Reading challenges in English: Towards a reading model for Grade 8 learners in Mafikeng district

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Thesis accepted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in English
at the North-West University

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Graduation ceremony: April 2020
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Declaration

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work in the **Faculty of Humanities, North-West University, Mafikeng Campus, 2019.**

Every effort was made to indicate and acknowledge the contributions of other scholars and this is clearly indicated in reference to the literature and acknowledgement of collaborative research.

I declare that this research is my own, unaided work. This work has not been submitted before to any other institution except NWU, Mafikeng Campus.

The work was done under the guidance of **Professor. T.T. Mukhuba, Doctor. M.L. Hove and Doctor. P.N. Nkamta** in the Faculty of Humanities, North-West University, Mafikeng Campus.

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In our capacity as supervisors of the candidate's thesis, we certify that the above statements are true to the best of our knowledge.

Prof Mukhuba……Dr M.L. Hove……Dr P.N. Nkamta…….

Date…… Date…… Date……

Acknowledgements

There are few individuals who played a critical role in the successful completion of this thesis.

First, I would like to gratefully acknowledge Prof. Mukhuba, Dr. Hove and Dr. Nkamta for their supervision. It was not an easy task.

My sincere gratitude also goes to my family, especially my wife and friend, Dipuo. There was never a time before when I needed her support more than this time and she did not disappoint. I dedicate this work to my grandmother for believing in me, my mother, Makgethe and my late sister Tshidi Mashuga and her husband Caiphus who supported me throughout my journey. I am truly grateful.

I also thank everyone who played a role in my journey to reach this level of my studies, specifically the teachers in the five schools that were part of this project. May you all continue to play this role and assist other researchers to excel.

Above all, I appreciate my LORD and saviour who gave me life, family and friends for and protecting and guiding my life. You deserve all the praise and glory. You are the Lord who never forsakes his children and you have made us a promise that:

They that wait upon YOU shall renew their strength they shall mount with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary and they shall walk and not faint.

ISAIAH 40 Verse 31.

Abstract

Recent research findings from PIRLS, (2017) reveal shocking statistics about the state of reading among Grade 4 learners in South Africa. Out of 50 countries surveyed, South Africa came last with 78% of Grade 4 learners who cannot read for meaning. The main objective of the investigation was to design strategies that could assist Grade 8 teachers in addressing the reading challenges of their learners. Research suggests that reading challenges of learners can be overcome if teachers employ a systematic approach to the teaching of reading. This means that teachers need to establish ways of learning about their learners's reading challenges and follow a specific process to help root them out. Data was collected through a mixed-method, that is, qualitative in the form of classroom observations and a reading study for the learners and quantitative in the form of a questionnaire for teachers. The sampling technique is purposive. The study focuses on addressing Grade 8 reading challenges and proposing a reading model developed for application in Grade 8 classes in the region. The study established that most learners struggle with word recognition and ultimately comprehension. It also established that fluent reading does not always result in systematic reading comprehension. Some learners who performed well on reading speed, accuracy and expression failed to do well on comprehension.

Keywords: reading speed, word recognition, reading prosody, accuracy, word meaning, vocabulary, comprehension.

Summary

The standard of learning as observed by many lecturers of the students they teach is of serious concern. The reading problem emanates from early schooling and the teachers know not how to arrest the situation. According to Taylor (2014), the most common finding in school-based research is that teachers simply do not have the knowledge of effective reading pedagogies and as a result cannot teach reading effectively in spite of their efforts to do so. His findings were subsequent to a study undertaken in five colleges and below is what he documented:

> "Across all five institutions, there may be insufficient focus on equipping student teachers to guide IP learners to become proficient readers and writers/producers of texts in a range of genres and modes. In particular, little or no attention is given to reading pedagogies across the sample (Taylor 2014:17)".

In another study, Taylor (2008) felt that despite the daunting situation South African teachers teach under, they are still dedicated and work hard to educate children under those circumstances. Teachers and academics are thus duty-bound to endeavour and identify solutions to the problems facing the country in general and the Department of Education in particular. It is for this reason that this study attempts to find the solution to reading challenges experienced by Grade 8 learners in Mafikeng district and to provide some remedy that could be adopted for best practices despite all the setbacks.

List of abbreviations and acronyms

ANA	Annual National Assessment
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CIERA	Centre for Improvement of Early Reading
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
FL	Foreign Language
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
PIRLS	Progress In International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
STAR	School Transformation and Reform Strategy
ZPD	Zonal Proximal Development

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

CERTIFICATE OF EDITING A PHD THESIS

This serves to confirm that I have read and edited Mr. G. B. Maruda's PhD thesis titled: **READING CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH: TOWARDS A READING MODEL FOR GRADE 8 EARNERS IN MAFIKENG DISTRICT.** The candidate corrected the language errors identified. The document is of an acceptable linguistic standard.

Thank you

Yours Faithfully



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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION

1.1. Introduction

Reading has been identified as one major challenge for Grade 8 learners in South Africa. As a result of this recognition, curriculum developers have got to place more emphasis on measures that could assist struggling learners to identify and overcome these reading challenges. Each year, final year results of higher grades are considered with a great amount of disappointment, with the blame being apportioned to the preparation received at primary school. The preparation is viewed by many as inadequate. Fluency is the most important element in reading together with comprehension. The other components of fluency include reading accuracy, reading speed, reading with the correct expression and all culminating in comprehension. These components of fluency have been identified as lacking and are usually non-existent in these learners. Therefore, competent teachers are required to help learners reach the level of reading fluency required for complex comprehension processes. Furthermore, in order to circumvent later challenges, literature (Fang, 2008; Dearman and Alber, 2005) strongly suggests that teachers need to find new ways of intervening with the purpose of stemming these reading challenges before they become deep-rooted and fossilised. Research also proposes that the curriculum authority should establish professional training that would increase teachers' knowledge and expand their understanding of teaching reading skills to all struggling Grade 8 learners (Alberto, Compton, and O'Connor, 2014:viii).

It was reported in *The Mail & Guardian* of the 20th May 2018 by Ingrid Willenberg that family literacy intervention is important, and should be viewed as a complement for early childhood and foundation phase education. She emphasizes the appropriateness of family literacy intervention strategy and stresses that many South African children live in poverty and as a result survival concerns are more immediate than literacy. This thus places all the burden on teachers alone. When learners move from one grade to the other, they should do so with their reading report. That report is important in assisting the new teacher in planning for reading and reading intervention that is tailor-made for each struggling learner. This paucity of intervention has left many learners with limited chances

to overcome their challenges (Costa, Edwards and Hooper, 2010). Moreau (2014), Deshler and Hock (2006) and Cekiso (2017) state that more concerns have been raised by teachers about learners who continue to struggle with reading and how that affects their performance in school. According to Costa, Edwards and Hooper (2010), the paucity in reading comprehension that prevails in schools is frustrating and demoralising to teachers as learners continue to perform below their grade level in reading. More studies, Joubert, Ebersohn, Fereira, du Plessis and Moen (2013); Rule and Land (2017) have intimated that the culture of reading for South African children is low as compared to other nations and this also accounts for the poor reading situation in local schools.

Despite the Department of Basic Education's efforts, South African learners have remained the lowest in reading abilities when compared to performance achievement in many other countries. According to the report from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (2006), South Africa's learners achieved the lowest in reading (Hlaletwa, 2013). In fact, PIRLS's findings in the study focus on the quality of reading literacy and teaching in this country (Hugo, 2010:133). In addition to the low performance of South African learners, 13% of Grade 4 learners scored very low when compared to the 94% around the world (Howie, Venter, Van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Du Toit, Scherman and Archer, 2008) about 87% could not reach the standards set for that test. The results imply that primary schools have failed to assist learners to reach their ultimate potential with regard to reading. Hlalethwa (2013) recognizes that the results imply, further, that learners move to the next grade still as challenged as they were in the previous grade. It is for that reason that this study sought to identify learners' reading challenges and to design strategies to address them.

1.2. Contextualisation of the research problem

Since 1994, a number of curriculum changes have been undertaken by the national government with the view to reverse the inequalities perpetuated by the unequal provision of education by the apartheid regime (Jansen, 1998; Heckman, 2011). Changes were hurriedly implemented, and as a result, standards declined and measures to arrest the decline were put in place. In an attempt to arrest the situation, extensive damage has already been done to the educational processes. Grade 8, for example, was moved to

primary schools and the middle school system was abolished. Learners were handed to primary schools where teachers who had little or no training in teaching at the level of specialist teaching offered by the middle schools. The quality of learners presented to high school could not cope with the amount of work that high school teaching exposes them to. The ultimate damage was later inflicted on the Grade 7 to 9 learners when they were later transferred to secondary school. With Curriculum 2000, reading deficiencies started to surface. The deficiencies showed the amount of vocabulary that the Grade 8 learners possessed, reading to search and locate information, deriving meanings from the text, establishing connections between words and finally comparing and contrasting items (Zimmerman, 2010). As commonly established within the field of reading, reading increases vocabulary and exposes a learner to the formal language used in print material.

Grade 8 learners in South Africa struggle with reading and what has to be established is what could be the cause thereof. According to the Department for Education (2012), studies, OECD (2002); Clark and Rumbold (2006); Clark and Douglas (2011) indicate that there is international evidence that suggests that learners do not only read less, but enjoy reading less as they move to upper grades. In their quest to answer the above question, the Annual National Assessment (ANA) was conducted by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) on Grades 1-6 and Grade 9 in Language and Mathematics. From the findings, it was established that learners struggle with reading for comprehension, could not construct sentences that were coherent, and lacked inferencing skills and spelt frequently used words incorrectly (Department of Education, 2012:5).

According to Yeh (2014:1), specialists point out that South Africa does not have a “reading culture.” The attitudes toward reading, in particular are not conducive to literacy. As Yeh (2014) succinctly puts it, “Reading is not something people do during their free time, also not something useful outside of school and finally that it is often not seen as an empowering skill.”

A sizeable proportion of the population is reported not to have books in their homes and it is often said that South African children are obsessed with material things like cell

phones and television which often take them away from important activities such as reading and playing sport or exercising (Tlale, Engelbrecht and Nel, 2016).

The challenge with reading among Grade 8 learners is not a problem unique to South Africa. According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), in England, average learners read less independently and do not derive pleasure in reading (Antilla, 2013:32). Therefore, these results suggest that there is still a lot to be done in relation to the state of reading amongst learners irrespective of where they are in the world.

Focussed reading instruction and intervention provide the key for the development of literacy in learners throughout adolescence and as they emerge into competent and educated adults (Alvermann, 2002; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008 and Antilla 2013: 5).

1.3. Statement of the problem

Though there is a dearth in studies on the status of reading in Mafikeng, a recent study by Mampe (2016) offers a glimpse into some of the reading challenges of learners in this area. In teachers' forums and workshops for English language teachers for Grades 7 to grade 9, the practitioners complain about the low level of reading of their learners and a picture of their concern is captured well in the study conducted by Howie (2003) cited in van Staden and Bosker (2014). This study points to a number of multifaceted factors. These factors include insufficient subject knowledge of teachers, communication break down between learners and teachers in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT), unavailability of instructional material, classrooms that are difficult to manage, packed programme of teaching, heavy teaching loads, huge numbers of learners in class, poor communication between policymakers and practitioners and lack of support from the Department. All of the above challenges create major educational problems for learners and Grade 8's in particular because they ought to be adequately prepared to learn through English and master reading abilities in the language of instruction. What learners reflect unfortunately is in contrast to what the authorities expect from them. As it stands, Grade 8 learners begin at high schools and continue to higher levels of schooling which include tertiary education without having acquired the appropriate reading skills necessary for succeeding in life. Failure to read has been associated with all poor

academic performance (Allsop, Minskoff and Bolt, 2008; Challen, King, Knapp and McNally, 2008).

In conclusion, this study resonates with many others that suggest that mastering the skills of reading early in life will develop superior language skills in learners (Pretorius, 2012). Early reading ability prepares learners to overcome the serious academic challenges that lie ahead and boost their chances to succeed in their studies. Most of the studies that have been examined did not directly deal with Grade 8 reading challenges. However, through engagement with the qualitative and quantitative data obtained from this study, the results could initiate debates related to reading challenges experienced by Grade 8 learners.

1.4. Purpose of the study

This study investigates the reading challenges experienced by Grade 8 learners and interrogates how these challenges affect their quest to succeed in their studies. The study strives to provide solutions to those reading challenges in the form of a reading model. Four schools were visited during a period of four weeks. During the study, the researcher profiled learners' reading challenges and strove to identify the root causes of these challenges. Five (5) learners who were randomly selected from each of the four schools were given five texts to read and answer questions at the end of every reading task in order to assess their level of comprehension of each text.

According to Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016:1), the performance of South African learners is low on literacy and has sparked stern responses from various provincial education departments. For example, Mpumalanga implemented the School Transformation and Reform Strategy (STAR); KwaZulu Natal Department of Education initiated the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (LNS) and the National Department of Basic Education put a plan to implement the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) (DBE, 2019:21). In his study, Moats (1999:10) argues that classroom teaching must focus on alleviating reading challenges.

In the course of this study, a model for teaching reading was designed whose purpose is to assist teachers to improve the teaching of reading to their learners. This model took its cue from sociocultural and motivation theories to develop strategies that could effectively address the reading challenges at this specific grade level. Two models of interest to the

researcher are Verbal Efficiency (Perfetti, 1988), and Construction-Integration model (Kintsch, 1988), particularly because the two models are grounded in explaining reading skills development and how the strategies could be implemented in classrooms such as the South African ones identified in this study. They specify the role of cognitive processes in reading comprehension more precisely than other models. They provide concise and complete explanations of reading abilities in terms of cognitive processes with empirical evidence, indicating how reading performance varies and could be enhanced under different conditions (Grabe, 2009). The model designed in this study takes the path and shape of a socio-cultural trajectory.

In the Verbal Efficiency Model, skilled readers are distinguished from poor readers in terms of possessing automatised lower processes. Automatic processes occur without much effort and these do not burden attention and working memory. They develop from extensive practice (Walczyk, 2000). A learner who reads more (practice reading) develops an efficient verbal profile which boosts the attention and working memory resources to be retrieved when needed. In this model, attentional resources are directed towards lower level processes. What is of importance in the Construction-Integration model is its capacity to monitor comprehension. During reading, which is perceived as the construction phase, ideas are developed from words, sentences and context. Knowledge, relevant or irrelevant to the propositions is then activated and with more inferencing refined (Xiao, 2016:186). It is from these two models that the Theme Teaching Model was designed.

Reading plays an important part in determining whether learners succeed in the academic journey or not. The researcher designed a discrimination tool that the language teacher could use in identifying learners with reading challenges and to place them in reading groups according to their reading abilities. Such intervention needs to be designed according to the unique challenges of each group with the aim of reducing the gap between the two reading extremes, the very poor and the very good reader. The study identifies and interrogates reading challenges that learners experience and provides strategies of handling them.

1.5. Rationale for the study

Reading and information processing abilities provide learners with skills in writing and speaking. However, findings derived from the 2006 and 2011 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) highlighted major concerns about the quality of reading literacy teaching in South African primary schools. Zimmerman and Smit (2014) pointed out that the lack of development of thinking and reasoning abilities for reading with comprehension among learners today constitute major challenges. An introspection by a number of countries regarding the state of reading of their learners has prompted remedial action. Action taken by European countries was to urge its member countries to engage in a critical conversation about issues and directions for adolescent literacy (Brozo, Shiel and Topping, 2007). This points to the seriousness of the situation which called for the efforts from everyone involved in the education of young adolescents.

Grade 8 is a level that falls between primary and secondary schooling in South Africa. At the secondary school level, the expectation is that learners come prepared to face all educational challenges that would confront them at that level. According to Joshanloo and Afshari (2011), they are at a self-realizing stage that brings many developmental issues to play, such as those experienced by adolescents. How the learners define who they are at this stage of adolescence certainly has a direct connection to their academic success or failure. As a result, it is important that middle-level educators work purposefully to help their learners develop positive perspectives about their identities that could lead to academic success (Terras, Thompson and Minnis, 2009).

Learners who cannot read cannot learn successfully and, therefore, are less likely to proceed to the next grade as expected or simply put, will fail the grade (Cameron, 2001). As they find themselves surrounded by younger learners in a class, they are more likely to avoid learning situations that embarrass them in class (Terras, Thompson & Minnis, 2009). Such situations involve trying and not getting the answer correct. They are sensitive to criticism of personal shortcomings and are easily offended (Joshanloo and Afshari, 2011). This behaviour interferes with their ability to learn from both peers and teacher-guided corrections (Eamon, 2001). The adolescents do not take criticism well, especially of their personal shortcomings and they become moody and restless (Hellough and Hellough, 2008; Scales, 2010). They are not easy to teach and ought to be treated with the utmost care possible as they are fragile (Lumsden, 1994; Ea**m**on, 2001).

It is for all these reasons that significant attention should be paid to struggling readers because if they are unable to attend to the problems they encountered in the lower grades, these problems are likely to develop into an epidemic which could be difficult to deal with going forward (Lumsden, 1994; Eamon, 2001).

The injustice which might have occurred to Grade 8 learners through selective and poor curriculum implementation throughout the primary and intermediate phase has to be corrected at secondary school, failing which the learners proceed to higher classes without having attained the right levels of reading competencies necessary for success in colleges and universities. It is therefore prudent to arrest problems of reading at the level of Grades 8 as learners enter grade levels that are academically challenging and specifically depend on their abilities to read for and with comprehension.

A well-developed vocabulary empowers learners with speaking and writing abilities. This means that people who develop large vocabulary acquired through reading tend to develop large speaking and writing vocabulary (Çağrı Tuğrul Mart, 2013:91). Akbar (2014:1) supports the above statement when he stresses that insufficient level of vocabulary creates self-doubt in learners which often leads them to stammer and hesitate while speaking because words form the most important part of communication. To be able to overcome communication challenges, teachers ought to engage their students in worthwhile activities, such as providing them with appropriate and interesting reading texts. Therefore, more reading time and skills by teachers to identify reading challenges could assist learners in overcoming their reading challenges thereby enabling them to accumulate the requisite vocabulary that could be useful in all spheres of learning. Indeed, reading power relies on the continuous accumulation of vocabulary knowledge that improves communication (Akbar, 2014:93).

Struggling readers require more time on tasks, which the Curriculum and Assessment Policy document (CAPS) does not seem to afford them in abundance. According to the time allocation for First Additional Language (FAL), CAPS stipulates 3 hours 30 minutes per fortnight cycle for Reading and Viewing which is further divided into 1 hour 45 minutes for comprehension and another 1 hour 45 minutes for literacy texts; which proves not sufficient to arrest reading challenges of Grade 8 learners (CAPS, 2012). If each of the two activities mentioned above were to be treated on a daily basis for a period of two

weeks, it means that each activity would be allocated 10 minutes 5 seconds, which exacerbates the problems of poor readers (CAPS, 2012:12).

1.6. Aims of the study

The aims of the study were set to:

(a) Find a way to close existing gaps in reading, and to conduct empirical research into what causes such reading problems and find solutions to remedy the situation.

(b) Assist learners to overcome fluency challenges, such as reading speed, word recognition problems, reading comprehension problems and inferencing.

(c) Utilise information obtained through the literature, engagement with learners and a questionnaire for teachers to design a theme-based sociocultural reading and teaching model that could be used by teachers in their classrooms.

1.7. Research questions

The study answers the following three important research questions:

1. What are the reading challenges that Grade 8 learners experience and encounter.
2. What are the causes of the most recurring reading challenges experienced in Grade 8 in the Mahikeng school district?
3. What are the possible strategies that could be used to assist learners in overcoming their reading challenges?

1.8. Objectives of the study

This study strove to achieve the following objectives, which were set to:

1. Determine what reading difficulties Grade 8 learners experience and encounter;
2. Establish different means to assist Grade 8 learners overcome their recurring reading challenges; and
3. Design and develop a reading model as one strategy that could be used during the teaching and intervention phase at the Grade 8 level.

1.9. Outline of the research methodology

This section of the study talks to the research methodology, which includes the research design, setting, population sampling and data collection instruments.

1.9.1. Research design

Research designs are procedures for research that explain the decisions taken in detailing methods of data collection and analysis (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The overall decisions involve which design should be used to study the topic (Creswell, 2009:3). They are a blueprint for getting credible answers to the research questions that guide the study (Creswell, 2009). Burns and Grove (2001:223) as well as de Vos (2001) state that designing a study assists researchers to plan and implement outcomes to the study to obtain the intended results, thus increasing the chances of identifying data that could resolve the real challenge in the situational context defined.

The research design utilised in this study was eclectic with more focus on a qualitative approach, complemented through a quantitative approach, the mixture commonly referred to as a mixed-method approach.

1.9.2. Mixed method research

1.9.2.1. Qualitative research

Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (de Vos, 2001). In this type of project, the researcher may engage in roles varying from a nonparticipant to a complete

participant. Data was collected by the researcher in the participant's setting, analysed inductively, building from particulars to general themes, and finally, the researcher made interpretations of what the data evidenced (Creswell, 2009:3). The qualitative data may consist of qualitative audio and visual materials to help capture important information which the researcher may not be able to remember after a while. These research tools can assist the researcher to preserve the information to be used in the future and can be shared with other researchers.

1.9.2.2. Quantitative research.

According to Babbie (2010), quantitative methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques. Quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon (Asan and Montague, 2014). The researcher designed a questionnaire that was distributed among Grade 8 teachers in the five research sites. The aim of the questionnaire was to establish from teachers what they perceive to be problems with their learners' reading.

1.9.2.3. Case study

Creswell (2008:465) defines a case study as an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection, and an important type of ethnography that provides insight into an issue or theme. According to Best and Kahn (2003:249), discussions about probes deeply and analyses interactions between the factors that explain present status or that influence change or growth. Furthermore, Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004:41) state that a case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. Interactive qualitative methods were adopted as they allow a researcher to collect data from participants in their natural setting, employing a face-to-face technique (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:26). Since the researcher's primary interest was to learn about reading challenges of Grade 8 learners in Mafikeng district, an instrumental case study method was the most appropriate tool to use because, in this type of study design, the researcher is interested in how and why a

phenomenon operates as it does. That is, the researcher selects the case to develop and/or test the theory or to better understand some important issue. This type of design is important to researchers who are interested in generalising and extending their findings in the research literature on various topics (Johnson and Christensen, 2008:408).

The case study was divided into two sections; that is,

- Classroom observation (Four days- 4- in each school) and
- Exposing learners to a Standardized Reading Programme (A day in each school). Therefore, both sections lasted five (4) days in each school and the entire study lasted for a month.

1.10. Research setting

Five schools in Mafikeng District were identified for this study. The names of the schools are not mentioned for the sake of confidentiality. The selection criteria that the researcher used comprised of the following:

- ❖ Two schools were from an urban area and three from a rural area,
- ❖ They all had similar resources.
- ❖ From poor communities of Mafikeng, wherein parents were either unemployed or earning little money to survive
- ❖ No fee schools.

1.11. Research population and sample

This section of the study explains what population is as defined by numerous researchers. It also explains who the population of this study is and how they will be sampled.

1.11.1. Population and sample

The population for this study was determined by the research instruments used and the type of activity examined. For example, for the silent reading activity, all learners in a class took part whereas, in a reading aloud activity, only five (5) learners per school were

randomly selected to take part. Polit and Hungler (1999:43 & 232) define a population as the totality of all subjects that conform to a set of specifications, comprising the entire group of persons that is of interest to the researcher and whom the research results can be generalised. LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (1998:250) describe a sample as a portion or a subset of the research population selected to participate in a study, representing the research population.

There are 465 high schools in Mafikeng district with a total enrolment of 75 886 learners. At the intermediate phase there are 49 555 intermediate learners who are taught by 7 250 teachers who hold divere qualifications ranging from teachers' diplomas to bachelor's degrees.

The sample of this study comprised four (4) classrooms from the four schools that were purposefully selected in Mafikeng District of the North West Province. Each school had one (1) Grade 8 class with one (1) teacher responsible for teaching English. Therefore, the sample of teachers in the study was four (4). This sample cannot be viewed as representative of all the high schools in the district. However, this was justified because of the rigorous depth of data collected that would help shed light to the reading challenges at Grade 8 that was the research problem investigated.

1.12. Instruments and procedure for collecting data

This section explains how data was collected. Two types of data sets were collected, namely, the qualitative data and the quantitative data.

1.12.1. Qualitative data collection procedure

The first procedure followed was to collect data from a silent reading activity in which all the learners in the classroom participated. The purpose of this exercise was to establish the entry reading levels of each learner and to gauge if indeed a problem of reading does exist among them.

The second procedure where five learners were randomly selected from each class in all the schools visited was reading aloud exercise. In this exercise, each learner was exposed to reading five texts and responded to a test at the end of every reading. The purpose of the exercise was to establish the speed at which the learner was able to read,

pick and identify the reading mistakes and challenges committed by the learner and how to classify them. Since keeping a mental recollection of every detail pertaining to data about the reading of every learner collected, the researcher deemed it appropriate to use a recorder to record the reading. A video recorder has been proven a very important tool in qualitative data collection (Asan and Montague, 2014; Suggate, 2016; Edwards, Vaughn, Wexler, Reutebuch, Cable, Tackett and Schnakenberg 2009).

1.12.2. Quantitative data collection procedure

A questionnaire was designed for each English subject teacher in all the five schools visited. The purpose of the questionnaire was to establish from those teachers what they have identified and established as the reading challenges of their learners. The questionnaire consisted of two parts; namely, personal information part and the reading challenges of learners. The responses to the questions were weighed through a Likert scale 1-5. Teachers responded to the questionnaire during the week of the researcher's visit to their school.

1.13. Data analysis and interpretation

This section deals with the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data collected.

1.13.1. Data analysis approach for quantitative research

A quantitative data was analysed through a Microsoft excel to determine number of occurance and percentage and of grouping responses according to questions asked.

For calculating both silent and reading speed when reading aloud, the following formula was applied;

> Speed = Number of words read in the passage divided by the words in the passage multiplied by 100.

For determining the performance of the learners on the tests they took at the end of every reading, the scores were converted to percentages to allow for ease of interpretation.

1.13.2. Data analysis approach for qualitative research

Since the qualitative data measured reading speed, accuracy, expression rate and reading comprehension-through summary- which are components defined as fluency, word recognition identified while learners were reading and inferencing ability through questions, data analysis focused on all of the aspects identified. Formulas were applied to determine the following:

- **Speed** = Number of words learner managed to read divided by the total number of words in the passage multiplied by 100
- **Accuracy** = Words read incorrectly divided by the number of words the learner managed to read multiplied by 100
- **Expression** (First determine the expression rate of the entire text, using the total number of words in the text)
  e.g. if the total number of words is 350
  350 divided by 5 = 70 (100%) and to determine the percentage,
  70 divided by 70,multiplied by 100,

  Then the second step was to determine the expression rate of a learner out of the words she managed to read.
- = Number of words the learner managed to read, dividedby 5. Take the answer and divide by the expected expression rate (which is the 100% expression of the total number of words in the passage).
- **Comprehension** = mark obtained by a learner divided by total mark of the test multiplied by 100

These formulae were used in Chapter 4 to understanding the reading of all the learners and to determine their reading challenges. The outcome of the analysis also assisted in formulating the reasoning provided towards what these challenges were and what could be the causes behind them.

1.14. Ethical considerations

According to de Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2011), ethics in research is important in ensuring the humane treatment of participants. Since this study's focus was on Grade

8 learners, consideration was to protect them against unpleasant exposure. Denzin (1989:83) suggests:

> "… our primary obligation is always to the people we study not our project or to a larger discipline. The lives and stories that we hear and study are given to us under a promise and that promise is to protect those who have shared them with us".

The following, therefore, became the basis for the contract between the researcher and the participants. For example:

(a) Permission from Principals and the Head of the Provincial Department of Basic Education. A letter was sent to parents which sought permission to enrol their children as part of the study and to inform them about the aims of the study with regard to reading performance at Grade 8.

(b) Written Assent. Learners themselves completed a consent form. In it, all information about the research and its benefit was explained to the learners as well as the risks involved if any. Their permission to take part in the study was obtained.

(c) Children were allocated numbers for ease of identification and not their names. Their reading progress was a matter between the researcher and each child. This was made possible by the fact that reading by each learner was done in a separate office and not in a class and only the learner and the researcher were present.

(d) Kaplan and Howes (2004) raise a few ethical issues that come with the use of video recorders as tools in educational research on children, such as the invasion of privacy and child abuse. However, they urge researchers to use careful judgment so that a potentially valuable educational research tool is not ignored because of over-reaction. In consideration of Kaplan and Howes' (2004) caveats, the researcher transcribed the footage of learner reading alone, away from any person or his assistant. By working alone, the researcher avoided potential abuse of the footage should the footage be handled by any other person. Lastly, after the footage was exhaustively analysed and the research project completed, the researcher deleted the footage.

The Grade 8 learners are at an age of vulnerability and their self-identification and self-concept should be handled cautiously (Markus and Wurf, 1987). The only feedback they got from the researcher was that of encouragement and love. During early childhood and adolescence, children value play and acceptance by their peers (Russell-Mayhew, Arthur, and Ewashen, 2007). Children with reading difficulties receive positive feedback they develop academic self-belief, self-concept and high self-esteem (Dyson, 2003). It was, therefore, important to protect every child and create a safe and positive learning environment for them to learn and develop positive self-worth (National School Safety Framework, 2015). Their identity was protected and the errors they committed were not used against them.

1.15. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to explain the process that was taken to reaching the answers to the questions raised. It had to demonstrate the rationale of undertaking a study of this nature. It also elaborated on the methodology chosen to arrive at those answers.

1.16. Organisation of the study

Chapter 1: Orientation

The initial chapter outlines the research problem, definition of a research question, motivation of the study, research approach of dissertation, limitations and key assumptions and contribution to be made by research. It also provides background/ context to a research.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter examines and evaluates the literature on the research questions. Thus, this literature review explores the reading challenges of Second language Grade 8 Learners and its impact on learning in general and English language proficiency in particular. The chapter also gives the perspective and sets parameters within which the research problem and research questions are investigated. More importantly, an overview of all concepts and theories applied in the study is given in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology terrain through which the research was conducted and the method of research design applied and the justification thereof.

Chapter 4: Analysis and interpretation

The chapter details the research findings. Conclusions are then drawn from amassed data and implications of the findings related to the theory at hand. More importantly, it discusses the findings and all other factors thrown up by the study as it progressed in order to align all the recommendations and conclusions to be reached.

Chapter 5: Reading Model and Intervention Programme

In this chapter, a programme for reading and intervention was designed out of the experiences this researcher gathered in the longitudinal engagement with the learners**.**

Chapter 6: Conclusion, summary and recommendations

This chapter summarizes the findings of the thesis and provides recommendations for dealing with the reading challenges of Grade 8 learners.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review current literature related to the study of reading challenges among Grade 8 learners and to foreground the need for a reading model that would assist teachers in scaffolding struggling learners to overcome their reading problems. The literature review undertaken provides specific insight into learners' reading challenges. This review covers relevant and recent literature and is guided by the aims and objectives of the study. Also, the review examines different intervention strategies used by researchers and classroom practitioners in other educational institutions in South Africa and other parts of the world. Lastly, the review also interrogates different models of reading and how they have contributed insight into reading and reading challenges. Furthermore, from the literature, a model for successful reading is proposed, designed and tested in Grade 8 classes with the aim of establishing its potential capacity to deal with identified reading challenges experienced by learners in the Mafikeng District of the North-West Province.

Eisenhart and Jurow, (2011) provide the purpose of undertaking a literature review as one which informs the researcher on what has been undertaken and what is yet to be with regards to the research problem. It also assists the researcher to identify research strategies and specific data collection approaches that have been productive in investigations of challenges similar to a specific study and may also suggest approaches and procedures that the researcher previously had not considered. Knowledge amassed through the literature review assists the researcher to avoid the pitfalls of other researchers and profit from their experience. Two types of the literature review are popularly used in the line of research: the theoretical overview which is relevant to concepts and theoretical frameworks and methodological review, relevant to strategies of data collection and analysis (Tomaseli, 2018).

2.2. Reading described

In dealing with reading challenges, it should be understood first what reading entails, and what is considered normal reading development and growth from primary school grades to secondary school grades and the goals of reading instruction. Reading is a process of the construction of meanings through the dynamic interaction between a reader's existing

knowledge, the information conveyed through written language, and the context of the reading situation (Anthony, Pearson and Raphael, 1993:284). Grabe (1991:383) states that interactive reading processes involve “both an array of low-level rapid, automatic identification skills and an array of higher-level comprehension and interpretation skills”. In the words of Bakhtin in Waghmare (2011:2), a text is not a self-contained nor an alien entity, but rather a site for dialogic interaction of multiple voices or modes of discourse. In the same vein, Bakhtin submits that a text depends on the repetition and transformation of other textual structures. This means that, according to Grabe (1991) and Bakhtin (1986), for reading to yield the appropriate acquisition of information and learning, there has to be a reader and a text and at the centre of it all – interaction, interpretation and most significantly, comprehension. Therefore, there is a lesson to learn from Bakhtin. There is a need to move away from teacher centred approach of reading to a learner centred approach where the teacher guides the learner’s understanding of the text that give learners an opportunity to engage the text and the author and establish their own understanding of the text and what the author wants to communicate. The current approach of dealing with comprehension need to be discouraged where learners respond to questions after reading as a means to demonstrate their understanding. Learners should also made to feel that differing with the author or the teacher is acceptable.

