) is of the opinion that reading difficulties are preventable for the vast majority of learners who encounter difficulty in learning to read. A reading difficulty occurs as a breakdown or disruption in the communication between a reader and what is being read (or the author) (Francis, 1999:1,5 ; Levine, 2002b:1), or as a result of language difficulties (De Witt & Booyesen, 1995:95).

A general rule of thumb in detecting the existence of a reading difficulty, is to try and identify any pattern of discrepancy between a reader's normal, comfortable speaking behaviour and the reader's reading behaviour (Francis, 1999:5,6).

Reading difficulties entail difficulties in identifying letters and/or words, difficulty in saying words, and difficulty in comprehending sentences and paragraphs (Bergert, 2000:1). Learners with reading difficulties usually do not like to read and do not get sufficient practice in reading to become fluent readers (Gregg, 1998:1).

Now follows a description of reading difficulties, in terms of difficulties with word decoding and with comprehension, respectively.

3.2.1. Word decoding difficulties

Lerner (2000:412) and Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005:132) distinguish between three reading levels. Determining a learner's reading level does not give a precise indication of his actual reading performance, but it does give an indication of where to start with reading support.

The first level is independent reading where the learner can recognise or decode 95% of the words and answer 90% of the questions on the reading material correctly. These learners can read the text with ease without support.

The second level is the instructional level where the learner recognises 90% of the words, and answers 70% of the questions on the reading material correctly. This is the level on which support should take place, especially with comprehension. Although the reading material is challenging for the learner, word decoding and comprehension is not too difficult.

The third level is the frustration level where the learner recognises less than 90% of the words and answers less than 70% of the questions on the reading material correctly. This learner needs more explanation and support from the educator, concerning decoding and comprehension. Not all learners reach each level at exactly the same stage; some learners reach a higher level earlier or later in the Grade.

The following symptoms indicate that a specific piece of text is on the frustration level (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:133,134) for the learner because the learner cannot decode words in the text:

- oral reading is too loud or too soft;
- slow oral reading rate (reading word by word);
- reading intonation, phrasing, pronunciation is inadequate;
- omit words in sentences;
- repeats words;
- lip-reading (mouths words while reading), head movement, finger pointing;
- learner often asks for help;
- there is little indication of interest in the text and the story and the learner seems tired;
- the learner refuses to read any further;
- reading without expression;
- holds breath while reading;
- incorrect breathing;
- wrong voice intonation;
- insertion;
- substitution;
- hesitation;
- anticipation mistakes;

- guesses unknown words;
- skips unknown words.

It is critical for early identification of any reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase already (DoE, 2002b:32 ; DoE, 2003:34). Reading difficulties can be the result of a variety of other barriers, including factors such as emotional difficulties, physical difficulties or social difficulties (see chapter 2).

Educators should be aware of reading difficulties so that they can identify and support these difficulties themselves, as already mentioned. To identify reading difficulties educators should have the knowledge and skill to recognise these reading difficulties according to their defining characteristics or symptoms (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:319).

In 2000 the former Minister of Education, professor Asmal, gazetted the Norms and Standards for educators as national policy. These Norms and Standards for educators set out in detail the notion of educator competence, and explains what competences educators should be able to demonstrate across a range of educator roles (Niemann & Monyai, 2006:2).

The general understanding of the definition of competence is that the competent educator has to have the knowledge, skills and ability to perform the tasks and roles required of him or her (Niemann & Monyai, 2006:2).

Reading comprehension difficulties are described next.

3.2.2. Comprehension difficulties

As described above, learners with decoding difficulty cannot adequately identify basic sight words, read very slowly, move from sound to sound, and cannot remember the sentences they have read.

Learners with comprehension difficulties will have difficulties with the following (Winkler, 2005:88):

- comprehending written or spoken directions;
- understanding or remembering what they have just read;
- the meaning of words and sentences;
- connecting ideas in a passage;
- detail, either through omission of or glossing over detail;
- distinguishing significant information from minor details;
- connecting what is read to prior knowledge;
- applying content of a text to personal experiences;
- putting their thoughts on paper;
- phrasing, when reading aloud;
- answering of content questions;
- making assumptions of the content or to argue about content;
- punctuation, when reading aloud or silently;
- using linguistic clues to decode unknown words;
- meta-cognition – the learner constantly reads incorrectly without correcting himself, or he does not realise that he is reading incorrectly.

In the next section the support for reading difficulties will be discussed.

3.2.3 Support for reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase

This section will be described in terms of *approaches* to reading support, support for reading *decoding*, reading *comprehension*, the role of *teacher support teams*, and what *educators* themselves can do in the classroom to support reading difficulties. The aspect about teacher support teams is not included in the empirical part of this study, but is described here for the sake of the total theoretical presentation of the support task of the school in reading difficulties.

3.2.3.1 Approaches to reading instruction or support

Reading difficulties do not disappear by themselves with time. The earlier learners receive support in the Foundation Phase, the more likely they will become good readers (Gisler & Eberts, 2005:1).

A very important aspect of reading support is to give the learners the opportunity to listen to the spoken word. Written language differs from spoken language. By reading to learners often, the learners become used to language and sentence structures in written language and this may help learners to understand the content better when they read.

Making use of reading games and reading in real-life situations in order to enhance the learners' interest in reading also makes them aware that reading is part of peoples' daily lives.

Learners should always experience reading as a pleasure as this will motivate them to want to read. Educators should not criticise every mistake, but rather acknowledge every attempt at improvement in a learner's reading even if it is only a word or two, or a vague indication of an attempt to improve reading or intonation (Landsberg, Kruger, Nel, 2005:139).

There are several methods to support learners with their reading difficulties. Reading support methods however, are described as a 'political battleground' by Hancock and Wingert (1996a:2), due to the sometimes fierce argumentation about the different methods. The most argumentation in literature is mainly about the Whole Language approach versus Explicit Code-Emphasis instruction (the phonics approach). The fact is that specific methods of instruction can help anyone learn to read well or better, despite the nature or cause of the difficulty (Hancock & Wingert, 1996a:1). The two mentioned support approaches are now described briefly.

The Whole Language approach

Proponents of the Whole Language approach believe that reading is learned best when the learner is immersed in real books. The theory is that learners can figure out what words mean when they see these words in context. Learners are encouraged to skip unfamiliar words. Overall understanding, and not word-by-word accuracy, is the goal.

The Whole Language approach teaches through memorisation of word pictures and strategies for recognising words (Lerner, 2000:366,368,370,372 ; Donald, Lazarus,

Lolwana, 2002:395,399) and is based on four beliefs:

- Reading is part of the integrated language system, closely linked to oral and written forms of language.
- Both oral and written language is acquired through natural usage.
- The use of authentic literature, to provide abundant opportunities for expressive literacy or writing.
- Avoid teaching separate, non-meaningful parts of language or using isolated exercises and drills.

Explicit Code-Emphasis

Explicit Code-Emphasis (phonics) instruction is mostly seen as the best way to teach reading to learners with reading difficulties. Most research backs the need for lots of phonics instruction, the sooner the better (Frost & Emery, 1995:2 ; Hancock & Wingert, 1996a:2 ; Hancock & Wingert, 1996b:1 ; Lerner, 2000:376,377,378,417,380 ; Donald, Lazarus, Lolwana, 2002:397).

Research (Frost & Emery, 1995:2 ; Hancock & Wingert, 1996a:2 ; Hancock & Wingert, 1996b:1 ; Lerner, 2000:376,377,378,417,380 ; Donald, Lazarus, Lolwana, 2002:397) indicates that the brain reads sound by sound. Basically what this means is that the brain learns to read in the same way the brain learns to talk. When we read, our brain is processing sounds (phonemes) and putting them together so we see words. Our brain is processing one sound at a time but we perceive it as a whole word. In good readers, the process is so fast it appears that they are reading whole words but in fact they are converting the letters on the written page into sounds. The brain then recognises groups of sounds as words. To read the word "cat" the reader must segment the word into underlying phonological elements. Once the word is in its phonological form, it can be identified and understood.

Unlike the Chinese or Japanese language which is a picture language, the English language is a phonetic language with 44 sounds and about a million words. These facts explain why having to memorise 44 sounds as opposed to memorising hundreds of thousands of words, is seen by most as the best way to learn to read (Hancock &

Wingert, 1996a:3).

The question however remains whether phonics instruction turns learners into robots, and in the same vein, whether whole language leave learners dazed and confused. The pros and cons of both these approaches are briefly indicated as follows (Hancock & Wingert, 1996c: 3 ; Lerner, 2000:366,368,370,372 ; Donald, Lazarus, Lolwana, 2002:395,399):

Whole language Advantages

- The early emphasis on literature makes reading fun from the start.
- Learners learn words in context, with a goal of increasing overall understanding.

Whole language Disadvantages

- If learners skip words, they may never learn these words.
- Educators often do not fully teach learners how to decode the alphabet.

Phonics Advantages

- Learners learn strategies for decoding words that they have never seen.
- Tutoring may help bring learners with early reading difficulties up to Grade level.

Phonics Disadvantages

- Educators may rely on “kill and drill” methods.
- The emphasis on decoding practices may turn learners away from literature.

Other reading support approaches are now briefly described.

The **neurological impress-method** can be used for the learner who experiences extreme difficulties with reading (Lerner, 2000:418):

- The learner sits close but more to the front of the educator.
- The educator and the learner read together from the same book.
- The learner should hear the voice of the educator in his or her ear.
- The educator sometimes reads faster than the learner and other times the educator reads slower than the learner.

- The educator sometimes reads louder than the learner and other times the educator reads softer than the learner.
- The learner does not get an opportunity to prepare the text that he or she is going to read because the main idea of this reading exercise is for the learner to hear his or her own voice, or to hear the voices of other readers and to hear how other readers read the same material, for the first time.
- The educator can also make use of the read-along method where the learner reads simultaneously while a tape recorder is playing the same story that the learner is reading.

According to Landsberg, Kruger & Nel (2005:140) all methods can be categorised into the so-called “bottom-up approach”, the “top-down approach” and the “interactive approach”.

The Bottom-up approach

This approach for teaching reading was used for many centuries. Only a few people learned to read in this way and the rest remained illiterate. The point of departure for teaching reading using this approach is phonics instruction only, teaching learners the letter-sound relations and then to sound and say the words. Comprehension according to this approach developed automatically. However, comprehension difficulties did occur unavoidably in this approach, and to counteract this, educators started using a top-down approach.

The Top-down approach

The point of departure in the top-down approach is to teach learners to identify the whole words and to read sentences without sounding the words. According to this approach learners become aware of the phonemes and the letter-sound relations gradually and automatically while they are reading in this way. However, as in the case of the bottom-up approach, all learners did not learn to read adequately through this approach either, which led to the interactive approach.

Interactive approach

As a result of the limited success of the bottom-up and the top-down approaches, the interactive approach became popular. The interactive approach tries to accommodate both

word recognition (word decoding) and comprehension at the same time during reading instruction. The interactive approach ensures more success than either of the bottom-up or the top-down approaches on their own. The interactive approach helps learners who tend to overly concentrate on either letter-sound relations or comprehension, by integrating both.

The principle of the interactive approach is adapted by many other reading approaches such as the so-called 'holistic' approach and the 'language experience' approach. Both the holistic and the language experience approaches include word recognition as well as comprehension.

These two approaches are mainly about the *order and strategies* used to teach word recognition *and* comprehension, and not about concentrating on *either of* these, that makes these approaches different from the bottom-up and top-down approaches (Landsberg, Kruger, Nel, 2005:140). As the top-down approach activates learners' background knowledge, and the bottom-up approach has game-like similarities, these two approaches combined in the integrative approach, can be successful when used with Foundation Phase learners, because they like playing and doing familiar work.

