

# **EVALUATING READING STRATEGIES INSTRUCTION**

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**M.A.**

**Thesis submitted for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in English  
at the North-West University**

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**2007**

**Potchefstroom Campus**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- My sincere thanks and gratitude to the following people without whose assistance this research would not have been possible:
- Prof. C. Nel, my promoter, for excellent guidance and advice, incredibly fast feedback and focused comments. Her persistent encouragement and inspiration constituted the driving force behind the success of this study.
- My sincerest thanks are due to Prof. J.L. Van der Walt for arranging financial assistance for this research.
- I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Principal of Kusile Comprehensive School, Mr. H.F. Gayiza for granting permission for the research to be conducted at his institution.
- Let me dedicate this thesis to the Lord Almighty; my mother Nothobile Mamtolo Cekiso; my father Ngakanani Hulbert Cekiso; all my children; my brothers and sister; colleagues and friends.
- Finally, it is with great appreciation that I acknowledge Ms Nontobeko Mblashwa and Mrs. Hazel Mandindi for their willingness to type and prepare this work for printing.

## **SUMMARY**

Key words: reading strategies; reading comprehension; English Second Language; training programmes; instruction; evaluation.

There is a generally accepted reality among first and second language reading researchers and practitioners that learners who study in a second or foreign language are almost always at a disadvantage, particularly in the area of reading. In light of this learners who register for high school study each year in South Africa are very often under prepared for high school education and many of these learners also have low levels of reading ability. This has an adverse effect on their chances of academic success. In order to meet the reading needs of these learners, educators need to develop effective instructional means for teaching reading comprehension and reading strategy use. It is evident from the volume and quality of research published that the teaching of reading strategies enhances the learners' reading comprehension ability.

The purpose of this study was to:

- determine what reading strategies Grade 11 ESL learners use;
- determine what reading strategies should be taught;
- determine how and when reading strategies should be taught in the ESL classroom;
- determine what the effect of an implemented reading strategy programme is on the reading comprehension of the Grade 11 ESL learners participating in this study; and
- provide guidelines in terms of the composition (i.e, format, outcomes, content, teaching method / approach, etc.) of a reading strategy instruction programme.

In this study a quasi-experimental pretest - posttest control group design was used. The participants in this study included a total of 60 Grade 11 ESL learners from a high school in the Eastern Cape. Two intact randomly selected classes participated in the study. Both males and females participated in the study and ranged in age from 18 – 22 years.

The Reading Performance Test in English: Advanced Level (Roux, 1996) and a Reading Strategy Questionnaire based on the work of Oxford (1990), Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) and Pressley et al. (1995) was used in this study.

A t-test was used to determine whether the mean scores of the experimental and control group differed statistically significantly from each other. Cohen's (1977) effect size  $d$  was used to determine whether the mean differences were practically significant.

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

The results indicated that the learners who followed the reading strategy programme and received strategic reading instruction (experimental group) obtained both statistically and practically significantly higher marks on the reading comprehension test (posttest) than did the learners in the control group. The posttest results indicated that the learners in the experimental group used certain strategies statistically ( $p < 0.05$ ), as well as practically significantly (small to large effect size), more often than the learners in the control group.

The reading instruction programme developed in this study focuses on five reading strategies, namely guessing the meaning of words from the context, making inferences, predicting what is to come in a text, identifying the main idea and summarising.

The programme presents an overview of the guidelines for a reading strategy instruction programme. It outlines the purpose, target group, content and other aspects, instruction, classroom procedure and assessment concerning a meaningful reading strategy instruction programme. English Second Language teachers may find it worth their while to implement reading strategy training models of a similar nature in order to develop their learners' proficiency in reading comprehension and reading strategy use.

## OPSOMMING

Sleutelwoorde: leesstrategieë; leesbegrip; Engels Tweede Taal; opleidingsprogramme; onderrig; evaluering.

Navorsers en praktisyns op die gebied van eerste- en tweedetaallees aanvaar oor die algemeen dat leerders wat in 'n tweede of vreemde taal leer, feitlik altyd benadeel word, veral op die gebied van lees. Gevolglik is leerders wat jaarliks vir hoërskoolstudie inskryf in Suid-Afrika dikwels nie voldoende voorberei vir hoërskoolonderwys nie, en baie van hierdie leerders het ook lae leesvaardigheidsvlakke. Dit beïnvloed hulle kanse op akademiese sukses nadelig. Om te voldoen aan die leesbehoefte van hierdie leerders, moet opvoeders effektiewe metodes ontwikkel vir die onderrig van leesbegrip en leesstrategieë. Uit die volume en gehalte van gepubliseerde navorsing is dit duidelik dat leesstrategieë leerders se leesbegripvermoë verbeter.