Taking cue from what was learnt from Bakhtin (1981) learners should not be made to respond to questions only from a reading text, but they should be encouraged to communicate their thoughts about the topic presented in the text, the author’s intentions in encoding specific meanings at the time of writing. They should also be encouraged to differ in their interpretations with the author through writing an end that could be markedly different from the one provided. This approach strives to develop the writing part of the language learning and mastery process.

A good writer, through a storyline, evokes feelings, emotions and takes the reader to near and far away places, evokes sounds and voices already available, known and experienced by the reader which form their world of knowledge. The written text exhibits certain characteristics. It must be written in a language which is not too far above the reader’s understanding, should relate to concepts which are not too abstract to the reader’s world of imagination, and should be interesting to read, opening new vistas of

the textual world (Mesmer, Cunningham and Hiebert, 2012). This is achieved through the reader's interaction with the text. In his voice, Bakhtin (1986) describes this interaction as dialogic, a conversation between the reader and the writer. As experienced readers engage with a text, they begin to develop mental representations of the text. This serves as an evolving framework for understanding subsequent parts of the text (Ruddel and Unrau, 1994). Through the reader's contribution to the text, a lot is then processed and learnt. On the surface, reading seems to be a passive, solitary and simple exercise. It is, however, an active and complex exercise that is populated by rich voices, establishing new experiences to old encounters of similar and different textual information and views. These voices, according to Bakhtin (in Waghmare, 2011), fill the emptiness left unfilled by the author and answer questions that the author could not provide answers to. What should be at the centre of reading, according to Halliday (1993a:93), is comprehension.

Skilful reading means an ability to recognise words and to have the relevant vocabulary and carrying out the reading tasks in a fairly automatic manner. However, all the above are not sufficient, especially if the text is complex and challenging, gauged on the grade-level of the reader (Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko and Hurwitz, 1999:39). The question asked through this study is how skilful are the Grade 8 learners in harnessing these strategies for the accomplishment of a successful reading.

2.3. Constituents of proficient reading

There are five skills a learner must excel in to be a good reader: phonemic awareness, phonic enunciation, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

2.3.1. Phonemic awareness

This is the ability to recognize and control the individual sounds of spoken words (Nel, Nel & Hugo, 2012:90). According to Jordan, Kirk and King (2005), children who possess phonemic awareness skills are likely to have an easier time learning to read and spell than children who have few or none of these skills. Though this skill is important it is a skill learnt by children at kindergarten and early primary school. At ages between 12 and 14 years, children are expected to have fully mastered this skill.

2.3.2. Phonics and enunciation

Phonic enunciation is the connection between the letter of a written language and the individual sound of that spoken language. Children are taught the sounds first, then how to match them to the letters, and finally how to use the letter sound for reading and spelling (Jordan, Kirk and King, 2005). This skill again is taught at kindergarten and early primary school level and therefore Grade 8 learners who are at the centre of this current study are expected to have the above two requisite skills.

2.3.3. Fluency

Fluency is the connector between word recognition and reading comprehension (Muaka, Bernhardt and Kamil, 2003, Piper 2010). It is the potential to read a text correctly, with pace and with the correct expression. The reader can concentrate on the meaning of the text and does not have to concentrate on the minutiae of decoding each and every word. It develops gradually over time (National Institute for Literacy, 2003). According to Jordan et al. (2005:4), learners are expected to demonstrate full fluency through good phrasing, the grouping and chunking of words in phrases and clauses, inflection, intonation, attending to punctuation as well as reading quickly and accurately.

Discussions about struggling readers usually confuse decoding with fluency (Wolf, and Katzir-Cohen, 2001). Fluency comes from the reader's ability to identify and decode words and to quickly process larger language units. Fluency varies according to the text density at hand. That means, familiarity or lack thereof, with the subject, language structures used, features of a text and language processing ability could influence the speed at which a learner can read a text, and do so with understanding. What this means for the teaching of reading is that vocabulary of the text should be taught before the actual reading can begin. This also means, for example, that teachers cannot assume that learners's ability to read a narrative text fluently could enable her to do the same with expository text. One thing that teachers need to remember is that inability of a learner to read as expected sometimes is influenced by various factors which Wolf and Katzi-Cohen outlined above.

Fluency develops when students are given the opportunity to read texts that are accessible to them in terms of vocabulary and meaning-making strategies. More exposure to the reading of difficult texts helps broaden a reader's fluency (Pikulski, 1998).

For adolescent readers, fluency grows as they encounter favourable moments, support and inspiration to read a wide range of text types about different topics (Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko and Hurwitz, 1999:39). Therefore, this statement challenges language teachers to provide learners with more reading opportunities.

Fluency consists of four parts, namely; accuracy, speed, expression and compression. When it is said that a reader is fluent such a reader must be able to coordinate all four of the above-mentioned aspects of fluency.

Accuracy: Accuracy measures the capacity that a learner is expected to read words without a struggle having to stop and think what the word could be or what the word means. Accuracy entails the capacity exhibited by the learner to fluently read a word without sounding them out or breaking them into syllables (Piper, 2010). Accuracy can be calculated through the use of the following formula:

Words incorrectly read divided by words the learner was able to read multiplied by 100, to determine the percentage.

Speed: Speed at which the learner reads should be efficient, meaning that it must not be too fast nor too slow. It should be kept in mind that at whatever speed the learner reads, accuracy, speed and expression should lead to comprehension, and if comprehension cannot be attained, such a learner cannot be said to be a fluent reader. Observing a learner's performance in reading fluency could help in guiding and planning both instruction and intervention (Jordan et al., 2005:4). The formula to use to determine Speed at which the learner read a text is as follows:'

Number of words the learner managed to read divide by the total number of words in the text multiplied by 100 to determine the percentage.

Expression: According to Pang, Muaka, Bernhardt and Kamil (2003) as well as Piper (2010), expression in fluency reading is equivalent to normal spoken language when one expresses emotions, stops to breathe and changes the tone to capture the listener's attention. Since the literature on reading does not provide a formula to calculate expression, this study offered the following formula.

The length of the sentence accepted to be of appropriate length for each grade level will be different and will be determined by their age and the standard the learners are at. For the purpose of this research, it should be accepted that a sentence consisting of five (5) words was rational of the right reading length for the level of Grade 8. Therefore, in order to determine the expression rate, the number of words the learner was able to read out of the total words in the passage will be divided by 5 (which is the length of a sentence assumed to be appropriate for the level of Grade 8).

For example;

(a) Calculate the expected expression rate of the passage;

- The passage has 281 words
- The learner manages to read only 150 words, then the calculation will be as follows.

  281 (number of words in the passage) – divided 5 (the assumed length the Grade 8 can read at and be able to understand). The answer will be 56.2 (expression rate if the learner has read exceptionally well – 100%).

  Now that the learner managed to read 150 words of the 281, the calculation will determine the expression rate out of the 150. The 150 words read will then be divided by 5 giving the expression rate of 30. The 30 (53.3%) expression rate is slightly more than half the expected expression rate of 56.2 (100%) expected from a fluent reader. It can be assumed that the more the learner is exposed to reading and or remediation, the more therefore that the expression level is likely to improve.

2.3.4. Comprehension

Comprehension is the ability to grasp meanings from a text. Perfetti and Stafura (2014) have identified three constructs that underpin reading comprehension. They are knowledge, processes involved in reading, which include decoding, word identification,

meaning retrieval, sentence parsing, inferring and lastly cognitive resources such as memory.

Constructing meaning is an engagement and a dialogic process between the content and structure of the text, the purpose for reading, the reader's prior knowledge and experience and fluent processing of the text (Blanton, Wood and Moorman, 1990). The ultimate reason for reading should be comprehension. Posing questions to learners or having them generate their own questions is one way of helping them improve their comprehension. Questions usually help learners direct their attention to what they read and assists them in thinking actively while reading. This therefore, encourages them to observe their own comprehension keenly. It also facilitates in making them to reflect on what they have read and to merge it with their current knowledge, stored in both short and long term memory (National Institution for Literacy, 2003). Comprehension can be assessed through different means including recall, summary, responding to questions, be it orally or written and through other creative methods adopted by the teacher.

2.3.5. Vocabulary

Vocabulary is one of the key building blocks for becoming a fluent reader (Stoffelsma, 2019:1). it is a group of words the learner knows, together with what they mean. It can be gained through listening to others speak, communicating, thus expressing one-self, reading or recognition vocabulary and writing vocabulary (Harris and Hodges, 1995). Vocabulary is important to reading comprehension. Sight word vocabulary affects fluency and comprehension. For students to read at the advanced level material which is sophisticated, they need to raise their vocabulary. To access vocabulary, a teacher can speak a word and ask a learner to identify its meaning from a range of given meanings or corresponding pictures or provide the definition of a word and ask a learner to give a corresponding word to the meaning given. Another way is to give a learner a word and ask them to give a word with the opposite or similar meaning (Jordan *et al*., 2005: 4).

2.4. Theories of second language reading

This section of the study responds to the following questions.

How do we process information?

What importance do textual organizations have in processing of input? (Fontanini, 2004:168)

As information is produced, there is no conscious awareness of the processes involved in doing so. The information that is processed has to be stored in memory where it can be retrieved as and when needed for use (Fontanini, 2004:168). During reading, a reader interacts with the new information and in doing so, reorganizes the text in line with what is already known in the background knowledge resources to form a clear mental picture that leads to comprehension (Kintsch and van Dijk, 1978 . However, the processing is not easy and can be determined by various factors, such as individual characteristics as well as text properties (Fontanini, 2004:168). The following three reading theories and their implications to reading processes are discussed here-under.

2.4.1. Traditional view: Bottom-up model

This section of the study provides the researcher with an opportunity to learn more about different views of how the learner reads and how such a learner should be taught how to read. The ultimate end goal is to direct the researcher to learn enough to assist in designing the most relevant reading model for Grade 8 (Objective number 3 of the study).

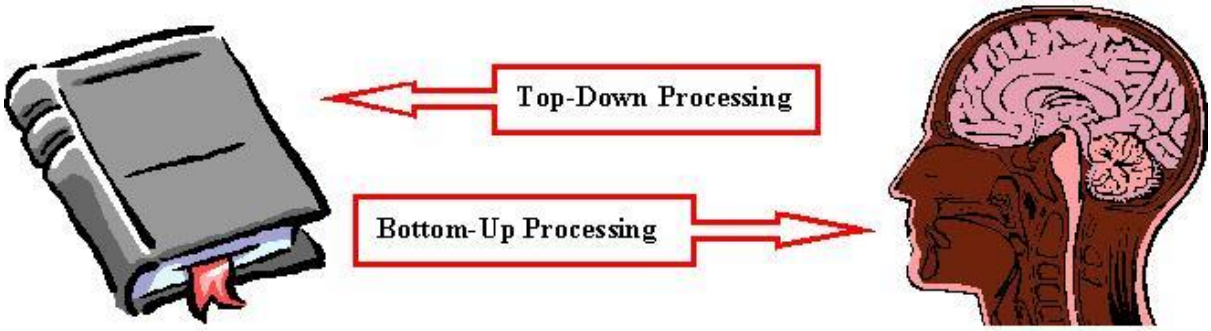
The focal point of the traditional reading view is on the printed form of a text. According to Dole, Duffy, Roehler and Pearson (1991) the reading beginner acquires a set of ordered sub-skills to assist with comprehension. When learning to read, one is taught the sounds of letters that eventually form words. The words are grouped together to form a sentence then a paragraph with a central theme or point. It is these skills that move a reader from the beginner to what can be referred to an expert who comprehends what he reads without much struggle. Since there is meaning in each text, McCarthy (1999) mentions that interacting with a text will produce comprehensible meaning. Reading is thus referred to by Nunan (1991) as basically a matter of decoding a series of written symbols into the aural equivalents in the quest to make sense of the text. He refers to it as the Bottom-up view of reading. McCarthy (1999) has labelled this view as Outside-in processing which refers to the idea that meaning can be derived from the text and is thus broken down and extracted then fused in with the existing knowledge of the reader. According to Vaezi (2006), this view is dependent on the features of formal language, which consist of words and structure. This stands to follow as it is not only from words and structures alone that meaning is derived but also from knowledge of linguistic

features of the language and through the interaction and the input from the reader's experiences and previous knowledge (Vaezi, 2006). As the reader strives to derive meaning from a text they begin by focussing on letters that form a word, break them up until they can comprehend the material being read.

2.4.2. Cognitive view: Top-down model

The top-down model is considered the opposite of the bottom-up model. Goodman (1967) cites reading as a "psycho-linguistic guessing game" in which a reader samples the text, makes hypotheses, confirms or rejects them, and makes new hypotheses which are subjected to the same processes. Here the reader, rather than the text (as it was the case in the traditional view), is at the heart of the reading process. The reader is in dialogue with the text thus bringing their own knowledge (schemata) into it which helps with comprehension of the written text (Vaezi, 2006). Readers read complete sentences, fuse new information with existing knowledge from the background experiences to derive meaning (Vaezi, 2006). Learners see a complete word and recognise components (letters) that form the word. This event takes place immediately the reader sets eyes on the word. Schemata are described as "the building blocks of cognition" which are used in the process of interpreting sensory data (Vaezi, 2006), in retrieving information from memory, organising goals, sub-goals, in allocating resources and guiding the flow of the processing system (Rumelhart, 1977).

Below is a graphic representation of the Bottom-Up and Top-Down Model.



2.4.3. Schema Theory

According to Pardere (2010), past experiences give the reader the skills to make sense of new experiences. For example, one's knowledge of a cruise ship can help them make sense of a cruise she has not been in/to. These experiences are then compared to what the reader already knows. These may comprise the knowledge of "objects, situations, and events and procedures for retrieving, organizing and interpreting information" (Pardere, 2010). Anderson (1994:469) maintains that in order for the reader to recall information from the text, the reader's schemata must first be activated. He further explains that once the reader is able to retrieve from his background knowledge resource the schema that can best explain the object and the object is, will then be the time he will make sense of it or comprehend it. He defines comprehension as "activating or constructing a schema that provides a coherent explanation of objects and events mentioned in a discourse" (Anderson, 1999:473). According to Anderson and Pearson (1988:38) for comprehension to take place there is the need for new and old information to interact. They stress that "to say that one has comprehended a text is to say that they have found a mental 'home' for the information in the text, or else that they have modified an existing mental home in order to accommodate that new information." In light of what is known, the reader's schema absorbs new information into the mainframe (Omaggio, 1993).

2.4.3.1. L2 reading and schema theory

The following procedures constitute what reading in English as a second language ought to do in order to activate and build schemata (Aguilar, Cortez and Hernandez (2015) :

- Select texts that are relevant to the learner's needs, preferences, individual differences and cultures (Pardere, 2010). In the pre-reading stage, the teacher should make learners think, discuss and write what they know about the topic (McRae, 2012). The reader ought to employ techniques such as prediction, information mapping and reconciled reading (McRae, 2012).
- During the reading stage, the educator should guide and monitor the interaction between the reader and the text (Ad Heisat, Mohammed, Krishnasamy and Issa, 2009). Note-taking and summarising should be encouraged as important related reading skills.

- In post-reading stage, the educator should evaluate the learner's ability to interpret (Pardere, 2010).

2.4.4. Metacognitive view

The reader has control over their ability to understand a text and Block (1992), refers to it as metacognition. Metacognition requires that we raise questions about what happens when one is reading and the processes involved. According to Klein *et al.* (1991), the strategic reader attempts the following while reading:

- Identify the purpose of reading before the actual reading.
- Identify the form and type of text before reading (Vaezi, 2006).
- Locate the topic sentence and follow supporting details toward a conclusion (Ad Heisat, Mohammed, Krishnasamy and Issa, 2009).
- Project the author's purpose for writing the text (while reading it).
- Choose between scanning and reading in detail.
- Make continuous predictions about what will occur next, based on the information obtained earlier (Ad Heisat, Mohammed, Krishnasamy and Issa, 2009).

2.4.4.1. Structure Building Framework

According to this theory (Gernsbacher, 1990) , comprehension of the text depends on the foundation the reader has laid, that is, previous information obtained about the topic. Processing is expected to be slow as integrating new information to the old represents the construction and organizing phase. After the foundation has been established, the incoming information is mapped onto pre-existing memory nodes, forming new structures. According to Fontanini (2004:169), the more overlap between new input and the previously stored knowledge, the stronger the connections, thus, the easier the retrieval of concepts and comprehension. He further argues that if the incoming input does not fit or cohere with any stored nodes, there is a shift in the mechanism, which starts the mapping process again (Fontanini, 2004:169). What this theory adds to the reading process is that the more learners are exposed to more reading material (Mudzielwana, 2014), the faster the processing takes place. This is a fact because the mental structures

required in processing would have to be constructed and well organised. This thinking has roots from what Rumelhart (1977) called schemata “building blocks of cognition”.

Another perspective for text comprehension is brought to the fore by Folz (1996). He suggests that processing occurs at many levels, ranging from the basic recognition of single words (Folz, (1996) to a high-level generation of inferences. Therefore learners whose vocabulary is bigger and wider are competent in inferring meanings and able to think of how the ending of the story is more likely to be if they are stopped from reading before the story comes to its conclusion.

According to van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) the basic units of analysis are called “propositions”; considered to be the “semantic processing units of the mind”. van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) further explain that propositions are linked together in texts through semantic coherence relations. The result of such an organisation is a hierarchically organized textual structure the facilitates processing. Propositions result from verbs, adjectives, adverbs, sentence connectives and are mostly traceable elements, that is, they elicit essential information readers should link to achieve the author’s intended meanings. They can be distinguished as: “micro propositions” and “macro propositions”. The micro-propositions are described as units used to organize the writers’ ideas (Fontanini, 2004:171). They form the textbase or local level of the discourse, also known as microstructure. The microstructure is important because through the overlapping of

ideas it shows the relations between the propositions facilitating mapping, the construction of coherence, and then comprehension.

2.5. A model important to reading

2.5.1. From eye fixations to comprehension

The eye fixations to comprehension model deal with word processing, clauses and text units (Just and Carpenter, 1980). Where processing loads are greater, readers pause for a longer period. Processing load occurs when readers are confronted with infrequent words that they need to break, integrating information from important clauses and making inferences at the end of sentences. This model accounts for the gaze duration and the predictability of each word in the text as a function of the involvement of various levels of

processing (Just and Carpenter, 1980:329). Different studies are examined, for example, one which proposes that in-text reading the current fixated word and the next word are processed in parallel with a slight delay of 90 milliseconds per degree of eccentricity (Schiepers, 1980) which account for the break between words, and thus regulating pace. Other models propose factors that influence WHEN the eye moves (fixation duration) as well as WHERE they move to gaze position (Reingold, Yang and Rayner, 2010). Other studies examine the difference between the reading speed of older and younger readers (Rayner, Castelhano and Yang, (2010) and lastly White and Staub (2012) look into the manipulation of physical properties of the visual stimulus. All of these studies shed light on what happens when we read.

In one study by Drieghe, Brysbaert, Dresmet and Baeke (2010), it is proposed that the main purpose of saccades (movement between fixation points) is to bring new information into the centre of the visual field, where there are words to be read. That means that when people read, their eye fixations are characterised by a sequence of movements and focusing on words to be read. The eye will move as soon as there is a need to focus on new words. This is called a familiarity check. At this stage, the word is not yet fully recognised but the dynamics in the lexicon are such that it is likely to become so within a limited time once the eye is fixated. The current fixated word is *n* and once the familiarity check has occurred, the fixation of the eye move to *n+1,* meaning to a new word. Then the next familiarity check begins, the same process explained takes place. The fixation moves to *n+2* as soon as *n+1* has been identified and given its correct meaning. Movement from *n* to *n+1*, to *n+2* … is called skipping. With longer words however, the movement as explained is not expected to be smooth processing is often delayed. This is not always the case depending on how frequent the word has occurred in the text. Familiarity with a word makes the difference in how fast a reader moves from n to n +1, n+2….. Hence the longer word on the right of the foveal word n will reduce the speed at which the eye can move *to n+1* and is replaced by an eye movement to word *n+2* (Drieghe, Rayner, and Pollatsek, 2005; Kennison and Clifton, 1995; Schroyens, Vitu, Brysbaert, and d'Ydewalle, 1999*)*. This usually happens out of frustration where the reader gives up in trying to decode the word on the right of n and quickly jumps to n + 2 with the expectation of finding an easier word or a frequent one. Therefore the reading is slowed down or halted and in this case, it could be said that a learner is experiencing reading difficulty (Drieghe, Brysbaert, Dresmet and Baeke (2010:85)

The parafoveal preview benefit refers to the findings that reading is slower when the letters of the word to the right of the currently fixated words are not visible or unfamiliar than when they are visible or familiar (Rayner, Schotter and Drieghe, 2014). It is clear from the findings that the processing of parafoveal information plays a role in normal reading (Drieghe, Brysbaert and Dresmet, 2005:1693; Rayner, Schotter and Drieghe, 2014).

The study by Drieghe et al (2005) on eye movement sought to establish how words in a text are processed. A model E-Z by Pollatsek, Riechle and Rayner (2006a) in White, Warren and Reichle (2011) suggested that attention shifts from word to word. Only the word within the attentional beam is processed and the beam does not shift to the next word until full identification of the currently fixated word has been obtained. In an earlier study, Pollatsek and Rayner (1999) established that words are processed serially because when one skips some word as you read moving towards the right, comprehension of the text can be lost. One of the models that embraces the logic that words are processed in parallel is the SWIFT model (Kliegl, Nuthmann & Engbert, 2006) in White, Warren, & Reichle (2011). Rayner, Warren, Juhasz & Liversedge (2004) raise one weakness about the parafoveal-on-foveal effect that "words are processed parallel" that the effect has not yet been framed within a coherent model that allows researchers to predict which effect would be obtained when and why (Rayner, Schotter and Drieghe, (2014).

With regard to the difference between older and younger readers' reading, Raynor et al confirmed that younger readers read faster than older readers because of the following three reasons:

(1) Older readers tend to make more and longer eye fixations during reading than younger readers do (Rayner, Castelhano and Yang, 2010)
(2) Older readers make longer saccades and skip words more frequently (Lambrock, Kliegl and Engbert, 2006; Rayner et al., 2006).
(3) Older readers have a slightly smaller and less asymmetric perceptual span (Rayner, Yang, Castelhano and Liversedge, 2010).

These findings suggest that Grade 8 learners ought to be reading faster than their older counterparts in the same school. It is well established that fixation durations during reading vary with processing difficulty (Rayner, 1998). However, there are differing views

as to how oculomotor control, visual perception, shifts of attention, and lexical and other cognitive processes are coordinated (Dambacher, Slattery, Yang, Kliegl, and Rayner, 2013:1468). These researchers state that effective reading requires the coordination of oculomotor control and word recognition. On the other hand, fixation duration must be long enough to accumulate sufficient information about the meaning of the words readers view (Dambacher, Slattery, Yang, Kliegl, and Rayner, 2013:1468). The unnecessary long dwell time of the eyes would make the reading process inefficient (Rayner, 1998).

Processing underlying word recognition is influenced by the manipulations of the physical properties of the visual stimulus (Staub and Rayner, 2007). For example, in White and Staub (2012) recorded eye movement of participants reading a single sentence, first presented normally and secondly presented in a faint text. The study revealed that fixations were much longer when the entire sentence was faint than when the sentence was presented clearly(Staub and Rayner, 2007). In addition, fixation was much longer on a single faint word among the words in a normally presented sentence compared to when the entire sentence was faint (Staub and Rayner, 2007).

The eye fixation to the comprehension model has a number of characteristics that make it unique to other reading models. During an ordinary reading, almost all content words are fixated (Weverka, 2009), even in narrative texts. Fixation improves usually when readers are given a text which is appropriate for their age level (Just and Carpenter, 1980). The words that are not always fixated tend to be short function words, such as ‘the’, ‘of’ and ‘a’. However, Kliegl, Grabner, Rolfs and Engbert (2004) maintain that long words generally receive longer and more fixation than the short action words (Simon, Tiffin-Richards, and Schroeder, 2015). The number of words per fixation is even lower if the text is especially difficult or if the reader (Just and Carpenter, 1980:330) has a poor reading background. The above explanation then brings the reader interest in a text into play. When a reader attempts to read a passage and the words in that passage make comprehension difficult, the reader loses interest which then affects the fixations.

This model proposes that gaze durations reflect the time spent to execute the comprehension process (Just and Carpenter, 1980). Fixation is longer in situations where the word under scrutiny is new or does not occur frequently (Just and Carpenter, 1980). In a number of theories of linguistics, thematic relations usually explain a relationship between the Subject, the Action word and the Object. For example, in the sentence

“Thembi ate an apple”, Thembi is the doer of the eating, so she is an agent; the apple is the item that is eaten, so it is a noun.

The link between eye fixation data and theory rests on two assumptions prevailing which link eye fixation and theory, namely; the immediate assumption and the eye-mind assumption. In the first one, its meaning is in the name. It is the one where the reader tries to obtain meaning as he reads; negating an opportunity to make guesses that sometimes turn out to be wrong (Just and Carpenter, 1980). Interpretation refers to word processing at several levels such as encoding the word, choosing one meaning of it, assigning it to its referent, and determining its status in the sentence and in the discourse. The immediacy assumption posits that interpretations at all levels of processing are not deferred; they occur as soon as possible (Just and Carpenter, 1980). According to Rayner (1983), the second assumption is called the eye-mind assumption. He submits that the eye remains fixated on a word as long as the word is being processed and the length and the frequency of such words affect encoding and the lexical access. This implies that where words appear frequently in the text decoding of such words is not only faster, but it is done smoothly which gives access to the lexicon. Thus, the time it takes to process a newly fixated word is directly indicated by the gaze duration. Because access to the word was smooth, comprehension of the text does not require any back and forth fixation (Just and Carpenter, 1980:330). The eye-mind assumption can be contrasted with an alternative view that data acquired from several successive fixations are internally buffered before being semantically processed (Reichle and Reingold, 2013). The bottom-line in this argument is that there will be a momentary delay which is explained in gaze durations, fixation span and dwell time (Dambacher, Slattery, Yang, Kliegl and Rayner, 2013). When a person is asked a difficult question he or she does not respond immediately but first processes the question and examines the logic within what he or she is about to say. Likewise, with reading a difficult word, a reader is more likely to be cautious, especially when he or she is reading aloud in front of an audience of peers or other learners. Furthermore, if children do not have the means of dealing with these difficult words, it follows that sustained reading will be much more disrupted, few words will be encountered, and in turn, vocabulary will not develop as well as it should have (Castle and Rastle, 2018). The eye-mind assumption posits that there is no appreciable lag between what is being fixated and what is being processed (Just and Carpenter, 1980).

2.6. Supporting students read complex texts

Studies and English language curriculum designers have focused their attention on the level of cognition of the text and under estimated to delineate the text type and its complexity (Shanahan, 2013). As learners were not reading within their grade level (in fact they were reading way below the level), it meant that teachers were expected to give support to those struggling learners to read at a grade-appropriate to their level despite the complexity of the text (Reynolds and Goodwin, 2016).

Those researchers who support increasing text complexity have argued that the text which is often found to be too easy is not beneficial for language learning, knowledge acquisition and does not develop learner thinking capacity (Reynolds and Goodwin, 2016). Increasing text complexity, on the other hand, may yield something else not intended. Reynolds and Goodwin (2016) point out that increasing text difficulty has been found to be appropriate at high schools because a more complex text will more likely overwhelm younger learners when relevant support to the text is not provided (Reynolds and Goodwin, 2016:1). Sanden (2014) however argues against continuously subjecting learners to more complex texts which are beyond their capabilities affect their motivation negatively (Reynolds and Goodwin, 2016). Assisting and supporting learners read complex texts affords the opportunity of changing their frustration into successful reading. These interventions (called scaffolding) work to support reading, especially for learners who are subjected to reading more complex texts (Reynolds and Goodwin, 2016). Scaffolding is defined in many ways. It has been defined under two types of scaffolding namely, interactional (Athaneses and Oliveira, 2014) and planned scaffolding. Below is a table showing how these two are contrasted:

Interactional scaffolding	**Planned scaffolding**
1. Defined as support provided by humans responsive to learners'immediate needs (Athaneses and Oliveira, 2014; Hammond and Gibson, 2005).	Is defined as the support provided by tools and curriculum that can be extended across settings but is not contingent upon immediate needs of individual learners (Stone 1998; Putambekar and Hubscher, 2005; van der Pol, Volman and Beishuzen, 2010)
2. It captures the dynamic responsive nature of face-to-face scaffolding	Planned scaffolding indicates that the scaffold was

between the scaffolder and scaffoldee, which could also include a scaffolder encouraging learners to use planned scaffolding (glossary, as long as the scaffold is used in response to observed learner needs (Reynolds and Goodwin, 2016).	predetermined before the start of a lesson (Reynolds and Goodwin, 2016)

Table 2.1: Interactional and Planned scaffolding

The question that needs to be asked is how teachers respond to learners' needs through interactional scaffolding as they read difficult texts (Reynolds and Goodwin, 2016). They examine the question by interrogating the connection between reading comprehension of the learner and the different use of interactional scaffolds by their teachers. These are the scaffolds that are built-in the lesson plan and scripts. Reynolds and Goodwin (2016) elaborated on the theoretical understanding as to why interactional scaffolding would be significant in supporting reading. The term interactional is sociocultural in origin and is associated with the work of Vygotsky (1978). Reynolds and Goodwin (2016) claim that learning processes in the Zonal Proximal Development (ZPD) are boosted by the child's interaction with other children through play, songs and debates (Vygotsky, 1978:90), and these interactions are eventually internalised as the child develops. Though the learning is social and interactive, the development achievement by the learner comes as a result of his comprehension of a complex text. Wertsch (1984) in Reynolds and Goodwin (2016) pointed out three important elements of interactive learning in the ZPD, which are situation definition, semiotic mediation, and inter-subjectivity. Situation definitions are efforts by the teacher as well as the learner in representing the text which is then reconciled through the application of the other element called semiotic mediation, the process deployed by teachers using different tools and signs to reconcile the difference between the learning interactions.

Inter-subjectivity is the end goal of scaffolding where the novice now shares the expert's representation of the task. The text's reading levels are largely well above the students', meaning that the tutors have to work to mediate those disparities through the semiotic mediation of interactional scaffolding, and the tutors' goal was to achieve intersubjective understandings of the complex texts. Three important characteristics of scaffolding which link well with Wertsch (1984)'s work were established in Van de Pol and colleagues

(2010) in Reynolds and Goodwin (2016) which are, contingency on learners' learning needs, transfer of responsibility for the learning from the teacher to the learner, and fading of the support over time. This implies that the relationship between the teacher and the learner exists because of the learning the child needs and the expertise the teacher should provide. In a classroom situation, the responsibility to provide learning and learning opportunities is the teacher's (as the situation requires). As learners acquire the knowledge, they become independent and take the responsibility for their learning away from the teacher. In order for the learning needs to be achieved, the teacher must attend to learners' initial situation definitions. The process of transferring responsibilities to learners is enacted through semiotic mediation, and the teacher slowly withdraws support as the learners move closer to understanding and fully comprehending the reading task. The tutor then removes the scaffolding to encourage the transfer of responsibility for reading to the learners and scaffolding is faded as learners approach the level of text comprehension (Reynolds and Goodwin, 2016).

2.7. Linking interactional scaffolding to reading

This section of the study is meant to assist teachers in helping their learners do well on comprehension. It also should assist the researcher in designing a reading model appropriate for the Grade 8 level (Study objective 3).

The research literature on scaffolding has come up with largely general findings. One of those findings suggests that effective teachers use learners' contributions, constituting a benefit for interactional scaffolding to initiate meaningful discussions in classrooms (Reynolds and Goodwin, 2016). This is the scaffolding that capitalizes on learners' prior knowledge (Reynolds and Goodwin, 2016) to raise the levels of text comprehension. Research also suggests that comprehension strategy instruction (that is, planned curricular scaffolding) can be coupled with interaction scaffolding that enhances comprehension strategies (Reynolds and Goodwin, 2016); Rumelhart (2014), suggests that reading occurs simultaneously at the letter, word, sentence, and text levels. Taxonomies that support vocabulary and fluency (accuracy, speed, expression and comprehension) would be needed as processing letters for adolescents' reading becomes automatic. Reading of complex texts requires working groups where learners are able to discuss their different understandings of text (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand and Gamoran, 2013) which often reduces the level of anxiety in readers and builds self-belief

and increases motivation (Huang, 2014). Therefore, taxonomies that include peers and motivational scaffolds would likely provide the important understanding of reading support (Reynolds and Goodwin, 2016:3).