Through the language experience approach, as part of the integrative approach, learners can (Lerner, 2000:417) -

- expand their knowledge and language skills;
- connect different forms of language (listening, reading, speaking, writing);
- use their own knowledge as raw material to start with;
- dictate stories to the educator;
- know that they can say whatever they are thinking in class;
- know that they can write whatever they are saying in class;
- know that they can read whatever they are writing in class;
- know that they can read whatever others are writing in class.

According to Pikulski (1997:10,11), Levine (2002c:4), Lerner (2000:417), and Frost and Emery (1995:2), the characteristics of any successful reading intervention, irrespective of the method used, are the following:

- The dependence on a strong, effective programme of regular classroom reading instruction is recognised. Instructional procedures are used to introduce new books to ensure that learners are successful in reading these books. Intervention instruction is frequent, regular and of sufficient duration to make a difference. Provide positive explicit and corrective feedback. Reinforce attempts as well as successes. Educator-learner interaction should be emphasised.
- Reading for meaning is an overriding consideration.
- Learner-to-educator ratio is kept very small.
- Fluency is a major goal. Reading-while-listening and repeated reading are useful techniques for developing fluency.
- Texts are carefully selected and sequenced to ensure learner success.
- Word learning activities are used to help learners become familiar with print. Teach reading and spelling in conjunction. Teach learners the relation between spelling and reading and how to correctly spell the words they read.
- Writing is used to teach and extend word identification skills.
- Assessment is meaningful, practical, efficient and ongoing.
- Educator training is practical and ongoing. The success of any intervention programme is for educators to reach out to each other and share their individual skills concerning the identification and support of reading difficulties. An important element in the ongoing training of educators is that the training should occur *while* educators are working with their learners, so that the aspects to be supported arise from their actual teaching. Ongoing, practical, professional development of educators results in greater learner progress as compared with training sessions that are concentrated into a more compact time frame. Training should be done by highly experienced, trained professionals with a background in reading instruction. Educators should believe in their learners' ability to learn to read.
- Learners build confidence and come to see themselves as readers and authors.

Support for reading decoding difficulties is described next.

3.2.3.2 Literacy and language support for reading decoding difficulties

Planning a balanced reading support programme, literacy development should be included

for learners to systematically participate in literacy activities, which will engage their interest, in the following ways (Rivalland, 2005:2):

- The educator talks clear and precise enough for the learner to focus on what is being learned.
- Oral language activities which develop awareness of sounds, listening, speaking, complex oral language structures, vocabulary and knowledge about the world.
- Comprehension and composition of a range of text forms through educator instruction, modeling, scaffolding and meta-cognitive instruction.
- Systematic practice through engagement with a variety of texts, using a range of instructional strategies.
- Explicit instruction in code-breaking techniques, which include phonological awareness, letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence and sight word recognition.
- Frequent practice in reading aloud to develop fluency.
- Encouragement of spelling exercises to help learners develop understanding of phonemes, phonemic segmentation and spelling relations.
- Games and computer activities which will provide practice to support the development of the learners' 'literacy toolkit'.

How educators go about planning for and teaching literacy and reading will be likely to change according to the needs of the learners and the literacy experience they bring with them to school. Helping learners learn how to move between the different ways of talking and doing literacy, required by different contexts, is critical. Most important is that educators will need to know as much as possible about the learners they teach.

If learners come to school without a great deal of experience of written texts, much of the educator's time will be spent in providing such learners with the experiences, texts, analysis, practice and discussions to give the learners the necessary experience in language to become familiar with written texts. Educators must use what the learners know and engage with, in order to move them to read (Rivalland, 2005:4).

It is not an easy task to describe exactly how educators should enact a balanced literacy curriculum in their different classrooms. Unless learners are engaged in cognitively

demanding activities it will be likely that some students, for a range of reasons, will not successfully develop effective literacy resources. The challenge that is put towards educators, are to plan ways of implementing a balanced literacy programme which both engages the learner and cognitively challenges the learner, while at the same time providing the learner with sufficient practice to facilitate the fluency and automaticity achieved by effective literacy learners (Rivalland, 2005:4). Learners could be encouraged to assist their classmates, i.e. by reading aloud what is written on the board for a classmate who does not see well, and by repeating things for a classmate who does not hear well (DoE, 2003:35).

Strategies to support learners with the decoding of words consist of phonetic strategies, sight words and contextual clues (Lerner, 2000:403). To make phonemes more understandable for learners, demonstrate their use concretely, for example, phonemes can be represented with blocks where learners can be taught how to add, omit, substitute and rearrange phonemes in words (Levine, 2002a:8; Lerner, 2000: 417).

Combine phonetics with visual analysis and synthesis of word families. Analysis concentrates on the continuous sound and spelling pattern or sequence of the letters within words, and of the phonetic correspondence of the visual letter sequences in a word. Start with the selection of words with simple patterns, for example words that begin and end with consonants and have a single vowel in the middle (e.g. can; man; fan). Synthesis concentrates on the blending in sequence of these isolated letters and sounds.

Some learners learn sightwords better from learning spelling rules through analysis of the word patterns (Levine, 2002b:9). 'Exceptions to the rule' or the pattern can be memorised as sight words where a word has to be remembered as a whole. Once learners have learned the rule for a vowel or consonant combination, remind them to follow the pattern when they encounter similar words in reading.

When doing class reading, choose books with rhyme, repetition, a controlled vocabulary (e.g. short words like "cat" or "bed"), and sight words e.g. "man" and "of" (Gregg, 1998:3; Lerner, 2000:402,403,404).

Reinforce sight words by using flashcards for short words like “the”, “and”, “to”, “is”. Let the learners collect word ‘families’, such as words that end in e.g. -ight or ish, to let learners grasp the idea to rather look at parts of words than to sound out single letters.

Play rhyming games such as having learners finish sentences by filling in a rhyming word or saying a rhyming word. Play listening games for letter-sound correspondence by saying a sentence and have the learners clap when they hear a words that starts or ends with a particular consonant, vowel or consonant blend (e.g. ‘st’). Play missing sound games by telling learners to say the word “picnic” and then to say the word without the “pic-”, or say “stable” without the “t”.

Learners should also be able to count the individual sounds or the syllables that they hear. Play listening games for analysing (segmenting) and blending of sounds, by having the learners first say words separately, e.g. “snow” and “ball”, and then blend the two words together to say the compound word “snowball”.

Learners can also break down a multi-syllable word like “caterpillar” by saying the word slowly to accentuate the syllables while clapping for each syllable. Direct letter-sound relations should be taught, that is, how the 26 letters of the alphabet represent the 44 sounds or phonemes that make up the English language) (Gregg, 1998:3 ; Lerner, 2000:402,403,404 ; Hancock & Wingert, 1996:20).

Reinforce knowledge of letter shapes by having the learners write them, trace them or place magnetic letters in sequence, while saying the alphabet names of the letters. Think multi-sensorily – use the senses: auditory, kinesthetic/tactile and visual. In addition to look and say, the learner writes the word in sand or salt or flour poured into a flat pan. ‘Erase’ the word by lightly shaking the pan or wiping with the hand (Gregg, 1998:3 ; Lerner, 2000:402,403,404).

Write all the letters of a word on a separate card and then place the cards in sequence as the word is sounded out. Show them how to make new words (e.g. “pat” can be rearranged to make the word “tap”, or the p can be removed to make the word “at”).

Help the learners see the difference between similar letters such as “b” and “d” or “p” and “g”. The learner should concentrate on one letter at a time. Make a list of e.g. “b”-words. Write the b in a different colour or underline the b-sound in every word. Use association or rhymes so that learners can remember that e.g. the ‘tummy’ of the b faces the same direction as the ‘tummy of the capital or ‘big’ B (Lerner, 2000:433).

For other word decoding difficulties as described in 3.2.1, the following strategies can be useful (Lerner, 2000:402,403,404; Winkler, 2005:87-88).

To focus the learner’s attention on his *omissions* (when the learner leaves out words in a sentence or sounds in a word), colour the beginning, middle or endings of words, or whole words, to highlight the words. For any omissions in words, the educator must read the incomplete word back to the learner, ask the learner what is missing, and instruct the learner to listen to or look at the whole word. For omissions or *additions* (when the learner adds sounds to words or words to sentences, due to superficial reading with lack of comprehension) the meaning of that sentence should be explained, and difficult words discussed and analysed before the learner starts reading.

For *substitutions* and *repetitions* (when one word is overly repeated or replaced by another, usually similar in appearance or meaning, due to poor analysis and synthesis, poor sight vocabulary or poor comprehension) the educator can use flash cards, teach phonics and sight words, build visual and auditory analysis and synthesis, and explain that substitutions changes the meaning of a sentence.

Word-by-word reading can be dealt with by paired reading, to teach reading for meaning and to teach the meaning of punctuation. The educator sets a slow, comfortable pace so that a learner who reads haltingly or word-by-word, is forced to move more quickly from word to word, while also hearing what he and the educator are reading aloud. Provide the learner with a marker that is held on top of lines and not beneath, as this may impair reading speed and scanning ahead. The learner must also not be interrupted or stopped while reading, as this may delay comprehension of the whole section. The more the learner is allowed to read flowingly, the better the learner will read.

Losing one's place or jumping lines can be inhibited through eye exercises by using a pencil to guide the eyes from left to right.

Support for reading comprehension difficulties is described next.

3.2.3.3. Support for reading comprehension difficulties

The educators should constantly keep in mind that instruction for comprehension demand that they keep in mind the K-W-L-principle (Lerner, 2000:417), where K stands for Know (what do the learners already Know?); W stands for What (What do the learners want to know?) and L stands for Learn (what did the learners Learn?). The educator should constantly ask him or herself these questions during support for comprehension.

Start with a strategy. Before the learners begin reading, let the learners write down the reading comprehension strategy they plan to use. The learners might choose guiding questions, highlighting or underlining significant details, writing comments in the margin or writing comments after each paragraph (Levine, 2002c:6).

The teaching of comprehension skills can be done by introducing the learner to a specific theme. These theme lessons should be very organised and should be focused on the reading of one story at a time. Ideally the story must be out of a series of graded books that follow each other on the same theme, to expose the learner to different reading levels and different information, but still on the same theme.

These stories should be divided into five sections. Section one should consist of the pre-reading of the story, the discussion of the story and what the main purpose and theme of the story is. Section two should consist of the actual reading of the story. Section three should consist of the discussion of the information given in the story. Section four should consist of the identification of a relevant theme, and section five should be an implementation of the story in the real life of the individual learner that is reading the story (Lerner, 2000:408).

Introduce conceptually important vocabulary prior to reading (Frost & Emery, 1995:2 ; Lerner, 2000:417 ; Levine, 2002c:4). Preview difficult vocabulary by offering the learner a glossary of related words and concepts to use while the learner reads (Levine, 2002c:6).

Have learners retell the story and answer questions regarding implicit and explicit content (Frost & Emery, 1995:2 ; Lerner, 2000:417 ; Levine, 2002c:4). Teach learners the main components of most stories, i.e. character and setting, and how to identify and use these components to help them remember the story (Frost & Emery, 1995:2 ; Lerner, 2000:417 ; Levine, 2002c:4).

Encourage learners to interpret stories through drawings, models or other constructions. Teach learners to 'make movies' in their heads as they read to visualise the setting and events. Stop after a few paragraphs or pages and ask them to describe their 'movie' (Levine, 2002c:6).

The educator can provide the learners with a discussion on the background of the story before the class reads the story (Lerner, 2000:409). Before the learner starts to read challenging material, the educator should offer the learner an outline of the key ideas or help the learner make diagrammes or charts that capture key concepts as they read (Levine, 2002c:6). Help the learners to locate main ideas and important details (Levine, 2002c:6).