Die doel van hierdie studie was om:

- vas te stel watter leesstrategieë gebruik word deur graad 11-leerders in Engels Tweede Taal (ETT);
- vas te stel watter leesstrategieë onderrig behoort te word;
- vas te stel hoe en wanneer leesstrategieë onderrig behoort te word in die ETT-klaskamer;
- vas te stel watter effek 'n geïmplementeerde leesstrategieprogram het op die leesbegrip van graad 11-ETT-leerders wat aan hierdie studie deelgeneem het; en
- om riglyne te formuleer wat betref die samestelling (formaat, uitkomst, inhoud, onderrigmetode/-benadering ens.) van 'n leesstrategie-onderrigprogram.

In hierdie studie is 'n kwasi-eksperimentele voortoets-natoets-kontrolegroepontwerp gebruik. Die deelnemers aan hierdie studie was 60 graad 11-ETT-leerders van 'n hoërskool in die Oos-Kaap. Twee intakte, ewekansig geselekteerde klasse het aan die studie deelgeneem, met manlike sowel as vroulike deelnemers in die ouderdomsgroep 18 tot 22 jaar.

Die Reading Performance Test in English: Advanced Level (Roux, 1996) en 'n leesstrategievraelys, gegrond op die werk van Oxford (1990), Pressley en Afflerbach (1995) en Pressley et al. (1995) is ook in hierdie studie gebruik.

'n T-toets is gebruik om vas te stel of die gemiddelde tellings van die eksperimentele en kontrolegroep statisties beduidend van mekaar verskil het. Cohen (1977) se effekgrootte  $d$  is gebruik om te bepaal of die gemiddelde verskille prakties beduidend is.

Die resultate van die studie kan soos volg opgesom word:

Die resultate het daarop gedui dat die leerders wat die leesstrategieprogram gevolg het en wat strategiese leesonderrig ontvang het (die eksperimentele groep) statisties sowel as prakties beduidend hoër punte in die leesbegriptoets (natoets) behaal het as die leerders in die kontrolegroep. Die natoetsresultate het daarop gedui dat die leerders in die eksperimentele groep sekere strategieë statisties ( $p < 0.05$ ) sowel as prakties (klein tot groot effekgrootte) beduidend meer dikwels gebruik het as die leerders in die kontrolegroep.

Die leesonderrigprogram wat in hierdie studie ontwikkel is fokus op vyf leesstrategieë, naamlik om die betekenis van woorde te raai op grond van die konteks, om afleidings te maak, om te voorspel wat gaan kom in 'n teks, om die kernidee te identifiseer en om op te som.

Die program bied 'n oorsig van die riglyne vir 'n leesstrategie-onderrigprogram. Dit stippel die doel, teikengroep, inhoud en ander aspekte, onderrig, klaskamerprosedure en evaluering van 'n betekenisvolle leesstrategie-onderrigprogram uit. Onderwysers van Engels Tweede Taal sal dit nuttig vind om soortgelyke leesstrategie-opleidingsmodelle te implementeer, om sodoende hulle leerders se vaardigheid te ontwikkel wat betref leesbegrip en die gebruik van leesstrategieë.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Reading is a skill essential to success in all academic areas (cf. Anderson, 1999; Granville, 2001; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Pretorius, 2002). In other words, reading is central to the learning process. Anderson (1999) points out that in the ESL reading class, however, one great challenge is that even when learners can read in their second language, much of their reading is not fluent because they are not actively engaged with the text in a meaningful way. For example, the learners may move through the text one word at a time and not reap the full benefits from reading. Second language teachers, therefore, face many challenges in the classroom. Creating awareness, attention, intentionality and control of reading strategies are among the most useful contributions that teachers can make to develop their learners' reading comprehension ability (Oxford, 1990; Dreyer, 1998).

The current study is prompted by a deep concern about the high failure rate of Grade 12 learners in South Africa. Pretorius (2002:93) points out that "every year there is a public outcry over the low matriculation marks and poor pass rates countrywide of our secondary school learners, particularly learners who have to study through the medium of a language which is not their primary language." In a study conducted by Pretorius (2002) it is concluded that a fundamental feature of academic underperformance in South Africa is poor reading ability. Her results show that learners who fail are learners who perform poorly on reading tests and attain comprehension levels of less than 4.5%. According to the READ Annual Report (1999), the average age of entry of Grade 8 pupils, in rural areas, is 14,4 years. In addition, they have ESL reading levels equivalent, on average, to children at age 7,6 years. The problem becomes more serious at higher levels, as Pretorius (2002) points out that skill in reading becomes more demanding as learners move up the education ladder, while the gap between skilled and unskilled readers widens. A pilot study undertaken by Dreyer (1998) in a

multilingual classroom in the North West Province indicates a failure rate of approximately 75% among Standard 6 (Grade 8) learners on a reading comprehension test. At the heart of this problem, according to both Pitt (1985) and Pretorius (2002), is the lack of those skills basic to learning (i.e., reading skills and reading strategy use).