2.8. Connections between word recognition and reading

Adam (1994) argues that reading as a system cannot be assumed to take place in isolated contexts. He explains the system using the analogy of a car: A car consists of a number of different parts which all operate at once to move the car. It also requires petrol, oil to lubricate and cool the engine and water as well. But all its parts and everything in it are all interconnected to perform one function that is to move the car and this can be likened to reading. He condemns the long-held belief that reading starts with word recognition. His model is not influenced by existing literature in cognition, psychology and guessing. His model is neither Top-down nor Bottom-up.

He further expatiates his model using a schematic representation of processes for ease of explaining and yet all those processes take place all at once. The first thing the skilful reader does is to fixate on a group of lettersuntil they are recognised, and when recognised, thenmeaning is obtained. These processes are automatic and simultaneous. He identifies four processes to explain how the model works,as demonstrated in the schematized figure below:-

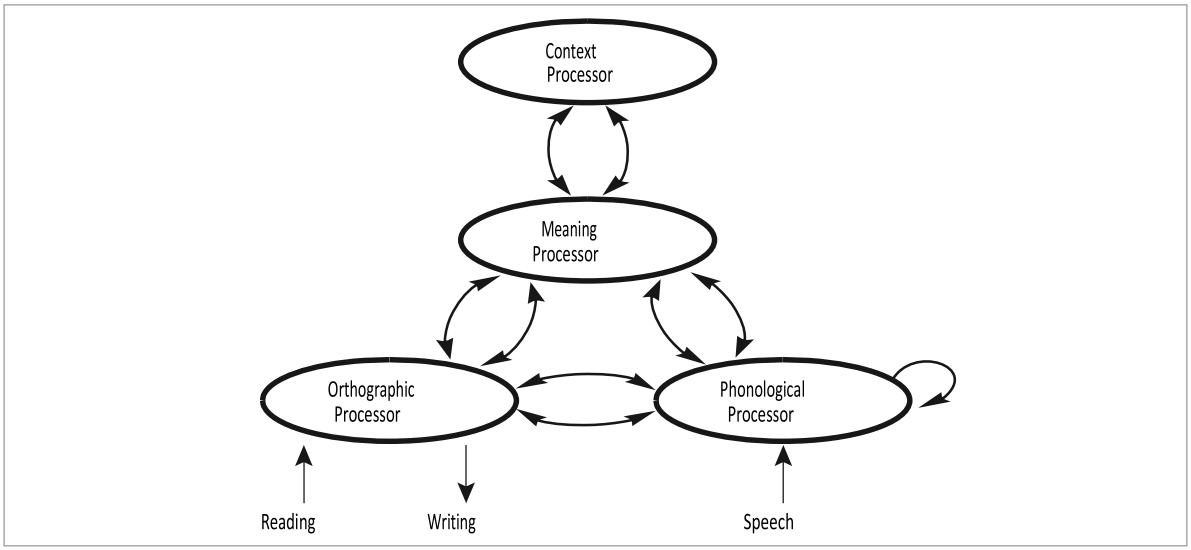


Figure 2.1: Modelling the reading system

2.8.1. Explanation of the model

This section explains the model as it is structured according to Adams (1994) and what it means for reading.

2.8.1.1. The Orthographic Processor

(a) Processing letter order

Reading does not only depend on recognizing words. In order to derive meaning, the mind has to work interactively and parallel with many cues and clues that it can recognize as relevant. This means, for example, that just as the engine starts to run, all the parts in the car work together to create a seamless and well-coordinated motion which is reading. The problems and difficulties this engine goes through to move the car are of no importance until the engine stops, just like the processes that take place to ultimately read the word and obtain the meaning of that word (Nassaji, 2013).

In this model, the Orthographic processor receives information directly from the printed page. The letter and words constitute the basic perceptual data of reading. All the words which are essentially in English are read from left-to-right, line-by-line and word-by-word (Henderson, 2014). What is written by authors is a way of conveying the message or thoughts. Skilful readers process each letter of every word they read, translating what they read as they go. They process the words regardless of the ease or difficulty of the text and the processing starts immediately when the eye gets fixated on the page. Occasionally readers do skip some words as they skim and scan, reading to look for information, and these exclusions are non-function words like, of, a, and to.

When an unusual word like “bane” is encountered, old knowledge of letter association and letter order is applied and the word is read correctly or is corrected in the process of reading until it can be confirmed or refuted according to the context in which it is used. Again if faced with an orthographically irregular string, for example, “ndsta”, which is an ordering error, the order is automatically corrected in order to give the word its correct meaning such as ‘stand’ in this case (Adams, 1990).

(b) Breaking words into syllables

According to Adams, (1990:791), poor readers have the characteristics of blocking longer words and polysyllabic words. For example words like *conglomerate, infrastructure, pomegranate,* and *entrepreneur*. Although none of these words may be familiar, for a skilled reader, the chance would be that the words were attempted until they are read correctly or near correct. In their battle with reading those words, they are more likely to break them into syllables without even noticing it. Knowing the order of how words should be formed enables one to figure out the word even when some of its letters were left out. For example, words that begin with a spoken sequence *dr*, they form the sequence which is pronounceable in English unlike word with *dn* which are not. For example, draw, drug, drag, etc. The sequencing is one that is not familiar in most English words unless they are found in a syllabic boundary of a word. For example, midnight, kindness, and many more.

(c) Helping beginners

The orthographic processor is responsible for letters and spelling of words. All other functions, like word recognition, automatic syllabification, and morphemic sensitivity are dependent on the knowledge of conventional spelling (Adams, 1990). The difficulty at the level of orthographic knowledge (Lafrance and Gottardo, 2015) is said to be the most single weakening cause of reading disability (Perfetti, 1985; Stanovich, 1986; Vellutini, 1991).

Beginning to read is difficult for children because they have not accumulated enough data reserve in their background knowledge to permit them to deal with the demands of reading. It also depends on the milieu in which the children are brought up, whether it was rich or poor with literary material and whether or not the child was encouraged to read (Adams, 1990: 793).

2.8.1.2. The context processor

According to Adams (1990:793-795), the context processor does the following:

- Constructs a coherent, ongoing interpretation of the text. In the process of reading, as we encounter words, we identify them and then process them, attaching meanings to them. Now the content processor facilitates a complete understanding of the text and

where there were gaps in understanding it closes those gaps for a coherent and complete meaning to emerge.

- Optimises and selects word meanings that are appropriate to the text. All these responsibilities take place at the same time allowing the reader an ongoing interpretation and understanding of the text.
- Works by sending its own stimulation to the meaning it expects. This extra stimulation boosts the contextually appropriate dimensions of words' meaning-causing them to dominate the reader's interpretation of the text.
- Helps to revive the reader's understanding of the situation. In the case of this sentence, *"At the farm stand, we got tomatoes, squash and corn on the ….*

The context processor would facilitate the appropriate word that should occupy the space in relation to the context. Though the selection may be wrong, the selected word would make sense under other circumstances.

2.8.1.3. The meaning processor

The meaning processor allows the reader to extract the meanings of new words gradually by encountering them in context.

(a) Learning new word meaning from context

When a child reads a new word for the first time its spelling and pronunciation are transported automatically to a meaning processor. Because the word is new, it cannot trigger a meaning from their mind until they encounter the word again. According to Adams (1990), when a word reappears in a variety of different contexts the meaning is reinforced which may be learnt eventually. This has an implication on teaching the repertoire of skills essential in reading. The longer the extent to which children are exposed to more reading material, the more they acquire new words and their associated meanings.

Increased direct vocabulary instruction culminates in increased knowledge and reading comprehension (Stahl and Fairbanks 1986).

2.8.1.4. Phonological processor

In reading, once the reader lands his eyes on the word the orthographic processor is activated. The word image is created and processed and it stimulates the phonological processor responsible for pronunciation. The word image is then given a sound. The word image moves between the orthographic, the phonological and the meaning processor and the meaning of the word is registered (Derakhshan and Karimi, 2015). The meaning of the word is not immediately assimilated into the child's memory until he sees the word used in a number of ways in a different context (Adams, 1990).

2.9. Research in word recognition in foreign language reading: A systematic review

Word recognition, according to Han (2015), is the most frequently "recurring cognitive activity in reading hence my interest in the subject. Reading begins with word recognition, then decoding and processing and access or failure to access meaning or comprehension depending on whether it is word learning or text reading that is important to the teacher.

Word recognition is a factor that determines if the reader is able to read fluently with accuracy (Young, 2017) and the required speed (Hulstijn and Laufer, 2001) . Word recognition involves two processes (Katzi-Cohen, 2001) namely:

- Visual decoding of orthographic forms of words; and
- Activating links between graphic and phonological codes (word decoding or phonological decoding).

Retrieval of a word is not dependent on phonological information (Han, 2015). When retrieving a word from the mind, it is the structural make-up of the word that necessitates such retrieval and not the sound or phonological make-up of the word. This implies therefore that in word recognition if the word exists in the background knowledge of the reader, retrieval becomes automatic and spontaneous. However, if the word is new to the reader or difficult, often the reader attempts to break it into syllables that are not dependent on the phonological information ((Hoien and Lundberg, 2000; Han, 2015). Retrieval is made easier by the appearance of high-frequency words. This explanation by Snow, Burns and Griffin (2006) supports my view that selecting reading texts from theme-based material is likely to increase word frequency and word familiarity.

Kato (2009); Bowey and Muller (2005) state that when reading proficiency increases readers opt for using orthography (conventional spelling of the word) and not phonological information when retrieving words from their background knowledge.

2.10. Word recognition and comprehension

It is assumed that the ability to recognize words, their meaning should be sufficient enough to yield comprehension (Hirsch, 2003). This is not always true. For example, it is possible for the skilled reader to recognize and process the words in the text accordingly but fail to comprehend what the text is all about (Bojovic, 2010; Hamouda, 2013; Van, 2018) and this happens all the time in the process of learning (Semakula, 2016). This is what leads learners to apply strategies like rereading, group discussion and many others to get to what the text is saying. Perfetti (1998) and Bowey (2005) argue that when the reading experience of a child increases, they automatically get exposed to more words thus building the vocabulary, therefore word recognition ceases to play a prominent role in text comprehension (Han, 2015). With more experience, children develop a strong vocabulary and as that happens word recognition becomes automatic. It is done without any second thought of the word's structural formation.

Han (2015) compared correlations between word recognition and text comprehension in reading situations with time as a trigger and situation without time pressure. The results that he obtained were that the measure of lexical access correlated with text comprehension whereas in untimed situations the correlation did not have any level of significance. What this means is that the pressure of time placed more responsibility on learners to comprehend or to want to comprehend whereas with the untimed situation the pressure to comprehend did not exist.

2.10.1. Empirical Research on Word Recognition in Foreign Language Reading

Research results from Segalowitz and Segalowitz (1993) indicate that with increased access to foreign language print material and accumulation of reading experience (Han, 2015), word recognition error rate decreases, at the same time word recognition speed increases (Han, 2015), and foreign language readers are able to achieve automaticity in

foreign language word recognition (Segalowitz, Segalowitz and Wood, 1998). Word recognition in L2 is much slower if compared to L1. It is for this obvious reason that speakers of the native language have much broader orthography, semantic and lexical depth as compared to the foreign-language speakers (FL).

With languages that share the same alphabetic system (English, French Dutch), word recognition is said to be easier and quicker as compared to languages with different logography like Chinese, Arabic and Japanese. This holds true because learners will not be burdened by having to learn the new form and shape of the word and then learn the word and later what it means. In the case where the L1 and foreign language (FL) orthography are different like English and Chinese, regardless of the child's L1 reading experience, it will be difficult to transfer L1 word recognition skills to that of foreign language (Koda, 2007; Yamashita, 2013).

2.10.2. Word recognition, reading speed and comprehension

Reading for comprehension demands at least two skills: accurate and fluent word recognition (single word reading) and linguistic comprehension (Gough and Tunmer, 1986; Carver, 1998). Those learners who were struggling with word recognition in all the reading texts were subsequently unable to pick up reading speed. According to Hayes and Flanigan (2014) children who cannot process words efficiently, who must laboriously sound out words letter by letter and sound by sound, will have few attentional resources left to focus on the meaning of the word, sentence, paragraph, or story (Hempenstall. 2007). Cognitive psychologists (Blachman, Tangel, Ball, Black and McGraw, 1999; Aghababian and Nazir, 2000; Geva, Yaghoub-Zadeh and Schuster, 2000) argue that people only have a limited amount of cognitive resources, or "mental energy," to consciously spend on any one task at a time (Taylor, Lindsay and Willner, 2008). During the reading, recognizing words and comprehending text compete for these limited cognitive resources (LaBerge and Samuels, 1974). This means that a skilled reader utilises less cognitive resources in dealing with words (recognizing words) and the remainder of those resources are then deployed in comprehension as opposed to a poor reader who uses almost all cognitive resources on words recognition and leaves less or nothing at all to deal with text comprehension.

Word recognition together with a lack of speed will naturally affect reading comprehension. Learners who perform very poorly in reading comprehension is because are not able to finish reading their texts. In reading for comprehension which ought to always be the reason for reading, word recognition is the (Literacy Information and Communication System, 2002) most important component of reading and ought to be given serious attention especially from primary schooling. On the other hand, studies showed that there exists a group of poor comprehenders who fail in spite of their good word recognition skills (Dufva, Niemi and Voeten, 1999). One of the reasons provided by Cutting and Scarborough (2006:280) was the inability to retain sufficient information. He argues that is because such a reader lacks memory capacity which normally limits (Hindal, Reid and Badgaish, 2009) a poor comprehender's ability to retain sufficient information about the words in a text to process meaning adequately. The reason provided for the failure was a low level of general language comprehension skills (Dufva, Niemi and Voeten, 1999), such readers need training in reading comprehension rather than in word recognition.

2.10.3. Foreign Language Word Recognition and Foreign language comprehension

Word recognition does not always translate to comprehension (Grabe, 2009). For example, learners can display fluency when reading, meaning that their word recognition, decoding and processing are good but go on to perform very poor in questions that test comprehension. Shiotsu (2009) concluded that skilled and less skilled readers did not necessarily differ from each other "at processing the visual forms of real words, but they were much slower at accessing the meaning of such words". From this study, it was expected that those learners who read quite well, would answer better in questions that test comprehension, unfortunately, they did not. This means that the processing of words does not guarantee the accessing of meaning which plays a role in comprehension.

2.11. Factors that influence reading

This section of the study aims to clarify some of the things that stand in the way of learners mastering the learning process. If we know the facets that impede learning we are better placed to assist learners to deal with every reading and learning challenge they encounter (Study objective number 1).

2.11.1. Socio-economic factors

Much of the studies on poor reading were conducted on learners in elementary classes. Though this study is focused on Grade 8 learners in high schools, reading challenges they experienced can be traced back to elementary schooling years. Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, 2001-(PIRLS), in Hlaletwa (2013) concluded that the socio-economic situation of the family has a great impact on students reading literacy as well as parents' education and reading aloud to a child at the preschool age (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). This status quo implies that if a parent cannot read, he/she cannot in any way read for the child. Spoken words are first heard from home by children through adults talk and not baby-talk (as it is usually the case), reading and children play. When the parents read to their children they are doing so to introduce them to the world of stories and books. The more knowledge the child has before beginning school the better learning achievements can be anticipated during the primary school years (Geske & Ozola, 2008**).**

2.11.2. Student and family collaboration

With regard to the education and literacy level of the children, parents are the best suited to play the most important role before the teacher. There are activities which parents should do with their children, sharing with them stories, read for and with them, engage in discussions and introduce them to letters and words. These very activities, according to Geske and Ozola (2008), contribute to the interest in reading of a child. It is obvious that in this manner parents try to awaken children's interest in the written text and improve children's literacy. Children's' reading literacy is substantially influenced by their parents before they are ready for pre-schools. According to Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998), paying regular joint visits between the child and the parent to a library or a bookstore is very important.

2.11.3. Student's reading outside the school

Not every reading culminates in improved literacy. That is a dominant opinion that reading leads to improved literacy (Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998). PIRLS (2001) data analysis shows that it is not true (Hlalethwa, 2013). PIRLS also found that it depends much on

what the child is reading. There are those children who will read much more often one theme in a number of books, such learners may not report significant literacy in a global sense (Geske and Ozola, 2008).

2.11.4. Students reading at school

Reading materials in schools are chosen by teachers from the books assigned for the grade whereas at home it is chosen by a learner. The reading which a learner does at home is more inclined to quench her thirst for stories that interest her unlike when she reads at school. Therefore, such learners are more likely to accept that if the teacher chose a story from their book which is not of their line of interest, they have a chance at home to gratifying themselves. Teachers should give more written work to learners after every reading lesson in class and should also give reading responsibility to learners to be done at home (Geske and Ozola, 2008).

2.11.5. Selecting reading materials

Selecting reading material for any particular ESL/EFL class must be a thought out process rather than a random one. Teachers need to involve learners in this process if they want to adopt the materials which are appropriate for the class. Due to the significance of the process, researchers have set aside much time to analysing the various aspects of the selection process. Field researchers such as Melvin and Stout (1987), Fox (1989) and Gebhard (1989) considered other factors that need to be looked into when preparing material for ESL-EFL classes.

2.11.5.1. Factors directly related to the learner

(a) Learner reading Level

Researchers have suggested that the educator needs to be aware of materials which are suitable for the reading levels of his learners (Melvin and Stout, 1987); Fox (1989). Gebhard (1989) asserts that when selecting the reading material one should be cautious that the content is not beyond the learners' level because it might frustrate them and lead them to give up. Later, they can gives lightly difficult texts as the learners gain more reading fluency and texts that vary with degrees of difficulty (Arias, 2007). However,

Fisher and Frey (2015) offer a very different and revolutionary view on the selection of material based on the level of the learner. They perceive that as a new form of censorship and is as dangerous as banning books that touch on racial issues, unpopular lifestyles, religious affiliations, witchcraft, political bias, or a host of other reasons that have been used to remove reading choices from learners (Davies and Thate, 2017).

Text selection mishaps can also occur when learners are restricted from access to a text because it is not at their level. Texts could not be too easy or too hard (Fisher and Frey, 2015), but rather the informational texts should be challenging and not frustrating for the learner.

(b) Learners' interests

Researchers do agree with one another that material to be selected for the ESL/EFL reading class ought to satisfy the interests of learners. Lotherington (1988) states that lack of interest in the material, the difficulty of the material often overwhelm the learner thus either bore them or take the passion for reading away from the learner. Similarly, Fox, (1989) states that the number one step in the selection of the reading material is "to find which materials are likely to be interesting to his learners. In establishing the interests of the learners, the instructor need to be sure of the interests of his learners at the start of the period. In achieving that a teacher can use a survey or interview that learners suggest topics of interest for the class. Educators can make can give responsibilities to learners to select a number of interesting materials to be packed in a file which they can use anytime they want to read. Interest and motivation are closely related, as Day (1994) proposes: "when the topic of a passage is not of interest to learners, their motivation to read is substantially lessened." The absence of motivation will make it a challenge to meet one of the intended purposes of a reading program which is to help get the learners to read in English on their own, outside the reading classroom. Considering the learners' interests in the reading selection process is as important as exploring the students' needs (Arias, 2007).

(c) Learners' needs

There has been a great deal of agreement among researchers about the importance of considering learners' needs in the material selection process for the ESL-EFL reading class. Gebhard (1989) states that teachers should always discover the learners' needs

before making any decisions about the course content. Similarly, Gray (1988) says that the teacher should be aware of the students' needs to be able to help them fulfil these needs by providing appropriate material. According to Grellet (1981), learners have other needs on top of their individual needs. For example, they need to be able to read with speed, accuracy and with good expression. Teachers should, after collecting materials from learners, look into what materials interest the greater numbers of students. The type of content that is not in line with learners' interests and expectations will often result in frustration, which might lead to a failure of a reading course (Arias, 2007).

(d) Leaners' Background Knowledge

Another important criterion for the selection of an appropriate material is background knowledge the learners possess. To provide learners with suitable material, the instructor must be aware of his learners' background knowledge (Arias 2007). Likewise, Fox (1989) in Arias (2007) asserts that "background knowledge is an important part of the learners' ability to read and understand a particular text." It is not impossible for learners to be able to read words without knowing what they mean. In other words, the teacher must provide cues and relevant information related to the new text, or instruct learners to make a research on the topic before they can begin with the reading. This is done to help awaken the interest in reading and to teach learners to be responsible.

2.11.5.2. Aspects related to the text

(a) Relevance

Choosing reading material wisely also implies considering the text itself. The topic, the type of text and the information it sustains make the text relevant. Students must find that the reading material used in the course is relevant for their socially mediated lives. Day (1994) argues that the readings should be related to the learners' world of knowledge and real-world reading purposes. For this reason, it is necessary to involve the learners to contribute to the reading selection process. Permitting students to contribute will certainly benefit the educator as well (Arias, 2007).

Gebhard (1989) asserts that "understanding the needs of students in specific fields can provide the means through which material can be selected and created". The teachers

can determine the appropriateness of the reading material by judging whether it is or will be relevant for his learners or not (Arias 2007).

(b) Content

Fox (1989) concurs that selecting material by its content is the most important criterion for selecting reading material for ESL class. They affirm that if the selected content is interesting for the students, the learners will be successful in the reading process no matter how difficult the text might be. When the students are required to read a complex text that is at the same time interesting for them or that refers to the knowledge required in other classes, they will probably make more effort to comprehend it, and they will probably use a variety of strategies to process it (Arias, 2007).

In order to select reading material with appropriate content, the students' interests and needs should be taken into account. This can be achieved by asking the students to make a list of topics that they would want to study in certain fields or read for fun. A good selection of readings materials can be obtained by encouraging students to bring their own material to the class. Students could then devote some class time to studying this material. Teachers might want to get copies of the readings and classify them according to the field of study for future reference (Arias, 2007).

(c) Authenticity

Gebhard (1989) and Cray (1988) regard authenticity as another important criterion for the selection of readings for the ESL/EFL class. Melvin and Stout (1987) state that teachers should take full advantage of the potential benefits of authentic materials. In like manner, Gebhard (1989) points out that authenticity should be part of the criteria taken into account when selecting appropriate reading material for ESL classes. The rationale for selecting authentic material may include the following:

- Students need to be able to comprehend real-life language.
- Teachers can take advantage of the grammatical aspects found in the texts.
- Students will be prepared to read any type of text.
- The fact that language is simplified does not ensure comprehension.
- Students can be provided with different strategies to ensure better comprehension.
- It is better to simplify the reading process, rather than the text.

On the other hand, researchers such as Lotherington-Woloszcyn (1989) and Cray (1988) justify the adaptation of reading materials in order to satisfy students' needs. The reasons that they have provided for the use of simplified texts are as follows:

- Adapting materials can make them accessible, interesting and informative.
- Arranging materials around one theme allows the learner to build up background knowledge of the content.
- Attention should be given to what the learners find easy and interesting.
- If the text is poorly presented, it can always be improved.
- Teacher-created material should be based on authentic texts.
- It allows teachers to evaluate their students.

Fisher and Frey (2012) offer a qualitative summary of how to select reading materials.

Table 2.2: Qualitative factors of text complexity for informational texts		
Levels of Meaning and Purpose	• **Density and complexity**	Many ideas come to the reader, or there are multiple levels of meaning, some of which are not clearly stated (Arias, 2007).
	• **Figurative language**	There are many literary devices (e.g., metaphors, personification) or devices that the reader is not familiar with (e.g., symbolism, irony) as well as idioms or clichés (Arias, 2007).
	• **Purpose**	The purpose is either not stated or purposefully withheld. The reader has to determine the theme or message.
Structure	• **Genre**	The genre is unfamiliar, or the author bends the rules of the genre (Arias, 2007).
	• **Organization**	It does not follow traditional structures, such as problem/solution, cause/effect, compare/contrast, sequence or chronology, and it has rich descriptions (Arias, 2007).
	• **Narration**	The narrator is unreliable, changes during the course of the text, or has a limited perspective for the reader (Arias, 2007).
	• **Text features**	It has fewer signposts, such as headings, bold words, margin notes, font changes, or footnotes (Arias, 2007).
	• **Graphics**	Visual information is not repeated in the text itself, but the graphics or illustrations are essential to understanding the main ideas (Arias, 2007).
Language Conventionality and Clarity	• **Standard English and variations**	It includes variations of standard English, such as regional dialects or vernaculars that the reader is not familiar with (Fisher, Douglas & Frey, 2015).
	• **Register**	Its language is archaic, formal, scholarly, or fixed in time.

Knowledge Demands	•**Background knowledge**	The demands on the reader extend well beyond his or her personal life experience (Arias, 2007).
	• **Prior knowledge**	The demands on the reader extend well beyond what he or she has been formally taught (Arias, 2007).
	• **Cultural knowledge**	The demands on the reader extend well beyond his or her cultural experiences and may include references to archaic or historical cultures (Arias, 2007).
	• **Vocabulary**	The words used are representations of complex ideas that are unfamiliar to the reader, or they are domain-specific and not easily understood using context clues or morphological knowledge (Arias, 2007).

Table 2.2: Adapted from Fisher, D, Frey, N, & Lapp, D. (2012). Text complexity: Raising rigor in reading. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

2.11.5.3 Reading intervention for learners, choosing your programme

This section of the study guides teachers on what is needed in designing strategies that could best assist their learners (Study Objective number 2).

According to Solity (2000:56), creating a climate of success for learners requires that employees in the system of education should treat every learner as capable of learning and reaching age-appropriate performance targets in speaking, listening, reading and writing (NEPS LWP, 2012). It is for this reason that children who struggle with reading ought to be assisted in order to be on par with their peers. Such assistance should be well structured and based on well-researched literature, which was tested in a number of programmes and ones that yielded positive results. Singleton (2009); National Reading Panel (2000) and Eurydice Network (2011) suggested some elements that should be included in an effective reading programme. They include (Ehri, 2005) the following:

- Phonemic awareness and the teaching of phonics
- Decoding and word studies, including the learning of sight vocabulary
- Language development, to include vocabulary enhancement
- The explicit teaching of comprehension strategies
- Meaningful writing experiences
- The development of fluent reading by reading and rereading familiar texts
- A wide range of reading materials
- Opportunities for both guided and independent reading

It is important to note that reading intervention is not a one size fit all kind of programme. A programme for suitable for young children may be inappropriate for the older reader and so is the need for one reader different to the needs of another(Cassatt-James, 1992). For example,one reader may need help with the explicit teaching of reading while the other may need help with aspects of reading comprehension like inferencing training (NEPS LWG, 2012:6).

Assessing learners on a regular basis is important to establish their reading needs (Donaghy, 2015). This should be done with the intention to have no learner left behind. Teachers should have reading expectations for their learners and through that set targets that will enable every learner to reach proficiency in reading (US Department of Education, 2012:12) cited in NEPS LWG (2012:191). They should set targets for fluency, vocabulary, phonemic awareness and phonics depending on the age and level of their learners.

2.11.6. Enhancing progress for struggling readers

According to Brooks (2007) and Singleton (2009) specialised (one-on-one) tuition is required for struggling readers. Swanson and Hoskyn (1998) claim that structured specialised tuition for struggling readers is more effective than a normal classroom teaching. They emphasise the importance of targeted teaching that deals with a specifically identified challenge, explicit and systematic while being intensive at the same time (Singleton, 2009:8). Singleton goes to define systematic teaching more closely as, structured cumulative and sequential (2009:20). Cumulative and sequential in a sense that challenges found during the assessment of reading throughout the four quarters are dealt with in a sequence until the teacher can safely say that all attempts have been made to assist failing readers. At the beginning of every quarter, a class teacher should assess his learners with the view of profiling each learner's reading challenges. This move assists the teacher in either selecting or creating/structuring an intervention programme which is more targeted and systematic in dealing with the reading challenges of his learners. Having identified the learners' reading challenges, a teacher puts those challenges into categories and designs objectives for each of the reading challenges identified. He designs strategies that will assist him in meeting the objectives.

Lingard (2005:67) argues for a clearly focused intervention programme and provides the demonstration below on how it should be driven for post-primary schools with low attainment.

- Allow pupils to read as individuals every day and in small groups.
- Give them individual help with reading difficulties identified during their reading.
- Their remedial reading texts should be derived from different genres (from a book the learner has chosen) and should also be helped with writing based on a model in which clear objectives focused on what their teachers perceived to be their particular learning needs.
- The pupils should be assisted during the time allocated to the mainstream English and pupils should be withdrawn from two lessons a week to provide daily support. They should also be encouraged to read every evening at home with the help of their parents. The programme also encourages parental participation (Lingard, 2005).
- Non-readers or near non-readers, individually or in twos, should follow the same daily programme with trained teaching assistants (TAs) out of class. This gives the children more individual attention and is individually focused, that is, developmentally appropriate, literacy teaching (Lingard, 2005).
- Pupils do not move at the same pace but move when they have attained mastery on an identified difficulty/challenge.

2.12. Teaching skills and strategies in reading comprehension

The word skills and strategies are frequently used words in the literature on reading and the teaching of reading (Mosito, Warnick and Esambe, 2017). Yet, despite their frequent use in professional discourse, the terms are used interchangeably. Therefore defining reading skills and strategies according to Afflerbuch, Pearson and Paris (2008:364) has important implications for reading and policies.

Unlike skills, strategies are thought of as intentional and deliberate and under the conscious control of readers.

2.12.1. In search of definitions: Between skills and strategies

The word strategy describes features of reading that involve deliberate control and direction of behaviour (Dole, 2002) and under conscious control (Chamot 2005) of the reader. On the other hand, Brown (2007:119) defines strategies as the specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information." Bojovic (2010) regards skill as a cognitive ability which a person is able to use when interacting with a written text Strategies involve identifying word meaning, drawing inferences, identifying writer's technique, recognizing mood of passage, finding answers to questions (Davies,1968). It can also include recognizing the script of language, deducing the meaning, use of unfamiliar lexical items, understanding explicitly and non-explicitly stated information, conceptual meaning, communicative value of sentences, relations within the sentences and between parts of text through lexical cohesion devices, recognizing indicators and main point of information in discourse, distinguishing main idea from supporting detail, selective extraction of relevant points from the text, basic reference skills, skimming, scanning, transcoding information from diagrams/charts (Munby, 1978). Therefore equipping a learner with both can transform him into a fluent reader who has access to comprehension.

In further the search for definitions, Afflerbach et al. (2008) went around teacher and college professors of education, graduate and undergraduate students seeking to identify their understanding and use of the word skills and strategies and the meanings they ascribe to them. The response they collated from them are outlined herein:

- "Skills make up strategies."
- "Strategies lead to skills."
- "Skill is the destination, the strategy is the journey."
- "We learn strategies to do a skill."
- "Skills are automatic, strategies are effortful and mediated."
- "We use strategies as tools."
- "Strategies that work require a skill set."
- "We have to pay attention to learning skills, but eventually we use them automatically."
- "You do not think about skills, and you do think about strategies."

Clearly, this array of responses indicates the need for a common understanding of both terms. Lack of common understanding by the above professionals signals how different their approach may be in terms of carrying out reading instructions relevant to both reading skills and strategies. They all have intentions to teach the right things and also perceive what they teach to be correct yet they are miles apart when it comes to their understanding of what skills and strategies are. The second approach in search of definitions undertaken by Afflerbach et al (2008) was to consult the Dictionary of Literacy by Harris and Hodges (1995). They established the following definitions;

Skill n. 1. An acquired ability to perform well; proficiency. Note: The term often refers to finely coordinated, complex motor acts that are the result of perceptual-motor learning, such as handwriting, golf, or pottery. However, skill is also used to refer to parts of acts that are primarily intellectual, as those involved in comprehension or thinking. (p. 235)

Strategy n. in education, a systematic plan, consciously adapted and monitored, to improve one's performance in learning. (p. 244).

As the search for the differences between the two words continues, the dictionary meaning does not offer a distinction nor the relation between them. The use of the terms skills and strategies in different disciplines and during different times has justifiably created a lot of confusion. According to Atkinson and Schifrin (1968) in Afflerbach et al. (2008), the word strategy was popularly used in psychology, in which rehearsal as a strategy could be applied to information in short memory to protect the information and move it into long term memory. For Flavell and Wellman (1977) in Afflerbach et al. (2008:366) the term strategies was used to describe the mental and sometimes physical actions that children could use to boost their memory and other cognitive functions. A much better distinction between skill and strategy was offered by Dole (2002) who suggests that strategies represent intention. Smith (1925) used the term skill to describe abilities.

In reaching a common understanding and the ability to distinguish between the two terms, reading strategy is now perceived to be deliberate, goal-directed attempts to control and modify the reader's effort to decode text (Nhapulo, 2016), understanding words and constructing meanings of the text. Reading skills, on the other hand, are automatic actions

that result in decoding and comprehension with speed, efficiency, and fluency and usually occur without awareness of the components or control involvement (Kamita, 2015). Therefore from the distinction provided above, it is amply clear that strategy is deliberate and with intentions, whereas skills become effortless and automatic the more the act is practiced. For example, players execute skills they have practices in the field of play whereas their coach applies strategies different from his opposition to enable his team to win. However, practice alone is not enough for some children to make progress. What is also required is scaffolding and guided practice. It needs to be brought into the readers' consciousness that effective reading is also a strategy (Afflerbach *et al*., 2008).