Mapping techniques and organisers such as a story outline, help learners become more familiar with the structure of stories and help learners to keep track of story elements as the learners read. Educators should make these reading organisers a hands-on activity by using markers to identify each story element. The markers could be named according to the outline of the story which would be (Lerner, 2000:411 ; Levine, 2002c:6):

- Title
- Setting
- Characters
- Problem
- Event 1

- Event 2
- Event 3
- Event 4
- Outcome.

The discussion of any story or book in the classroom can be dealt with by using questions as a guide (Lerner, 2000:408). Suggest that the learners think about the five “w’s” as they read: who? what? when? where? why? Post these “w” questions on the classroom wall or have the learners write them down to keep them nearby, or use these “w” questions as a bookmark (Levine, 2002c:6).

Examples of these “w” questions to help comprehension, are:

- Who is the sentence or article about?
- What happened?
- Where did it happen?
- When did it happen?
- How did it happen?
- Why did it happen?

Comprehension activities can be done with the learners before, during and after the reading of a text (Lerner, 2000:409). Encourage the learners to develop expertise in a subject and to read different types of texts about the subject (Levine, 2002c:5). Encourage collaborative reading activities. Learners who are reading the same book might meet in small groups, or in a group of friends, to discuss what they have read (Levine, 2002c:6).

The educator and the learners can predict what the story is all about by having a look at the cover page of the book the pictures inside the book (Lerner, 2000:409). Connect yesterday’s reading to today’s reading. Continue a story over several days. Have the learners make predictions about what they think will happen. Compare the learners’ predictions to what actually happens in the story (Levine, 2002c:5).

Let the learners list the things they would like to learn about the topic and make predictions

about whether the reading will include these things that the learners want to learn or not (Levine, 2002c:5).

Build on the learners' previous knowledge. Select reading topics that enhance subject matter that were previously covered in class or that reflects the learners' interest (Levine, 2002:9). Connect reading to what children know. Let the learners discuss what they already know about a topic before reading the story or book (Levine, 2002c:5).

Niemann and Monyai (2006:100) state that educators should take into account the learners' prior knowledge and build on the learners' prior knowledge in the following way, before starting to read:

- Ask learners individually or in groups what they have already learnt and achieved about the subject and theme.
- Revise prior learning.
- Summarise the main points of the previous lesson and put the main points of the previous lesson in writing and refer to the main points of the previous lesson regularly.
- Deliberately involve the learners' background knowledge in their new learning experience.
- Take the learners' cultural backgrounds into account.
- Work at correcting any incorrect existing understandings learners may have.

Develop interest in words and concepts. Let the learners keep track of the times they see, hear or use a new vocabulary word. (How many times can they find the word in a day or in a week?) Encourage learners to report their observations to the rest of the class (Levine, 2002c:6). Engage several pathways. Use pictures and diagrams to explain concepts, use stories on tape or tell stories (Lerner, 2000:409). The learner can use the story to escape from reality, and the story does not necessarily have to be educational. The learner should see the opportunity to read as an opportunity to enjoy, relax and discover (Lerner, 2000:411).

The educator should use predictable books where there is a pattern in every book that repeats itself in the next book. The learner becomes involved even before the reading of the

book occurs. The learner builds his or her knowledge of the language, the learner anticipates and this also helps the learner with the recognition of words when he or she starts to read as the learner recognises the words from the previous books that he or she have read (Lerner, 2000:418). Choose reading material on subjects of interest to the learner (Gregg, 1998:1).

Educators should speak distinctly and expressively when reading, clearly enunciating words and sounds. Inflect your voice in accordance with punctuation (Gregg, 1998:1). What is important for a learner with reading difficulties is for the learner to be immersed in a language-rich environment where he is hearing stories, interacting with the content and predicting how the story could develop (Excell, 2005:90).

Read in stages. Break lengthy passages into short segments. Ask learners to summarise each section as soon as they finish reading that section, or have the learners write a brief summary for themselves at the end of each section (Levine, 2002c:6).

After the reading the learner should provide the educator with a summary of the story by telling the educator what he or she enjoyed about the story, what he or she would have wanted to happen differently, as well as discussing the characters in the story and the story itself (Lerner, 2000:409).

How reading support should be planned and executed by a school support team, is described next.

3.2.3.4 School support teams

To achieve maximal efficiency, a network of support involving peers, educators, support teams, other departmental caregivers and parents, are of the utmost importance (Burden, 2000:38).

Living with or teaching a learner with reading difficulties can be an emotionally charged experience. Frustration and confusion can complicate the relationship between parents and educators while trying to teach the learner to read. Respect for each other and open

communication can reduce tension and enable parents and educators to benefit from each other's expertise and knowledge of the learner from different perspectives. Working as partners, the parents, educators and the learners themselves, can inform one another on how to best address the learners' needs (Levine, 2002c:1).

When a parent or an educator suspects a reading difficulty, a parent-educator meeting should be scheduled to share information about the learner. The talking point during this parent-educator meeting should be to share observations of the learner's profile of reading skills and to discuss where the breakdown is.

The parent and the educator should take into consideration the learner's strengths and interests. The parent and the educator should discuss the learner's instructional programme and the parent and the educator should acknowledge the emotional reaction of the learner to the situation (Levine, 2002c:2).

Each school should establish a School-Based Support Team (SBST) which is responsible for the provision of learner support together with the educators involved in a particular learner's teaching and learning (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:66). The school-based support team should feature strongly in each school and should be flexible (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:67). The composition of the SBST is dependent on the size and the needs of the school and the number of educators available. Each member of the SBST should have a particular responsibility towards the team (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:67).

The SBST should consist of, *inter alia* (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:67; Winkler, 2005:71,72):

- A learning support educator who is competent and innovative and possesses good collaborative skills.
- The referring educator.
- The scribe.
- An elected educator, depending on the needs of the learner.
- The principle.

- A school assessment team representative.
- A learner support material committee representative.
- Any co-opted member from outside depending on the needs of the learner.
- The parents of the learner.
- The learner.

The school-based support team in each school, together with the education support service of the district, should take responsibility for (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:66,67):

- The in-service training of educators in the identification, assessment and support of all learning.
- Establishing networks that promote effective communication between learners, educators and parents as well as with non-governmental organisations.
- Identifications and discussion of learner development.
- Placement of the learner in another school if necessary.
- Facilitating the sharing of resources including teaching methods and teaching aids and teaching ideas.
- Ensuring parental involvement.
- Planning preventive strategies.
- Supporting educators on site.
- Monitoring and supporting learner progress.

At national level The White Paper 6 specifies that the educational support services should form an integral part of education. There should be an integrated approach to the provision of services to support learners. Government departments involved with learners who need support is Education, Welfare, Health and Labour (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:62). The South African Schools Act (Act no. 84 of 1996) makes provision for compulsory education for all (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:62).

At provincial level the role of the departments of education of the nine provinces is to implement policy accepted by the national Department of Education. It stands to reason that the provinces are not on the same level regarding the implementation of the Education White Paper 6, as resources and manpower differ from province to province (Landsberg,

Kruger & Nel, 2005:62).

At district level each province is divided into several districts, each of which has a team which manages inclusive education in that district. This team is called the district-based support team “to provide a co-ordinated professional support service that draws on expertise in further and higher education and local communities” (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:64).

Each education district is responsible for the schools in that district. It is stated clearly in the Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:10) that support would be rendered according to the level of needs of learners. Learners will be rated on a flexible scale from 1 (low intensity support) to 5 (high intensity support) by an assessment team (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:64).

According to the Draft Guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education by the DoE (2002:98-100) the core education support service providers at district level include:

- Support personnel currently employed by the Department of Education such as therapists, psychologists, learning support educators, experts on specific disabilities, as well as health and welfare professionals.
- Curriculum specialists who can provide support to educators.
- Management experts to provide guidelines on management to schools.
- Administrative experts who provide administrative and financial management support to schools.
- Specialist support personnel from existing special schools and other education institutions such as higher and further education institutions.
- Government professionals such as local government structures, Office of the Status of Disabled Persons, Health, Social Welfare, Justice, Safety and Security and Sport and Recreation.
- Community role-players such as parents, grandparents, caregivers, members of the school governing body, educators and learners (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:63).

Reading support by the individual educator in the classroom is described next.

3.2.3.5 Reading support by the educator

Educators should choose the reading support strategies that suit their teaching style as well as the needs of the learners. The strategies that educators choose or the recommendations that are made do not imply that academic standards should be lowered, that contents should be simplified or that less should be expected of learners (Niemann & Monyai, 2006:35).

Good and Brophy (2000:386) and Gregg (1998:3) suggest the following steps when the educator demonstrates a reading skill:

- Focus attention. Gain learners' attention before the demonstration starts. Focus the learners' attention by holding up an object, pointing to where the educator want the learners to look, or by telling the learners to pay attention to a particular aspect of the demonstration.
- Give a general orientation or overview. The educator should explain beforehand what he is going to do.
- Label any new concepts or objects. The educator should ensure that the learners know the meaning of all the words he or she uses in his explanation. The educator should label different parts of any apparatus and allow learners to repeat the labels if necessary.
- Go through the process step by step. Think aloud while performing each step.
- Perform each action slowly with exaggerated motions.
- The learners should repeat the demonstration so that the educator can observe and give corrective feedback.
- The educator should re-demonstrate to correct mistakes and learners should then try again.
- Connect the subject of the story to a learner's prior knowledge or experience. Let the learner talk about his experience and then explain what the story is all about. Building new information onto previously learned concepts increases interest, comprehension and retention.
- Stop at key points to ask what the learner thinks will happen next. Stop later to confirm predictions made by the learners. Discuss why events in the text did or did not turn out as predicted.

- When a learner stumbles on a word, help him/her to sound it out by breaking the word into individual letter-sounds (e.g. kuh – ah – tuh for cat). Highlight the letters as they are sounded to help build letter-sound awareness. The learner rereads the sentence and focuses on the meaning rather than on individual words.
- Provide immediate corrective feedback if a learner mispronounces or mistakes a word.
- After reading a story, let the learner explain it in his own words.
- Keep packets containing a copy of the book, an audiotape of a word-for-word reading of the book and a tape player for the learner to use at home to practice reading skills. Include instructions for parents on how to use the book and tape.

Winkler (2005:90) suggests how educators can help learners who have difficulty remembering what they read:

- Make regular reading times for learners who are struggling until they begin to decode the words automatically and can concentrate on the meanings.
- Read short interesting paragraphs to the learners and ask the learners to listen for the main idea.
- Let learners read short pieces at a time. Once learners have finished, ask them to write only one sentence about the passage they have read.
- Let learners show that they have understood what they have read by filling in missing words, drawing pictures, filling in missing speech bubbles or arranging pictures in the order in which they happened in the story.

The educator's role in the motivation of learners who dislike reading, and to enhance their comprehension, should inter alia be the following as suggested by Levine (2002c:4) and Winkler (2005:90):

- Get learners to read in pairs if they are unsure about the meaning of words.
- Choose reading material that suits the language level of the learner even if the vocabulary is limited.
- Guide learners through the written text using questions, pictures and key words.
- Make three "book boxes" for the classroom with short, easy pieces of reading in them. One box should contain very easy reading material, one box must contain relatively easy material, and the third box should contain challenging material. The learners can

choose to read at a level that they are comfortable with.

- Let all the learners in the classroom spend at least fifteen minutes a day reading quietly.
- Organise a book character day at the end of the term, where learners can dress up as a character from a book they have read. The learners must then tell the class who they are and what they liked about the book.
- Encourage readers to read for fun. Read interesting stories to the learners.
- Suggest books that are of high interest-low vocabulary. Talk about books with learners and make lists of exciting books Contact organizations such as READ to set up a little library in class The learners should see the educators (teachers *and* parents) read as well. This could be turned into a fun time by calling a compulsory 20 minute reading time in class: "DEAR", which stands for Drop Everything and Read.