One widely recommended method of improving learners' ability to comprehend an L2 text is explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies (e.g., Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Anderson, 1991; 1999; Auerbach et al., 1997; Chan, 1996; O'Malley & Chamot, 1995; Oxford, 1990; Dreyer, 1998; Carrell et al., 1989; Kern, 1989). Pressley et al. (1998) state that specific instruction in strategy use together with teacher modelling is very successful not only in enhancing comprehension but also in promoting self-monitoring and motivation. In addition, strategy research (e.g., Oxford, 1990) suggests that less competent learners may improve their reading skills through training in strategies evidenced by more successful learners. However, Carrell et al. (1989) point out that relatively little research on metacognitive strategy training has been done in second language reading. Research conducted on poor readers and successful readers (cf. Lau & Chan, 2003; Arabsolghar & Elkins, 2001; Kozminsky & Kozminsky 2001; Carrell et al., 1989) indicates that while the latter know how to use effective strategies to facilitate the functioning of various cognitive processes and construct meaningful understanding of the text, the former simply read the text word by word without using any strategies. Many intervention programmes have been developed to improve learners' reading comprehension through direct strategy instruction (e.g., Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Oxford, 1990; Deshler & Schumaker, 1993; O'Malley & Chamot, 1995; Pressley et al., 1992; 1995; Presley, 1998). Arabsolghar and Elkins (2001) point out that effective teaching provides a variety of strategies for learners to use before, during and after reading for constructing meaning, whereas ineffective instruction focuses only on written practice and isolated skills.

Research indicates that reading strategies have been taught in various ways; some more beneficial than others. Kern (1989) points out that there are two major approaches to comprehension strategy training: direct explanation (DE)

and transactional strategy instruction (TSI). During direct explanation, teachers do not teach individual strategies but focus instead on helping learners view reading as a problem-solving task that necessitates the use of strategic thinking, and learning to think strategically about solving reading comprehension problems. Transactional strategy instruction focuses on the ability of teachers to facilitate discussions in which learners collaborate to form joint interpretations of text and explicitly discuss the mental process and cognitive strategies that are involved in comprehension.

Pressley et al. (1992; 1995) have developed a transactional strategy instruction programme called Learners Achieving Independent Learning (SAIL). In SAIL, reading processes are taught as strategies through direct explanation, teacher modelling, coaching and scaffolded practice. A goal of this programme is for learners to develop more personalised and integrative understanding of texts. Informed strategy instruction (cf. Brown & Day, 1983; Oxford, 1990) can cause an increase in strategic intentionality. This form of strategy instruction tells the learner what a particular strategy does and why it is useful. This kind of instruction results in improved performance on the given language task. However, in most instances, it does not give the learner enough control to evaluate the success of the strategy or to know when or how to transfer the strategy to another task.

Anderson (1999) states that a strategy-training programme should emphasise the “when” and “why” of strategy use at least as much as the “what”. Oxford (1990) mentions three types of strategy training: awareness training, one-time strategy training and long-term strategy training. Awareness training refers to the situation where participants become aware of and familiar with the general idea of language learning strategies and the way such strategies can help them accomplish various language tasks. One-time strategy training involves learning and practising one or more strategies with actual language tasks, usually those found in the regular language-learning programme. This kind of training gives the learner information on the value of the strategy, when it can be used, how to use it, and how to evaluate the success of the strategy. Long-term strategy

training also involves learning and practising strategies with actual language tasks. Learners learn the significance of particular strategies, when and how to use them and how to monitor and evaluate their own performance. It is more prolonged and covers a greater number of strategies. Therefore, it is likely to be more effective than one-time training.

Oxford (1990), in her eight steps for “a model for strategy training”, states that it is most helpful to integrate strategy training with the objectives, tasks, and materials used in the regular language training programme. In other words, when strategy training is closely integrated with language learning, learners better understand how the strategies can be used in a significant, meaningful context. Research shows that there is concrete evidence that learners who receive strategy training generally learn better than those who do not.

The following questions need to be addressed:

- What reading strategies do Grade 11 ESL learners use?
- What reading strategies should be taught?
- How and when should reading strategies be taught?
- What is the effect of an implemented reading strategy-training programme on the reading comprehension of the Grade 11 ESL learners participating in this study?
- What should an effective reading strategy programme look like?