The strategy can change into a skill. Because it is a deliberate, conscious, metacognitive act, a student who is worried about his poor comprehension ability subsequently applies strategies to achieve the goal. He applies strategies like rereading, reading slowly, and asking himself questions related to the text while reading. When comprehension becomes effortless and automatic the reading strategy or strategies used become skills (Esmer & Gunes, 2018).

2.13. Teaching reading for comprehension

Howie (2017); Ramalepe (2013); Rule (2017); Makumbila (2016) and Pretorius, (2016) identify differences in the approaches adopted to teach reading by many classroom practitioners as one of the reasons for the conflicting score average. On the other hand, researchers advanced macro-level factors as reasons for the poor performance of South African learners on comprehension but besides (Pretorius and Klapwijk, 2016:2) them, the pair stressed specific factors associated with language and literacy. According to Howie et al (2008:3) there is a perception that poor comprehension performance is a result of language proficiency issues. Though language proficiency and reading ability (Moodley, Kritzinger and Vinck, 2014) are closely related, they are not synonymous (Makgato, 2015). Pretorius and Machet (2004: 47-48) point out that poor literacy results cannot be solely attributed to second language instruction as teachers and learners struggle with literacy in African Languages as well as English (Makgato, 2015). Madikiza, Cekiso, Tshotsho and Landa (2017) blame poor reading performance on lack of knowledge by South African teachers on the application of reading strategies. In engaging with the learners during reading, the researcher established that learners struggled with reading words within a sentence structure and could therefore not comprehend the

meanings within a sentence, the subsequent paragraphs and then the entire text. Word reading is a skill taught at primary schools and in the case of this paucity points to where this problem originates.

According to Rule and Land (2017), research findings suggested that teachers use this method of teaching reading because they lack the knowledge in effective reading pedagogies. They view reading as an oral performance rather than a cognitive exercise in accessing meanings in the text. (Rule and Land, 2017). In short, teachers were not taught how to teach reading hence the low performance of learners in ANA (Rule and Land, 2017).

2.14. The teaching of grammar

Weaver (1996:15) argues that the traditional way of teaching grammar is not a recipe inspiring a love of language. This traditional way is where learners memorize words and meaning (Saleem, 2015). In his study, he argues that repetition and memorization culminate in retention. This argument is based on the Muslim practice of reciting the Quran. Çağrı Tuğrul Mart (2013) insists that grammar should be taught in the classroom as it teaches learners to organize words and messages to be meaningful. He continues to argue for the teaching of grammar in context is the way to go. With the introduction of the Communicative Approach to the teaching (Borden, 2017) of the second language, the teaching of grammar took a back seat. What teachers who ignore the teaching of grammar seem to forget is that language consists of sound, lexicon and grammar. The three defines language, and that there cannot be language when one is missing (Wang, 2010:78). Therefore Weaver (1996:16) argues that exposing learners to language through reading affords the acquisition of grammar as the “unconscious command of the syntax that enables us to understand and speak the language”. What this statement suggests is that grammar should not be taught since it is what is acquired as the language is learnt. At this stage of learning, the Grade 8 have passed the language acquisition stage and are at the level of language learning. Language acquisition is expected to be subconscious (Hemmati, Teimoori and Jafarigohar, 2013) effortless assimilation of linguistic knowledge whereas (TEFL, 2016) language learning is not communicative. It is the result of direct instruction in the rules of language and is certainly not an age-appropriate activity for your young learners. The question that should always linger is ‘Should grammar be taught and if it should, how and if it should not, why?’

2.15. Selecting tasks for theme-based teaching

The performance in this task signals the importance of selecting reading tasks with content which could trigger learners' memories and merge new information to what they know. This study is not advocating for the selection of all too familiar reading material but the ones that challenge the thinking of the learners and that can activate their background knowledge. In selecting tasks that are appropriate for training inferencing skills, narrative and expository text are most recommended by researchers (Best, Floyd and McNamara, 2008:137-164; Cain, Oakhill and Bryant, 2004). Gardner (1979) emphasises that teachers should select texts which are not excessively difficult, that are not conducive to reading and the inferencing that arises from the willingness to reflect.

Kispal (2008) states that inferences happen automatically in narratives. This is because events in the narrative have a close relation to everyday life. The advantage of teaching learners inferencing is that it is not only confined to classrooms, but they also use English skills outside the class when they listen. Cain, Oakhill, Barnes and Bryant (2001:858), for example, concluded that difficulties with inference for less-skilled comprehenders are not just restricted to reading situations but are apparent in tasks involving listening comprehension as well. On the other hand, Gilberto, Martinez and Vidal-Abarca (2005: 65) reflected on the disadvantages of selecting a text that is too easy. They argue that making a text too easy suppresses the thinking ability of the reader to work hard in searching for meaning as the meaning will be so easy to find. Processing will, therefore, be passive resulting in low inferencing and low understanding. In contrast, increasing the connection among text idea is so that the reader's inferential activity is enhanced benefits the reader's understanding at both the deep and superficial levels. Therefore selecting reading texts for learners should be a balancing act.

2.16. Benefits of theme based-teaching

In theme-based reading, a number of words are repeated throughout the texts. Since words are repeated, learners are more likely to remember them and how they were used in different settings. A number of researchers (Tessier and Tessier, 2015) have explained the reasons behind the use of theme-based approach for engaging learners in classroom learning, such as Handal and Bobis (2004); Lipson, Valencia, Wixson and Peters (1993), who argue that theme-based teaching helps learners link what they already know and

interests with knowledge. In contrast, Handal and Bobis, (2004); Lipson, Valencia, Wixson and Peters (1993); Mangan (2014) create a focus for learners that reveals connections among knowledge areas and promote positive attitudes in learners and Lipson, Valencia, Wixson and Peters (1993) contend that theme-based reading improves the learners' chances of success (Mangan, 2014; Handal and Bobis, 2004). Mangan (2014) recorded an increased learner performance, citing a 87% pass rate as compared to 78% in other classes.

The effectiveness of combining content and language when teaching, (commonly through theme-based instruction) stems from two main factors: that language which includes vocabulary or word meaning is learnt effectively when student's attention is directed on meaning rather and the structure of the word. This means that more reading should be introduced in class than having to spend time on isolating a component like grammar for teaching, especially when learners are still younger. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), CBI operates under two principle, namely, that in order to learn a language successfully, when it is used to communicate and create meaning and the second principle is that reflects the learners' need to learn a language.

2.17. Bakhtin and reading

This review of the literature would not be complete without reference to Bakhtin's views on reading. Mikhail Bakhtin was a Russian scholar and a theorist of discourse in the twentieth century who worked in the era of Stalinism. He was a very controversial figure at that time. Because of the controversial figure he was, he was subsequently sentenced to internal exile in Kazakhstan during Stalin's purges (Robinson in *Ceasefire* magazine July 2011). In his view, Bakhtin criticised those who continued to hold the author of a text or his voice as the most dominant of other voices creating a monoglossic dominance (Koschmann 1999). He sees language as intertextual, meaning that it refers back to others' statements and views. Therefore reading, if treated in a monologic manner, mutes the voice of the reader and his experiences. Reading would cease to be conversational and allow the author's dominance.

According to Koschmann (1999) heteroglossia may be defined as the inscription of multiple meanings engaging in a dialogue within the text. It avoids emphasis on narrowly defined consensus and celebrates the diversity of voices produced by different individuals

(Zegarlinska, 2019). In Rosenblatt (1993) who wanted to build a theory of reading from Dewey's philosophy, she argues that meaning does not exist in a text; rather it emerges from reading and the text is only the stimulus (Davidson, 1993). The text on its own does not communicate anything until such time that it is engaged. It is the reader who gives a text its communicative purpose, not the other way round. As the reader engages the text he contributes his knowledge and experiences to bring the author or character alive in the text. What this means for the teacher and the learner is that learners should be engaged in more reading and expand their world of knowledge. This entails that teachers should always allow divergent views pertaining to the interpretation of the reading text and its messages. Teachers should allow learners space to interrogate and converse with the text and impose their own views which should be assessed for their strengths and perceptions into possible meanings of the text/s.

According to Whitehurst, Falco, Lonigan, Fischel, DeBaryshe, Valdez-Menchaca and Caulfied (1988) and Brannon and Dauksas (2012), the main principle of dialogic reading is to teach children to become storytellers instead of passively listening to a story. This goes well with reading a story, to make them story writers. According to Whitehurst et al, (1988), in dialogic reading children are active readers where they create more sentences while expressing their opinions rather than in the traditional way of reading where they assume a role of passive listeners what adults read for them. In a dialogic reading intervention, learners should be allowed an opportunity to interact with the text thus bringing up the views/opinion. Through this interaction, learners develop a wider use of words thus building their vocabulary.

During observation of the actual teaching, the researcher focused on whether teachers allowed learners opportunities to voice their own views with regard to what they read, how they could have approached the interpretation of the story, introduced or concluded a given story. This was important as encouraged some degree of confidence and stimulated the learners to become active participants in the process of thinking, meaning-making and writing of the story and not just be consumers. Paquette (2007) stresses the importance of writing by learners at the end of reading or listening to a story. She argues that this process enables learners to develop their vocabulary (selecting and using appropriate kernel words and their extensions in different settings. She proposed a process that activates the creativity of the learner and entails the following:

1. Providing pictures to stimulate learner thinking and creativity.
2. Providing clear understanding of the purpose of the writing exercise.

According to Thomas and Burke (2016) these processes assist in answering the thorny question on how to encourage children to become frequent readers.

2.18. Conclusion

Reading is a skill very important to learning and knowledge acquisition. It must be acquired early if a child is to succeed in his/her studies and life long careers. This chapter provided insight into reading challenges (Study objective 1), and how other researchers dealt with them (Study objective 2). It also provided an overall view of reading theories and reading models, all of which were important in creating a base for the Model the researcher designed at the end of chapter 5 (Study objective 3). This chapter again provides a base through which the researcher coiled his arguments in chapter 4 (Interpretation and Analysis).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The chapter deals with the research method (s) used, including the research design, setting, population and sampling as well as data collection instruments.

3.1. Research design

Research designs explain the steps to be taken in carrying out the research, the reasons behind the research approach chosen, the data collection tools to be used and how data collected will be analysed (Creswell, 2009:3). All the decisions taken should be in the interest of addressing the research questions raised. Burns and Grove (2001:223) stated that the purpose of designing a research study is to assist the researcher to implement the outcomes in a way that helps them reach the intended results, thus increasing the chances of obtaining data that is pertinent to the research question.

The approach adopted for this study is a mixed approach, meaning that it consists of qualitative and quantitative approaches. This approach is referred to as the mixed method.

3.1.1. Mixed method approach

The mixed method offers to researchers a number of advantages. According to Halcomb and Hickman (2015), the term mixed methods research is broadly accepted to refer to research that brings together both qualitative and quantitative data within a single study. In mixing qualitative and quantitative data collection, Halcomb and Hickman (2015) argue that mixed methods research takes advantage of the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research (Scammer *et al*, 2013).

This study used both methods because of the benefit these methods provide. The quantitative approach deals with numbers and percentages to understand the data from the participating teachers captured in a questionnaire while the qualitative was useful in the observation of classroom reading activities that were analysed. This approach helped in providing insight into the problem that learners have with reading and identifying the root cause.

When contemplating the use of the mixed- methods approach, Halcomb and Hickman (2015) warn researchers of eight (8) important factors to consider when one plans to conduct a mixed methods research, which are designed to:

1) Examine the rationale for using mixed methods;

2) Explore the philosophical approach;

3) Understand the various mixed method designs;

4) Assess the skills required;

5) Review project management considerations;

6) Plan and justify the integration of qualitative and quantitative aspects;

7) Ensure that rigour is demonstrated; and

8) Disseminate mixed methods research.

3.1.1.1. The logic behind using mixed methods

When deciding to adopt mixed methods approach, Lavelle, Vuk and Barber (2013) argue that when contemplating to undertake mixed-method research, the research question should point to the reasons for choosing that method based on the scope and limitations of both methods. The decision to use a mixed-methods design should be based on the advantages that both methods bring in resolving the research question (Halcomb and Hickman, 2015; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011; Scammon *et al*., 2013). Since the use of both methods would demand more research resources and skills, Halcomb and Hickman (2015) argue that the rationale to apply them should be based on the benefits that could be accrued.

3.1.1.2. Exploring the philosophical approach

Before adopting any philosophical approach, Halcomb and Hickman, (2015) explain that the researcher should have consulted the relevant literature that supports their study against their own perceptions.

3.1.1.3. Understanding mixed methods designs

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), there are four main characteristics that define mixed methods research designs. The first characteristic is to assess the extent to which the qualitative and quantitative data interact with each other or is independent. The second one is how one implements the order of data collection. In a simultaneous and concurrent design, both data that is, qualitative and quantitative is collected at the same time (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). The advantage would be a reduced period of data collection. Due to time constraints, this research adopted a concurrent design.

Thirdly, it is important to prioritise which data to collect first prior to commencing the study as both designs vary in the relative priority given to the data. For example, exploratory studies usually prioritise qualitative data over quantitative one while the survey studies would prioritise quantitative data (Halcomb and Hickman, 2015). Lastly, mixed methods designs vary at which point of the study the qualitative and quantitative data are integrated. There is no specific point where data can be integrated. It could occur at any point in the research process.

3.1.2. Qualitative research

According to MacDonald (2012), qualitative research is a way of studying with the view to understand how a group or individuals in a community contribute to the problem being studied. In this type of research, the researcher may engage in roles varying from a non-participant to a complete participant. On the other hand, Creswell (1998) in MacDonald (2012:35) views the goals of qualitative research as that of interpreting and documenting an entire phenomenon from an individual's viewpoint of frame of reference. In this study, the researcher needed to explore the causes of reading challenges that the Grade 8 learners experience. The qualitative approach allowed the researcher a moment to study reading challenges experienced by learners in their schools, to observe them reading and makeup what their challenges are and of which nature.

The process of research involved random questioning participants and engaging in a reading programme that aimed at gaining more knowledge about learners' challenges. All of the procedures undertaken took place in the participant's setting and these were analysed inductively. The qualitative data consisted of qualitative audios and visual materials. During the research process, the researcher recorded learners' reading. This

was done to keep a record of their reading which assisted the researcher when the analysis stage began. Some of the video recorded clips were converted into audio sound and embedded in the study to be used in a qualitative analysis of reading. Throughout the first fifth week of the study, the researcher observed Grade 8 teachers conducting reading during their reading lessons and how their learners responded to their reading strategies. During that period, the researcher mapped out how he was going to approach the next session of reading aloud and what components of reading to assess and analyse. Observation and the reading session by the researcher was endorsed by all participants in all the schools (attached Appendixes B,C,D,E and F).

In the second week of the study, the researcher exposed learners to more reading tasks in order to identify first-hand what their challenges were with regard to reading. The researcher randomly selected five learners from each of the five schools to continue with standardised reading texts for the period of the week and at the end of every reading exercise, they wrote a short test. While reading, the researcher video-recorded their reading and used this data in the categorisation and analysis of their reading mistakes and challenges. Throughout the activities, the role of the researcher was that of an active participant.

3.1.3. Quantitative research

According to Labaree (2009), quantitative methods are used to stress the reasons for selecting the measurements that will be applied and the statistical and mathematical analysis will follow all the data collected. Its main focus is on the collection of statistical data which after analyses the results can respond to the problem been researched and the findings applied to everyone affected by the problem. The researcher designed a questionnaire which was distributed among Grade 8 teachers in the schools visited where the aim was to establish teacher perception of what the reading challenges are for their Grade 8 learners and from their response and the analyses of the data obtained from the reading programme the reading was designed.

3.1.4. Case study

Merriam (2009:40) defines a case study as an in-depth exploration of a bounded system adding that case study research focuses on a particular aspect and that the product of an investigation should be descriptive and heuristic in nature. Cohen and Manion (1989)

define case study as a method to deeply observe the characteristics of the individual units such as a person, a group or a community, in order to analyse various phenomena in relation to that unit of study. In the case of this study the Grade 8 learners were the subject of interest for the research and the phenomenon of interest was the challenges they were experiencing relating to reading. Van Rensburg and Smit (2004:41), state that a case study design is used to gain and have an understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The researcher used the research tools available to him, prescribed by both qualitative and quantitative to understand the causes of their challenges.

According to Bargate (2014), Interactive Qualitative Approach (IQA) uses focus groups to produce a systematic representation of a phenomenon from participants' experiences of the phenomenon being studied. IQA was therefore, to allow the researcher to collect data from participants in their natural setting employing a face-to-face technique (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:26). This approach was chosen since the IQA is based on the premise that the closer you are to the phenomenon studied the better chance to construct a representation of the systems' influences and outcomes (Bargate, 2014).

Since the researcher's primary interest is to learn about reading challenges of Grade 8 learners in the Mmabatho district, an instrumental case study method is the most appropriate tool to use.

The study case was divided into sections:

(a) 5 weeks of classroom observation
(b) 1 week of reading and testing

In this type of study design, the researcher is interested in how and why reading has continued to be a challenge to Grade 8 learners. That is, the researcher chose Grade 8 learners as his case in order to more about their reading challenges.

3.1.5. Research setting

Five schools in Mafikeng district were identified for this study. Due to ethical reasons, their names are not mentioned. The criteria used in selecting schools was structured in the following way:

- Two schools were from an affluent part of Mafikeng which attracts learners from the middle to high earning parents.

- ❖ Fee-paying schools
- ❖ Schools where SGB can appoint stand-in or substitute teacher in the case when the permanently employed teacher is absent or sick.
- ❖ The schools are well resourced with a working library and laboratory.

The three remaining schools are from poor communities of Mafikeng where parents are either unemployed or earn just enough money to survive.

- ❖ From quintile 1-4, state-funded schools
- ❖ No fee schools
- ❖ Lunch provided by the state for free
- ❖ Not well-resourced

3.2. Research population and sample

Polit and Hungler (1999:43 and 232) define a population as the totality of all subjects that conform to a set of specifications, comprising the entire group of persons that is of interest to the researcher and whom the research results can be generalised. LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (1998:250) describe a sample as a portion or a subset of the research population selected to participate in a study, representing the research population.

3.2.1. Population and sample

Population is “the group of people, which is the object of research and about which the researcher wants to determine some characteristics” (Bless and Higson-Smith, 1995.85). Mark (1996:106) refers to a population as “the collection of all individuals, families, or group, or organizations, communities and events that will participate in the study”. It was from a small group of Grade 8 learners that a sample was chosen which the researcher’s focus was to learn about reading challenges that the group experience.

The sample for this study was determined through purposeful strategy. The first instrument intended to establish the reading levels of all the learners in classes that were selected. This baseline reading level was used in sampling learners who took part in the second test which involved reading aloud. Those learners who obtained reading scores below 50% were candidates for selection in the second test. Five (5) of them were randomly selected. For the purpose of this study, those five (5) were regarded as

challenged. The first test was a silent reading one where all learners in the class took part. 220 words standardised reading passage (SRT1) was distributed to the learners and allocated 90 seconds to read. At the end of the 90 seconds, learners were instructed to stop reading and mark the last word each read. The formula used to calculate speed was;

> *Number of words read divided by the number of words in the passage X 100*.

The second set of the instrument (SRT2) tested fluency, comprehension, word recognition and vocabulary from five of the learners selected from each class in all the five schools. The learners were randomly selected and each read five texts and wrote a test at the end of every reading. SRT2 consists of Five (5) reading texts, RTX1 to RTX 5. The tests consisted of a summary question that tested comprehension, a question testing understanding of words as used in the text, inferencing, application of acquired knowledge and the use of some grammar structures.

3.3. Data collection instruments

Both qualitative and quantitative instruments were used for data collection. According to Creswell (2014), who emphasises that when data is collected, all the steps used in doing so should not exceed or be less than the scope of the study. The steps include collecting data through unstructured or semi-structured observation and interviews, documents and visual materials as well as establishing the procedure for documenting the data. Unstructured interview is recommended for the studies which are like to take longer (Gray, 2009) and this study did not need this type of interview as it was planned to last a shorter period. The data collection instruments used in this study is discussed hereunder;

3.3.1. Teacher questionnaire

To establish Grade 8 reading challenges, a questionnaire was designed to ask teachers what they identified as their learners' reading challenges and what they think could be causing such challenges. According to Mather and Rule (2017), a questionnaire is "a list of questions, either open-ended or close-ended" to extract from teachers their views on what they perceive as reading challenges for their learners. The language used to structure questions should be easy and accessible to the respondents and also not

ambiguous which may lead participants responding in a way that may not be in line with what the researcher was hoping to achieve.

This study's questionnaire consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was completed by five (5) teachers, one from each school visited. The teachers filled the questionnaire at the time the researcher was busy with learners during the reading session.

3.3.2. Standardised reading texts

There were five texts selected, all from one theme which was Natural disaster. Each text had a different word number and was more or less at the same difficulty level. Each learner was expected to read all of the five texts and took a test at the end of each reading. Each test was set out of 10 marks and consisted of questions on summarizing what was read for five marks (5), grammar which carried between one (1) and two marks (2), one question which required learners to respond to questions about the text but not necessarily part of the information in a text (infer) and recognising some meaning of words as used in the text.

During the reading by each learner, the researcher video recorded the reading. According to Torsen and Anderson (2010) video is "a valuable tool for creative documentation and it can be used to facilitate information gathering, reporting, dissemination and networking". At the same time, video material can be harmful to research participants whose personal information is captured. If not handled with care (information) it can fall into wrong hands which can expose information about participants which they gave out willingly with the trust that it be kept safe. Therefore researchers have certain responsibilities to their audience or participants in their studies, such as to ensure that they do not experience any harm or suffering by taking part in their study (McKee and Porter, 2009).

As learners read, they were video recorded and the recordings were later used in the analysis of their reading errors. The reading speed for each learner was then calculated using the formula:

Speed = words read over the number of words in the passage X 100.

3.3.3. Observation

Observation is not just observing but perceiving and noting systematically people, events, behaviours, settings, artefact, routines and so on (Marshall and Rossman, 1995; Simpson and Tuson, 2003:2). A distinctive feature of observation as a research process is that it offers the researcher the opportunity to gather live data from naturally occurring social situations (Cooper and Schindler, 2001). In this way, the researcher can look directly at what is taking place *in situ* rather than relying on second-hand account. In the case of this study, the researcher went to five schools and observed teachers and their learners during the reading lesson. Not only reading was observed but also issues around learner discipline, school routines and teacher professionalism. According to Cooper and Schindler (2001:374) observation as a research process provide the researcher for reality-checking and also enables him to look afresh at everyday behaviour that otherwise might be taken for granted, expected or go unnoticed.

Christiansen and Bell (2010) draws a distinction between structured and unstructured observation. According to them, unstructured observation means the researcher focuses on one or two aspects to observe and make notes and on the other hand, a structured observation schedule has specific categories and checklists and is used when the researcher directly observes a phenomenon then systematically records what is being observed. The phenomenon which was of interest to the researcher during the observation period included the following: classroom setting, the teaching approach, the learner interaction during the lesson, learners' actual reading abilities (interest, speed, word recognition and pronunciation). According to Christiansen *et al.* (2010), structured observation is very much ideal for those researchers who have a clear idea of what they are looking for and using a structured observation schedule with categories that have been worked out in advance. In structured observation Cohen *et al*. (2011) state that the observer adopts a passive, non-intrusive role, merely noting down the incidence of the factor being studied. The teacher factors included how he/she gave out reading instructions to his/her learners, how learners responded to his/her instructions and how reading was carried out. Through observation some attitudes of learners towards reading were observed, for example, some learners looked forward to reading while others were very reluctant to read. This study opted for the use of structured observation and the reasons for that was to see how the teacher handle all issues around reading which included, introduction of the lesson, how learners respond to the lesson or the theme/topic to be read, whether they had books to read from and lastly their attitude to reading.

3.4. Data analysis and interpretation

After the data is collected, what followed was data analysis and interpretation which is a causative/inductive organising of the data into groupings and then finding patterns within those groupings (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001). Through the collected data the researcher often seeks to establish patterns that answer to the objectives, research questions and hypothesis raised. The qualitative data consisted of information captured through video recordings (reading) and the audio sound of learners reading.

Though videos can serve the researcher well, the problem with video data is that it contains information that clearly identifies people's faces, bodies, voices and names (participants' names and to certain extent names of their institutions). It is for this reason that handling information contained in this form of material becomes the researcher's number one priority to protect. In the case where the researcher used images from the video, there are ways to conceal the identities of the research participants in keeping with human subjects, privacy and restricted-use laws and guidelines, different techniques must be employed, such as eye blocking, face blurring, and voice modification (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2002:10). For this study, the researcher only needed to transcribe the reading challenges of the learners in the form of words incorrectly read, wrongly pronounced and their reading speed.

3.4.1. Data analysis approach for quantitative research

The latest quantitative data analysis software (IBM SPSS. 25, 2009) was used to generate tables. The researcher analysed the data in each table in his quest to provide answers to the research questions in Chapter 1.

3.4.1.1. Data analysis approach for qualitative research

Data collected through Qualitative means were analysed manually and results discussed in line with Objective 1 of this study, which is to establish whatever challenges Grade 8 learners might be having with relation to reading.

3.5. Ethical considerations

Social research usually takes people as participants and there are ethical issues to be contemplated. When collecting data, researchers are expected to concern themselves with their participants' current and future emotional wellbeing (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2002). Therefore this study was no different from all social research because its participants were Grade 8 learners who are perceived to be vulnerable and required protection from all forms of possible exposure to abuse. Lastly, when analysing the data the National Centre for Education Statistics (2002) urge researchers to always maintain the confidentiality of the participants and to ensure that data is not used for profit or unintended ways. The following ethical principles were followed while conducting the research. The informed consent from the teachers who were part of the study, the learners as well. The contents of a written consent letter were explained to learners before they could sign it. The rights of participants to choose to participate or to withdraw were explained before-hand.

Permission was obtained from the Department of Education – North West Province to conduct the study in selected schools. The reasons for the observation study was also provided to the learners, the English teachers, the Head of Department and the principal before they sign the respective consent forms.

For ethical reasons, it was important to conceal the identity of learners as the study was not about the learners but their reading challenges. It was also important to conceal the names of the schools because the interest was not on the schools but the environment the school provided for the learning of the participants. The names of teachers too were no interest to the researcher, what was of interest though was their response to the questionnaire and how they conducted the teaching of reading to their learners. With regard to this study, the above actions were not necessary because the recording was not to be shared with anyone but its interest to the researcher was only for the purpose of going back and forth during analyses to observe phenomenon which if it was not for the recording could have been forgotten or the exact events mixed up.

With regard to the use of video recording, there are guidelines to follow and ethical issues to consider. Since video recording captures participant's facial identity, their attire and voices, their identity must at all times be protected. According to National Centre for Education Statistics (2002:10), some steps have to be taken where the video clips are to

be aired of shared with the any other person or group, such as eye blocking, face blurring, and voice modification.

3.6. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to explain the process taken, and the rationale behind the processes chosen. In this chapter the processes and the methodology were explained in detail. The mixed methodology was chosen as was the methodology that best answered the study questions raised. The study needed to establish the challenges experienced by Grade 8 learners with regard to reading. A qualitative approach was necessary to arrive at knowing these challenges. A questionnaire was structured and distributed to the teachers as a quantitative tool to establish what they perceive the challenges are of their learners in reading.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. Introduction

Chapter four presents the data, describes and explains the process, rationale, purpose and type of research methods used. The mixed methods research design was used to acquire an overview of the extent of reading challenges Grade 8 learners experience in the schools selected for this study. The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods allowed the researcher to understand, through engagement with learners in their classrooms, their reading challenges as well as explore the views of teachers about the nature of the reading challenges and what causes them. Through a concerted engagement with the most recent and relevant literature, the researcher was able to select reading instruments that assured the study of reliable and valid outcomes. In this chapter, the data is presented, analysed and interpreted systematically. The copious data collected is arranged and classified in accordance with the aims of the study and the objectives that this study sought to achieve.

Furthermore, the distinctive features of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods are reflected in the methods used to analyse those data. Accordingly, qualitative data analysis focuses on data collected, video clips and notes taken during the observation of the participants studied and subsequently transcribed. The qualitative data describes their textual versions in ways that capture the setting and the research participants who produced those texts on their own terms rather than in terms of predefined measures and hypotheses.

On the other hand, the quantitative data collection method that was deployed focuses on quantifiers used to measure the extent of the reading problem and equally for comparative purposes with the qualitative set. In this chapter, the study reports therefore on the observation of educators in classrooms and engagement with learners in their different schools (the qualitative environment). In the penultimate, the study analyses a questionnaire filled in by teachers in the schools visited.

4.2. Observation of reading and the teaching activities in schools

4.2.1. The teaching and learning environment of classes visited

Observation of the teaching and learning of reading was carried out in four weeks, a week exclusively devoted to each school. The researcher observed one fifty (50) minutes period a day for five consecutive days in one school before moving on to the next. In all the schools visited, there was one hour and a half period after school called a study period. The researcher was allowed to utilise that period to engage learners in a pre-planned reading programme with 5 learners only per school. The reading programme was executed in an office away from the classrooms. Learners were called to the office, one by one to read one task each a day for the period of a week. This reading process lasted only five (5) minutes for each learner and such that not much of their study time was consumed by the reading programme. At the end of the five days, each learner had read 5 texts and written five comprehension tests. The study period, together with the reading programme, lasted four weeks for the selected schools. A report of what transpired in each school during the four week research period is presented below.

(a) School A1

School A1 is situated in a township that is hemmed in by a number of villages. This school attracts most of its learners from the surrounding villages. The researcher asked the teacher why that was the case and he was informed that part of what attracts the parents to bring their children to the school was that the school fees asked were the lowest when compared to other schools in the area. Another reason was that the school operated a kitchen that served learners with lunch so parents' social status was less likely to be negatively exposed.

The teaching and learning environment in this school was different from other schools that the researcher visited in that almost half of the learners in the Grade 8 class were significantly older for their grade level. The reason given by the teacher was that the bulk of the learners were repeaters. As a result, they were difficult to control, consistently rowdy and spent much of the teaching time outside of the class and the English period was not an exception. They were always among the learners who came to school without books.

The most difficult to control were boys. When the one period before the English one ended, quite a large number of boys usually rushed out, so when the period began they would still be outside. Their return to class meant that the teacher had to stop doing what he was doing and to wait for calm to prevail before he could continue. This usually crept on the time set aside for teaching or reading. The other time the researcher asked the teacher how he coped with the situation and his response was that he usually reported them to the principal who would then call their parents. Part of the teacher's concern was that some parents did not come when they were summoned to and that left him with an unresolved and recurrent problem at hand. Besides the problems that the researcher witnessed, when calm finally prevailed the atmosphere for teaching and learning improved and the teaching took place.

(b) School A2

School A2 is situated one kilometre outside a township. The learners from the school were not different from those of school A1. During the first period, many of them reported late to school, the reason being many of them walk a long distance to school. This says a lot about their social status. They were not fortunate to have parents who dropped them at school like other children from well to do families. They displayed a slightly constrained behaviour as compared to learners from school A1. In a week, the English period appeared twice during the first period in the time table, and during that time almost half of the learners were still outside the school premises or on their way to school. This posed a major challenge for the English teacher but there was nothing he could do about it. Because of the distance, many walked to school there was a tendency to leave textbooks home, in this instance the reading materials including those for English.

(c) School A3

With regard to the location of school A3, it was situated in a village far from town and townships. Many of the learners walked to school while some took buses to commute, meaning that many either miss the first period or arrive in the middle of the lesson for English. Many teachers in that school expressed their frustration about having to teach half a class during the first period. Teachers are often in a catch 22 situation where they have to decide whether to keep the learners outside the classroom for the rest of the period where they would not disturb the class or allow them in only to please the authority

and thus register less teaching progress. Again, in all the four schools visited, the period after the break also offered a challenge. Though the people who cook for the learners try their best to serve learners within the time set aside for break, sometimes there are impediments outside their control which prohibit them from completing the feeding of learners within the set time. This then affects the response of learners to the bell after the break. Behaviour of learners as compared to School A1 and A2 was much better and more conducive to teaching and learning.

In this school, the teacher insisted that the learners leave their English reading books with him and only take home one book called “The reader”. The teacher stated to the researcher that “The reader” is a story-book which the learners can read at home on their own or through the supervision of their parents.

(d) School A4

School A4 is situated more than 20 kilometres away from town or any township. Almost all the teachers in that school commute to school together with a smaller number of learners. There was a day when the bus was late and a sizeable number of teachers were late for the first period and only those who use their cars were present. Though the village is big, the houses are close to one another and adjacent to the school. Learners do not walk for a long distance to get to school and as a result, the problem of late coming during the first period was less experienced. The school does not have the problem of discipline experienced in School A1 and A2 and teaching and learning proceeded smoothly without much setbacks.

4.2.2. The teacher factors

This section of the study focused on what teachers carried out in their classrooms during the English periods. The following are the results of the observation.