4 SUMMARY

In this chapter it was described how language and reading difficulties can be identified, and how such reading difficulties can be supported by the educator. In the next chapter the empirical research about the identification of reading difficulties is described.

CHAPTER 4

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the researcher will discuss the objectives of the empirical research, the research design, how the empirical research was implemented by the researcher, the results that were found during this empirical research as well as the discussion of these results.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The purpose of this empirical research is to determine -

what the knowledge and skills of Foundation Phase educators in the North-West Province are concerning the identification of English Home Language (EHL) reading difficulties.

From this main aim the following sub-aims are to establish -

- what reading difficulties are being experienced by Foundation Phase learners with English as home language in the North-West Province;
- how effectively Foundation Phase educators identify reading difficulties.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. Empirical design of this study

An empirical study will be conducted, concerning the identification of EHL reading difficulties by Foundation Phase educators. This empirical study will be conducted in a qualitative manner by using questionnaires with open-ended questions.

The questionnaires are based on the literature study in chapters 2 and 3, concerning the

identification of language, literacy and reading difficulties, and the possible support for such difficulties in the Foundation Phase.

The aim of this qualitative study is to obtain detailed data from various Foundation Phase educators, and to analyse this data, to reach a rich and meaningful picture (Leedy & Ormrod: 147), concerning the identification of reading difficulties that are being experienced by Foundation Phase learners with English as home language in the North-West Province, how Foundation Phase educators identify these reading difficulties, and how these educators can be trained to support these reading difficulties with this empirical aim in mind.

The qualitative study is chosen by the researcher as the best and most efficient way to gather information for this particular study. Types of qualitative approaches are case studies, ethnographies, phenomenological studies, grounded theory studies, content analyses and historical research. This study will consist of content analysis.

The identification of reading difficulties by educators in specific North-West primary schools (the sample) will be analysed as they provide their own data. This qualitative study is characterized by content analysis of the data from the questionnaires, leading to descriptions and interpretations of meanings (Schunk, 1996:6).

Qualitative research can range from microanalyses of verbal and nonverbal interactions, within single to in-depth observations, and interviews, over shorter or longer periods (Schunk, 1996:6). A qualitative study is chosen when the problem needs a -

- description: which reveals the nature of certain situations, settings, processes, relationships, systems or people;
- interpretation: to gain insight about the nature of a particular phenomenon, to develop new concepts or theoretical perspectives about the phenomenon and to discover the problems that exist within the phenomenon;
- evaluation: to provide a means through which a researcher can judge the effectiveness of particular policies, practices or innovations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:148).

3.2. Aim of Empirical study

The aim with the empirical study is to collect data concerning the knowledge and skills of educators in the Foundation Phase in the North-West Province in the identification of EHL reading difficulties experienced by Grade 1, 2 and 3 learners.

The purpose of this empirical research is to determine -

what the knowledge and skills are of Foundation Phase educators in the North-West Province concerning the identification of English Home Language reading difficulties.

3.3 Data analysis

Organising and analysing data in his study will be done by -

- organisation: breaking large units into smaller ones;
- perusal: getting an overall sense of the data, jotting down preliminary interpretations;
- classification: grouping the data into categories or themes, finding meanings in the data;
- synthesis: offering hypothesis or propositions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:161).

The content of the answers to questions that are obtained from the questionnaires will be analysed according to themes about how educators identify and support reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase in the North-West Province, as these themes progressively reveal themselves from the answers.

The qualitative research design of this study is a content analysis design. A content analysis encompasses a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns or themes. Content analyses are typically performed on forms of human communication to obtain data, including videotapes of human interactions, transcripts of conversations, filled-in questionnaires, reports and documents.

A content analysis is systematic, and measures are taken to make the process as objective as possible. The following measures are typical (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:155):

- The researcher identifies the specific body of material (content) to be obtained from the data. In this research, the body of material encompasses data on the identification by educators of spelling difficulties in Foundation Phase learners, as obtained by way of questionnaires. The questionnaire as the measuring instrument in this study is described below.
- The researcher defines the characteristics or qualities to be examined in the empirical research, in precise, concrete terms. In this research, the aspects to be examined are spelling difficulties in terms of learners' behaviour, reading, spelling and written language errors, as obtained from the videos and described in the questionnaires by the educators.
- The researcher scrutinises the material. In this research it encompasses the teachers' answers to the open questions of the questionnaires (the data) that are to be scrutinised, or read in detail, after which the analysis of the data follows.
- If the material to be analysed involves complex or lengthy items, e.g. answers to open questions in questionnaires, the researcher breaks down each item into small, manageable segments that are analysed separately. In this research, each answer to each open question on the questionnaires is analysed separately, by identifying emerging themes in terms of educators' identification of the above difficulties, as filled in by the educators on each question in the questionnaire.

3.4. Population and sample

The target population for this study is educators in the Foundation Phase of primary schools in the North-West Province, with learners who have English as Home Language, and with English as medium of education and instruction. English Second Language difficulties are not investigated in this study.

Since it is not possible to reach the total population of Grade 1, 2 and 3 educators in the Foundation Phase of all the primary schools in the North-West Province, a convenience sample of the population is selected. The convenience sample consists of Foundation Phase educators in the Potchefstroom district only, because the learner as well as the

educator population in this district is representative of the wider population of Foundation Phase learners and educators in the North-West Province with English Home Language as medium of instruction.

Three educators per school, one each in Grade 1, 2 and 3 in each of three sample schools, were required to complete the questionnaire (see Addendum A). The applicable method of sampling for this research is Purposive Sampling/Convenient Sampling.

In purposive sampling, participants are selected for a particular purpose. In this research, the particular three schools were selected because they are representative of learners in the Foundation Phase who receive instruction through English as their home language. The sample is also referred to as a convenience sample, because the North-West University is situated in Potchefstroom and the target schools are nearby. The participants were reachable, available and willing to participate in this research.

The three educators from the Foundation Phase in each of the three schools were requested to view the videotapes and fill in the questionnaires. One educator each from Grade 1, 2 and 3, in all three schools, participated in this empirical study. All the selected educators agreed to participate in the study (n=9).

3.5 Limitations of the study

The results of this research will be representative only of EHL Foundation Phase educators in the Potchefstroom district of the North-West Province, and not of the whole of South Africa.

3.6 Implementation of the empirical research

A letter was presented to the Department of Education in the North-West Province, requesting permission to perform the research in schools in the North-West Province. This letter (see Addendum B) as well as the consent received from the Department (see Addendum C). The principals of the selected sample schools were then contacted and the above-mentioned letters as well separate letters (see Addendum D) were issued to each of them, requesting permission to conduct the research in their schools.

After consent was granted, the nine teachers in the three selected schools were approached and requested to view the videos, and then to answer the questionnaire (see Addendum A) provided on each video. The teachers viewed the videos and filled in the questionnaires in their own time and at their own pace. The researcher thereafter collected the questionnaires personally. Subsequently each question was qualitatively analysed. The results of this analysis are presented below (see paragraph 4).

3.7. Measuring instrument

Educators will fill in open-ended questions on questionnaires concerning their abilities and skills towards the identification of EHL reading difficulties. There is a separate questionnaire for each Foundation Phase grade 1, 2 and 3 (see Addendum A).

The questions in the questionnaire are about learners in Grades 1, 2 and 3 manifesting observable reading difficulties in a video which the educators have to view and then fill in the questions about their knowledge of the identification and support of reading difficulties.

A questionnaire with open-ended questions was deemed applicable for this study, because open questions leave space for the respondent to answer in any way he or she feels is appropriate (Cates, 1985:97).

This method of open-ended questions is ideal for this study as open-ended questions' answers yield data about educators' own knowledge and skills in the identification of reading difficulties in the classroom.

The aim with the questionnaires in this study is to establish -

- what reading difficulties are being experienced by Foundation Phase learners with English as home language in the North-West Province;
- how effectively Foundation Phase educators identify reading difficulties.

When conducting an interview or analysing data from questionnaires, the researcher should ask questions concerning facts, people's beliefs about the facts, feelings, motives, present and past behaviours, standards for behaviour and conscious reasons (Leedy & Ormrod,

2005:159). The questionnaires in this study ask questions about facts, people's beliefs about the facts, present and future behaviour, educators' standards for behaviour and possible reasons.

The videos about the Grade 1, 2 and 3 learners respectively, are described as follows:

Video Grade 1: A Grade 1 girl (in the green dress) exhibiting learning difficulties as can be observed on the video in her oral and written work in a language lesson. Images of her written work in the language lesson are also displayed on the video, as excerpts from her workbooks. The duration of the video is 12 minutes.

Video Grade 2: A Grade 2 boy (in a green sweater top which he later discards and then wears a white shirt) exhibiting learning difficulties as can be observed on the video in the boy's oral and written work in a language lesson. Images of his written work in the language lesson are also displayed. The duration of the video is 13 minutes.

Video Grade 3: A Grade 3 boy (in a white shirt) exhibiting learning difficulties as can be observed on the video in his oral and written work in a language lesson. Images of his written work in the language lesson are also displayed. The duration of the video is 11 minutes.

The *purpose* of all the questions in all the questionnaires about the learners in the videos, is to establish the educators' knowledge and skill in the identification of the specific aspects in each question.

The *focus* of each question is described next. The Grade 1, 2 and 3 questionnaires are described separately, as the questions for the three Grades vary in sequence. However, although the sequence differs, the questionnaires for all three Grades are seemingly the same. This is because the learners on the respective videos display the same or similar types of behaviour.

GRADE 1 QUESTIONNAIRE**Question 1: What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?**

The focus of this question is the learner's behaviour on the video, that indicate that the learner is having difficulty in learning or reading.

Question 2: With which word building activities does she have difficulty?

The focus of this question is the learner's behaviour on the video, that indicate that the learner is having difficulty in building words.

Question 3: What kind of reading difficulties does she exhibit?

The focus of this question is the various reading difficulties that the learner on the video exhibits; the educators must write down on the questionnaire what they observe concerning these difficulties.

Question 4: What kind of written language difficulty does she exhibit?

The focus of this question is various written language difficulties that exist and that the learner on the video is experiencing; the educator must fill in the question about the manifestation of these writing difficulties.

Question 5: With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate her language difficulties?

The focus of this question is alternate assessment methods and techniques which educators can use to further identify and support such language or reading difficulties that the learner on the video exhibits.

Question 6: Would you explain the lesson material to her in any other way than the teacher? (Answer "Yes" or "No") How (if you answered 'yes')?

The focus of this question is alternative instruction methods and techniques, with which to further identify and support a learner experiencing language or reading difficulty.

Question 7: With what approaches or techniques would you assist her with her difficulties?

The focus of this question is alternative support methods and teaching techniques with which to support a learner experiencing language or reading difficulty.

The possible correct answers to these questions are derived from the actual behaviour of the learners in the videos, as well as from the literature study on the theory of reading difficulties as presented in chapters 2 and 3.

These correct answers can be described as follows:

Question 1: What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?

- The learner tends to be disorganised.
- Unsure of herself.
- Playing around instead of concentrating on the lesson.
- Looks around all the time.
- Looks puzzled.
- Fidgeting, frowning.
- Not doing the work that is expected of her.
- Not participating in class activities.

Question 2: With which word building activities does she have difficulty?

- Blending.
- Auditory discrimination, analysis and synthesis.
- Poor phonetic skills.
- Reversals.

Question 3: What kind of reading difficulties does she exhibit?

- Reads hesitantly or jerky.
- Difficulty with decoding.
- Poor word recognition.

- Loses her place.
- Constantly looks at the educator for reassurance.
- Rhyme words.
- Correspondence of sound to letter.
- Basic sight words.
- Inability to retell a story in sequence.
- Substitutes words.
- Gets stuck on familiar words.
- Guesses.
- Omissions of letters.

Question 4: What kind of written language difficulty does she exhibit?

