

**Criteria for the evaluation of ESL readers for the senior
primary phase**

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Reading is to the mind what exercise
is to the body (Richard Steele).

The more you read the more you
consciousness-build (Michael Smith).

Books are the carriers of civilisation.
Without books, history is silent, literature
dumb, science crippled, thought and
speculation at a standstill (Barbara Tuchman,
in Hobbs, 2000)

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SUMMARY

The approach in this thesis was holistic in the sense that use was made of theoretical underpinnings from fields as diverse such as reception aesthetics and sociolinguistics to study reader preferences and influences of texts on readers. Sociolinguistic influences considered to exert an influence on readers are gender, educational influences such as teachers and even parents, socio-economic influences, ethnicity and culture, religion, age and emotional as well as cognitive development. Theoretical investigation revealed that books enjoyed by learners are books that deal with cultural issues sensitively and avoid portraying Black people as inferior. The ideal book is a book that parents and teachers approve of and children enjoy in equal measure. The favourite book for girls aged 11-14 must be a romantic story with lots of fantasy and with a female character in the lead. The males want a male major character, but also like romantic stories.

Literacy could be significantly promoted if all these factors are taken into account when authors write books. Parents seem to be very involved with their offspring, but television seems to have cast its spell over children, keeping them glued to their seats.

The empirical investigation attempted to verify the theoretical statements and support the notion that ethnicity must be dealt with sensitively. It reveals a cry for help from the side of Black learners to share and mix with other cultures and reveals the curiosity of White learners about, for example, township stories in spite of their demonstrated resistance to mixed cultures in books.

It points out and reinforces the recurrent statements that the economy is a problem and resources and money are in short supply. A surprise revelation was that boys are not such poor readers as they are sometimes perceived to be in that they read as eagerly and even more eagerly than girls (from the results of the study). The empirical study underlines the economic problems of South Africa which exacerbate the already precarious provision of reading materials in homes of learners. It also reveals that writers are actually few and far between, and disappointingly not many learners seem to be interested in writing stories for others to read and therefore the handful of learners who do dispose of such talents need tremendous encouragement so that they can answer the need and write stories and other creative works of literature.

OPSOMMING

Die benadering in hierdie proefskrif is holisties in die sin dat gebruikgemaak is van teoretiese grondings uit velde so verskillend soos resepsie-estetika en sosiolinguistiek om lesersvoorkeure te bepaal en die invloed van tekse op lesers vas te stel. Sosiolinguistiese invloede wat 'n rol speel is geslag, opvoedkundige invloede soos onderwysers en selfs ouers, sosio-ekonomiese invloede, etnisiteit en kultuur, godsdiens, ouderdom en emosionele en kognitiewe ontwikkeling. Die teoretiese ondersoek het aan die lig gebring dat boeke wat lesers geniet dié boeke is wat sensitief is oor kulturele aangeleenthede en wat nie Swartmense as minderwaardig uitbeeld nie. Die ideale boek hiervolgens is 'n boek wat ouers en onderwysers goedkeur maar wat kinders ook geniet. Dogters van tussen elf en veertien geniet romantiese verhale met heelwat fantasie en 'n vroulike hoofkarakter. Seuns uit hierdie groep verkies 'n manlike hoofkarakter en hou die ook baie van romantiese verhale.

Geletterdheid sou heelwat verbeter kon word indien al hierdie faktore in berekening gebring word as boeke geskryf word. Dit blyk tog of ouers nogal betrokke is by hulle kinders as dit by lees kom, maar ongelukkig het televisie 'n stewige greep op die kinders en het 'n werklike invloed.

Die empiriese ondersoek was 'n poging om die teoretiese aannames te verifieer en het die idee ondersteun dat etnisiteit met die grootste omsigtigheid hanteer moet word. Dit is terselfdertyd 'n hulpkreet van die kant van Swart leerders om te deel in ander kulture and wys ook die nuuskierigheid van Wit leerders oor lewe in die swart woongebiede – ten

spyte daarvan dat hulle beweer het dat hulle nie juis in die representasie van gemengde kulture in boeke belangstel nie.

Die studie wys ook uit dat die ekonomie, soos algemeen bekend, 'n probleem is en bronne en geld is te min. Wat nogal verrassend was, is dat seuns nie heeltemal sulke swak lesers is as wat algemeen gedink word nie – die studie wys dat hulle meer as meisies lees. Die empiriese studie onderstreep weer eens die eekonomiese probleme van Suid-Afrika wat die alreeds moeilike situasie van lesers binne hulle huisverband verder bemoeilik. Dit wys ook dat skrywers maar dun gesaai is, en dit is nogal teleurstellend dat nie baie leerders belangstelling toon om te skryf nie. Die paar leerders wat wel belangstel moet dus aktief aangemoedig word en gewys word op die uitslae van studies soos hierdie, sodat toepaslike boeke geskryf kan word en die leeskuiluur uitgebrei word.

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