4.2.2.1. The teaching of reading

One of the findings of the observation was that educators focused on reading aloud and correcting learners as they read, the more oratory approach. In schools, A1 and A3 teachers were not able to test learners in comprehension because of constraining of time instead they gave learners homework. In school A1, learners produced excellent

performance explained that they were assisted by their parents while others either have not done their homework or relied on copying from those who have done it. Therefore the truth about learners' performance would not be known. Teachers gave homework because the entire task could not be completed in the 45 to 50 minutes period.

In schools A2, A3 and A4 teachers allowed learners to read silently. After this, they instructed learners to turn their books down and write everything they could remember about the text. This practice promoted reading for comprehension and gave learners some notion of confidence. In their observation, Rule and Land (2017) found that learners may perform well in reading accuracy and pronunciation but go on to perform dismally on comprehension. The reason, according to Shea and Ceprano (2017:51), is that the child's lexical development and knowledge of word meaning is a variable that accounts for differences in achievement level. Rule and Land (2017) recommend that measuring reading should be assessed through the reader's ability to comprehend and derive meaning. Again they found that teachers in South African schools are more concerned with fluent pronunciation at the expense of comprehension. In their study, Madikiza, Cekiso, Tshotsho and Landa (2018) also established that teachers neglect comprehension in their classrooms and went on to provide a tentative reason that teachers do so because they were never taught how to teach comprehension at teacher training colleges.

4.2.2.2. Teaching and assessing reading

The only reading strategy employed in all the schools visited was the one where learners read aloud, and every time when they read a word incorrectly, the teacher would stop the reading to offer the correct pronunciation.

4.3. Time allocated for reading

According to the Department of Education policy document, reading is allocated 3 hours and 30 minutes per two-week cycle. In a normal 45 or 50-minute period reading is taught twice each week. Under these circumstances, it means that the time allocated for reading is disproportionate to the number of learners. If it was practically impossible for each learner to be given an opportunity to read during each period, the time would never be sufficient. In school A1 to A4 teachers express their disappointment with the department when they said;

"We are always pressed for records and it feels as though learners are no longer as important as we think they should in teaching".

The table below depicts the time allocated for reading in the Grade 8 curriculum.

Table 4.1: Time allocation

SKILLS	**TIME ALLOCATION PER TWO-WEEK CYCLE (HOURS)**		
	GRADE 7	**GRADE 8**	**GRADE 9**
*Reading and Viewing	3 hours 30 min (1 hour 45 mins for comprehension and 1 hour 45 mins for literary texts)		

4.4. Teacher-Learner ratio

According to her response to the opposition party question on the teacher-learner ratio, the Minister of Education Angie Motshekga stated that the ideal ratio for primary schools should be 40:1 while at secondary school the ideal is 35:1 (PoliticWeb, 2012 retrieved on 29th October 2018). In 2018 during observation of teaching in the four schools visited, the ratio was far beyond 50:1. Below is the size of the class in each of the schools visited;-

Table 4.2: Number of learners in a class

A1	**A2**	**A3**	**A4**
51 Learners	49 learners	49 learners	48 learners

These inordinate ratios, plus the little time allocated to reading, made it extremely difficult for educators to achieve the ideal goals set for the period and this was expressed by teachers in school A1, A2.

When asked how they manage to teach effectively in lasses with such big numbers, teachers in school A1 and A2 expressed their frustrations by saying:

"Teaching under such conditions is demoralising and strenuous. It leaves you drained and does not benefit struggling learners."

In schools A1 especially and A2 the situation in those classrooms was rowdy and noisy most of the times and this consumed much of the teacher's energy in trying to control them. Classroom management was a challenge for those teachers as a consequence.

4.5. Qualitative data and analysis

This section of the study analyses data obtained through a qualitative approach which exposed learners to the reading of texts to determine their reading challenges. It responds to objective number 1 of the study which is:

- Through the review of the literature and the results of the empirical investigation, the study sought to establish the reading challenges of Grade 8 learners and what caused them.

4.5.1. Reading complex texts

Learners were observed reading and their reading errors identified. The errors identified were related to word reading difficulties which included double syllable words and multi-syllabic words.

4.5.1.1. Syllabic word reading and word recognition

Word recognition is the foundational process of reading and is critical to support vocabulary attainment and reading comprehension (Stanovich, 1996; Archer, Gleason & Vachon, 2003: 90). Many of the words that learners struggled to read were long words and often multisyllabic. For example, the following words are clearly problematic to learners as recorded in the OneNote embedded profile:

Table 4.3: Multi-syllable words

Words read	**Number of syllables**
Submerged	Sub – merge - ed
Management	Man – age – ment
Coordinate	Co – ordinate

Contingency	Con – tin – gen – cy
Characteristics	Character – is – tics
Intermittent	Inter – mi – tent

4.5.1.2. Word recognition and pronunciation of words across the four schools

This section captured miscues,the wrong pronunciation of a word and other reading errors from readers who read RTX 1 to RTX 5. All the five learners read their entire texts but for the purpose of analysis, this is how learners were selected for reading.

From School A1

- learner number 1 read text RTX1
- learner number 2 read text RTX2
- learner number 3 read text RTX 3
- learner number 4 read text RTX 4 and
- learner number 5 read text RTX 5 and the same process was repeated in School A2, School A3, and School A4. The transcription was obtained through replaying of the video recordings in order to transcribe the manner in which words and clauses were read in situ.

Table 4.4: Word recognition and pronunciation of words

SCHOOL A1 Learner 1 Reading Text RTX1

Words from the text	Pronunciation	How they were read
- brace	breɪs	Brice (mis-pronounced)
- service	sɜːvɪs	Selvice
- severe	sɪˈvɪə(r)	Serviour
- thunder	ˈθʌndə(r)	Thonder/ tonder

Table 4.4.1: Learner 2 Reading Text RTX2

Words from the text
The learner:

- swallowed words he could not read. - viewed difficult words for a long time without uttering them. - managed to read only four (4) lines from the text. - struggled a lot.

Table 4.4.2: Reader 3 Reading Text RTX3

Words from the text	Phonetic transcription	How they were read
Severe	sɪˈvɪə(r)	Server
Thunder	ˈθʌndə(r)	Thounder
Battling	Bætl	Beitlling
Unconfirmed	ʌnkənˈfɜːmd	Unconfirment
Flood	flʌd	Floud
Approximately	əˈprɒksɪmətli/	Approximatery
Flooded	flʌd (ed)	Flouded
Vehicle	ˈviːəkl - ˈviːhɪkl	Vehi
Submerge	səbˈmɜːdʒ	Sub-midget (mis-read, influence of existing words in the memory)

Table 4.4.3: Reader 4 Reading Text RTX4

Words from the text	Phonetic transcription	How they were read
Steep	stiːp	Speed (replaced–t with –p)
Intensi***fy***	ɪnˈtensɪfaɪ	Intensi***ve***
Invaded	ɪnˈveɪd	Invented (read a complete different word – from stored words)
Accompanied	əˈkʌmpəni	Akhomponied (pronunciation taken from the first part of the word ***Accomm****odate*)

Table 4.4.4: Reader 5 Reading Text RTX5

Words from the text	Phonetic transcription	How they were read
Vacationing	veɪˈkeɪʃn	Vacationg (swallowed the penultimate last part)
Unusually	ʌnˈjuːʒuəli	Unisually – (pronounced as Anisual)
Worst	wɜːst	Woust
Yell	Jel	Hell
Smashed	smæʃt	Smush (mis-pronounced)
Echoes	ˈekəʊ	Echoice (mis-read)

Table 4.4.5: School A2 Reader 1 Reader Text RTX1

Words from the text	Phonetic transcription	How they were read	
Continuous	kənˈtɪnjuəs	Conscious (Relied heavily on words she knew)	She read so well except for the two words)
Contained	kənˈteɪn	Continent	

Table 4.4.6: Reader 2 Reading Text RTX2

Words from the text	How they were read
The learner read well	His only problem was repeating words which seemed difficult to read

Table 4.4.7: Reader 3 Reader Text RTX3

Words from the text	Phonetic transcription	How they were read
International	ɪntəˈnæʃnəl	Internal (could not read the last part of the word)
Destructive	dɪˈstrʌktɪv	Distributing (mis-read)

Occur	əˈkɜː(r)	Ochoore/ ***o-cure***
Still	stɪl	Stall
Interchange	ˈɪntətʃeɪndʒ	Intergers (mis-read)
Flooded	ˈflʌd(ed)	Floded (Appears to have come from the word ***floor.***

Table 4.4.8: Reader 4 **Reader Text RTX4**

Words from the text	**Phonetic transcription**	**How they were read**
Contingency	kənˈtɪndʒənsi	Conti (could not read the last part of the word)
Organs	ˈɔːgən	Orja
Drought	draʊt	Drough (swallowed the last letter – t)
Designate	ˈdezɪgneɪt	Decided (mis-pronounced)

Table 4.4.9 School A3 Reader 1 **Reader RTX1**

Words from the text	**Phonetic transcription**	**How they were read**
Sever	ˈsevə(r)	Se-ve-re read the last syllable 're' as like the 're' from the word read in the past tense
Shower	ˈʃaʊə(r)	Shouwer She read too well

Table 4.4.10: Reader 2 **Reader RTX 2**

Words from the text	**How they were read**
Read well with good pace	

Table 4.4.10: Reader 3 **Reader RTX 3**

Words from the text	How they were read
Read well with some acceptable degree of articulation	

Table 4.4.11: Reader 4 **Reader RTX 4**

Words from the text	Phonetic transcription	How they were read
Contingency	kənˈtɪndʒənsi	Repeated this word until she got the pronunciation right She read well and was quite composed

Table 4.4.12: School A4 **Reader 1** **Reader RTX1**

Words from the text	How they were read
Read well with the right speed	

Table 4.4.13: Reader 2 **Reader RTX2**

Words from the text	Phonetic transcription	How they were read
Intensify	ɪnˈtensɪfaɪ	Intensive
Invade	ɪnˈveɪd	Invented She was an average reader. She read with relative ease

Table 4.4.14: Reader 3 **Reader RTX3**

Words from the text	Phonetic transcription	How they were read
Severe	sɪˈvɪə(r)	Several
Unconfirmed	ʌnkənˈfɜːmd	Unconfment
Flood	flʌd	Flod

International	ˌɪntəˈnæʃnəl	Intranational
Approximately	əˈprɒksɪmətli	Appropriate (wrong word read)
Occurred	əˈkɜː(r)	Acquired (wrong word read)
Incur	ɪnˈkɜː(r)	Insured (wrong word read)
Significant	sɪgˈnɪfɪkənt	Scientific (wrong word read)
Diversion	daɪˈvɜːʃn	Division
Diverted	daɪˈvɜːt	Deviated

Table 4.4.15: Reader 4 **Read RTX4**

Words from the text	**Phonetic transcription**	**How they were read**
Executive	ɪgˈzekjətɪv	Excutive (left the –e out)
Gazette	gəˈzet	Gazit
Occurring	əˈkɜː(r)	Acuring Besides an incorrect reading of the 3 words, this participant read well.

Table 4.4.16: Reader 5 **Reader RTX5**

Words from the text	**How they were read**
Read well with good stress, pace and intonation.	

4.5.2 Challenges of word recognition identified in the pronunciation

It is apparent that learners depended more on what words they knew as compared to words they should know. This was evident from their reliance on the existing words in their background knowledge. Words that seemed similar to the ones they knew were read and pronounced to echo those words that they were familiar with. For example, all the

words marked in red on the previous pages reveal that coloured words on the right column are not necessarily incorrect in the sense that they exist as correct words in their vocabulary but were not words appearing in the texts they read.

The other error that appeared with the learners' reading had to do with their knowledge of the pronunciation of the base word. They failed to pronounce the word with its extension. For example, a word like 'shower' has a base word 'show'. Because the learner identified the base word's pronunciation 'show' but not its extension, the word 'shower' was then pronounced as '*shouwer*' (see School A3 Reader RTX1).

From School A1 Reader 4 RTX4 a word marked in red 'Accompanied, the learner broke the word into syllables of the word that he knew. For example, it appears that part of the word has a syllable that resembles the first part of the word **accom**modate or **accom**modation from which the learner took her pronunciation. The pronunciation of the word *accompanied* was therefore pronounced as '*akhompanied*.' Essentially what emerged then was the rule in prescriptive grammar where the meaning of a word can change, depending on where the stress is placed. Where stress is placed on a faulty part, the semantic sense is lost completely as in the following illustration:

- con<u>test</u> (noun) as opposed to con<u>test</u> (verb)
- <u>increase</u> (noun) as opposed to inc<u>rease</u> (verb)
- <u>pro</u>duce (noun) as opposed to pro<u>duce</u> (verb)

Lastly, some of the words that the learners found difficult were left unread. Some parts of the words were either mumbled or swallowed. Another problem with such difficult words led learners to repeat them in an effort to get the pronunciation correct. This repetition significantly affected their text comprehension.

It is advanced by Lingard (2005) that profiling the reading of learners could assist teachers to provide each with targeted reading intervention. He recommends an intervention programme that targets each learner's reading difficulties rather than the "one size fits all" kind of a programme.

4.5.2.1. The three processes of dealing with difficult words in the text

Word reading fluency skill is usually taught at primary school where learners are exposed to single word reading. The ability to recognise written words has an influence in fostering

comprehension. Therefore poor reading comprehension to a certain degree is evident in those learners with poor word recognition skills.

After compiling the results of the first reading comprehension test, poor performers in reading were identified. In the first process, the researcher took learners back to those words they struggled to read. He gave them the correct pronunciation and meaning and then let them read the words after him. The next process was to show learners how the words were formed through their syllables. Lastly, the researcher re-introduced words into the text and tested learners for comprehension. The words in all the texts were closely similar because texts were picked from the same theme which ought to have made comprehension easier. This process is elaborated in the following diagram.

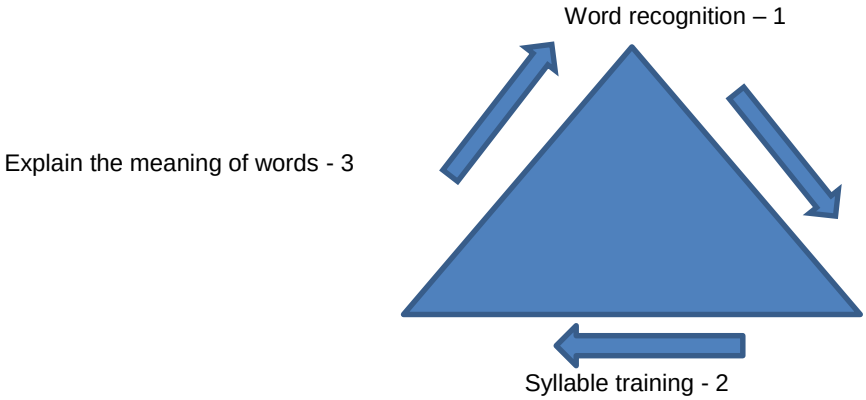


Diagram 4.1: Dealing with difficult words

4.6. Qualitative analysis of the embedded audio sound of learners' reading

This section of the study analyses the reading of learners recorded during a fluency reading test in their various schools which is embedded in the study (see embedded recordings). The section analyses what was correct or incorrect in the reading of learners and how the model developed and designed in this study could help deal with their reading challenges. The audio recordings that are selected were from one struggling reader, the one whose reading was rated moderately middle-of-the-range and the one who read relatively well.

(i) Struggling reader: Embedded audio sound

This reader struggles a lot at reading words as they appear. Though he is reading laboriously, his major problem is recognizing words and part of his problem is insufficient background knowledge of similar words. Dambacher, Slattery, Yang, Kliegl, and Rayner (2013:1468) state that effective reading requires the coordination of oculomotor control and word recognition. On the other hand, fixation duration must be long enough to accumulate sufficient information about the orthography and meaning of the words readers view. This can only be possible when a reader has sufficient background knowledge of the vocabulary. The reader certainly did not have these resources. His way of compensating for the problem was to create his new and idiosyncratic words from the words he did not recognise. Speed reading for this reader was never in question and what can be done for this reader is expose him to more reading material. Theme based reading offers the benefits of frequently occurring words. For a learner who struggles at the level of word recognition, more exposure to theme-based material could develop their word base resources. The more frequent the word appears in a text, the more familiarity with the word and, by extension, its retention (Han, 2015).

(ii) Average reader: embedded audio recordings

This learner has a challenge in reading words as they appear in the text (see words learners struggled within 4.5.1.2). Her challenge calls for modelling of the reading by the teacher and teaching of high-frequency words/vocabulary in the text, all of which are incorporated in the TTM. The model also offers the benefit of repetition of texts and words that ultimately enhances familiarity and retrieval. Though words frequently occur in theme-based texts, they are used differently in specific contexts.

The speed at which the participant reads is normal and her recognition of words and decoding them is fairly acceptable. The challenge exhibited in the audio-recording relates to insufficient background knowledge resources. Comprehension is the last component of reading and the likelihood of performing well in comprehension is less likely in such a moderate reader.

(iii) Fluent reader

A reader who is fluent articulates words accurately at the correct speed, with the correct expression and comprehends what they read. An expression is explained as ‘reading

like normal speech.' The participant in this study observed punctuation for pacing the reading and affording the requisite stress, full stops and her control of breathing was adequately paced. Evidence on how she read suggests that she is exposed to reading quite often and her word identification is superior to the other two. Her composure was commendable and such a readers exhibit sufficient potential to fully comprehend what she reads.

4.7. Quantitative analysis of the reading of texts

This section of the study reports on the tests administered to establish the learners' reading abilities. There were two sets of tests, the first one was a silent reading test (Reading Test 1) (SRT1) which was a once-off test at the beginning of the study, designed to identify entry reading levels of learners in order for the researcher to develop a clear picture of the reading challenges. The second one, Reading Test 2 (SRT2) was a Fluency test (read aloud test) consisting of five additional tests. Reading text 1-5, (RTX1 to RTX5) aimed to test learners on various issues related to fluent reading abilities, that is, speed, expression and comprehension. From the tests that these learners took after each reading, word recognition, inferencing, application of acquired knowledge and the use of some grammar structures were tested.

4.6.1. Silent reading

The first stage of the qualitative data gathering began with silent reading. The test aimed at establishing learners' reading ability through a speed-reading exercise. Learners were given a 220 words reading text to read in one 1 minute 30 seconds. The formula used to calculate the speed for each reader was:

The number of words read divided by the number of words in a passage x 100.

For example:

In the case where a learner managed to read 170 words, the calculation was as follows:

- the number of words read (170) divided by the number of words in the passage (220) multiplied by 100 which should give us 77% as the speed at which the learner read in the allocated time of 1 minute 30 seconds.

The table below displays the outcome of that exercise (Number of learners and their reading levels).

According to Piper (2010); Pang, Muaka, Bernhardt and Kamil (2003), fluency is the ability to read a text easily. These researchers state that fluency consists of four parts, namely accuracy, speed, expression and comprehension. When a reader is fluent they must be able to coordinate all four of the above-mentioned aspects of fluency.

There were five texts selected for this study, all covering the same theme which is “Natural Disasters”. According to Alptekin, Ercetin and Bayyurt (2007), a single theme offers numerous advantages for learners in the task of reading (see 5.1). One of those advantages is that words used in similarly themed texts are repeated a number of times and thus are easily recollected. The texts used in this study were of different length, complexity and were allocated different amounts of time for reading. From the reading of the texts, the four parts that constitute fluency were tested and learners proceeded with the other reading tests at the end of every reading which measured word meaning, application of acquired knowledge, inference skills and prediction. The four fluency parts are discussed hereunder and formulas to calculate each isexplained.

(a) Accuracy

With accuracy, a learner is expected to read words facility, without having to stop and decode by sounding them out or breaking them into syllabic chunks (Piper, 2010). A

formula to measure reading speed was used while words read incorrectly were underlined and counted. The incorrect words were divided by the total number of words the learner was able to read and not the total number of words in the passage. For example, in a reading passage consisting of 123 words where a learner only managed to read 15 words in the time allocated, the calculation first determined the speed at which the text was read:

Speed = total words read – divided by total words in the text –multiplied by 100, which makes 15/123 100 = 12%.*

The second process was to determine the accuracy with which the learner was able to read. Suppose the learner read 3 words incorrectly in her total of 15, then 3 was be divided into 15 and multiplied by 100 to get the answer. The answer is calculated at 20% of the words read incorrectly.

(b) Speed

The speed at which the learner reads should be efficient, meaning that it should neither be too fast nor too slow. The formula for calculating speed was discussed above. It should be kept in mind that at whatever speed the learner reads, accuracy, speed and expression should lead to comprehension and if comprehension cannot be attained, then such a learner cannot be called a fluent reader.

(a) Expression

According to Piper (2010) as well as Pang, Muaka, Bernhardt and Kamil (2003), expression in fluency refers to the ability to read in a way that sounds like spoken language; it has to do with the rise and fall of the words on the page and the tempo that the reader assigns to the text. This means that the learner uses appropriate emotion to read aloud, pauses for periods and commas and emphasises important words. Because the literature on reading does not provide a formula to calculate expression, this study offered the following formula.

For the purpose of this research, a sentence consisting of five (5) words was rationally accepted as of the right reading length for Grade 8. Therefore, in order to determine the expression rate the number of words the learner was able to read is divided by 5 (which is the mean length of a sentence assumed to be appropriate at the Grade 8 level of reading).

Table 4.5: Silent reading diagnostic scores

Reading level (Between - And) Number of words read in %	0-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-100	Total no of learners
School A1	31	4	7	6	3	0	51
School A2	11	21	11	4	1	1	49
School A3	10	27	7	2	1	1	48
School A4	22	12	5	5	5	1	50
Total reading level %	37%	32%	15%	9%	5%	2%	198

4.6.2. Discussion of silent reading scores

The average percentage of learners who read between 0-49 in the four schools stood at 37%(see Table 4.4 above). The picture painted by the numbers suggests that there is much work still to be covered with regard to helping learners become better readers. These are learners who were unable to read a sentence without a struggle and who continuously relied on the researcher for assistance throughout the reading exercise. In school A1 the number of inarticulate readers outweighs those who were able to read and this raises serious concern.

There are various reasons that could be advanced for the poor reading performance of the learners in this study. The first is that silent reading is more likely to produce inaccurate scores because learners are not totally honest, especially when they are told that their reading would be assessed. The other reason could be that feeder schools may not have done sufficient preparatory work in enabling the learners to read proficiently. The true picture of these possibilities could be observed from the second exercise on reading aloud.

4.6.3. Discussion of the Fluency test results (Reading aloud)

At the beginning of the fluency test, the researcher asked Grade 8 teachers in each of the schools visited the following question:

- *What aspect of fluency is a challenge to your learners?*

For example:

Calculating the expected expression rate of the passage, for example

- The passage has 281 words
- The learner manages to read only 150 words, then the calculation was as follows.

-281 (number of words in the passage if the learner has read all the words in the passage) – divided 5 (the length of a sentence a Grade 8 should read with ease and understanding). The answer is 56.2 (expression rate if the learner has read exceptionally well – 100%).

In the case where a learner has read a certain number of words, those words divided by 5 to arrive at her expression rate.

If a learner managed to read 150 words out of a total of 281 words, the calculation determines her expression rate out of the 150. The 150 words read are then divided by 5 giving us an expression rate of 30. The 30 (53.3%) expression rate is slightly more than half the expected expression rate of 56.2 (100%) (expected from a fluent reader). It can be assumed that the more the learner is exposed to reading and or remediation, the more her expression level improves.

(b) Comprehension

The real goal for reading is comprehension (Piper, 2010; Pang, Muaka, Bernhardt and Kamil, 2003). The ease with which a learner is able to read facilitates comprehension. The learners were given a test out of 6 marks to summarize the gist of what they had read. Three of the five tests were analysed to assess the reading comprehension levels of learners in the four schools visited and the results are presented in the table below. Each test was marked out of 6.

Table 4.6: Fluency score

Reading passage 1

Reader no –	**Accuracy**			**Speed in %**	**Expression**	**Comprehension in**
	Words in the passage	**281 (no of words in the passage)**	**100**	**(Words read/ tot words in passage x100)**	(Words read/5 = tot) Example 281 divide by 5 = 56.2 28/56.2*100 =	**%** **Test Mark out of 6**
Reader no 1 School A1	**Words read** **Words read incorrectly**	140 8	49.8 6 - (8 divide by 140 multiplied by 100)	49.8	28 (49.8)	0
Reader 1 School A2	**Words read** **Words read incorrectly**	281 0	100 0	100	56.2 (100)	83.3
Reader no 1 School A3	**Words read** **Words read incorrectly**	281 3	100 1	100	56.2(100)	67
Reader 1 School A4	**Words read** **Words read incorrectly**	281 3	100 1	100 Reading too fast	56.2 (100)	17
Reading passage 2						
Reader no –	**Accuracy** **Words in the passage**	202	100%	**Speed in %**	**Expression %** 40.4(100)	**Comprehension in %**
Reader no 2 School A1	**Words read** **Words read incorrectly**	38 32	18.8 84	19	7.6 (18.8)	0
Reader no 2 School A2	**Words read** **Words read incorrectly**	83 3	41 3.5	42	16.6(41)	66.6
Reader no 2 School A3	**Words read** **Words read incorrectly**	125 3	61 2.4	61	25 (61.8)	50
Reader no 2 School A4	**Words read** **Words read incorrectly**	85 5	42 6	42	17(42)	66.6
Reader no –	**Accuracy** **Words in the passage**	408	100	**Speed in %**	**Expression** 81.6	**Comprehension in %**

Reader no 3 School A1	**Words read** **Words read incorrectly**	134 18	32.8 13.4	32.8	26.8 (32.8)	0
Reader no 3 School A2	**Words read** **Words read incorrectly**	231 13	56.6 9.7	56.6	46.2 (56.6)	16.6
Reader no 3 School A3	**Words read** **Words read incorrectly**	365 6	89.5 1.6	89.5	73 (89)	100
Reader no 3 School A4	**Words read** **Words read incorrectly**	147 11	36 7.4	36	29.4(36)	66.6

Table.4.5: Reading fluency results

4.6.4. Discussion of fluency results captured in Table 4.5

There are some important issues the fluency test reveals about the reading abilities of the learners. The first is the reading rate (speed) and its effect to comprehension. According to the results of the test, the rate alone does not guarantee effective comprehension results. For example, in the rate performance of Reader 1 (School A1 – Reading passage 1) the learner's rate is way below 50% which explains the zero (0) percentage mark on comprehension. The learner continued to score poorly in two more tests in both rate and comprehension. On the other hand, there are learners with a better reading rate above 50% who went on to perform poorly in comprehension (see reader 1 – school A4) and reader 3 - school A3. It is important to know why this is the case and how this could be improved. Yuill and Oakhill (1998) provide this reason to explain why poor and good readers sometimes fail to comprehend a text. They fail:

1) Because of poor ability to draw inferences from text.

2) To use working memory in order to integrate information into a logic model.

3) To reflect on own reasoning/comprehension, i.e, monitor own comprehension during reading, to look back on text in order to understand.

In order to establish if the reasons provided by Yuill and Oakhill (1998) are inconsistent with whatever reason(s) teachers perceive to be for their learners' failure to comprehend, they were asked the following question;

What do you think are the reasons for learners to perform poorly on comprehension? Below are the responses provided by teachers from schools A1 – A5.

Teacher from school A1: *Some of my learners are too playful and read without concentration which affects their comprehension negatively*.

Teacher from school A2: *Those learners who struggle with reading get so discouraged to an extent that they give up completely which affects their will to comprehend.*

Teacher from school A3: *I think the reason for failure to comprehend is their inability to understand the question asked in the text.*

Teacher from school A4: *They fail to comprehend because some of them do not take reading seriously.*

Teacher from school A5: *Until they (learners) improve their reading, they will continue to perform poorly on comprehension.*

Wallot, Hausmann, Lyby and Kloos (2014) study arrived at contrasting findings to the above study of Yuill and Oakhill (1998), they found that a better reading rate yielded significant comprehension. This finding should thus serve as a motivation for teachers to improve their learners' reading rate. What my study gave as findings were inconclusive results in that some of the learners who scored poor on reading rate and could not finish reading their text, scored fairly well in comprehension (see Table.4.5) and on the other hand some of those who scored substantially well on reading rate went on to perform poorly in comprehension.

In Reading Passage 2 from learner 2 (school A2 and A4 and Reading Passage 3 learner 3 from school A4) there is an important observation that points to the importance of Theme Teaching and Reading Approach. There are learners whose reading rate is below 50% and the expression rate low as well but these students continue to score better in comprehension (see Reader 2 – school A2 and A 4). When selecting the reading materials it is important to select a theme that the learners can relate to and one that would enable them to tap into their background and existing knowledge.

An expression is also the most important element of reading. Learners should be able to hear themselves read and what they are reading about. Readers with an expression rate

less than half of the maximum are more likely to perform poorly on comprehension. (See Reader 3–school A4).

4.6.5. Teacher response to the question:

- "*What aspect of fluency is a challenge to your learners?"*

This question above and the response of teachers generated points of arguments which covered the following topics, namely:

(i) Importance of theme-based reading
(ii) Developing lexical abilities of learners
(iii) Theme teaching and vocabulary
(iv) Reading a text like its writer
(v) Theme teaching and reading like a writer
(vi) The importance of selecting theme-based material.

(a) School A1 (Teacher)

> *My learners are struggling with a number of reading aspects, one of them being word recognition, especially the older ones. They also struggle with reading for comprehension.*

This study on the other hand found that learners not only struggle with the word recognition and comprehension, but struggle with component of reading called Fluency items, (see discussion on 4.6.3 and 4.6.4. and table 4.5 above). A study byTaylor (2014:17) focussed its attention on how teachers were trained to teach reading. In his own words he observed some alarming findings:

> "Across all five institutions, there may be insufficient focus on equipping student teachers to guide IP learners to become proficient readers and writers/producers of texts in a range of genres and modes. In particular, little or no attention is given to reading pedagogies across the sample (Taylor (2014:17).

In another study by Madikiza, Cekiso, Tshotsho and Landa (2018) which looked at whether teachers apply teaching strategies in their classroom and which one are they using. They too observed worrying results. They blame poor reading performance on the lack of knowledge by South African teachers on the application of reading strategies. In engaging with the learners during reading, the researcher established that learners struggled with reading words within a sentence structure and could therefore not comprehend the meanings within a sentence, the subsequent paragraphs and then the entire text. They also found out that teachers' knowledge about teaching strategies were not the same. This point to problems as entrenched in the system of education and that learners are the one left to pay the price.

(l) Importance of theme-based reading

Built in the Model is theme-based selection of the reading material. Word recognition was discussed fully in Chapter 2 (sections, 2.10; 2.11; 2.12.4; 2.18 and 2.19) Chapter 4 (section 4.5.1.2. and Chapter 5 (section 5.1) to provide an insight into the importance of theme-based selection of the reading material to word recognition base.

(b) School A2 (Teacher)

My learners cannot integrate the meaning of words in the text to construct meaning. They also lack the requisite vocabulary to communicate effectively in the classroom setting. Pronunciation of words is also a challenge (see section 4.5.1.2)

Below is what the literature provides regarding the above challenges and how the TTM can help address such challenges.

(i) Developing the lexical ability of learners

One of the strategies that learners seem to favour more in Vocabulary Learning Strategies is repetition (Lawson and Hogben, 1996; Gu and Johnson, 1996). Loucky (2003c) suggested a taxonomy of Vocabulary acquisition which proposes that effective lexical processing of new vocabulary may be done by using **cyclical** series of open-ended phases for assessing, **accessing**, **archiving**, analysing, anchoring, **associating**, activating, anticipating, **reassessing**, and **relearning** new terms. His assertion is that to

develop vocabulary will improve word recognition which has proved to be a challenge for most learners in this study re-teaching, repetition offer learners an opportunity to go back and forth in and assess words they met and integrate their use in a new and different setting. This practice improves retention of words as learners play around with them to create meaning in different settings. Repetition offers more benefits that learners do not only learn words but get to experiment with the use of such words, something with promotes language acquisition and confidence in learners.

(ii) Theme Teaching Model and Vocabulary Learning.

This model is designed to help build learners' vocabulary reserves thus contributing to language learning. In Step 2 of the model, the teacher selects words that may pose a challenge to learners' ability to comprehend the text and explain their meaning and use in different settings. Theme based reading recycle words and make them familiar to the learner which improves recognition and pronunciation. During this Step, the teacher model the reading, explain unfamiliar word and provide an example of their use by linking their relevance in the previous themes they have learned. A lot is done in part of the model, linking previously acquired knowledge to new one, building the learner interest in the theme, teach new vocabulary and model the reading.

> "Reading won't help you much unless you learn to read like a writer. You must look at a book the way a carpenter looks at a house someone else built, examining the details in order to see how it was made" (64)

Charles Moran, a professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, urges learners to read like writers because: When learners read like writers they understand and participate in the writing. They see the choices the writer has made, and see how the writer has coped with the consequences of those choices . . .