- Spatial problems.
- Poor letter formation.
- Poor fine motor skills.
- Poor phonetic skills.
- Slow development in sentences.
- Difficulty understanding questions.
- Consistent errors in spelling.
- Letter or word reversals when writing (“left” as “felt”, “are there” as “there are”).
- Syllables in the wrong order (“enemy” as “emeny”).
- Reversing letters or words when spelling words that are presented orally.

Question 5: With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate her language difficulties?

- Oral and written assessment of reception and expressive language skills.
- Daily informal class assessment of all language skills.

Question 6: Would you explain the lesson material to her in any other way than the teacher? (Answer “Yes” or “No”)

- Yes

Question 7: With what approaches or techniques would you assist her with her difficulties?

- For fluent reading:
 - Paired reading.
 - Flashcards to drill sight words.
 - Directed practice in oral reading: speak distinctly and expressively when reading, clearly enunciating words and sounds. Inflect the voice in accordance with punctuation.
 - Direct letter-sound relationships – how the 26 letters of the alphabet represent the 44 sounds or phonemes that make up the English language.
 - Highlight each letter of the word as it is sounded or cover surrounding letters to focus on the one being sounded.
 - Rhyme, words, repetition and a controlled vocabulary expansion through sight words, rhyming songs and poems. Clapping while singing or saying the syllables of the rhyme.
 - Write each letter of a word on a separate card. The learner places the cards in order as the word is sounded out. Select words to say out loud in which the sounds can be changed in sequence (e.g. “pat”/“tap”, or “pat”/“at”).
 - Use all the senses: auditory, kinesthetic/tactile and visual. In addition to look and say, the learner writes the word in sand or salt or flour poured into a flat pan. “Erase” the word by lightly shaking the pan or wiping with the hand.
 - When reading to the learner, track the syllables and words on the paper with a pointer finger. Teach the learner to track words herself while reading alone.
 - Listen to books on tape while following along in text.
- For comprehension:
 - Act out words.
 - Connect yesterday's reading to today's reading.
 - Connect the reading to what the learner knows.
 - Read only the first part of the story to her and let her continue on her own.
 - Focus on important information.
 - Preview vocabulary.
 - Contextual clues; structural analysis.

- Focus her attention on:
 - title
 - setting
 - characters
 - problem
 - event 1
 - event 2
 - outcome of the story.
- For decoding and phonics:
 - Break up words into their component sounds or phonemes by sounding out the words. For example, the word “bag” is made up of three phonemes, “buh”, “aah”, and “guh”
 - Play listening games for letter-sound correspondence.
 - Reinforce sight words.
 - Preview words.
 - Play listening games for blending and segmenting sounds.
 - Play missing sound games.
 - Teach rules, e.g. spelling rules.
 - Integration of the Whole Word approach and Explicit Code-Emphasis.
 - Alphabetic coding into phonemes.
 - Strategies to identify words include phonics, sight words, contextual clues, structural analysis and combined word identification clues (Lerner, 2000:380).

GRADE 2 QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 1: What aspects in his behaviour are indicative that he is having difficulty?

The focus of this question is the learner’s behaviour on the video, that indicates that the learner is having difficulty in learning or reading, which the educators must fill in on the questionnaire.

Question 2: What kind of written language difficulty does he exhibit?

The focus of this question is the various written language difficulties that exist and which are exhibited by the learner on the video, which the educators must fill in on the questionnaire.

Question 3: What kind of reading difficulties does he exhibit when reading on the board?

The focus of this question is the various reading difficulties that the learner on the video exhibits, which the educators must fill in on the questionnaire.

Question 4: What kind of reading difficulties does he exhibit when reading silently and aloud from his book?

The focus of this question is the various reading difficulties that the learner on the video exhibits while reading aloud or silently from a book, which the educators must fill in on the questionnaire.

Question 5: What other (than language) difficulties do you observe the learner to have, that may handicap him in his work?

The focus of this question is difficulties in any other area, eg. physical or emotional, which the educators must fill in on the questionnaire.

Question 6: What kind of handwriting difficulties does he exhibit?

The focus of this question is the learners' handwriting on the video, and possible motor and language skills during writing, which the educators must fill in on the questionnaire.

Question 7: With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate his language difficulties?

The focus of this question is alternative instruction methods and techniques which the educators can use to help identify and support the language or reading difficulty that the learner exhibits, and which the educators must fill in on the questionnaire.

Question 8: Would you explain the lesson material to him in any other way than the teacher? (Answer "Yes" or "No")

How? (If you answered “Yes”)

The focus of this question is the alternative instruction methods and techniques that can be used, in terms of language or reading support, which the educators must fill in on the questionnaire.

Question 9: With what approaches or techniques would you assist him with his difficulties?

The focus of this question is alternative instruction methods and techniques with which to support the learner on the video in the language or reading difficulties, which the educators must fill in on the questionnaire.

The possible correct answers to these questions can be described as follows:

Question 1: What aspects in his behaviour are indicative that he is having difficulty?

- Very restless.
- He plays with his pen and sponge.
- Yawns and looks around.
- He is reluctant to start, looks uncertain as to what he must write.
- His attention is easily distracted.
- Clowning around.
- Looking puzzled.
- Fidgeting.
- Frowning.
- Not working.
- Not participating in class activities.

Question 2: What kind of written language difficulty does he exhibit?

- Write the word “does” incorrectly as “dus”, but corrects it.
- He appears to be uncertain of himself – writes the word, erases it and writes it again.

Question 3: What kind of reading difficulties does he exhibit when reading on the board?

- He has poor figure-ground discrimination.
- He is unable to find the word that is similar to the one he just wrote.

Question 4: What kind of reading difficulties does he exhibit when reading silently and aloud from his book?

- He reads word-for-word, uses his finger as well as his ruler.
- Poor eye movement.
- He moves his head instead of his eyes when he reads.
- Possible sight barrier.
- Possible hearing barrier.
- Poor word recognition.
- Does not comprehend the meaning of the fullstop.
- No expression.

Question 5: What other (than language) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap him in his work?

- His eyes are too close to his book.
- By using his finger and a ruler, he covers the text, which slows him down.
- Because of faulty eye movement, he loses his place.

Question 6: What kind of handwriting difficulties does he exhibit?

- He leaves out sounds, eg. "happn" in "happen" and "fam" in "farm".

Question 7: With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate his language difficulties?

- Ask him to repeat what he has read in his own words to determine if he comprehended what he had read.
- Ask him to sound some words, eg. f-a-r-m.

Question 8: Would you explain the lesson material to him in any other way than the teacher? (Answer “Yes” or “No”)

- Yes

How? (If you answered “Yes”)

- Build words with letter cards.
- Give fewer words at a time and ask him to find similar words.

Question 9: With what approaches or techniques would you assist him with his difficulties?

- Teach him the different words before the lesson
- I read/we read/you read, I help
- You read on your own

GRADE 3 QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 1: What aspects in his behaviour are indicative that he is having difficulty?

The focus of this question is the learner’s behaviour on the video, that indicate that the learner is having difficulty in learning or reading, that the educators must write down on the questionnaire.

Question 2: What kind of language difficulties does he exhibit that may handicap him in his reading and writing?

The focus of this question is the learner’s reading and writing difficulties, which the educators must fill in on the questionnaire.

Question 3: What kind of reading difficulties does he exhibit?

The focus of this question is the various reading difficulties that the learner on the video exhibits when he is reading from the board or when he is reading aloud or from a book, which the educators must fill in on the questionnaire.

Question 4: What kind of writing difficulties does he exhibit (compare his written work)?

The focus of this question is the various writing difficulties that the learner on the video exhibits in his spelling, use of basic words, vocabulary in his written assignments, and word structure in sentences, which the educators must fill in on the questionnaire.

Question 5: With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate his language difficulties?

The focus of this question is alternative support methods and instruction techniques in language or reading difficulties with which the learner on the video can be supported, which the educators must fill in on the questionnaire.

Question 6: Would you explain the lesson material to him in any other way than the teacher? (Answer "Yes" or "No")

The focus of this question is whether the educators are aware of alternative instruction methods and techniques, with which to further identify and support a learner experiencing language or reading difficulty.

How? (If you answered "Yes")

The focus of this question is the alternative instruction methods and techniques, using their own initiative and adapting to each learner's individual needs, to support the learner on the video in any language or reading difficulties that he exhibits, which the educators must fill in on the questionnaire.

Question 7: With what approaches or techniques would you assist him with his difficulties?

The focus of this question is alternative support methods and teaching techniques with which to support a learner experiencing language or reading difficulty, which the educators must fill in on the questionnaire.

The possible correct answers to these questions can be described as follows:

Question 1: What aspects in his behaviour are indicative that he is having difficulty?

- He is very self-conscious.
- He is aware that he is being filmed.
- Muscle tone is weak.
- He tends to flop against the wall.
- He tends to hide his face and eyes with his hand. He is unwilling to answer questions.
- He doesn't even really chat to his neighbour. He is withdrawn.
- Does he thus have emotional problems due to his learning difficulties or is it a combination of both?
- Clowning around.
- Looking around.
- Looking puzzled.
- Fidgeting.
- Frowning.
- Not working.
- Not participating in class activities.

Question 2: What kind of language difficulties does he exhibit that may handicap him in his reading and writing?

- Indistinct speech, mumbles – cannot hear what he says.
- He seems to have an auditory problem – auditory perceptual and carrying out of instructions.
- Concentration is poor; he is easily distracted.

Question 3: What kind of reading difficulties does he exhibit?

- Hesitant, scared to speak or read aloud.
- Scared to spell out unknown words.
- Read jerkingly.

- Seems to lack comprehension.

Question 4: What kind of writing difficulties does he exhibit (compare his written work)?

- He seems to be at a Grade 1 level in some cases, eg. "ball" was spelt wrongly, thus he is unsure of basic sounds.
- Incomplete sentences.
- Reversals in words.
- Spatial difficulty – not on the line, much below the rest.

Question 5: With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate his language difficulties?

- He would need testing by an audiologist and visual perceptual testing.

Question 6: Would you explain the lesson material to him in any other way than the teacher? (Answer "Yes" or "No")

- Yes

How? (If you answered "Yes")

- Ask more questions and allow him to answer in his own time.
- He might answer better if on his own.
- Make it more practical.
- More interaction, control and discipline is needed.

Question 7: With what approaches or techniques would you assist him with his difficulties?

- Teach him the different words before the lesson.
- I read/we read/you read, I help.
- You read on your own.

The answers to these questionnaires by the educators who participated in the sample, will now be presented, as the results of the empirical part of the study.

4. RESULTS

The results as provided by all three educators on the Grade 1, 2 and 3 questionnaires respectively, are quoted below verbatim. The reader should note that the number of answers per question differs. This is due to some educators giving several answers to one question, and others not answering that question at all. Therefore the number of answers listed below each question is not indicative of the number of educators.

Each Grade was assigned three educators to answer the questionnaire as described earlier, but these three did not necessarily supply one answer each. Neither did they answer the same number of several answers each. Therefore, each answer is quoted separately in a separate line. Even when one teacher supplied more than one answer, each answer is quoted separately.

The rationale for presenting the answers in this way, and not per teacher, is that a *global* impression can be gained of the *total responses on each answer, of the Foundation Phase teachers as a group, and not as individuals*. The total number of possible correct answers of the group of teachers is therefore the aim of the investigation, and not whether each individual teacher answered each answer correctly or not.

GRADE 1 QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 1: What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?

- “ She looks at the educator for reassurance every time.”
- “ She seems to withdraw and become shy when she is not sure about the answers.”
- “ When reading, she displays uncertainty by ‘asking’ teacher for confirmation of each ‘unknown’ word.”
- “ She had difficulty with reading, word recognition.”
- “ Nervous – playing with hair and by looking at teacher after each word for confirmation.”

Question 2: With which word building activities does she have difficulty?