## **1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to:

- determine what reading strategies Grade 11 ESL learners use;
- determine what reading strategies should be taught;
- determine how and when reading strategies should be taught in the ESL classroom;

- determine what the effect of an implemented reading strategy programme is on the reading comprehension of the Grade 11 ESL learners participating in this study; and
- provide guidelines in terms of the composition (i.e., format, outcomes, content, teaching method/approach, etc.) of a reading strategy instruction programme.

### **1.3 HYPOTHESIS**

The following hypothesis is formulated for this study:

H<sub>1</sub>: A well-developed reading strategy instruction programme significantly affects Grade 11 ESL learners' reading comprehension.

A null hypothesis was not formulated for this study because as Hatch and Lazaraton (1991:230) state: "If we have good reason to believe that we will find a difference (for example, previous studies or research findings suggest this is so), then we will use a one-tailed hypothesis". A one-tailed hypothesis specifies the direction of the predicted difference. A review of the literature (cf. Chapters 2 and 3) led the researcher to believe that a positive difference could be expected and, therefore, a null hypothesis was not formulated for this specific study.

### **1.4 METHOD OF RESEARCH**

A quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design was used in this study. The subjects included a total of 60 Grade 11 learners from a high school in the Eastern Cape. Two intact randomly selected classes participated in the study. All the learners were from the same school and have a homogeneous background. The learners ranged in age from 18-22 years. Both males and females participated in the study. A t-test was used to determine whether the mean scores of the experimental and control group differed statistically significantly from each other. Cohen's (1977) effect size *d* was used to determine whether the mean differences were practically significant.

## **1.5 CHAPTER DIVISION**

Chapter 2 focuses on reading strategies and reading comprehension. It emphasises the idea that the readers' awareness and use of reading strategies facilitates the readers' comprehension of text.

Chapter 3 focuses on reading strategy instruction. It gives an analysis of reading strategy intervention programmes and also their effect on reading comprehension.

Chapter 4 gives an outline of the research methodology employed in this study.

Chapter 5 focuses on the results of this study.

Chapter 6 presents guidelines for reading strategy instruction programmes.

Chapter 7 contains the conclusion and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### READING STRATEGIES AND READING COMPREHENSION

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Reading, in spite of a long history of intensive research remains a largely misunderstood activity. Pitt (1985:23) points out that reading has been subjected to a number of definitions, explanations, theories and research, and these in turn have spawned a bewildering array of methodologies. He further states that despite the long history of investigation, the field is still wide open to research as its acquisition and the development of its component skills continue to baffle academics.

This chapter focuses on schema theory as a theoretical framework, because of its relevance to reading comprehension. It also focuses on the idea that the readers' awareness and use of reading strategies facilitates the reader's comprehension of the text. Recent research (e.g., Arabsolghar & Elkins, 2001; Kozminsky & Kozminsky, 2001; Lau & Chan, 2003) has shown that knowledge of reading includes, among other factors, knowledge of reading strategies, knowledge of the goals of reading, the various factors affecting the reading process, what reading strategies to apply, how to apply them effectively, when each strategy should be applied and why. Such knowledge allows the reader under various reading conditions, to identify, select and use appropriate strategies and as such gain better understanding of the text.

#### 2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical model for the reading process is important as a basis for explaining how reading for comprehension could be attained. Various reading models that seek to unfold the reading process have emerged, for example, bottom-up models, top-down models, interactive models and schema theory models. Bottom-up models contend that the process of reading begins with letters and

their sounds and learners are perceived as being almost passive decoders of visual stimuli (Wallace, 2001). Thus, reading is accepted as a passive skill. According to Grabe and Stoller (2002), in the bottom-up model, the reader goes through a mechanical pattern by creating a piece-by-piece mental translation of the information in the text where the interaction between the reader and the text includes little or no inference from the reader's own background knowledge.

Grabe and Stoller (2002:32) state that top-down models assume that reading is primarily directed by reader goals and expectations, and that is why top-down models characterize the reader as someone who has a set of expectations about the text information and samples enough information from the text to confirm or reject these expectations. The criticism against bottom-up and top-down models led theorists to develop a new approach, namely the interactive model. Interactive models combine elements of both bottom-up and top-down models (Anderson, 1999). In interactive models, the reader needs to be fast in order to recognize the letters. This is similar to what the readers do in top-down models in order to skim a text for the main idea. Not only should the word recognition be fast, but also efficient. Schema theoretic models deal with what readers bring to the text they read. Schema theory attempts to describe the efficiency of prior knowledge. It is thought that prior knowledge of readers affects their comprehension of the text. Since schema theory requires schema activation or background knowledge support before starting to read in order to comprehend the text better, reading activities (especially pre-reading activities) play a vital role in schema theory reading models (Chan & Graves, 1995; Demirez, 1998).