> We "see" what the writer is doing because we read as writers; we see because we have written ourselves and know the territory know the feel of it, know some of the moves ourselves." (61).

What is built in the model:

> Step 3 expose learners to reading as a writer. The teacher encourages learners to formulate questions about the text, the language the writer uses and questioning the selection of certain words used in the text. In other instances, the teacher instructs learners to provide for the story a climax point that different from the one furnished and provides the story with an intriguing end. Peha (1995-2003) puts at the centre of reading "Ideas". With ideas as an important part of the writer learners should be taught to ask questions like:
>
> - How does the writer reveal the main idea?
> - What types of details does the writer use?
> - How does the writer achieve his or her purpose?
> - How does the writer's choice of ideas affect the reader?

In this step of reading the teacher takes his learners through the stages of thinking throughout the text and being creative thinkers.

(c) School A3 (Teacher)

> *Often times my learners do not understand the text from the writer's point of view*

(i) Reading a text like its writer

There are two ways to read a text, first as the reader which learners always do, and the second way is to read like the writer. Each of the ways has its unique characters. For example, when one reads like a reader often times the focus is on the things the writer wants to convey as opposed to how the writer he conveys it. When reading like a reader we are intrigued by the words the writer uses as opposed to why such choice of words. In Peha's words (1995-2003:3), *a reader like a writer means*:

> '*We look deeply into the text hunting in certain specific ways searching for clues as to what the writer is trying to say. When we read interactively, we*

ask questions about the text and our reactions to it, and we use the answers to develop a sense of how the text works. It's as if we start a conversation between the writer, the writing, and our self'

Therefore, in the teaching of reading, critical thinking should be pursued vigorously in each Language classroom.

(ii) Theme Teaching Model and reading like the writer

A number of writers present the importance of encouraging and teaching our learners to teach to read like writers.

Peha (1995-2003:3):

> "When we read from the perspective of a writer, we focus less on what the writer is trying to say and more on how the writer is saying it. Specifically, we look at the techniques the writer is using to get his or her message across and how those techniques affect us as we experience the text."

Author David Jauss makes a similar comparison when he states that:

(i) Selecting theme-based material

How to select material and why, have been discussed fully under the following section 2.11 and page 54 (d), and educate us as to the importance of background knowledge in reading. Retrieval of information in the background knowledge becomes automatic and spontaneous when information/words exist in our background knowledge. Therefore, pose a challenge to teachers to provide learners with material that will help increase their background knowledge. In the case where the word or words and information is new to the learner, she attempts to break it into syllables which are not dependent on the phonological information (Han, 2015). The theme selected reading material is very key in assisting learners to better retain information and to link with previously learned material.

4.6.6. Reading levels of each of the four schools visited

Reading fluency has to improve if learners are to perform well in their studies. The score obtained by all the schools was 55.73% which means that learners only managed to complete their reading tasks just above 50%, suggesting that comprehension of texts is more likely to be compromised by the results. These numbers have far-reaching implications for the overall scholastic performance of these learners and may spell doom in all their school subjects. Understanding tests and examinations instructions often determines whether a learner makes it or not. Reading ability includes the ability to break down words (decoding), the correct pronunciation of words, correct reading speed and observing all punctuation marks.

Table: 4.6. Scores for reading ability of each school

	A1	**A2**	**A3**	**A4**
Average per school	51.1	71	49.4	51.4
Total aver for all schools				55.73%

A report issued by the National Institute of Literacy (2008) states that the foundational reading and writing skills that develop from birth to age five have a clear and consistently strong relationship with later conventional literacy skills. The argument posited by the report links the importance of early childhood literacy to later reading ability and success in learning. Therefore, it is derived from the above reason that early childhood reading development has to be taken seriously as we are one nation that assigns so much per capita expenditure on education. The next part of the study analyse the performance of learners in the tests they took after every reading of each text.

4.6.6. Performance in a grammar test

The total average percentage achieved by learners in the three tests is 38.5% which, is a poor mark and shows a huge inarticulate reading capacity of learners. New ways of teaching grammar ought to be found. Learners went on to perform well at 63.8% in the second test (see benefits of theme-based reading (Chapter 2 – 2.19.). Some researcher

advocate for the use ‘context-based teaching of grammar. In the third test learners performed partly because of its difficult content.

4.6.7. Inferencing capacity of learners

The following scores are prepared per school: School A1 (20%), A2 (50%), A3 (100%) and School A4 (87.5%). Total average for all schools 64%

The two questions which the learners were to answered are as follows:

1. **“**The storm we are expecting might be **severe.**” What can you encourage people to do? Choose the correct answer.

   (a) Ignore the alert and continue with their business? 1
   (b) Stay home and prepare for any disaster? 1

2. If the hail is **severe**, what do you think will happen to the cars when they are not parked inside the garage?

Performance for School A1 and A2 was not satisfactory. Since the questions expected learners to search for their reasoning outside the written text they couldn’t link what is in the text with what they already know.

4.6.8. Understanding of the meaning of words in the texts

Performance in word meaning (vocabulary) was good especially material with content that is derived from the environment familiar to that of the learners. The results per school are as follows:

Table 4.8: Understanding the meaning of words

A1 (20%)	A2 (87.5)	A3 (60%)	A4 (70%)	Average of 76.9%).

Reading based on themes achieved in this case good results as far as word recognition and word meaning is concerned.

4.7. Analysis of teacher response (questionnaire)

4.7.1. Part 1: Teaching experience

Out of the four teachers in schools visited, two of them had five years' experience and two of them had between 5-10 and 10-15 respectively. In my view teachers in the schools had good experience based on their years of service in the teaching profession. Therefore, it cannot be said that challenges that the learners may experience could be attributed to their lack of experience, rather if such challenges are established the cause may emanate from other tributaries other than teacher experience.

4.7.2. Location of schools

Four schools were visited, two in the rural villages and two in a township. The reason for selecting schools like that was to determine whether the reading challenges for Grade 8 learners are similar between rural and urban schools. The answer to the question will be discussed through the help of qualitative data collected as well as the response received from a teacher questionnaire. According to performance outcomes of learners on a number of reading tasks, it is evident that the perception that urban schools perform better than rural schools is not always true, much depends on many other factors. The worst performing school in this study was in an urban township. During observation week, the researcher discovered that the level of discipline in that school is at an all-time low. The principal was in an acting position and as a result teachers did not duly recognise his authority. They did as they wished and learners then copied that laissez-fare attitude from them. Apart from the given reason above, performance of the school in Grade 12 examinations over the years has never been consistent. One year, the performance would be high and the following three to four years the performance wouldbe down to the level of what is known as "trapped zone".

Schools battle to maintain high numbers of learners in order to avoid losing teachers based on the Department of Education policy that regulates teacher-pupil ratio. When the roll goes down, teachers are transferred to schools where the roll is high and this move not only createsfear in the hearts of teachers, it also hasa way of affecting teachers' personal budget and morale. As a result, in the frantic attempt to keep the numbers high

learners who are admitted are not screened. Therefore, schools such as this admit learners from everywhere including their feeder school or schools.

4.7.3. Part 2: Reading problems - Analysis of statements presented to teachers and their responses

This section of the study deliberates on how teachers responded to all statements posed to them with regard the reading of their learners.

R1- Learners in Grade 8 are competent in their reading

The results to the above statement were as follows, two (2) teachers (50%) saying neither and two (2) agreeing (50%). What this means according to their responsesis that learners in Grade 8 can read well, which was refuted by the feedback obtained from the reading programme. Reading proficiency of Grade 8 stood at 56%. This implies that teachers are either in denial about the parlous state of reading of their learners or they do not have a tool to either measure or evaluate the reading proficiency of their learners. 56% is slightly above 50% and this does not translate into competency in reading. If learners are competent that should translate into good word recognition, improved reading speed and reading with comprehension to mention just the few. The 'Neither' response in this instance suggests that indeed teachers lack tools and the knowledge of how to measure/ evaluate the reading competency levelsof their learners.

R2 - I have a proper remedial reading programme in place to assist those learners who are not competent

I posed this question twice (during a casual chat with teachers and in the questionnaire. The reason for this approach was to record their actual response as opposed to only the number (frequency). They offered the following response:

School A1: *Our school time table does not cater for remedial reading classes. The only single periods that I have twice a week are used for marking.*

School A2; **A3; A4**: *We have remedial classes.*

During my visit I have not seen any evidence of a remedial programme in any of the four schools. Though reading ability levels of learners for all schools visited was at 55.73% (see table 4.6 above), a lot of work still need to be done.

R3- The time allocated for reading is not enough

Two teachers disagreed with the statement while one was undecided and another agreed. Their response state that they are satisfied with the teaching time yet their claim was very much untrue. If time was enough as they claim, the three schools should have had a remedial period in their time-table which they did not have (See argument presented in 4.3) and this should therefore reflect in reading performance of their learners.

R4-My school has enough reading resources

Three out of four teachers disagreed with the above statement. Reading resources implied reading corners in each class and a library. There was no evidence of a reading corner in the classes visited nor the library in all the schools. The status quoin the schools explains the 55.73% (4.5.5.2) of reading abilities of their learners. It means lack of exposure to reading opportunities at schools.

R5- My learners are reading at age appropriate level

Teachers' responsesto the question indicated a split where 50% strongly agreed and 50 % disagreed. With the 50% agreeing that learners are not reading at the level, teachers acknowledge that there is a problem which calls for our concerted effort to address. Response of the teachers are consistent with what different studies have uncovered, for example; Annual National Assessments (ANAs), also from the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ), 2010) and from the Progress in International Reading (PIRLS) study of 2006 and 2011 as reported in Howie et al. (2008, 2012).

R7- I have a perception that Grade 8 learners have reading difficulties because of poor teaching in Foundation phase

Three teachers (75%) agree that Grade 8 learners have reading difficulties because of poor teaching in Foundation phase. In a study conducted by van Staden and Howie (2008), found that more than half of Grade Four learners had teachers who exposed them to reading aloud almost every day, which takes away the opportunity from learners to practice reading. They argue that such reading practice is teacher-centred.

R8- I have been trained to teach reading.

Three teachers (75%) out of four reported that they have been trained to teach reading. They presumably got this training from their teacher training colleges or universities or from teacher development workshops. Though teachers claimed to have received training in teaching reading, a recent study by Madikiza, Cekiso, Tshotsho and Landa (2018) reported that teachers over-rely on reading aloud as a strategy to teach reading. According to them, this strategy is a very traditional strategy which they themselves were taught through by their teachers during their schooling years. This strategy does not facilitate reading. In school A1 and A3 something which was impressing about the teachers was that they allocated more time to reading during my stay at their schools but reading strategy used was mostly reading aloud and a teacher interjecting to correct a learner. This practice though it alerted learners to their mistakes, it interfered with their concentration thus affecting their comprehension.

R10- My classes have large number of learners.

All four teachers agreed with the statement that their classes have a large number of learners (See table 4.2 above). Teaching reading under those circumstances is practically difficult to handle. Classroom management becomes impossible. During the time of observation learners were rowdy and sometimes uncontrollable. Grade 8 learners are still young and playful, in a large class they know that it is not easy for teachers to identify them to be reprimanded.

From all schools visited, 4 teachers (100%) hold a view that socioeconomic factors play a role in the ability of learners to read (their view is also supported by literature reviewed in Chapter 2). Schools A1 and A2 are found in the township and, learners admitted in those schools are from very poor socio-economic background. They have scored the worst in comprehension throughout the five tests (See table 4.5), this happens despite the historic transition from apartheid to the new political dispensation. Bayat, Louw and Rena (2014) in their study blamed underperformance of selected secondary schools in Western Cape Province on some key socio-economic factors such as hunger, lack of proper clothing, lack of parental support, study motivation, self-esteem and language proficiency.

R11-Socio-economic factors play a role in the ability to read.

(See performance of learners in School A1 and A2: table. 4.10)

Table 4.8. Performance of School A1 and A2 in a summary test (testing comprehension

	School A1						**School A2**				
Learner	Test 1 Out of (6)	Test 2 Out of (6)	Test 3 Out of (6)	Test 4 Out of (6)	Test 5 Out of (8)		Test 1 Out of (6)	Test 2 Out of (6)	Test 3 Out of (6)	Test 4 Out of (6)	Test 5 Out of (8)
Learner 5	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	1	1
Learner 4	4	2	2	2	4		0	0	1	1	4
Learner 3	0	0	0	0	0		5	4	4	3	5
Learner 2	0	0	0	0	0		3	2	0	1	2
Learner 1	0	1	1	0	1						

Learners from school A and A2 comes from poor families as pointed out by school management. They used paying school fund as a measure of affordability. Parents of learners in these two schools were behind with paying school fund not exceeding R300. Other than the school fund some learners' clothing showed signs of aging. The reading in this table shows a genuine struggle by learners to comprehend which is a problem of reading.

R12- Few reading resources affect learner's reading abilities in a negative way.

Three teachers, 3 (75%) shared the view that the presence of reading resources has a way of affecting learners' reading positively. All schools visited did not have a library or reading corners. The problem with lack of resources is evident in the results of 2016 PIRLS which monitored trends literacy (Rule, 2017). Though learners were issued reading textbooks, learners were reported to leave books at home, claiming that they are stolen and/or could get lost. A teacher in School A2 asked a group of Grade 8 learners why they did not bring their reading material to class as he wanted them to read independently on their own, and the response was just as disarming as reported in the PIRLS Report (2017).

R13- I have measures in place to assist struggling readers

Teachers responded positively to the above question with 3 (75%) versus 1 (25%) who responded not to be having any measure in place to assist learners who are struggling with reading. This points to the need for remedial intervention. Adeolle (2005) blamed poor instruction for the reading problem among children, and recommended high quality instruction. Thus, it is teachers' responsibility to provide high quality reading instruction early to meet with the learning need of the children to reduce challenges posed in lower primary school. Ugwuanyi, Onu, Eskay, Obiyo and Igbo (2012) claim that with or without remedial classes, children can still benefit from learning to read programme, and also in word recognition.

4.8. Part 3: Issues that affect the reading of learners (R18A – R18N).

The statements posed to teachers seek to establish from teachers what the real reading challenges of their learners are. The table below summarises teachers' responses to learner challenges which they perceived as seriously disturbing.

Table 4.10: Summary of reading challenges that are least to most disturbing to teachers

Challenges from learners' reading that are Least to Most disturbing to teachers	Least	Moderate	More	Most
R18A. Lack of reading materials	1	1	1	1
R18B. Poor reading background	1		1	2
R18C. Pronunciation of words	1			3
R18D. Limited vocabulary	1			3
R18E. Poor word recognition	1		1	2
R18F. Weak decoding skills that affect reading	1		2	1
R18G. Reading as perceiving textual features and relating these to schemas of texts and words	1		2	1
R18H. Reading as selecting some textual features to convert to concepts	1		1	2
R18I. Reading as integrating lexical information (Meaning of words)	1	1	1	1
R18J. Reading as predicting the content of text beyond the part currently in view	1		1	2
R18K. Reading as relating what is understood to what has been previously read and understood. (Connecting what was previously learned to new information)	1		2	1
R18L. Reading as comprehending what the writer intended to say. (Understanding the text from the writer's point of view)	1		1	2
R18M. Reading as integrating syntactic information to construct meaning. (Understanding grammatical rules in order to construct meaning)	1		1	2
R18N. Reading as integrating semantic information in a text to construct meaning. (connecting meaning of words to form a sentence)	1	1	1	1

4.8.1.Discussion of some issues affecting the reading of learners.

R18A Lack of reading material

The table. 4.11 (p120) below summarises the response of teachers on whether their schools have sufficient reading material or not. There was a mixed response from teachers. Two teachers in school A3 and A4 stated that their schools have the sufficient number of books. That was evident during the reading lesson where every learner had his or her book. The chaos observed in School A1 and A2 was not experienced in their classes because of the presence of reading material enough for their learners.

According to department policy, learners are issued with reading materials at the beginning of each year but learners choose to leave their books at home. As a result of that, it was difficult for the teachers to execute the lesson as planned because of this fact. About five (5) minutes were wasted while learners went to other classes to borrow books.

R18B -Poor reading background

Three teachers (75%) are of the view that learners come from primary schools with a poor reading background. When conducting the reading sessions, learners in school A1 were the worst readers and besides they are the ones who during my observation period in their school were the most ill-disciplined and never brought reading materials with them to school. What I could deduce from school A1's performance in reading and their attitude towards reading was that reading was not for them. They tried everything to eat-up time for reading through their bad behaviour. It is important that secondary teachers have a system in place to assess the level of reading abilities of new learners. The information obtained should be used to design remedial programmes to assist struggling learners.

Poor reading background often is caused by a lack of reading materials at schools, lack of interest in reading by learners and lack of parental enthusiasm in helping their children with reading at home. This is confirmed in a National Survey into the Reading and Book Reading behaviour of Adult South Africans, commissioned and funded by the Department of Arts and Culture where reading was compared with other leisure activities such as music, watching TV/Videos, socialising with family and friends, reading came 6th in the

rating of preference by South African adults (South African Book Development Council, 2007).

The sentiments expressed by Yeh (2014:1) in ‘Global Perspectives on Human Languages: South African Context’, specialists point out that South Africa does not have a "reading culture" is supported by the findings of the survey mentioned above into the preference of South African adults.

The attitudes toward reading, in particular, are not conducive to literacy, and these include:

- Reading is not something people do during their free time;
- Reading is not something useful outside of school;
- Reading is often not seen as an empowering skill (Yeh, 2014:1)

The above-mentioned survey found that more than half of South African households have no leisure books – a concern that affects the reading culture especially of the young generation outside of school. In the quest to establish the reasons behind the state of affairs, the survey obtained the following response;

- Perceptions are that books are perceived as expensive.
- Book reading occurs at no set time for the majority of readers and is a home-bound activity for most.
- Those committed to book reading are likely white affluent – a reflection of a book reading culture and access to books is being more prevalent in this socio-demographic profile.
- Barriers to book reading can be managed – however, efforts will take time and money (SABDC, 2007).

R18C Pronunciation of words

Three teachers (75%) view pronunciation of words as a problem for their learners whereas one teacher (25%) did not.

From a review of their reading captured in the video tapes, learners who were struggling with reading, were having difficulties with the pronunciation of words and word recognition. The most common problem among a number of them was that they replaced

words they could not read with the word or words that appear to look similar to the one in the text, for example, they read “affect” as “infect”. Some of the learners who were not sure of some words they were supposed to read chose to either skipped the words or murmur them. Words are the building structures of sentences, paragraphs and a text, failure to recognize or pronounce poses a serious threat to their abilities to comprehend. Therefore, children who read less do not accumulate vocabulary and will as a result struggle with pronunciation when encountering new words. Lack of extra reading results in fewer words and such learners who do not read are threatened by every reading task they encounter. They either refuse to read in front of other learners and display the kind of attitude which is not acceptable to the teacher and one that breaks the conduct rules of the class. These learners would rather be in detention than to be in class. These views were expressed by a teacher in (School A1).

R18D Limited vocabulary

Three teachers (75%) view vocabulary as a problem for their learners whereas one teacher (25%) did not.

Learners do not lack vocabulary, the problem with them is that they lack appropriate text vocabulary. Some learners dropped words they know where they were not supposed to drop. Their Limited vocabulary is a result of reading less. Because learners are allowed to take “The Reader” home, parents should seize this opportunity to assist their children with reading. For those parents who read newspapers every weekend or every day should encourage their children to read with them. In the case where children are intimidated by newspapers, for example, parents can direct their children to electronic news and have a mechanism in place to monitor their reading. A parent may have a session in a week where the child discusses the topic of interest they have read.

R18E Poor word recognition

More teachers (75%) are troubled by the inability of their learners to read a sentence from the beginning to the end without a struggle. The struggle implies that not much of the basic skill of reading which ought to have been learned at the primary level was mastered.

Extended reading introduces both words and pronunciation to the reader thus building their vocabulary. For those learners who read less are less likely to benefit from exposure to reading materials. Word recognition is the most important element of reading. Lack of it means that a learner cannot progress and enjoy the benefits of reading. Such a learner needs a well-structured reading intervention programme.

R18F Weak decoding skills that affect reading speed.

Seventy-five percent (3 teachers) expressed their concern regarding the weak decoding skills of their learners.

Weak decoding skill means that a reader cannot move beyond the word recognition phase to the word decoding phase. A word skill means a thorough practice of anything that a person wants to master. When such mastery is achieved it then said that you have acquired a particular skill. With reading it will imply the lack of practising reading which will mean that you simply do not possess one of the important skills in reading which is decoding.

R18G Reading as perceiving textual features and relating these to schemas of texts and words.

Teachers (75%) are more disturbed by lack of mental structures that help learners perceive new information. These schemas can help the learners understand how new concepts/information fit into their existing parts of the world. Lack of schemas thereof affects how new information is integrated into their world of knowledge (Nadkarni and Narayanan, 2017).

R18H -Reading as selecting some textual features to convert to concepts

According to seventy-five percent (75%) of teachers, their learners are unable to convert textual features into concepts that help simplify what is communicated by the text. Inability to convert textual features is a result of limited schematic resources. Predicting content and inferring from the title, pictures or table of contents is very useful to readers and they need to be trained on those skills

R18I -Reading as integrating lexical information (Meaning of words) in text to construct meanings.

Two teachers (50%) are of the view that reading as integrating lexical meaning in text to construct meaning is a challenge to their students whereas the other two feel it is a problem but one which not that serious**.**

R18J Reading as predicting content of text beyond the part currently in view

Lack of exposure to reading materials leads to a number of challenges, such as reading fluently, with comprehension and above all to limited vocabulary. Some learners do not fully understand that the meaning of a single word in the text contribute to the actual understanding of the entire paragraph, then a text. A sentence consists of a number of words with each contributing to the broader meaning of a sentence. Number of sentences makes a paragraph and each sentence contribute to the meaning of the paragraph and contribute to the theme of that paragraph. A paragraph is like a dam which is filled by smaller streams which in the context of reading are sentences.

Three teachers (75%) are of the view that their learners have a challenge of not being able to predict the content flow and direction from reading.

A very capable and competent reader is able to read through, guessing or predicting even without certainty what to expect from the text taking a cue from the title of the story, from skimming and scanning of the text, from pictures and the table of contents. Reading according to Bakhtin is a conversation between the reader and the text. It is a dialogue between the reader and the author (Shevtsova, 1992).

Through this engagement, the reader does get the chance to impose himself on how the text should read like as oppose to what the author wants to say. Predicting is also a skill which needs to be practiced in class (Thomas, 1995). Some teachers prefer after reading that the learners write their own text from the text just read. He can ask his learners in groups to write the beginning of the story in the way they think should have been written, the body and the ending.

This kind of reading means the reader is able to fill up the gaps of information that the author may have deliberately left out or mistakenly left out. A good reader is in conversation with the author every-time they begin to read a text. In the process of reading, they ask questions to seek clarity, and they answer those questions from information existing in their background knowledge, they confirm their answers of disproving them after more interaction with the task (Shevtsova, 1992).

R18K -Reading as relating to what is understood to what has been previously read and understood. (Connecting what was previously learned to new information)

The response captured of teachers regarding whether their learners are able to connect what was previously learnt to new information reported that three out (75%) of four teachers agree with the above statement that their learners cannot connect what they already know with new information available in the text. Experiences of life and older information learnt do not go to waste, they are channelled to the back of our minds called background knowledge and later used when we need them most. It is these experiences that come in handy when we are confronted with new and difficult information. No matter how difficult the information may be it is integrated into our old experiences and help to break the new information down. This background knowledge separates good readers from poor readers in a sense that the bulk of information to assist in breaking down the difficult section of the text often seems to be readily available to good readers as opposed to the poor readers (Fisher and Frey, 2009).

R18L Reading as comprehending what the writer intended to say. (Battle to understand the text from the writer's point of view).

Three teachers (75%) are certain that their learners are struggling when it comes to comprehending the text from the writer's point of view.

This kind of reading means the reader is able to fill in the gaps to the information which

the author may have deliberately left out or mistakenly left out. According to Bakhtin (1981) in his "*The Dialogic Imagination*" a good reader is in dialogic conversation with the author every-time they begin to read a text. In the process of reading, they ask questions to seek clarity, and they answer those questions themselves from information existing in

their background knowledge, they confirm their answers of disproving them after more interaction with the task has been done.

R18M -Reading as integrating syntactic information to construct meaning. (Understanding grammatical rules in order to construct meaning).

Two of the teachers (50%) believe their learners experience a challenge as far as integrating grammatical rules in order to construct meaning.

In grammar test, learners' performance was 35.6% which in my view is poor. Without knowledge of grammar, it is not easy to know if the event will take place or has already taken place or will take place in the future. This is crucial in getting to know much about an event.

R18N -Reading as integrating semantic information (Connecting the meaning of words to form a sentence**) in text to construct meaning**.

Two teachers (50%) are of the view that their learners are having a challenge of connecting the meaning of words to form a sentence. Learners who struggle with reading words that form a sentence are less likely to derive meaning from the very words they are reading (Phala, 2013).

4.9. Part 4. Theme reading strategy as a tool to improve reading

The purpose of Part 4 in the study was to seek from the teachers a mandate to design a model that can assist them to deal with reading challenges of their learners. Below is a summary of their responses which explain how the model in Chapter 5 looks like.

Table 4.11: Summary of the theme reading strategy as a tool to improve reading

PLEASE INDICATE THE LEVEL OF YOUR AGREEMENT ON THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS WHERE 1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE, 2 = DISAGREE; 3 = NEITHER; 4 = AGREE AND 5 = STRONGLY AGREE						
		1(SD)	2(D)	3(N)	4(A)	5(SA)
T1	Sufficient background knowledge on a specific topic of interest to a learner affects their reading positively.				2	2
T2	Learners who are interested in a theme would want to read more materials on that theme.				2	2
T3	Theme reading increases a learner's current knowledge, which may fit well into existing knowledge thus boosting it.				2	2
T4	When learners are exposed to one theme, they become familiar with words used in the theme which boosts **word recognition** and **inferencing**.				1	3
T5	Fluency in reading contributes positively to a learner's self-esteem.				1	3
T6	When a learner is assessed on various themes read in class, chances of them scoring high in that assessment is high.			1	1	2
T7	The teacher's ability to raise the level of interest in his/her learners on the theme to be read is important.					4

4.9.1. **Discussion of teachers' responses to Part 4**

The design of the model took its cue from the response of the teachers. The main goal of the model is to assist teachers to develop competent readers. From the table above teachers responded positively to the statements provided to them regarding the shape and content of the model. The information below provides the motivation behind its creation.

T1: Sufficient background knowledge on a specific topic of interest to a learner affects their reading positively.

Exposure to different themes builds a resource of knowledge. Selection of theme-based material throughout the year can improve so much in the learner, such as reading proficiency (McNamara and Magliano, 2009: 34), interest and love for reading which boosts background knowledge.

T2: Learners who are interested in a theme would want to read more materials on that theme.

Heightened interest promote reading. If a topic evokes, one is likely to have a positive feeling about the topic and as a result, learn more. Designing high-interest reading materials is important to facilitate learning, particularly among struggling and unmotivated readers (Coan, 2007). Behind the reading challenge established through this study and the review of literature is the lack of interest of learners in reading. Various research points to this (PIRLS, 2006; South African Book Development Council, 2007). Therefore, the design of the model aimed at resuscitating the interest of learners in reading.

T3: Theme reading increases a learner's current knowledge, which may fit well into existing knowledge thus boosting it.

In a study by Tussa'diah and Nurfadillar (2018) whose objective was to find out the improvement of learners' achievement in a narrative text by using Theme-Based Teaching Approach found that the reading score of learners kept on improving in every test. As a result, the knowledge of learners keeps on improving through exposure to Theme-Based teaching.

T4: When learners are exposed to one theme, they become familiar with words used in the theme which boosts word recognition and inferencing.

The benefit of Theme-Based reading materials is word repetition thus boosting word recognition ability. According to Cameron (2001) through Theme-Based Teaching new vocabulary is learned easily, with the theme providing a meaningful context for

understanding, and for the natural use of a wide range of discourses types both written and spoken. Familiarity with the topics improves inferencing skills.

T5: Fluency in reading contributes positively to a learner's self-esteem

Reading is a process through which learners learn. Its ultimate goal is comprehension (Juyandegan, 2016). It is as much an emotional as a cognitive process and also an affective process (Brown, 2001). Self-esteem is considered an important factor in the success or failure to read lie for every Grade 8 learner. Branden (1985 and 1994) indicated that the biggest barrier to reading success is not a lack of ability or talent but a lack of self-esteem. It is for this reason that the design of the structure of the model was aimed at assisting users to gain self-esteem thus promoting learning through repetition reading.

T6: When a learner is assessed on various themes read in class, chances of them scoring high in that assessment are high

Research tells us that in order for learners to achieve high reading gains and become lifelong readers, reading for comprehension and for enjoyment must be the two top goals (Greer, 2002). Involving learners in the selection of texts to be (which is embedded in the model) will see to it that interest in reading is maintained. Repetition or recurrence of keywords in all the series of selected texts helps learners to remember the content read and help boost their vocabulary and increasing their chance of scoring high in the assessment. Theme Teaching Model as a sociocultural model encourages reading both in groups and individually. Learners can learn from the text and from their peers.

T7: The teacher's ability to raise the level of interest in his/her learners on the theme to be read is important.

The main goal of teachers is to instil in their learners the desire to read (Moser & Morrison, 1998). The negative attitudes towards reading have been found to begin early in the life of an elementary and/or primary learner. In a National Survey into the Reading and Book Reading behaviour of Adult South Africans, commissioned and funded by the Department of Arts and Culture, among the activities reading was compared with, it

occupied position 6 in the list of preferences (South African Book Development Council, 2007). This explains the lack of parental involvement in establishing and nurturing the culture of reading in their household. It has therefore, become the responsibility of teachers to promote the reading culture of young Grade 8 learners. This model has a built-in element of raising the interests of learners towards reading.

4.10. Part 5. Fluency, Motivation and Comprehension

On all of the issues raised pertaining to fluency, motivation and comprehension, all teachers confirm that their learners respond positively to issues raised under fluency, motivation and comprehension. Learners are struggling with the above-raised issues.

Chapter 5 below presents a teaching model that can help address the problems highlighted in the three boxes, that is Fluency, Motivation and Comprehension. The model will explain its purpose and its benefit. With its continued use in class, the model will strive to address all the remaining challenges in the boxes three boxes. Theme Teaching Model presents some benefits that can help address, slow and laborious reading, decoding, can draw teachers to their learners' inability to punctuate, etc.

Table 4.11. Types of errors in reading

	Types of errors in reading	**Agree/strongly agree**
F	**Struggling readers in my class are prone to struggle with the following:**	
F1	They read slowly.	100%
F2	They read laboriously.	100%
F3	May continue to struggle with decoding.	100%
F4	May not pause at punctuation.	100%
F5	Often lack articulation of emotion while reading.	100%
F6	May lack proficiency that results in non-fluent reading and limit comprehension.	100%

Motivation

M1	May engage in reading as a passive process without giving effortful attention to activating prior knowledge and using reading strategies.	100%
M2	Often have low comprehension of text.	100%
M3	Fail to access a variety of wide reading opportunities.	100%
M4	May not be curious about exploring topics through extended reading.	100%

Comprehension

C1	Fail to use metacognitive strategies as they read.	100%
C2	May not be aware when understanding breaks down.	100%
C3	Do not question the text during reading.	100%
C4	May lack theme-specific prior knowledge.	100%
C5	Do not readily make connections between what they are learning and what they already know.	100%
C6	Have limited knowledge that assists in gaining information from the text.	100%
C7	May fail to read with a purpose.	100%

4.11. Conclusion

This chapter provided us with answers to the following two important research questions:

1. What reading difficulties do Grade 8 learners experience/encounter?
2. What are the causes of the most recurring reading challenges experienced in Grade 8 in Mahikeng school district?

At the centre of what this study found to be the most challenging aspect of reading for Grade 8 learners was Word Recognition. This challenge proved to be one that led to so many other challenges such as speed, comprehension, pronunciation and fluency. Learners who struggled with Word recognition performed poorly on all the aspects of reading.

Data used in this chapter was collected through the use of three instruments namely, Classroom observation, Reading Programme and a teacher questionnaire. Data were analysed and the findings, conclusion and recommendations will be discussed and recorded in the last chapter (6).

Some of the challenges learned could be dealt within a short period through the use of the model this study has developed, but continued use of the model will further address the remaining challenges.

Some of the challenges that the model can help with include, slow and laborious reading. The strategy that the model employs is that of word repetition. In Theme teaching approach to reading more words are repeated. The more they see a word the better chance they stand to remember the word and how to use it correctly (Ofeng-Noy, Dudai and Karni, 2003). Modelling reading by a teacher will assist a learner in mirror him thus address issues of expression. Decoding in most of the learners was a serious challenge and Theme reading offers better opportunities to learners decode words successfully. In a remedial class, learners are given a chance to practice reading and success breeds confidence and leads to a desire to read more (Guthrie and Knowles, 2001).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE READING MODEL

Chapter 5 focuses on a theme teaching model whose aim was to answer research question 3 as indicated below:

- What are the possible strategies that couldassist learners in overcoming their reading challenges?