- “ She starts her building of the word from the last sound.”
- “ She is confused with the *b* and *d*.”
- “ Her cards are disorderly on her desk, it’s upside down.”
- “ She is confused with the beginning and the end sounds.”
- “ Some words she writes from right to left instead of from left to right (another sign of dyslexia).”
- “ (t e g) instead of ‘get’. During Abba cards.”
- “ d/b reversals. During Abba cards.”

Question 3: What kind of reading difficulties does she exhibit?

- “ She still reads with her finger.”
- “ She still sounds out the words.”
- “ She loses the place where to read.”
- “ Looks at educator for reassurance.”
- “ She looks frustrated.”
- “ She is not sure of the words she is reading. (I couldn’t hear her properly).”
- “ She has to sound each word, struggled.”
- “ Points with finger to each word.”

Question 4: What kind of written language difficulty does she exhibit?

- “ She struggles with writing on the line.”
- “ She can’t compare the picture with the sentence.”
- “ She has spatial problems.”
- “ Her fine-motor has not developed yet.”
- “ There’s no finger spaces.”
- “ Doesn’t use capital letters.”
- “ She reverses her sounds.”
- “ She gets confused with letters that are similar, like the *f* and *t* .”
- “ sjt/set : Confuses these sounds : pit / kit.”
- “ Poor phonics / sound.”

- “ The tat cat is faf.”
- “ Spacing poor when constructing sentences.”

Question 5: With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate her language difficulties?

- “ More oral sounding.”
- “ Practise more letter formation.”
- “ Is she English speaking or is it her second language? Find out if she knows her sounds and letters- she needs to know how to write the letter she is saying.”

Question 6: Would you explain the lesson material to her in any other way than the teacher? (Answer “Yes” or “No”)

- “ Yes.” “ Clap and sound the words to understand beginning, middle and end sounds.”
- “ Yes.” “ Maybe just by reading the lesson to her first and then she just follows in her book. After that she can read it.”
- “No.”

Question 7: With what approaches or techniques would you assist her with her difficulties?

- “ More individual reading.”
- “ Revise sounds and three letter words.”
- “ To help her to work from left [sic] to right.”
- “ To help her practice [sic] reading a lot.”
- “ Reading: sounds / phonics.”
- “ Word recognition.”

GRADE 2 QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 1: What aspects in his behaviour are indicative that he is having difficulty?

- “ He fidgets, looks around anxiously, becomes nervous, his leg/foot taps on the ground, his fiddles with his stationary.”

- “ He comes across as very insecure.”
- “ He keeps rubbing out his work and re-writing it, when task become demanding he stands still and waits for assistance – apprehensive to take risks.”
- “ He is not sure of himself.”
- “ He is fiddling.”
- “ He does not write the other two words.”
- “ He looks bored.”
- “ Fidgeting with pen and sponge.”
- “ Not looking and paying attention.”
- “ Yawning – bored.”
- “ Very soft voice when reading – lacking confidence.”
- “ Looses place when reading – even when he used his finger – then changed to reading with ruler guiding his eyes.”

Question 2: What kind of written language difficulty does he exhibit?

- “ Were [sic] unable to read his writing.”
- “ He wrote *does* with a *us*.”
- “ Spelling problem.”
- “ Unsure of himself.”

Question 3: What kind of reading difficulties does he exhibit when reading on the board?

- “ He cannot find the words, seems to withdraw when task is too demanding.”
- “ He does not see the words or cannot find them on the board.”
- “ It was not clear what he had to search for. The camera also didn't show us the reading matter.”
- “ He seemingly had difficulty in finding the word required.”
- “ It could be that the instruction was also not clear to him.”

Question 4: What kind of reading difficulties does he exhibit when reading silently and aloud from his book?

- “ He finds it difficult to decode unfamiliar words, reads slowly, for word.”
- “ He needs a ruler to assist him in following the lines.”
- “ He loses his place, repeats words in the beginning of the lines.”
- “ He cannot follow when another learner reads aloud.”
- “ Reading matter above his capability, words like *strange* and *peacefully* more for Grade 3 level.”
- “ Pointing with finger and using ruler – loose place.”
- “ Not using word attack skills yet to help him with the words he doesn’t know.”
- “ Has difficulty reading and sounding out the words when reading out loud.”
- “ He struggles to follow from one line to the next while reading (eye-coordination and concentration).”

Question 5: What other (than language) difficulties do you observe the learner to have, that may handicap him in his work?

- “ Cannot identify rhyming words which indicates that he is not familiar with the sounds of the language and he cannot yet break up words into sounds or blend or link sounds to form a word which will make reading difficult for him.”
- “ Concentration span is not very long.”
- “ Lacks confidence.”
- “ Concentration – not involved in learning process.”
- “ Looked lost – instructions were often changed, *write with your eyes closed – bother that – write it on your boards.*”
- “ Looked bored, but so were the other learners.”
- “ Interruptions – intercom and footsteps.”
- “ Educator often double up on instructions and not clear on what’s needed. Give 2 words – the same as ???”
- “ Negative instructions do not get results : *You are too slow – try Hurry up – and see results.*”

Question 6: What kind of handwriting difficulties does he exhibit?

- “ Could not see video image of written work.”
- “ Didn’t notice any – as written work could not be seen.”
- “ (I could not see handwriting on video)”

Question 7: With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate his reading difficulties?

- “ Assess reading age on an individual (one on one) level.”
- “ Test sight word reading.”
- “ Assess whether physical development is in tact and assess whether the learner is able to concentrate.”
- “ More reading material (to distinguish what exactly he is having problems with – dyslexia or just sounding out words etc.)”
- “ Flashcards.”
- “ Make sure that he knows all alphabet sounds a – z , not alphabet names.”
- “ Make sure he knows all blends e.g. *sh* for *shop*, *ch* for *chop*, etc.”
- “ English is a language of word endings. Train him to know and write these e.g. *ould* in *would*, *could*, *should*; *ight* in *right*, *fright*, *sight*, etc.”
- “ Lots of oral repetition of language patterns, completing sentences, filling in words, before comprehensions [sic] and own written work is attempted.”

Question 8: Would you explain the lesson material to him in any other way than the teacher? (Answer “Yes” or “No”)**How? (If you answered “Yes”)**

- “ No.”
- “ No.”
- “ Yes.” In co-operative learning groups:
 - 1) In groups of 4, learners read the material chosen.
 - 2) Best reader reads it to the group, while others follow while pointing.
 - 3) Each group gets questions printed on coloured paper. The questions answers are printed on white paper. All these are separately cut, so that the group can decide which answer must go with which question.

- 4) When task is completed, they read the questions and answers.
- 5) After this task is removed and learners work according to ability. 10 questions – top group. 7 questions – bottom group. 4 questions
- 6) For this learners need to be taught all ins and outs about group dynamics. Each group consists of:
 - A) Reporter
 - B) Encourager
 - C) Gatekeeper
 - D) Scribe

Each of these have certain tasks, which they are trained to do. The roles swap in the group every month.

Children learn much better if they are involved in the learning process. They also learn far better from their peers than from an educator that often rises their stress levels.”

Question 9: With what approaches or techniques would you assist him with his difficulties?

- “ Play games (individual basis) to reinforce sight vocabulary – use language master, tape recordings, word cards, etc.”
- “ Use Abba [sic] – card to break up and build up words into sounds.”
- “ Practise on an individual basis.”
- “ Assist where necessary.”
- “ Basic – core knowledge about the language needs to be learnt – spelling, word, language (grammar) and sentence building games needs to be played on a daily basis.”
- “ I would give him extra reading.”
- “ I would let him read out loud more often to build self-confidence.”

GRADE 3 QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 1: What aspects in his behaviour are indicative that he is having difficulty?

- “ He is not even attempting to discuss “

- “ Unsure of himself.”
- “ Is playing.”
- “ No groupwork skills.”
- “ Insecure.”
- “ Poor word recognition.”
- “ He has no self-esteem to start reading aloud.”
- “ Finds communicating with his partner difficult.”
- “ Seems very shy.”
- “ Very little eye contact with his partner.”

Question 2: What kind of language difficulties does he exhibit that may handicap him in his reading and writing?

- “ Express himself in word.”
- “ No communication ability.”
- “ Read word-by-word so its not fluent that he can understand what he reads.”
- “ Phonic awareness is poor.”
- “ Inversion of words.”
- “ His reading does not flow.”
- “ Does not sound out words properly.”
- “ Spelling (dyslexia) .”
- “ Placing capital letter in a middle of a sentence.”
- “ Can’t verbalize without prompting.”
- “ Needs vocabulary extension.”

Question 3: What kind of reading difficulties does he exhibit?

- “ Reading does not flow.”
- “ Spelling.”
- “ To read fluent.”
- “ Inversion of words.”
- “ To read words in syllabus.”
- “ Word recognition.”

- “ Spatial orientation.”
- “ Words in context.”
- “ Can’t use punctuation correctly.”
- “ Visual observens [sic].”
- “ Cannot read fluently.”
- “ Must learn to sound his words.”
- “ Visual memory – training programme.”
- “ Auditory memory – training programme.”

Question 4: What kind of writing difficulties does he exhibit (compare his written work)?

- “ Capital letter in middle of sentences.”
- “ Spelling.”
- “ Capital letters.”
- “ Spatial orientation (Incorrect use of the ruler) .”
- “ Inversion *no > on ; vidoe > video.*”
- “ Phonics *flbon* [sic].”
- “ Auditory memory.”
- “ Visual memory.”
- “ Battles with spelling as he doesn’t know his sounds.”

Question 5: With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate his language difficulties?

- “ Starts with a remedial reading program.”
- “ Balancing that he can discover the two sides of his body.”
- “ Exercises in left and right.”
- “ Arrow chart.”
- “ Visual memory games.”
- “ Auditory exercises.”

Question 6: Would you explain the lesson material to him in any other way than the teacher? (Answer “Yes” or “No”) How? (if you answered ‘yes’)

- “ No.”
- “ Yes.” “ The instruction wasn’t clear so we don’t understand the lesson. And it was impossible to comment on the teacher’s lesson because their camera never focus on her.”
- “ No. She explained very well.”

Question 7: With what approaches or techniques would you assist him with his difficulties?

- “ One to one teaching approach.”
- “ Extra reading and writing of sentences.”
- “ Need a full psychological and remedial assessment.”
- “ Reading – help with visual memory in order to learn and remember sight words, consolidate phonics and word blending.”
- “ Needs eye training and tracking skills – reading marker and frame to help with fluency.”
- “ Needs to develop his confidence and social interaction skills.”
- “ He may need medication to help him with his concentration problems. Pediatric assessment.”

5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

If the results quoted above are compared with the possible correct answers (see section 3.7 above), which in turn are derived from the literature study in chapters 2 and 3 about the theory on identification and support of reading difficulties, as well as from the actual behaviour of the learners in the video, it is evident that some questions on the questionnaires are correctly answered by the educators, while in other questions several of the correct answers are omitted. Seemingly the educators only have limited to moderate knowledge of language and reading difficulties, and reading support techniques.

This is briefly discussed below, per Grade.

Grade 1

The educators are able to identify the emotional barriers that this learner experiences, but they seem to have a superficial knowledge only about reading difficulties. One educator does make mention of “another sign of dyslexia”, but does not elaborate and thus it is not known what the person’s actual knowledge is. The educators do mention some of the reading difficulties, e.g the reversals and sound confusion. They however show no indication of knowledge about grammar difficulties, for example phonological, syntactical, semantic or graphical skills, or how to identify such skills or the lack thereof in learners.

Furthermore, they interpret some questions wrongly, or give the same answer at different questions – they confuse teaching, assessment and support techniques with each other (questions 5 – 7). This in itself is not condemnable, as teaching, assessment and support usually occur hand in hand and simultaneously. Nevertheless, the educators mentioned only a few relevant reading aspects, at whichever question they wrote their answers.