5.1. Theme Teaching Model for comprehension: A Sociocultural Instructional Model

What Theme Teaching model for comprehension (TTM) seeks to achieve is to improve the reading fluency and decoding abilities of Grade 8 learners which contribute to improved comprehension. According to Hudson, Lana and Pullen (2005:702) reading fluency separates good readers from poor ones and a reliable predictor of reading comprehension (Stanovich, 1991, Shea and Ceprano, 2017:57). Hudson et al. (2005:702) argue that there is a strong connection between reading fluency and reading comprehension and that without accurate word reading, the reader's access to the author's intended meaning is limited and can lead to misinterpretations of the text. They argued further that poor readers do so in a labored, disconnected fashion and focus their attention on decoding words and as a result fail to comprehend the text.

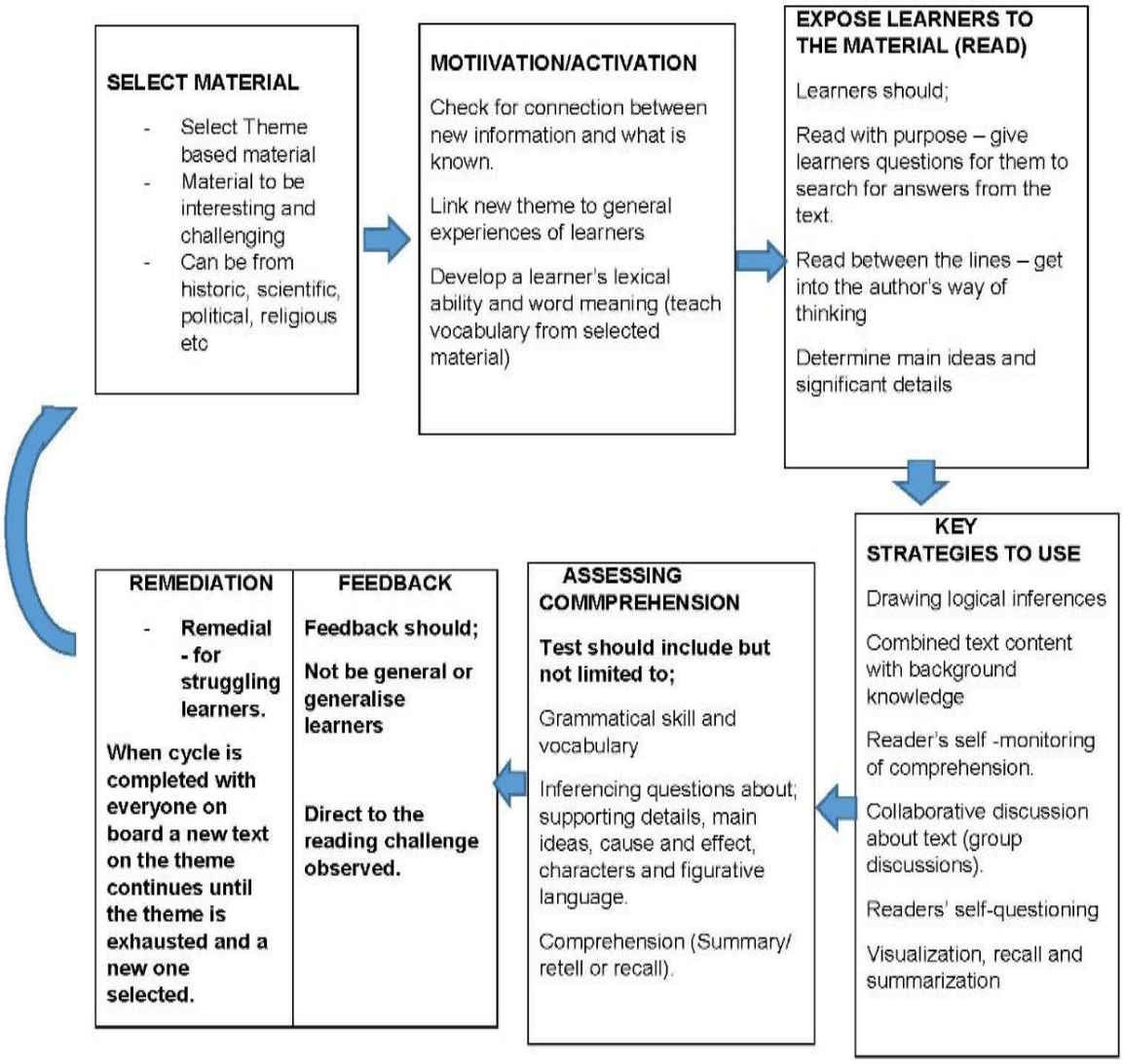
For comprehension and perhaps also reading speed to be achieved, La Berge and Samuels (1974) and Shea and Ceprano (2017:57) suggested that in cognitive processing, word identification must be learned first in order to free space for the processing of higher-order thinking. They further suggested that there is a limited capacity

of attention and working memory and the learning of words will free the processing space of higher thinking order like comprehension. According to Hudson, Lana and Pullen (2005) and Shea and Ceprano (2017:53) comprehension require higher-order thinking that cannot be automatic and therefore word identification must become an automatic process. Reading words without much struggle and without much effort is important because when reading comes automatically, one's limited cognitive resources can be freed and used for comprehension (NICHD, 2000) and many times the differences in comprehension between good and poor readers can be attributed to the difference in the level of automatic decoding (Shea and Ceprano, 2017; Perfetti and Hogaboam, 1986).

Therefore, with theme teaching, the learner is exposed to words, ideas and thinking again and again which bolsters word recognition, which is a key component in reading comprehension. According to Hudson, Lana and Pullen (2005:703) repeated reading of a similar word or words in a text improves single eye fixation and word prediction. Fluent readers are said to be better at seeing a word in a single eye fixation than poor readers. Different studies, Ofen-Noy, Dudai and Karni (2003); Kang, (2016); Taguchi, Gorsuch, Lems and Roswell (2016) have emphasized the benefits of repetition in reading for retention and transfer to occur. Riesman (1983) in his threshold model stated that about three or four times encounter with a word is needed for orthographic learning to occur, whereas a study by Lemoine, Levy and Hutchinson (1993) found that when words were repeated retention effects were better.

Theme Teaching Model is therefore important to improve reading which is characterized by word meaning retention, fluency and comprehension. The repetition of words in reading is to improve the transfer effects of new words. In the study by Gorp, Seger and Verhoeven (2014), they found evidence that exposing learners to texts that have more frequent words over and over again is effective in increasing their reading accuracy and speed. The implication of this finding for a reading teacher is that during the second stage of the TTM, where they summarize the theme for the learners, they must have identified words that they believe might be challenging for their learners and are central to understanding the author's message. They will then have to teach those words to learners and assess their retention and use.

Theme Teaching Model for comprehension (A Socio-cultural instructional model): TTM



5.2. Discussion of a Theme-Teaching Model: A sociocultural instructional model

5.2.1. New horizons

The educator needs to allow learners to select topics or books they would want to read; classify their choices under a theme and select reading material based on that theme. In a study conducted by Edmunds and Bauserman (2006:420), they interviewed learners on what makes them want to read more. Learners brought to their attention the different reading material that interests them. This, therefore, lets the researcher recommend to teachers to give the learners an opportunity to select the material they would want to read at school and at home.

5.2.2. Teacher summarizing selected material: Heightening learner interest

The more reading the child engages in the better, the more chances he would become a better reader (Gupta, Henninger, and Vinh, 2014; Loh, 2009). Reading motivation has also been linked to the development of lifelong readers (Morrow, 1992; Wang and Guthrie, 2004). When a teacher has made his decision about a theme to be read, it will be important for him to seek ways and strategies to increase learners' interest in the selected material. One way to do that is for a teacher to summarize the material which he selected to be read over a week in such a manner that heighten learner's interest and their wish to be given the opportunity to read further for themselves.

There are a number of researchers that hold that motivation is important for learning (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Dweck and Elliot, 1983; McCombs, 1989; Alizadeh, 2016; Rehman, Bilal and Nawaz, 2014). When children first enter school, they are excited about learning and are motivated (Edmunds and Bauserman, 2006:415). However, their motivation to learn appears to decrease during elementary school years in all academic subjects, including reading (Eccles, Wigfield and Schiefele, 1998; Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000). Therefore, it is important at all levels of schooling in whatever is taught to guard against learners' motivation level to drift below thus interfering with their learning in a negative manner.

When children grow older their motivation to read in school and home environment decreases (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000). Therefore, Grade 8 learners are not exceptions. This decline has been caused by monitoring their performance against that of other learners. They start to be concerned about the instruction that only focuses on

competition and forgets to address their interests (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000). This model therefore, should try to select reading material that is interesting to learners. It has also been discovered, Guthrie and Davies (2003) that in a school setting, struggling readers are exposed to difficult reading materials and classroom environment that is not encouraging. Therefore, it is the role of a language teacher to create an enabling environment for struggling readers to derive joy in reading through different motivational strategies. They also need to do the following:

- Clarify the goals of reading the selected texts. Learners are more likely to increase their efforts when goals are clearer and when belief in eventual success is high (Kluger and De Nisi, 1996:220).
- Enhance learners' commitment to attaining the clarified goals.
- Create an environment in which learners develop self-regulation and error detection (Hattie, Biggs and Pardie, 1996).
- Facilitates the use of relevant background knowledge to increase interest in gaining content mastery.
- Arrange hands-on experience or other stimulating tasks that lead learners to want to find out more, by reading.
- Make content goals interesting and relevant by having learners read a variety of materials, to pursue a theme over a period of time.
- Give learners feedback on their progress in meeting content goals (Roberts, et al, 2008)

5.2.3. Written and oral assessment

This stage is where the teacher tests his learners' reception of the material to be read from the summary he presented. The teacher can either link the new theme to other themes learnt before the current one or link the information to other subjects, like history, life sciences, etc. This is an important move because it demonstrates to learners that what was learned before is important and needs to be registered. It also activates readers'

prior knowledge and helps them to interact with the information every time when the need arose. (Promote level of engagement)

In this step, the teacher prepares a very short and engaging quiz or task to test the level of interest. The more the learners score higher on the task the better indication that there is potential for more exposure to more reading on the theme.

5.2.4. Reading of the selected theme

It has to be assumed that learners have been motivated by their teacher and should be allowed to interact with the selected theme themselves. The teacher can test for reading accuracy and reading ability, reading rate and reading expression – which is reading fluency. To be able to test the above reading components, learners ought to read aloud. Reading for comprehension which includes vocabulary and content recall, silent reading is ideal.

5.3. Reading accuracy, expression, rate and comprehension

Poor word-reading accuracy has a negative influence on reading comprehension and fluency (Hudson, Lana and Pullen, 2005). Word-reading accuracy refers to the ability to recognize or decode words correctly, a strong understanding of the alphabetic principles, the ability to blend sounds together (Ehri and McCormick, 1998), and knowledge of a large bank of high-frequency words are required for word reading accuracy. Reading along a theme line makes word identification/recognition easy and possible because of the frequent occurrence of words in a text and thus creating a rich and a large bank of encountered words which will eventually become an important part of the learner's background knowledge. It is important to assist learners from moving from a state where they commit reading errors because reading errors have the potential of changing the meaning of the text thus interfering with text comprehension (National Assessment of Educational Progress in the National Assessment Governing Board 2002). In order to accurately decode the words, the reader needs to be able to accurately;

- Identify the sounds represented by the letters or letter combinations.
- Blend phonemes.
- Read phonographs (common patterns across words).

- Use both letter sound and meaning cues to determine exactly the pronunciation and meaning of the word that is in the text (Hudson, Lana and Pullen, 2005).

5.4. Reading rate and reading ability

The reading rate comprises both word-level automaticity and the speed and fluidity with which a reader moves through connected text (Roembke, Hazeltine, Reed and MacMurray, 2018). With the teaching of words that the teacher believes will impede comprehension will strengthen the learner's background resources thereby promoting comprehension. Automaticity is quick and effortless identification of words in or out of context (Ehri and McCormick, 1998; Kuhn and Stahl, 2000; Roembke, Hazeltine, Reed and MacMurray, 2018). Automaticity frees up cognitive resources that can be devoted to text comprehension (LaBerge and Samuels, 1974; Stanovich, 1990).

5.5. Feedback

Transfer effects have been observed when texts are repeated and then followed by corrective feedback (Therrien, 2004). In a meta-analysis, Hattie and Timperley (2007) report that when a new skill is learnt, continuous feedback is important. It helps a reader to measure his success and failure thus motivate her to persist. They found that the timing can be crucial. While immediate feedback is helpful in acquiring a new skill it can disturb the process of automatisation while building fluency. Rasinsky, Homan and Biggs (2009) further stressed the importance of feedback while acquiring reading fluency. When a word is read incorrectly, it is important to give a correct presentation of the word because failure to do so may lead to a reader storing the incorrect presentation, but if the purpose for reading is comprehension TTM recommends that correct pronunciation and meaning of difficult words should be provided at the beginning of the reading. Rasinsky *et al*., 2009) argued that in addition to receiving feedback, learners should listen to others reading fluently.

According to Price, Handley, Millar and O'Donovan (2015), feedback should always aim at helping learners increase their efforts, particularly when efforts lead to tackling more challenging experiences. It should be noted that learners are more likely to increase their efforts when the goals for reading are clear, and belief in eventual success is high (Shea and Ceprano, 2017; Kluger and DeNisi, 1996:260). The implication of this statement to

teaching is that teachers should play their role in giving instructions that are clear and with outcomes which are measurable and also should instill in their learners' self-belief in their ability to succeed. The truth about success should be brought to learners' attention that success will not be easy and to achieve it is a process that needs effort and determination.

5.6. Summary of the model

Below is a summary of the benefits expected from the use of this model in the classroom.

Table. 5.1: Summary of the benefits of using TTM

Benefits	**How to achieve the identified benefits through the model**
Selection of reading materials	The model recommends that the teacher should give his/her learners the opportunity to select reading material based on what they like. This gives the teacher an idea of what is of interest to his/her learners
Word recognition	The model recommends that the teacher identify words from the passage that he/she believes will compromise comprehension of the text – then give proper pronunciation and meaning before the reading of the text.
Summary of the text	This exercise serves to motivate learners and activates their prior knowledge
Promote the level of engagement	Summarizing the theme selected can be done through questions, scenarios, role playing etc. This activity promotes engagement between the teacher and his/her learners and between themselves
Repetition of words	Theme based texts provide learners with the opportunity to encounter one word or more used in different contexts.
Feedback	Feedback enables learners to assess their progress
Remediation	For those struggling learners, remediation attempts to bring all learners on the same level

5.7 Conclusion

This section of the study offers benefits that can be attained when utilizing TTM.

The cyclic nature of the model encourages continuous reading for learners and more exposure to reading materials. It thus encourages innovation on the part of the language teacher. Improved reading ability was recorded by this study where the performance

stood at 53.73% in a week, meaning with continued use the reading ability will more like increase.

Comprehension levels improved for some learners (see table 4.6) and some it was poor. This could be due to various reasons, such as those associated with the teaching abilities, parental involvement in the reading of their children, low interest (see 4.5.5.). Fluency results were mixed, some of the learners performed well on reading rate as well as comprehension while others performed poorly on both. In another instance, some learners performed well on reading rate yet went on to perform poorly on comprehension. This could be due to their struggle with expression. Their laborious reading affected their focus on content thus limiting their comprehension.

The inference abilities average for all schools improved during the study which was at 64%. Understanding of the use of words also improved and stood at 76. 9%. Though attitude to reading was not part of the study, a better attitude to reading was observed.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the study. It focuses on the findings, contributions of the study and suggestions for further research.

Reading is considered to be the most important element in the acquisition of information (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1997). Mastery of reading opens the possibilities for text comprehension and the ability to respond to questions asked (Grabe and Stoller, 2002). The study was qualitative in nature with a small part being quantitative, designed to investigate challenges that Grade 8 learners have with regard to reading. Four schools formed part of the study. The sample comprised of four classes, a class from each of the four schools selected. The purpose of the first exercise was to establish the reading speed of every learner in class and that made each one of them part of the study. In the second and major part of this investigation, five learners were randomly selected and were exposed to five reading tasks each with the view to establish their reading challenges and to learn what might cause them.

Data obtained through reading was calculated through the use of a formula for reading speed which is;

Speed = Number of words read OVER the number of words in the text MULTIPLIED by 100.

The second set of data tables from a teacher questionnaire was generated and analysed through Microsoft excel, interpreted and incorporated into the study with the quest to establish reading challenges of the Grade 8 learners and to achieve research's other objectives.

6.2. Lessons learnt from the literature and conclusions to be made from it.

This section reflects what has been learnt from the literature and what conclusions could be drawn from it.

Bakhtin's theory of Dialogism emphasises the relationship between the reader and the text. He points out that reading involves a dialogue between the reader and the material he/she is reading in the teaching of reading, therefore teachers should allow and encourage that dialogue. They should teach their learners to engage with the material and to in the same ways that the writer intended and ask relevant questions.

Through dialogic engagement, learners are likely to develop oral language (Gupta and Lee, 2015:10). These researchers stress that

> Oral communication is a necessary and essential skill for effective functioning in the classroom…it is a critical tool for children to use when expressing their knowledge, and a tool through which they ultimately gain knowledge about the world in which they live. It is necessary for thinking, learning, and academic proficiency in school.

According to Alexander (2014), skills that learners gain in a dialogic reading classroom include guided narration, explaining, analysing, speculating, imagining, exploring, evaluating, discussing, arguing, justifying, and asking questions of their own. These skills are superior skils to those of basic textual decoding. The learners develop word power, that is, vocabulary. They also develop semantic exploration skills (Gibbsons (2015:33). Therefore, at the centre of teaching reading at colleges and universities, the curriculum calls on aspiring teachers to teach dialogic principles to their learners of English.

What the other views have in common with the dialogic view, that is, Bottom-up, Top-down views and Schema is that reading is an active rather than a passive exercise. Proponents of the bottom-up view (McCarthy, 1999) argue that meaning can be derived from the text and is thus broken down and extracted and fused in with the existing knowledge of the reader while Nunan (1991) sees reading as basically a matter of decoding a series of written symbols into the aural equivalents in the quest to make sense of the text. On the other hand, top-down view emphasises meaningful learning (Ausubel, 1963 and 1968) where the purpose of reading is not just extracting meanings from a text

but a process of connecting information in the text with the knowledge that the reader brings into the act of reading.

How are these views important to a teacher? They are important in that they should encourage teachers to teach learners the art of total engagement with the text, with the view to developing their oral communication skills and for them to recognise the importance prior knowledge in extracting meanings from the text. Therefore, what we have learnt should help teachers change their approaches to teaching reading in English. First, they should remember that reading is an active process, secondly that it involves a dialogue and the development of fluent oral communication. According to McRae (2012) learners should be encouraged to write creative stories based on what they know at the start of reading on a selected topic and then subsequently venture into more creative possibilities.

The other lesson learnt is what happens when readers set their eyes on a word or words. It is important to understand the struggles that South African learners go through when they engage in reading. In order to allow for the smooth saccharide movement between the words, a learner must become familiar with the words that they ought to read. Therefore, the teaching of reading should be preceded by an assessment of word recognition and decoding skills, such that learners encounter the new and difficult words with some level of familiarity with such words. Their search for meanings is therefore scaffolded in this approach, hence the anticipated ease with which they could possibly utilise in the new topic.

Lastly, the stronger the vocabulary (see sections 2.8 and 2.3.5) a learner possesses, the better she/he will be with word recognition which is important in reading speed (see, 2.10.2) .

6.3 Summary of findings

This section summarises the findings obtained through the three processes of data collection, namely; classroom observation, a reading program and teacher questionnaire.

The objective of the study was to establish the reading challenges Grade 8 learners have and what their cause might be. Some of the causes were identified through analysis of data while others were established through engagement with the literature. Those causes which were thrown up as the study progressed in the observation of teaching. These include factors like insufficient reading materials- not because the Department of Education and schools did not provide to learners but because they chose to leave them at home. When learners were asked why they left books at home, the answers they provided was that books are too heavy to carry in the distance they walk to school. The reasons some gave were founded as they travel a long distance to school daily on foot. The other reason learners provided was that books get stolen by other learners and become a burden for their parents to pay at the end of the year. The only strategy the one school used in their efforts to collect the maximum number of the books issued at the beginning of the year was to make parents of the learners who lost books to pay.

Lack of uniform teaching strategies by teachers in schools visited was also found to be a challenge. Teachers, in their handling of reading, adopted a strategy where learners read aloud and in the process of reading, a teacher would stop a learner when he/she pronounced a letter incorrectly to offer a correct pronunciation. This strategy though it offered a solution as far as word reading was concerned had an inherent problem in that it interfered with the comprehension of the text. The other problem with this strategy is that it puts pressure on the reader and the retention of pronounced words, offered to the reader was not permanent. What all this implies is that all the corrections benefited learners who were listening more than the one who was reading. Hattie and Timperley (2007) argued that immediate feedback during reading can be helpful in acquiring a specific skill, but in the case of building fluency, immediate feedback can disturb the process of automatisation and can also interfere with comprehension. Tshotsho *et al*. (2018) and Rule and Land (2017) referred to this strategy of teaching reading as more “oratory” and the one which focuses more on pronunciation than comprehension.

The end product of reading should be comprehension (Rule and Land, 2017; Stoffelsma, 2019). This study found that word recognition and decoding are some of the major challenges to some of Grade 8 learners. These challenges affected almost all aspects of reading for some learners (see table 4.5).

(a) Aspects of reading affected by word recognition and decoding include the following;

The performance of learners in a comprehension test, which was tested through learners' ability to summarise what was read stood below 50% (see Table 4.5.)

Reading competence of learners which was measured through speed reading stood at 55.7% (see Table 4.6)

The performance of learners in a grammar test was very poor at 35.6% which points to the need to teach grammar in context and not as isolated portfolios.

(b) Aspects of reading where learners performed well;

For the Inferencing test, the score was 64.5% and understanding the meaning of words (vocabulary) as used in text was very good and stood at 76.9% (see Table 4.7). This was possible because of how the texts were selected (Theme based).

Classroom size remains one of the burning issues which affects teacher morale (also confirmed by data from the teacher questionnaire). The number of activities teachers have to give out to learners versus the size of their classes took so much from the teacher. This situation denies learners the opportunity to benefit from the individual attention their teacher could offer to each if the classroom size was of normal size.

(c) Findings from the response of teachers in a questionnaire

Teachers reported their learners to be having challenges with regard to the following:

Word recognition, vocabulary, the pronunciation of words, weak decoding skills (all of which were confirmed by data collected during the Reading program).

(d) Other findings from the teacher questionnaire

Analysis of quantitative data obtained through a Teacher questionnaire yielded the following results:

That learners are not reading at the appropriate level and that lack of reading resources affects their learners' reading abilities negatively, which include, pronunciation, word recognition, vocabulary, weak decoding skills reading speed.

That they read laboriously and struggle with decoding. Many do not pause at punctuation and often lack articulation of emotion while reading. They are also not aware when understanding breaks down.

They do not question the text during reading and lack theme-specific prior knowledge.

They do not readily make connections between what they are learning and what they already know and have limited knowledge that assists in gaining information from the text. They fail to read with a purpose.

With regard to the three aspects of reading, namely; fluency, motivation and feedback, teachers acknowledged that their learners struggle with all the challenges within the three boxes (See Table 4.13) in Chapter 4.

(e*) Findings from the reading program of learners.*

One important finding observed in Table 4.5 was that the reading accuracy, speed and expression did not yield comprehension to all the fluent readers. Some of the learners who read well, with good words reading accuracy, correct speed and expression did not do well on comprehension questions. This means that failure to comprehend cannot be blamed squarely on reading fluency but should also be blamed on other things like where the mind of the reader was at the time of reading, which did not fall within the scope of this study.

Another finding from Katzi-Cohen (2001) states that familiarity or lack thereof, with the subject, language structures used, features of a text and language processing ability could influence the speed at which a learner reads a text, and to do so with understanding. This statement has far reaching implications for how reading ought to be taught. This statement also contributes a view in the design of the Model presented in Chapter 5. Ultimately, the recommendation on page 140 (bullet 5) emanates from this insightful observation.

6.4 Suggestions for Future Research

The following suggestions are put forward with reference to the current study and its limitations:

Since the sample of the study was small and only covered four schools in Mafikeng District of the North West Province, findings of this study cannot be generalised to all schools in the country. More research needs to be conducted with a larger sample size, involving more schools from different districts and provinces of this country.

Research on how to teach word recognition and decoding to Grade 8 learners should be pursued further. Reading challenges throughout all grades should be investigated vigorously in order to curtail the challenges and thereby provide opportunities for success in the reading of learners.

Research can be undertaken on getting to know the teaching skills that primary teachers have or lack, which could assist policymakers and curriculum developers in creating professional development relevant for preparing teachers for new challenges. This suggestion is influenced by changes made in schools' configurations where Grade 8 learners who originally were the responsibility of teachers in the middle schools' system which was phased out. The question that comes to mind is whether teachers in primary schools received or continue to receive support in handling the new additions in their schools or not. Similarly, that question can also be directed to teachers in high schools who receive the Grade 8 learners in their schools. (see 2.13 page 57).

6.5 Recommendations

Reading is central to all available knowledge and as a way to continue to acquire new knowledge. It is therefore important that reading becomes the most important skill that every Grade 8 learner in particular and every learner, in general, should master. Grade 8 classes are the beginning classes in high school and reading is one of the skills which they are expected to have mastered from primary school but which is often not the case. It is for this reason that more ways need to be found to bridge the gap and correct the shortfalls in reading efficiencies from primary schools. The present study was undertaken with the view of assisting Grade 8 overcome reading challenges they might be bringing to high or secondary schools. Through engagement with Grade 8 learners, engaging with their teachers through a quantitative instrument, the following recommendations are presented:

- It is important for language teachers to know the reading challenges of their learners, and it is therefore for every teacher in all the grades

to know what each individual learner's challenges are. With that knowledge at hand, teachers are in a better position to help the learners overcome their challenges.

- The Departments of Education should invest in early childhood development programs that privilege reading, writing and speaking at the centre of learning. Each school should have a remedial teacher who will, together with the regular class teacher, diagnose learners' reading challenges and help deal with them.
- There will be no quality teaching without providing teachers with quality training. The recent literature by Rule and Land (2017) points to a lack of skills by teachers especially in teaching reading to learners. Therefore, there is a need for universities, colleges and in-service training for teachers to begin to focus their attention on teaching (accelerating) the art of reading to teachers.
- Theme selection of reading materials should be encouraged (embedded in the TTM).
- For text to be familiar as recommended by Katzi-Cohen (2001) and from the theoretical perspectives developed in Chapter 2, teachers should endeavour to make content information about what is to be read familiar to the learners before-hand. This can be achieved through various approaches discussed under in sections 2.4 – 2.5 and summarised in 6.2.
- Teachers should help learners link what is already known with new information. This can be achieved through:

  - A short review of the previous learning, which helps in strengthening the connections obtained from other materials we learnt (Rosenshine, 2010:13).
  - Helping learners recall the concepts, any other relevant information and vocabulary relevant for the topic or theme selected for reading.
  - Asking questions related to the new information/theme which should help learners connect new material to prior learning.

Learners do not bring reading materials to class citing the weight and theft as the problem; perhaps something innovative (of the 21st century) to a book should be adopted.

Schools with adequate financial resources ought to employ specialists in reading who should work hand in hand with language teachers. The government should invest more in the reading programmes aimed at improving reading.

Over and above, the reading instructions, that is, drawing inferences, visualization and recall and summarization which has been stressed in the CAPS document Grade 7-9 an additional focus should be placed on developing more key reading instructions which include, using text content combined with background knowledge and life experiences, making text-text, text to self and text to world connections, collaborative discussion about texts, readers' self-questioning (EACEA/Eurydice, 2011 in Shea and Ceprano, 2017),

The problem of reading for learners is not about their inability to read with speed but decoding of words. The Departments of Education should ensure that when learners are moved to another Grade have the following requisite skills: Word Recognition and at least reading speed above 50% in whatever text they read.

6.6 Conclusion

This study sought to establish the reading challenges experienced by Grade 8 learners in Mafikeng District, categorise them and develop a model that could be utilised to overcome these limitations. To achieve this, a mixed method research approach was used, namely; qualitative in the form of reading texts and quantitative in the form of a teacher questionnaire. It was revealed that Grade 8 learners struggle with word recognition, which affected their reading speed and subsequently, their comprehension levels of texts. One startling finding was that some learners scored well in reading speed, word reading accuracy and expression but performed poorly on reading for meaning. Apparently, reading fluency did not guarantee sufficient comprehension at the level of re-statement, inference, analysis, synthesis of ideas. Though some learners read well, it emerged that during their reading, they did not apply specific comprehension strategies that could enable them to rephrase, restate, make judicious inferences and synthesise the thematic concerns of the texts that they were exposed to read. This is one challenge that teachers at Grade 8 level need to reconceptualise so that they refine strategies that

could enhance reading for meaning and synthesis when teaching reading to their learners.

Taylor (2014) established that,

> "…teachers did not have knowledge of effective reading pedagogies and, as a result, cannot teach reading effectively in spite of their efforts to do".

This is a systemic challenge that demands well-coordinated efforts from all stakeholders responsible for planning and policy formulation within the South African education system, specifically those engaged in the development of language teaching that strives to develop comprehension strategies.

Learners displayed limited levels of vocabulary, a sign that learners read less and, as a result, have imperfect knowledge and vocabulary repertoire to engage in reading for comprehension, inference, summarising specific thematic concerns and establishing an evaluative accent essential for synthesising ideas embedded in texts. One of the contributions that this sought to make was by way of developing a theme-based reading model, which strives to strengthen learners' conceptual and vocabulary repertoires that were identified as important in reading. Benefits associated with theme reading are evident in recurrent words that improve single eye fixation and word prediction (Hudson, Lana and Pullen 2005:703). Also, recurrent words encountered in intensive and frequent reading add on to the Mathew effect that allows exposure to new words. Gorp, Seger and Verhoeven (2014) found evidence that exposing learners to texts that have more frequent words over and over is effective in increasing their reading accuracy and speed, a skill that apparently contributes to the apprehension of meanings embedded in such texts. The Theme Teaching Model developed in this study is important in improving reading, which is characterised by retention of word meaning, deployment of such words in articulating comprehension of texts, fluency and comprehension proclivity to engage with the connotations rather than the transparent meanings of words in texts.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GRADE 8 TEACHERS

Researcher: Goitseone Marutla

Title of the research project:

READING CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH: TOWARDS A READING MODEL FOR GRADE 8 LEARNERS IN MAFIKENG DISTRICT

(PhD PROJECT)

Dear Recipient Name

I am a PhD student working on the topic: READING CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH: TOWARDS A READING MODEL FOR GRADE 8 LEARNERS IN MAFIKENG DISTRICT

This questionnaire seeks to establish whether learners have reading problems, and how best they can be assisted to overcome them. Through the empirical study and thorough engagement with the literature on reading difficulties, this study attempts to provide solutions through a reading model which teachers could use to resolve learners' reading problems. In order to achieve this, the answers that you provide should be honest and truthful. Your participation in this research is appreciated.

Part 1: Personal information: Teaching experience

PI 1	**Years teaching Grade 8 English**	
	Between 0 – 5 years	
	Between 5 – 10 years	
	Between 10 – 15 years	
	Between 15 – 20 years	
	More than 20 years	

PI 2	**Location of school**	
	Urban town	
	Rural village	
	Township	

Part 2: Reading problems (Statements to teachers)

PLEASE INDICATE THE LEVEL OF YOUR AGREEMENT ON THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS WHERE 1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE, 2 = DISAGREE; 3 = NEITHER; 4 = AGREE AND 5 = STRONGLY AGREE

	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
R1	**Learners in grade 8 are competent in their reading skills.**					
R2	**I have a proper remedial reading programme in place to assist those learners who are not competent.**					
R3	**The time allocated for reading is enough.**					
R4	**My school has enough reading resources.**					
R5	**My learners are reading at "Age Appropriate" level.**					
R6	**Teachers in South Africa have an under-developed understanding of teaching literacy (Mgaga, 2013) –Study conducted by HSRC.**					
R7	**I have a perception that Grade 8 learners have reading difficulties because of poor teaching in Foundation phase.**					
R8	**I have been trained to teach reading.**					
R9	**I am confident in teaching reading.**					
R10	**My classes have large number of learners.**					
R11	**Socio-economic factors play a role in the ability to read.**					
R12	**I have a reading recovery plan in my school**					
R13	**Few reading resources affect learner's reading abilities in a negative way.**					
R14	**I have measures in place to assist struggling readers**					

If respondent stated STRONGLY AGREE or AGREE to statement S13, then ask (OPEN ENDED QUESTION):

R15.A	**Please indicate which measures you have in place**	

R16	**When tested in 2005, Language competence of South African learners showed that 63% was not competent. From your experience, would you say that the, (Please choose one)**		
A	**Status has remained the same as in 2005**		**Please indicate why you say this?**
B	**Status has changed for the better.**		
C	**Status has changed for the worse**		

Part 3: Issues that affects the reading of learners

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statement, where 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree.							
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	
R17	**Poverty has everything to do with my learners' inability to read.**						**Please elaborate why you say this?**

R18	**In your experience rank the following challenges and impediments to your learners during reading on a scale 1-5 where 1 is the least disturbing and 5 the most.**	
R18A	**Lack of reading materials**	
R18B	**Poor reading background**	
R18C	**Pronunciation of words**	
R18D	**Limited vocabulary**	
R18E	**Poor word recognition**	
R18F	**Weak decoding skills that affect reading speed.**	
R18G	**Reading as perceiving textual features and relating these to schemas of texts and words.**	
R18H	**Reading as selecting some textual features to convert to concepts.**	
R18I	**Reading as integrating lexical information (Meaning of words) in text to construct meanings.**	
R18J	**Reading as predicting content of text beyond the part currently in view.**	
R18K	**Reading as relating what is understood to what has been previously read and understood. (Connecting what was previously learned with new information).**	
R18L	**Reading as comprehending what the writer intended to say.** **(Battle to understand the text from the writer's point of view).**	
R18M	**Reading as integrating syntactic information to construct meaning.** **(Does not understand grammatical rules in order construct meaning).**	

R18N	**Reading as integrating semantic information in text to construct meaning. (Connecting meaning of words to form a sentence).**	
S22	**In your experience, which gender experiences more reading difficulties**	
A	**Boys**	
B	**Girls**	
C	**No distinction between gender**	

S22 *

Whatever gender you select please give your opinion as to why is that a case?

Part 4: Theme reading strategy as a tool to improve reading

PLEASE INDICATE THE LEVEL OF YOUR AGREEMENT ON THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS WHERE 1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE, 2 = DISAGREE; 3 = NEITHER; 4 = AGREE AND 5 = STRONGLY AGREE						
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
T1	**Sufficient background knowledge on a specific topic of interest to a learner affects their reading positively.**					
T2	**Learners who are interested in a theme would want to read more materials on that theme.**					
T3	**Theme reading increases a learner's current knowledge, which may fit well into existing knowledge thus boosting it.**					
T4	**When learners are exposed to one theme, they become familiar with words used in the theme which boosts word recognition and inferencing.**					
T5	**Fluency in reading contributes positively to a learner's self-esteem.**					

T6	**When a learner is assessed on various themes read in class, chances of them scoring high in that assessment is high.**					
T7	**The teacher's ability to raise the level of interest in his/her learners on the theme to be read is important.**					

Part 5: Statements pertaining to FLUENCY, MOTIVATION AND COMPREHENSION

The following part focuses on statements pertaining to FLUENCY, MOTIVATION AND COMPREHENSION						
PLEASE INDICATE THE LEVEL OF YOUR AGREEMENT ON THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS WHERE 1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE, 2 = DISAGREE; 3 = NEITHER; 4 = AGREE AND 5 = STRONGLY AGREE						
Fluency						
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
F1	**Struggling readers in my class are prone to struggle with the following:** **They read slowly.**					
F2	**They read laboriously.**					
F3	**May continue to struggle with decoding.**					
F4	**May not pause at punctuation.**					
F5	**Often lack r articulation of emotion while reading.**					
F6	**May lack proficiency that results in non-fluent reading and limit comprehension.**					
Motivation						
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
M1	**May engage in reading as a passive process without giving effortful attention to activating prior knowledge and using reading strategies.**					
M2	**Often have low comprehension of text.**					

M3	**Fail to access a variety of wide reading opportunities.**					
M4	**May not be curious about exploring topics through extended reading.**					
Comprehension						
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
C1	**Fail to use metacognitive strategies as they read.**					
C2	**May not be aware when understanding breaks down.**					
C3	**Do not question the text during reading.**					
C4	**May lack theme-specific prior knowledge.**					
C5	**Do not readily make connections between what they are learning and they already know.**					
C6	**Have limited knowledge to gain information from the text.**					
C7	**May fail to read with purpose.**					

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION.

Supervisor Approval signature:……..

Supervisor's name:…….



Faculty of Humanities (Mafikeng Campus) **Date……**

APPENDIX B: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

Dear Director: Mafikeng District of Education

My name is Goitseone B. Marutla, a student in the Faculty of Humanities of the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus. I am applying for permission to conduct a study towards my Doctoral qualification which is called READING CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH: TOWARDS A READING MODEL FOR GRADE 8 LEARNERS IN MAFIKENG DISTRICT. The study seeks to establish the causes of reading difficulties among Grade 8 learners, and through interaction with them, generate a reading model dealing with these challenges. This project is conducted under the supervision of Professor T. Mukhuba, Dr M.L. Hove and Dr P.N. Nkamta of the North-West University.

(a) I hereby request your permission to conduct an empirical study at four of your schools, that is, two rural schools in Mafikeng District and two in the urban location to expose participants to my project. I also wish to bring to your attention that the process of data collection involves the use of a video recording device. Children will be recorded as they read a number of texts. This is done to enable the researcher sufficient time to analyse data at a later stage.

(b) Though there are risks associated with the use of video recording (Fine, 2013), I promise to keep all recordings safe from prying eyes. The recording will be stored in a computer hard drive and this will be protected by user pin which is only known to me.

I have provided you with the copy of an Ethics clearance Certificate (NWU-00329-18-S7) from the Higher Degree Committee (HREC) which authorizes the study and a letter from the Research Ethics Committee of North-West University.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the Department of Education with a bound copy of the full research report. If you require any further information, please contact the researcher on **marutlag@yahoo.com** / 072 402 0606.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours faithfully

Goitseone B. Marutla **Supervisor…….**

North-West University **Signature……**



Faculty of Humanities (Mafikeng Campus)

Date……

APPENDIX C: PRINCIPAL CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF THE STUDY: READING CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH: TOWARDS A READING MODEL FOR GRADE 8 LEARNERS IN MAFIKENG DISTRICT

I am a student at the North-West University (Mafikeng Campus) and conducting research in fulfilment of programme requirements for the degree PhD in English. This project is conducted under the supervision of Prof T. Mukhuba, Dr M.L. Hove and Dr P.N. Nkamta of North-West University. I require your permission to conduct this study at your school. The study consists of two parts, the first activity is an observation of a Grade 8 teacher teaching reading to their class. The second activity entails the researcher randomly selecting five learners who have consented to participate in the study and exposing them to a reading programme. Both activities require five days in each school.

The reading of the five learners will be video-recorded to enable the researcher to analyse the reading proficiency of the learners at a later date. Though there are risks (Fine, 2013) associated with the use of video recording, I promise to keep all recordings safe. The recording will be stored in a computer hard drive and will be protected by user pin which is only known to me. If you agree with the information provided, please complete the agreement form on the next page.

I……..(the principal) am satisfied that the information provided is true, appropriate and sufficient to consider granting permission to

conduct research at this school. Any question regarding the research was answered to my satisfaction. I agree that the researcher may proceed with his study at this school. I realise that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I agree that the research data collected for this study may be published or may be shared with other researchers in a form that does not identify this school, its parents/guardians, learners or teachers in any way.

NAME OF SCHOOL……..DATE……
……

(BLOCK LETTERS)

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL……DATE……
……

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER……DATE……
……..

Yours Faithfully

GOITSEONE MARUTLA

TEL: 072 402 0606 Email: **Marutlag@yahoo.com**

Faculty of Humanities (Mafikeng Campus)

Date: ……

APPENDIX D: REQUEST LETTER TO EDUCATORS

DEAR EDUCATOR

I am a student at the North-West University (Mafikeng Campus) in the process of undertaking a study in fulfilment of programme requirements towards a PhD in English. This study is conducted under the supervision of Professor T. Mukhuba, Dr M.L. Hove and Dr P.N. Nkamta of North-West University. I require your permission to participate in my study and to allow the researcher to observe you teaching reading to your learners. The second request is that you complete a questionnaire that the researcher will provide to you. The study topic is: READING CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH: TOWARDS A READING MODEL FOR GRADE 8 LEARNERS IN MAFIKENG DISTRICT and it seeks to establish reading difficulties experienced by Grade 8 learners, striving to generate a reading model that should alleviate these challenges.

The reading of the Grade 8 learners in this reading programme will be video recorded to allow the researcher more time to analyse their reading proficiencies but that is done outside of the school at a later stage. The video recording will only be used during reading. Other activities such as observation and silent reading will not be recorded.

Though there are risks (Fine, 2013) associated with the use of video recording, I promise to keep all recordings safe. The recording will be stored in a computer hard drive and will be protected by user pin which is only known by me. At the end of the program educators will be asked to complete a questionnaire form which seeks to establish the reading challenges of your learners. The results of the findings from the questionnaire will be made available to the school upon request in writing.

I will not cause any disruption in your class and will respect the teaching and learning environment in the school. I promise I will not report any information that will reveal anything of a personal and compromising nature about the learners to any other person. If you agree to be part of this study, please complete the agreement below.

I…… an educator at ……..

(Name of the educator) (Name of the school)

Agree to participate in Goitseone Marutla's research on READING CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH: TOWARDS A READING MODEL FOR GRADE 8 LEARNERS IN MAFIKENG DISTRICT.

I accept the following which have been outlined by the researcher:

- My identity will be kept confidential.
- The information I share with the researcher will be made available but will not compromise my position at school.
- My class and learners will be respected and the researcher will not cause any disruption to the teaching and learning time.
- My participation is not forced and I can withdraw at any time.
- During the researcher's stay at the school, he committed himself to brief me and the principal about activities taking place in the classroom.

SIGNED…….

DATE ……

PLACE……..

Yours faithfully

Goitseone B. Marutla **marutlag@yahoo.com**

Cell: 072 402 0606

Faculty of Humanities (Mafikeng Campus)

Date: ……

APPENDIX E: REQUEST TO PARENTS/ GUARDIANS

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am a PhD student at the North-West University in the process of undertaking a study in fulfilment of programme requirements for a PhD in English studies in the Faculty of Humanities. This project is conducted under the supervision of Professor T. Mukhuba, Dr M.L Hove and Dr P.N. Nkamta of North-West University. I request your permission to allow your child to be part of this study on READING CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH: TOWARDS A READING MODEL FOR GRADE 8 LEARNERS IN MAFIKENG DISTRICTIn the case that your child is younger than 18 and older than 12 years, he/she is viewed to be at a consenting age according to the Children's Act, number 41 of 2007. You are therefore requested to assist your child in making a well informed decision to either take part in the study or not. The study seeks to establish causes to their reading difficulties and to develop a model for reading that is designed to alleviate the challenges.

This study will expose your child to more reading in class and establish the nature and extent of these reading challenges.

The reading of learners in this reading programme will be video recorded to allow the researcher more time to analyse learners' reading proficiencies and this analysis is done outside of the school at a later stage. The video recording will only be used during reading.

Though there are risks (Fine, 2013) associated with the use of video recording, I promise to keep all recordings safe. The recording will be stored in a computer hard drive and will be protected by user pin which is only known by me. This will be done with your permission and that of the school, district officials and the educators.

In the case that you object to any of the information provided to you, you are free to bring it to the attention of the researcher or withdraw your child's participation in the project. Your child will not suffer any consequences as a result of the withdrawal. I promise to protect the identity of your child throughout my study. I will not force their participation and should your child report any unhappiness, please feel free to communicate that with me.

If you agree with the information provided to you and wish to allow your child to participate in the study, please fill the section below and sign it.

I…… (Full Names and Surname)have read the information provided in this Consent Form and my child will voluntarily participate in this study.

Name…….. (Of the child)

Your Signature……..Date……Place……

Yours faithfully

Goitseone B. Marutla Tel: 0749107300 Email: **marutlag@yahoo.com**
Supervisor:…… Tel:.....

Email:…….



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

READING CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH: TOWARDS A READING MODEL FOR GRADE 8 LEARNERS IN MAFIKENG DISTRICT

APPENDIX F: CONSENT LETTER FOR LEARNERS

REFERENCE NUMBERS: 16367588

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Marutla G.B

ADDRESS: 7574 Prunus close Unit 15 Mmabatho, 2735

CONTACT NUMBER: 072 402 0606

Your permission to take part in a research project that forms part of my PhD study in English is been requested. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part. Prior to publication of the study's results (or the point that publication is in process), you may also withdraw the data you generate.

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee (HREC- NWU- 00329-18-S7) of the Faculty of Humanities of the North-West University (NWU Mafikeng

campus) and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or relevant authorities to inspect the research records to make sure that we (the researchers) are conducting research in an ethical manner.

What is this research study all about?

- This study will be conducted by Goitseone B Marutla and will involve quantitative and qualitative research design. The researchers have been trained to use the methods mentioned in the previous sentence.
- The first part of the study include all learners in the class and will be conducted under the supervision of your teacher.
- The second part of the study will be video recorded and include 5 learners from each school. These will be the learners whose parents have signed the consent letters which give permission to them to participate in the study.
- Though there are risks associated with the use of video recording (Fine, 2013), I promise to keep all recordings safe. The recording will be stored in a computer hard drive and this will be protected by user pin which is only known to me.
- The objectives of this research are:
    - From the review of literature and the results of the empirical investigation the study will establish the reading challenges of grade 8 and what cause them.
    - Design strategies to assist learners to overcome their reading challenges,
    - Design a reading a model that will be used by language teachers in their classrooms.

Why have you been invited to participate?

- You have been invited to participate because you are in Grade 8
- You will be excluded if: Your parent or guardian does not give you permission to
- participate in the study through signing the relevant consent letter.

What will your responsibilities be?

- You will be expected to read some few texts and write tests at the end of every reading.

Will you benefit from taking part in this research?

- The direct benefits for you as a participant will probably be to test how well you could read and the advice you would get from the researcher.
- The indirect benefit will probably be summarizing, word recognition, and knowledge of word meaning as used in the text.

Are there risks involved in your taking part in this research and how will these be managed?

- The risks in this study, and how these will be managed, are summarised in the table below:

Probable/possible risks/discomforts	***Strategies to minimize risk/discomfort***
Because you will be expected to read text within the time allocated to each text, it is possible that you might panic.	The searcher will give time before you read to settle down. You will also be given time before you answer questions from the text you read.

- However, we do believe that the benefits to you and to science (as noted in the previous section) outweigh the risks we have listed. If you disagree, then please feel free not to participate in this study. We will respect your decision.
- Should we learn, in the course of the research, that someone is harming you, or that you are intending to harm someone, then we must tell someone who can help you/warn the person you are intending to harm.

Who will have access to the data?

- Anonymity (that is, in no way will your results be linked to your identity) will .be protected. Confidentiality (that is, I assure you that I will protect the information I have about you) will be ensured by not reporting or mentioning you or your name as a participant. Reporting of findings will be anonymous.
- Only the researcher and your teacher will know of the results and what transpired throughout the study. Data will be kept safe and secure by destroying all the hard

copies obtained during the process of data collection and all electronic data will be password protected.

- Recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer.
- Data will be stored for five years in password protected hard drive.

What will happen to the data?

The data from this study will be reported in the following ways:

- In all of this reporting, you will not be personally identified.
- This means that the reporting will not include your name or details that will help others to know that you participated (e.g., your address or the name of your school).

This is a once-off study, so the data will not be re-used.

Will you be paid/compensated to take part in this study and are there any costs involved?

No, you will not be compensated to take part in the study, but refreshments will be served to all participants. If participating in the research means that you have to travel especially for the purpose of participating, then your travel costs will be paid.

How will you know about the findings?

- The general findings of the research will be shared with you through your school principal who will then pass them to your language teacher and finally to you.
- If you would like feedback on your personal results, then do so by writing a letter to that effect.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- You can contact me (researcher) at 072 402 0606 of at **marutlag@yahoo.com** if you have any further queries or encounter any problems.
- You can contact the chair of the Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Prof C van Eeden) at 016 910 3441 or **chrizanne.vaneeden@nwu.ac.za** if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher. You can also contact, the co-chair, Dr Marita Heyns (016 910 3515) or

marita.heyns@nwu.ac.za). You can leave a message for either Chrizanne or Marita with Ms Daleen Claasens (016 910 30441)

- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I ……..…….. agree to take part in a research study entitled:

I declare that:

- I have read and understood this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person obtaining consent, as well as the researcher (if this is a different person), and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I understand that what I contribute (what I report/say/write/draw/produce visually) could be reproduced publically and/or quoted, but without reference to my personal identity.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) .....…..…... on (*date*) ……...…….. 20....

Signature of participant Signature of witness

- You may contact me again ☐Yes ☐ No
- I would like a summary of the findings of this research ☐ Yes ☐ No
- I would like feedback on my functioning/wellbeing as reflected

In the questionnaires I completed ☐ Yes ☐ No

The best way to reach me is:

Name & Surname: **Goitseone Benjamin Marutla**
Postal Address: 7574 Prunus close Unit 15 Mmabatho 2735
Email: marutlag @yahoo.com
Phone Number: N/A
Cell Phone Number: 0724020606

In case the above details change, please contact the following person who knows me well and who does not live with me and who will help you to contact me:

Name & Surname: Dipuo Bertha Marutla

Phone/ Cell Phone Number /Email: 0716043421

Declaration by person obtaining consent

I *(name)* ……..…… declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to ……..
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) .....…..…….. on (*date*)……...……20....

Signature of person obtaining consent Signature of witness

Declaration by researcher

I **Goitseone B Marutla** declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to (name)……..
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above

- I did/did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) Mmabatho on (*date*) ……..….. 20....



Signature of researcher Signature of witness

APPENDIX G: TEXTS FOR LEARNERS (NATURAL DISASTERS)

READING PASSAGE 1

Read this extract in 2. Min 40 sec

SA braces for hail storms and cold weather

Date: October 9, 2017 **Petru Saal**

While light snowfalls are expected in parts of the Eastern Cape' Western Cape 13
and KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng residents can brace themselves for a stormy 24
afternoon on Monday. South African Weather Service forecaster Dipuo Kawana 34
said that the storm activity could be severe. 42
Storm activity is also expected in parts of the North West' Free State' Limpopo 56
and Mpumalanga. 58
"For Gauteng we are looking at 60% thunder showers. We have issued an alert 72
that the storm we are expecting might be severe. The thunder storms might be 86
producing hail as well as strong gusty winds'" said Kawana. Temperatures will 98
peak at 23°C in Johannesburg and 25°C in Pretoria. 107
In Durban heavy rains are also expected but the rainfall will not be continuous. 121
The rain will be contained to the coastal areas of the province. 133
"In the Durban area we are looking at 80% chance of showers and thunder 147
showers later today' but the rain will be intermittent. The rain is expected to 162
hit by midday. Maximum temperature for Durban will be 22°C'" said Kawana. 173
Capetonians woke up to strong south easterly winds' reaching speeds of 182

50km/h in some parts of the city. Kawana said the wind would drop to about 197

37km/h by lunch time. 200

“For the Cape Town area we are expecting partly cloudy conditions’ with no rain 214

with a maximum of 19°C’” said Kawana. 221

The weather service said that an “intense cut-off low system” would affect the 235

eastern parts of the Western Cape’ south-eastern Northern Cape’ Eastern Cape 247

and KwaZulu-Natal on Monday. 252

Stock farmers were warned to expect very cold conditions in high-lying parts of 265

the Eastern Cape and south-eastern Northern Cape on Monday’ spreading to 277

KwaZulu-Natal on Tuesday. 281

READING PASSAGE:3

Read this passage in 3min

2016 Johannesburg flood

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

On the afternoon of 9 November, a severe thunderstorm moved across Gauteng 12
bringing with it rain and hail. Unconfirmed reports estimate that between 90 mm 25
and 150 mm of rain fell within an hour leading to flash floods. 39

According to the South African Weather Service, O.R. Tambo International Airport 50
received 89.6mm of rain in approximately three hours. Some of the most destructive 63
flooding occurred on key roads during rush hour traffic as particularly the Witkoppen 76
road and the Linksfield road off- and on-ramps to the N3 incurred significant damage. 91
By ten o'clock that night 100 vehicles were still stuck in submerged roads, the M1 was 107
still flooded at the Athol Road on- and off-ramps in Melrose, and both the N3 123
Buccleuch interchange and Linksfield road off- and on-ramps were flooded 134
in both directions.One of the heavily affected routes was the R24 westbound where 148
vehicles were submerged. 151
There was also widespread traffic gridlock with flooding in all directions at 163
Gillooly's interchange. Access roads to O.R. Tambo International Airport were flooded 173
as was the airport's lower basement parking. An estimated 26 aircraft diversions 188
took place between 17:10 and 18:30, with aircraft diverted to King Shaka International, 202
Lanseria, Wonderboom and Gaborone. 206
Heavy rain caused the Jukskei River to burst its banks, affecting the R55 in Kyalami 215

where a bridge was covered in debris and blocked off.The suburb of Buccleuch was 231
allegedly declared a state of emergency, Woodmead Drive was closed to traffic as 244
was Tom Jones Road in Benoni.Around 10 cars were pushed down an 254
embankment off the N3. 258
Trains running between Germiston and Kaalfontein were affected by the flooding, while 280
trains from Johannesburg to Pretoria and Tembisa are turning around at Germiston 290
station, and trains from Pretoria and Tembisa are stopping at Kaalfontein. Flooding was 304
reported in Midrand, Edenvale and Bedfordview;while a three-year-old girl was swept 318
away in Alexandra. Housing and cars were also swept away in Alexandra, and 331
the Gauteng Human Settlements Department was providing temporary accommodation 340
while the Province had set up the Johannesburg Disaster Management Centre. 351
A boundary wall collapsed at the Johannesburg Zoo and another wall 362
collapsed in Houghton. According to emergency services, six people died 372
during the flooding. According to the Johannesburg Road Agency, the R55 bridge 382
in Kyalami collapsed, the John Nhlanhla bridge in Alexandra and the Buccleuch bridge 396
washed away, and all low-lying bridges between Kyalami and Dainfern flooded. 408

READING PASSAGE: 4

Read this passage in 1, 30 sec

Drought crisis: 3 provinces declared national disasters

2018-02-13 21:28

Lizeka Tandwa



Johannesburg –

The national disaster management centre has called on organs of state to implement 13
contingency measures to enable the national executive to deal with the drought in 36
parts of South Africa. 40

In a statement released in the government gazette on Tuesday, Disaster head 52
Dr Mmaphaka Tau Tau said, after re-assessing the magnitude and severity of the 63
ongoing drought occurring in at least three provinces, disaster management 73
reclassified the drought as a national disaster. 80

The Northern Cape, Western Cape and Eastern Cape have already been declared 92
provincial disasters. 94

“The primary responsibility to coordinate and manage the disaster, in terms of 106
existing legislation and contingency arrangements, is designated to the national 116
executive,” Tau said. 118

Tau added that organs of state were required to prepare and submit reports, 131

required by the disaster management, “to the respective intergovernmental forums as listed therein”.

Last Thursday, Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Des Van Rooyen said the process of declaration was prescribed in the Disaster Management Act.

The first step in terms of the act, would be to reclassify them national disasters, he said.

The regulations linked to the act might touch on by-laws and guidance on procurement, so the department would move to identify impediments on spending given to all provinces to deal with the situation, Van Rooyen added.

He said it had also become clear that the department might have to look into supply chain issues, which slowed some water initiatives down.

READING PASSAGE: 2

Read the passage n 1 min

SNOW HITS EASTERN CAPE

2.18.1.1. Refilwe Thobega | 4 months ago

JOHANNESBURG –

South Africans are experiencing a cold snap that is affecting most parts of the country. 16
This week the South African Weather Service said a steep upper-air trough, having 30
the potential to cut off and further intensify, would result in significantly cooler weather 44
over most parts of the country from Wednesday and Thursday with the expectation of 58
snowfalls on some southern mountains. Cold weather invaded the Eastern Cape, 71
southern, KwaZulu-Natal, southern Free State and the Northern Cape on Wednesday, 81
spreading to reach the remainder of KwaZulu-Natal, the Free State, Gauteng and 92
Mpumalanga on Thursday, accompanied by maximum temperatures in the mid-teens. 103
SA Weather Services added that, however, very cold weather, characterised by single 116
digit maximum temperatures (+9 °C or less), would dominate high-lying areas of the 127
Eastern Cape and south-western KwaZulu-Natal on Thursday. Snow is subsequently 145
Heavy and disruptive (with respect to traffic and infrastructure) over the north-eastern 158
mountains of the Eastern Cape (Rhodes, Barkly East) and Lesotho. Snowfalls of this 170
nature typically lead to the closing of mountain passes, resulting in associated 182
disruption to traffic flow. At the same time, Storm Report SA posted some images and 198
videos on its Facebook page. 202

READING PASSAGE : 5

Read the passage in 3min

Survivors describe tsunami horror ‘It seemed like it was over’ Thursday, December 30, 2004

Posted: 0345 GMT (1145 HKT)

(CNN) –

Peter Heydemann of Chicago was vacationing in Thailand with his family when the tide 14
began to slowly rise early Sunday. He watched from his hotel as the street below became 30
flooded by what he thought was just an unusually high tide. Thinking the worst had passed, 47
he walked down to investigate. 51
“I didn’t know the big one was still coming,” he told CNN Wednesday. “And suddenly 67
I heard somebody yell—I assume it was something like, ‘Run!’ But I had no place to 86
run to, and suddenly I was in water above my head.” 98
A few minutes later, the water was dragging him out to sea along with driftwood, 113
smashed buildings, gas cans and other debris. He remained at sea for about 40 141
“It seemed like it was over,” he said. “Nobody saw me from the beach. I tried every 160
now and then to let go of the flotation and wave, but nobody could see me.” 178
Heydemann’s story echoes those of other survivors—that many people believed high 190
tide was coming in and they went to get a closer look, only to learn that the worst had 207
not yet hit. 210
Adam Forbes, an 18-year-old tourist from New Jersey, was on a fishing island off 227
Phuket, Thailand. He was to join about 40 people on a pier for the trip back to Bangkok, 245
but he had to pay his hotel bill first. 255
Forbes was delayed for a few minutes, so he was not on the pier when the massive wave struck. 275
“The first wave just looked like a wall of white coming toward you, and the sound .. it was 296
just screams everywhere and just the crashing sound,” he said. “The water just kept 309
coming and coming.” 313
Forbes, who was reunited with his parents Wednesday, said, “I will always appreciate 314

the power of water for the rest of my life and how much nature can destroy in just a few minutes.

READING PASSAGE: 6 (SILENT READING)

Read the passage in 1. min

Eastern Cape fire reaches Woodridge College

2017-06-10 18:10

Paul Herman, News24

Port Elizabeth –

A fire burning in the Van Stadens Gorge area in the Eastern Cape has reportedly reached some of 17
the buildings at Woodridge College outside of Port Elizabeth, the school said in a Facebook 32
post. 33

“All pupils are safely off campus. Non-local boarders [are] being hosted by other families. 49
Fires around school under control at this stage,” the school said on Facebook on Saturday. 66

The fire department was still on the premises, and the school evacuated. The school’s alumni 81
association said that all firefighters had to leave the campus on Saturday afternoon as “nothing 97
more could be done”. 101

“It is with a very heavy heart that we have to inform you that Woodridge is now on fire including 120
the buildings,” the Old Woodridgean Association also said on Facebook. 131

“All fire fighters have had to leave the campus and there is nothing more that can be done. 151
We will keep you updated if any more news comes through.” 162

HeraldLIVE posted a video on Facebook of the incident on Saturday afternoon. 175

Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality spokesperson Mthubanzi Mniki said the buildings affected 186
were reception and music halls, the newspaper reported. The school thanked friends of 198
the school for their assistance and support. It was not clear what caused the fire in the 214
Van Stadens Gorge area. 220

APPENDIX H: PHOTOS USED IN AN INTRODUCTION



PHOTO: A



PHOTO: B



PHOTO: C



PHOTO: D



PHOTO: E



PHOTO: F

STORY HEADING	PHOTO
1.Eastern Cape fire reaches Woodridge College	
2. Johannesburg flood	
3. survivors describe tsunami horror	
4. Drought crisis: 3 provinces declared national disaster	
5. Snow hits Eastern Cape	
6. SA braces for hail storms and cold weather	

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONS FOR EACH READING TASK

SCHOOL No:…….. Date:……

READING PASSAGE: 1 After reading passage: 1:

2. Summarise the passage in about 6 lines. 6

3. What does the word “braces” mean? Choose the correct answer.
   (a) goes
   (b) Runs
   (c) Prepares 1

4. The word “continuous” is from the verb “continue”. What is an opposite word for “Continue” 1

Answer: …….

5. “The storm we are expecting might be severe” what would you encourage people to do? Choose the correct answer.
   (a) Ignore the alert and continue with their business?
   (b) Stay home and prepare for any disaster? 1
6. If the hail is severe, what do you think will happen to the cars when they are not parked inside the garage? 1(10)

School no: ……TEST 2 (PASSAGE 2) Date…….

1. Summarise the passage in about 6 lines. 6

2. After reading the passage, give it a title. 1

……

3. The word intensify comes from the root word …… 1
4. The word infrastructure in this passage would include things like what? (Choose the correct two answers)

   (a) Roads
   (b) Tractors
   (c) Buildings,
   (d) Cars 2 (10)

School no…….. **Test 3** **Date……...**

1. **Summarise the passage in about lines.** **6**

2. The word “approximately” is used; (Choose the correct answer)
   (a) You are angry at people.
   (b) When you are not sure of the exact number. 1

3. Why is heavy rain not good for the country? Give three reasons
   Answers:
   1.
   2.
   3. 3(10)

……

School no…….. **Test 4** **Date…….**

1. **Summarise the passage in about 6 lines.** **6**

2. Explain the meaning of the word as used in this passage “severity”? Would it mean; (Choose the correct answer)
   (a) The size and length or
   (b)The seriousness 1

3. How are animals (like, cattle, sheep and goats) affected by drought? Give two answers.

1.

2.

2(10)

School no…… **Test 5** **Date…….**

1. Summarise the passage in about 6 lines. 6

2. What does the word “flooded” mean, as used in the passage? 1

……

3. “I didn’t know the big one was still coming,” What was he referring to? 1

……

4. Where are “high tides” usually found? Choose one.
   (a) On the race track.
   (b) On seas and oceans. 1

What kind of a natural disaster is Tsunami? 1(10)

APPENDIX: J Reading Assessment Rubric- Reading aloud

Learner's Name : **Grade :**

Subject : **Date :**

School : **Subject Teacher:**

Keys: 1. Frustration level 2. Acceptable level 3. Appropriate level

	Criteria	**1**	**2**	**3**	**Remarks**
Accuracy Reading words without having to stop and decoding by sounding them or breaking them into syllabic chunk.	How much does a learner struggle to read words in the text?				Write down the words she/he struggles with.
Expression Ability to read in a way that sounds like spoken language	At what level is the learner in control of his/her reading?				
	At what level is the able to control his/her breathing? s				
	At what level does his/her reading come close to normal spoken language?				
Speed Speed should neither be too slow or too fast	At what speed is the learner able to read?				
Pronunciation of words	Is his/her pronunciation of words correct?				
N.B. Where the learner scores (1) in any of the column---- learner need to be assisted to move the score 2 or 3					
Remediation **Example**: Teach the words that he/she struggled with, their meaning and their pronunciation (Teach them to use dictionary). **Indicate what you have done. (Be creative)**					
What do you thinks the problem is/was with your learner?:					

Signature of the teacher:

APPENDIX K: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

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2 April 2019

Dear Mr. Marutla, Prof. Mukhuba, Dr. Hove and Dr. Nkamta,

ETHIC CLEARANCE APPROVED

This letter serves to indicate that your ethics application was approved by the Ethics Committee for Language Matters (Humanities):

Ethics application number:	NWU-00329-18-S7
Project leaders:	Prof. Mukhuba, Dr. Hove and Dr. Nkamta
Applicant:	Mr. G.B. Marutla
Project title:	Reading challenges in English: Towards a reading model for Grade 8 learners in Mafikeng district.
Duration:	April 2019 – . An annual monitoring report is required.
Ethics Approval date:	2 April 2019

After perusal of the corrected documents and the report about implementation of reviewers' recommendations, ethics clearance for your PhD research is granted. The Ethics Committee for Language Matters wishes you well with your project.

Yours sincerely

C. Van Eeden

Prof C Van Eeden
Chair: Ethics Committee for Language Matters

APPENDIX L: EDITING CERTIFICATE

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
MAFIKENG CAMPUS

Department of Academic Literacy

23rd July 2019

Private Bag X2046

Mmabatho

2735

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

CERTIFICATE OF EDITING A PHD THESIS

This serves to confirm that I have read and edited Mr. G. B. Maruda's PhD thesis titled: **READING CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH: TOWARDS A READING MODEL FOR GRADE 8 EARNERS IN MAFIKENG DISTRICT.** The candidate corrected the language errors identified. The document is of an acceptable linguistic standard.

Thank you

Yours Faithfully



J.R. Moletsane (Academic Literacy)

Accr. No. 1002708

joel.moletsane@nwu.ac.za