Grade 2

The educators indicate the emotional and behaviour barriers experienced by the learner (hyperactivity and attention distraction). They also indicate the sight barrier the learner exhibits (“He does not see the words...”; “He cannot find the words...”; “He seemingly had difficulty in finding the word required...”). They however describe only some of the reading difficulties: word decoding, eye movement and hearing barrier.

Like the Grade 1 educators, they also show no indication of knowledge about grammar difficulties, for example phonological, syntactical, semantic or graphical skills, or how to identify such skills or the lack thereof in learners. One educator does indicate that other causes for these difficulties have to be assessed (“Assess whether physical development is in tact and assess whether the learner is able to concentrate”).

In terms of support they can supply very few techniques; only the indication that “individual help” is needed (see question 9).

One educator gives a description of group work but it appears to be copied from formal textbook material (see the answers to question 8). This indicates that the educator is aware of groupwork and that groupwork can be a possible expected answer for the question, but is seemingly more concerned about providing a complete answer on groupwork than about providing suggestions that would be suitable to the learner in the video.

The Grade 2 educators therefore have very little knowledge and experience of the identification and support for reading difficulties.

Grade 3

The educators cannot supply much information about identification and support of reading difficulties. Some describe only the emotional difficulties. They also confuse teaching, assessment and support on the one hand, and language, reading and writing on the other hand – their answers are a mix of these aspects (see questions 2 and 3).

They do indicate the necessity for professional assessment (“psychological”, “medical”, “pediatric”, “remedial”), but it is not evident whether this is because they are aware of their own limited knowledge and that they need extra information about the learner, or whether they merely think that it is an appropriate and expected answer.

They also show no indication of knowledge about grammar difficulties, as described above in the case of the Grades 1 and 2 educators. Concerning further assessment measures, they supply suggestions for perceptual assessment only (question 5).

Concerning reading support, they confuse it with assessment again, and otherwise suggest only emotional, social and medical measures in stead of language and reading techniques.

These educators therefore indicate very limited knowledge and experience about the identification and support for reading difficulties.

In total, the conclusion can be drawn that the whole group of Foundation Phase educators lack knowledge and experience of the identification and support of reading difficulties. On

the positive side it should be mentioned that they do indicate knowledge and awareness of emotional difficulties as well as other contributing factors to learning difficulties, e.g. physical and social aspects, which is in itself commendable.

6. SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher described the results of the empirical research. In the final chapter the suitable recommendations for these results will be provided.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. SUMMARY

In Chapter 1 the introduction to the study, the problem statement, the aim of the study, the research methodology of the study, and the limitations of the study were described. In the introduction it was described that a learner has a learning difficulty when he or she fails to learn to read, write or compute, thereby staying illiterate (Chronis, 2000:43).

The effect of reading difficulties can be seen in the behaviour of the learner encountering reading difficulties (Hancock & Wingert, 1996a:11 ; Du Toit, 1996:244 ; Pikulski, 1997:1 ; Winkler, 2005:90) – learners receive poor grades; are usually frustrated; have difficulty completing assignments; have low self-esteem; have behaviour problems; have more physical illnesses due to stress; do not like school; grow up to be shy in front of groups, and fail to develop to their full potential.

Educators however often feel that they do not have enough knowledge to support learners with learning difficulties (Winkler, 2005:105). Through pre-service and in-service training, Foundation Phase educators can acquire instructional and technical skills to identify and support learners with reading difficulties. Therefore the problem statement and aim of the study was formulated as establishing the knowledge and skills of Foundation Phase educators in the identification of reading difficulties, in order for the development of in-service training.

In Chapter 2 the educational dispensation in South Africa in the Foundation Phase was described, particularly concerning the Language Learning Area and reading in English Home Language. The expected outcomes of reading in Grades 1, 2 and 3 were described as well as the assessment of these outcomes.

In Chapter 3 the literature study on language and language difficulties, literacy, reading,

reading difficulties and the support for reading difficulties for EHL, is presented. Reading difficulties entail difficulties in identifying letters and/or words, difficulty in saying words, and difficulty in comprehending sentences and paragraphs (Bergert, 2000:1). Learners with reading difficulties usually do not like to read and do not get sufficient practice in reading to become fluent readers (Gregg, 1998:1). The identification of decoding and comprehension difficulties are specifically described, as well as the support for these difficulties.

In Chapter 4 the empirical research and the results thereof were discussed. Seemingly the educators only have limited to moderate knowledge of language and reading difficulties, and of reading support techniques.

In the rest of Chapter 5 the conclusions about these results and recommendations are presented.

2. CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the given questions in the unstructured, open-ended questionnaires and the given answers by Foundation Phase educators of Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3 of English Home Language (EHL) learners in the North-West Province, the conclusions as to the knowledge of the educators in this study towards the identification of reading difficulties can be presented as follows:

- The Foundation Phase educators in this study are not fully capable or they do not have the knowledge or skills to correctly identify reading difficulties.
- The educators in this study are not fully aware of all the language and reading difficulties that EHL learners in the Foundation Phase are experiencing.
- The educators in this study are not properly or efficiently trained to identify and support reading difficulties of Grade 1, 2 and 3 EHL learners in the North-West Province.
- Foundation Phase educators in the North-West Province seemingly are in need of pre- as well as in-service training in the identification and support of reading difficulties.

The results generally indicate that although educators are aware of some of the difficulties that learners might be experiencing, they do not have sufficient skills or knowledge to

pinpoint exactly what reading difficulties learners might be experiencing, or how to assess and support such difficulties.

It is therefore clear that there can be no shortage of attention and energy focused on enhancing the reading skills of learners in the Foundation Phase. The objective is clear: provide all learners with efficient reading skills enabling them to excel in the development of their academic and employment skills. No reading difficulty will be resolved unless educators, parents and learners work together to take the next practical, possible step towards learning and growth.

Sometimes the next step involves a specialised service or an expert from outside. In most cases however, all it takes is skill and patience applied by the educator in the classroom, in the identification and support of reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase (Winkler, 2005:119).

These proposed “next steps” and “skills” can be formulated in terms of the following recommendations.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the information gleaned from this study, the recommendations regarding educators’ skills and knowledge as to the identification of EHL reading difficulties experienced by learners in the Foundation Phase are described as follows:

3.1 Educator training

The critical importance of the FP educator in the prevention and identification of reading difficulties must be recognised. Great efforts should be made to provide all FP educators with adequate knowledge about reading and the knowledge and skills to identify reading difficulties. It is imperative that educators at all Grade levels understand the course of literacy development and the role of instruction in optimising literacy development. The pre- and primary school educators’ knowledge and experience are central to achieving the primary goal of preventing reading difficulties.

A critical component in the pre- and in-service training of educators, is supervised, relevant, clinical experience providing ongoing guidance and feedback, so that they can develop the ability to integrate and apply their knowledge in practice (Snow, Burns & Griffen, 1998:10). Educators also need to be knowledgeable about the research foundations of language and reading development. Collaborative support by the Education Departments and the individual schools where FP educators are employed, is essential. Professional development should not be conceived as something that ends with graduation or happens during in-service training. Ongoing support from colleagues and specialists, as well as regular self-reflection leading to ongoing training, are necessary for the career-long development of especially FP educators (Snow, Burns & Griffen, 1998:10).

Specifically the following aspects are of importance:

- All educators should be trained (through pre- or in-service) to identify reading difficulties even if they do not teach Grade R to 3 learners, so that they can identify difficulties that learners may display even later on in their school career.
- All educators should be lifelong learners and attend learning courses to enrich their skills and knowledge of the teaching process and of their learning areas and subject content. All educators should be masters of their learning area. Especially they should keep up to date with developments in language education policy in the Foundation Phase.
- Educators should have in-depth knowledge of how to identify and support learners with word decoding and comprehension skills.
- FP educators should be trained in the teaching and support of language and reading in Home Language as well as Additional Language.

3.2. Managing learner support

- All educators should confer with their Heads of Department of their individual Grade levels, on the difficulties that each learner experiences and how to support that difficulties, as part of the school support team (SST).
- Ideally all educators should have the aid of a class assistant to handle the teaching as well as administration of that class, so that all learners experiencing difficulties can be identified timely. .

- All educators should have in-depth knowledge of their duties and roles as educators as set out in the Norms and Standards document by the Education Department.
- Educators should have regular conferences with the parents of all the learners in their class to establish how the parents can become involved in the learning and teaching of their children, as part of the SST. Parents should constantly be aware of what their children are experiencing in class, so that they can support their children meaningfully and effectively at home.
- All educators from all the schools in a town or district should meet on a regular basis to help and guide each other in the identification and support of reading difficulties. Educators should assist each other and act as partners in learning.
- According to Landsberg *et al* (2005:61) educators need more time to plan their teaching activities to accommodate the diversity of needs of learners, as well as adequate learning support materials and assistive devices appropriate for the needs of learners with reading difficulties.
- Ideally class size should be no more than 20 learners in the FP, to effectively accommodate learners with reading difficulties within the inclusive classroom.
- The contents of the curriculum, the educator's teaching strategies and methods as well as the classroom management, must be adapted to accommodate the specific needs and potential of each individual learner.

3.3. Learner support

Effective identification and support of reading difficulties in the FP require that learners –

- realise that written text is related to spoken language;
- be motivated and interested in reading, and be able to identify the written symbols and associate them with the related language sounds;
- see reading as a way to obtain meaning from print;
- have frequent and intensive opportunities to read;
- have sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency with different kinds of texts;
- experience continued interest and motivation to read for a variety of purposes;
- apply applicable reading strategies to read for meaning, and be taught to talk, think and read their way through a reading text. The aim of the process of learning to read is to become a strategic reader;

- become aware of what they are doing when they read, how they solve reading difficulties that arise, and what they can do when they are stuck. The more reading strategies a learner has, the more fluent and efficient the learner will become in reading;
- be supported by an individualised reading support programme when needed by a learner. This will entail -
 - assessing the learner to determine what his or her skills are;
 - formulating the outcomes for each specific learner according to his or her specific skills, to be achieved by the end of the reading support;
 - choosing suitable learning support strategies and methods;
 - assess the learner's progress continuously.

3.4 The Foundation Phase curriculum

The curriculum for Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3 should include the following components:

- Clear instructions should be provided on the teaching of Home as well as Additional Language.
- FP readers need explicit reading instruction and practice that lead to an appreciation that spoken words are made up of smaller units of sounds, familiarity with spelling-sound correspondence and common spelling conventions and their use in identifying printed words, "sight" recognition of frequent words, and independent reading, including reading aloud. Fluency should be promoted through practice with a wide variety of well-written and engaging texts at the learner's own comfortable reading level.
- Word decoding and comprehension skills should be the main components of the assessment regimen in the Language Learning Area.
- Reading instruction should promote comprehension by actively building linguistic and conceptual knowledge in a variety of texts. This instruction can take place while the educator reads to the learners, and through direct instruction about decoding and comprehension strategies, such as summarising the main idea, predicting events and drawing inferences.
- The curriculum should promote independent reading outside school by such means as daily at-home reading assignments and expectations, at-home reading lists, encouraging parent involvement, and by working with community groups, including public librarians, who share this goal.

- The curriculum should make provision for two goals:
 - daily *independent reading* of texts selected to be of particular interest for each learner, and at independent level; not frustration level, in order to consolidate the learner's capacity for independent reading;
 - daily *supported reading* and rereading of texts that are slightly more difficult in wording or in linguistic or conceptual structure, in order to promote advances in a learner's reading skills.

4. FINAL REMARKS

Reading is the most important skill a learner can learn at school. Reading is the basis of all formal learning (Winkler, 2005:83). This means that the foundation skills of reading would include skills that prepared learners for reading for the rest of their lives. This would further mean that, unless this base has been prepared adequately, no effective reading can take place (Strydom & Du Plessis, 2000:77).

Good reading skills can prevent many learning difficulties in later years (Winkler, 2005:83). In this regard Ostrowiak (1977:3) and Van Loggerenberg (2005:7) also stress the importance of the appropriate foundation for learning and reading in the Foundation Phase: "A naturally intelligent child who has insufficient foundation will be incapable of reading and thus be handicapped in all his school subjects as every subject entails the ability to read and spell".

For the vast majority of learners with reading difficulties, the reading difficulties that first appear in the Foundation Phase years remain with them right through to the end of the Senior Phase. Some are fortunate enough to even make it into tertiary education, but their ability to achieve according to their potential will continue to be constrained by their limited reading skills.

It is of critical importance to provide excellent reading instruction to all learners. Excellent reading instruction is most effective when learners arrive in Grade 1, motivated for literacy and with the necessary linguistic, cognitive, and early literacy skills.

The researcher therefore recommends attention to the preschool environment as well. The researcher acknowledges that excellent reading instruction require educators who are well prepared, highly knowledgable, and receiving ongoing training and support. Excellent reading instruction may be possible only if schools are organised in optimal ways, and if facilities, curriculum materials, and support services function adequately.

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ADDENDUM A

QUESTIONNAIRE

IDENTIFICATION OF READING AND LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES IN GRADE ONE IN AN ENGLISH CLASS

Please look at the video of the girl in the green dress (Chané). Then please answer the following questions about the possible reading and language difficulties you observe as experienced by her in her oral and written work in language. Images of her written work (approximately one minute per page) will be displayed in between or at the end of the lesson. The duration of the video is 12 minutes.

1. What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?

.....
.....
.....

2. With which word building activities does she have difficulty?

.....
.....
.....

3. What kind of oral reading difficulties does she exhibit?

.....
.....

.....

4. What kind of written language difficulties does she exhibit (compare her written work)?

.....

.....

.....

5. With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate her language difficulties?

.....

.....

.....

**6. Would you explain the lesson material to her in any other way than the teacher?
(Answer "Yes" or "No")**

.....

How? (If you answered "Yes")

.....

.....

.....

.....

7. With which language, reading and writing difficulties would you assist her?

.....

.....

.....

8. With what approaches or techniques would you assist her with her difficulties?

.....

.....

.....

QUESTIONNAIRE

IDENTIFICATION OF READING AND LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES IN GRADE TWO IN AN ENGLISH CLASS

Please look at the video of the boy in the green sweater top (Andreas) (later on he discards the top and wears a white shirt). Then please answer the following questions about the possible reading and language difficulties you observe as experienced by him in his oral and written work in language. Images of his oral and written work (approximately one minute per page) in the lesson will be displayed in between or at the end of the lesson. The duration of the video is 13 minutes.

1. What aspects in his behaviour are indicative that he is having difficulty?

.....
.....
.....

2. What kind of written language problems does he exhibit?

.....
.....
.....

3. What kind of reading difficulties does he exhibit when reading on the board?

.....

.....
.....
4. What kind of reading difficulties does he exhibit when reading silently and aloud from his book?

.....
.....
.....
5. What other (than language) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap him in his work?

.....
.....
.....
6. What kind of handwriting difficulties does he exhibit?

.....
.....
.....
7. With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate his language difficulties?

.....
.....
8. Would you explain the lesson material to him in any other way than the teacher?
(Answer "Yes" or "No")

.....
How? (If you answered "Yes")
.....

.....
.....

9. With what approaches or techniques would you assist him with his difficulties?

.....
.....
.....

QUESTIONNAIRE

IDENTIFICATION OF READING AND LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES IN GRADE THREE IN AN ENGLISH CLASS

Please look at the video of the boy in the white shirt (Adam). Then please answer the following questions about the possible language and reading difficulties you observe as experienced by him in his oral and written work in language. Images of his oral and written work (approximately one minute per page) in the lesson will be displayed in between or at the end of each lesson. The duration of the video is 10 minutes.

1. What aspects in his behaviour are indicative that he is having difficulty?

.....

.....

.....

2. What kind of language difficulties does he exhibit that may handicap him in his reading and writing?

.....

.....

.....

3. What kind of reading difficulties does he exhibit?

.....

.....

.....
4. What kind of writing difficulties does he exhibit (compare his written work)?

.....
.....
.....

5. With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate his mathematics difficulties?

.....
.....
.....

6. Would you explain the lesson material to him in any other way than the teacher?
(Answer "Yes" or "No")

.....

How? (If you answered "Yes")

.....
.....
.....

7. With what approaches or techniques would you assist him with his difficulties?

.....
.....
.....

ADDENDUM B

Dr Mvula
District Director
Northwest Department of Education
POTCHEFSTROOM

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Tel (018) 018 299 1884
Fax (018) 018 299 1888

5 May 2004

Dear dr Mvula

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

I hereby request permission to conduct research in 10 primary schools in Potchefstroom and district, for my research project, titled:

Outcomes-based assessment of learners with special educational needs: An in-service training programme for educators in the Foundation Phase in the North-West Province.

A research grant was allocated to me jointly by the NRF and the University of the North-West for this research project, which has to be executed before the end of the year. The research encompasses that video recordings as well as questionnaires be presented to three Foundation Phase educators each in the 10 primary schools in the North-West Province. These educators (Grades 1, 2 and 3 educators in each of these 10 schools) will be requested to view the video recordings and fill in the questionnaires about the learners in the videos. The videos are about one learner each in Grade 1, 2 and 3, performing class activities in reading, writing and mathematics. The video recordings each are more or less 20 minutes long, of each of the Grade 1, 2 and 3 learners, in an Afrikaans, English, Tswana and Northern Sotho speaking class.

The educators' role in the research will entail the viewing of the video recordings and filling in the questionnaire – one Grade 1 teacher in each of the 10 schools (total 10 educators) will view the video of a Grade 1 learner; one Grade 2 teacher in each of the 10 schools (total 10 educators) will view the video of a Grade 2 learner; and one Grade 3 teacher in each of the 10 schools (total 10 educators) will view the video of a Grade 3 learner. After viewing the video, each educator has to fill in the questionnaire about that learner's learning and classroom behaviour on the video. The aim of the viewing of the videos is for the educators to **Identify any symptoms of any possible learning difficulties** from the learners' activities in the video, and to fill in corresponding questions in the questionnaire, about the specific learner's learning behaviour as evident on the video. From the answers obtained from the questionnaires I will be able to determine the educators' present knowledge and skill in identifying symptoms of learning difficulties. The ultimate aim of the research will then be to compile an in-service training programme for Foundation Phase educators in the identification of learning difficulties in the classroom.



Permission is therefore requested for the following:

- that **10 schools** are selected to take part in the research, issued to me with the names of the schools, **2 in each of the 4 mentioned mediums of teaching**, their **physical as well as postal addresses**, and their **telephone and fax numbers**.
- to conduct the research among **30 Foundation Phase educators** (3 educators – Grade 1,2 and 3 – in each of these 10 schools) in Potchefstroom and district.
- that these 10 schools each have to be **representative of either one of four language groups, in the North-West Province: English, Afrikaans, Tswana and Northern Sotho**. This means that approximately 2 schools in each of these 4 languages have to be selected – that the medium of teaching in these schools therefore has to be these 4 languages: **2 schools with English as medium, 2 schools with Afrikaans as medium, 2 schools Tswana, and 2 schools Northern Sotho**.

It takes about 45 minutes to watch the video and fill in the questionnaire, which the educators can do after hours on their own private video machines at home, or wherever they have access to video machines. **It therefore does not have to be done during school hours at all, but may be done on the school premises, after hours, if the school has video facilities available.** Some of the the 30 educators will therefore have to be willing to **stay after school for one day only**, to view the video and fill in the questionnaire, if they do not have private video facilities at their homes. I will personally deliver the videos and questionnaires to the 30 educators at the 10 schools, after which I will also personally fetch the videos and questionnaires.

Anonymity and confidentiality is of course guaranteed, as no names of educators or schools have to be filled in on the questionnaire. The research entails participation of **educators only; no learners**. The aim of the research is to obtain a general indication of how educators presently identify learning difficulties, in order to eventually design the in-service training programme for educators. The schools will benefit from the research by contributing towards the establishment of the training programme, from which all Foundation Phase educators ultimately may benefit, to improve their knowledge and skill in the identification of learning difficulties. I also envisage that these trained educators may ultimately become facilitators as well in their own right, in the training of their colleagues in the early identification of learning difficulties, to prevent school failure and dropout later on in learners' school careers.

I therefore request your permission on this matter urgently, in order to fulfil my financial and time-fixed obligation towards the NRF and the University of the North-West.

Thank you for your kind consideration of my request.

Yours sincerely

**PROF PETRUSA DU TOIT
RESEARCHER**

ADDENDUM C



Department of Education
Lefapha La Thuto
Departement van Onderwys

Private Bag X 919
Potchefstroom, 2520
Tel (018) 299 8294/99
Fax (018) 299 8290



NORTH WEST PROVINCE

SOUTHERN REGION

Enq.: M. Mveli
E-Mail mmweli@nwedg.gov.za

To : Prof. Du Toit
University of the North West

From : Mr H M Mveli
Executive Manager

Date : 11 August 2004

Subject : PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

Your correspondence to my regarding the above matter refers.

Permission is herewith granted for you to conduct research in schools as per your request. This Department will very much appreciate it if you can furnish me with a copy of the Research itself and/or a report on how you undertook the research.

Wishing you well in your endeavors.

Yours sincerely

MR H M MWELI
EXECUTIVE MANAGER
SOUTHERN REGION



ADDENDUM D

THE PRINCIPAL
POTCHEFSTROOM PRIMARY SCHOOL
POTCHEFSTROOM

**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
EDUCATION**

Tel (018) 018 299 1884
Fax (018) 018 299 1888

14 SEPTEMBER 2004

Dear Madam/Sir

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

Herewith I request your permission to perform research in your school. The research is about a project I am conducting at the University of the North-West, on the identification by Grade 1, 2 and 3 educators of learners with learning difficulties. Permission from the Department of Education has already been obtained, and a copy of that letter is enclosed for your notice.

The research entails that one each of a Grade 1, 2 and 3 educator in your school will view a video of a learner with learning difficulties, and then fill in a questionnaire about the learner on the video. That means that the Gr 1 educator will view the video of the Gr 1 learner, the Gr 2 educator the video of the Gr 2 learner, and the Gr 3 educator the video of the Gr 3 learner, and thereafter each educator fills in his/her separate questionnaire about the learner on the video that he/she has viewed. It should take about 45 minutes to view the video and fill in the questionnaire, which the educators can do after hours on their own private video machines at home or wherever they have access to video machines. It therefore does not have to be done on the school premises, but of course it will speed up the research if your school does have video facilities available on your premises, for the educators' use, as it is an official matter permitted by the Department of Education.

Anonymity and confidentiality is of course guaranteed, as no names of educators or schools are mentioned anywhere. The aim of the research is to obtain a general indication of how educators presently identify learning difficulties, in order to design an in-service training programme for educators. Your school will benefit from the research by contributing towards the establishment of the training programme, from which all Foundation Phase educators ultimately may benefit, to improve their knowledge and skill in the identification of learning difficulties. I also envisage that these trained educators may ultimately become facilitators as well in their own right, in the training of their colleagues in the early identification of learning difficulties, to prevent school failure and dropout later on in learners' school careers.



I will arrange to deliver and fetch the videos and questionnaires personally to and from your school. I request that you be so kind to please have the educators finish the questionnaires before the end of September 2004. The successful progress of the research project is dependent on your kindly returning the package by this date, which will again be personally fetched, to save you mailing costs.

Thank you again for your cooperation. It is highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

prof PETRUSA DU TOIT
RESEARCHER