The schema theoretic model of reading is still relevant in the view of the majority of reading researchers (e.g., Allen, 2002; Nassaji, 2002; Brown, 2001; Wallace, 2001; Harmer, 2001; Alderson, 2000; Khemlani & Lyne, 2000). In the next section the focus is on how the schema theoretic model of reading relates to reading comprehension.

## 2.2.1 Schema Theory

### 2.2.1.1 Elements of Schema Theory

According to Cook (1997:86), "schema theory was developed by the gestalt psychologist Bartlett ... who observed how people, when asked to repeat a story from memory, filled in details which did not occur in the original but conformed to their cultural norms". Carrell and Eisterhold (1983; 143) formalise the role of background knowledge in language comprehension as **schema theory**, and claim that any text either spoken or written does not itself carry meaning. They further claim that "... a text only provides directions for ... readers as to how they should retrieve or construct meaning from their own, previously acquired knowledge". In other words, meaning is constructed as a result of interaction between the reader's background knowledge and the information given in the text. Mauch (2001) states that the ability to understand a text largely depends on the reader's ability to access background information (i.e., to activate background schemata, about the facts presented in the text).

Khemlani and Lyne (2000) assert that since the late 1960's, a number of theorists (Goodman, 1970; Smith, 1978) have developed interactive theories of reading which place great importance on the role of the reader and the knowledge he/she brings to bear on the text in the reading process. These interactive theories, which now dominate reading research and strongly influence teaching practice, draw heavily on schema theory. The very important role of background knowledge on reading comprehension is also noted by Allen (2003). She proposes that true learning occurs as readers try to organize and understand information according to what they already know, their pre-existing knowledge. Chamot et al. (1999) point out that having a schema, or relevant prior knowledge, allows the reader to make predictions, visualize events, draw inferences, monitor comprehension and create summaries. They further state that success of the L2 learner in school has been closely linked with the student's ability to transfer L1 schemata to the second language.

In addition, Swales (1990:83) states that “background knowledge – also prior knowledge – is supposed to consist of two main components: our assimilated direct experiences of life and its manifold activities, and our assimilated verbal experiences and encounters.” Schemata are accepted as interlocking mental structures representing readers’ knowledge (Cook, 1997; Alderson, 2000; Brown, 2001; Harmer, 2001) of ordinary events (Nassaji, 2002). In the reading process, readers integrate the new information from the text into their pre-existing schemata (Nuttall, 1996; Wallace, 2001). Not only do schemata influence how readers recognize information, but also how readers store it. According to Harmer (2001), only after the schema is activated is one able to see or hear, because it fits into patterns that one already knows. The notion of schema is related to the organization of information in the long-term memory that cognitive constructs allow (Singhal, 1998).

Schema theory has been utilized in research fields such as ESL education, especially in reading instruction. According to Carrell (1987), ESL students from different countries have different schemata and most have difficulties in processing knowledge like English native speakers. As the schema theory reveals, proficient readers are able to activate prior knowledge stored in memory to integrate new linguistic data in the comprehension process. Based on schema theory, all readers carry different schemata (background information) and these are also often culture-specific. This is an important concept in ESL teaching, and pre-reading tasks are often designed to build or activate the learner’s schemata. In addition Carrel, Devine and Eskey (1988) claim that schema theory has provided numerous benefits to ESL teaching and most current textbooks attempt schema activation through pre-reading activities. Research conducted on student problem solving in familiar and unfamiliar contexts by Price and Driscoll (1997) and the study of the relative effects of familiarity with the topic and use of maps on student recall by Schwartz et al. (1998) suggest that schema theory is a valid metaphor for explaining student knowledge structures and ability to recall information. Price and Driscoll (1997) found that at the beginning of their 1997 study, 10.5 % of subjects could solve a particular type of problem in an unfamiliar

context. However, 57.3% of those involved in the study could solve a very similar problem in a familiar context.

#### *2.2.1.2 Types of Schemata*

Many reading researchers sub-categorise the term schema, with the most popular categorisation being the distinction between **formal**, **content** and **cultural schemata**. In order to understand the impact of background knowledge on reading comprehension, Alderson (2000) draws a distinction between schemata types. By **formal schemata**, he refers to background knowledge relating to the formal and rhetorical organization structures of different types of texts. **Content schema** is defined as background knowledge of the content area of the text that a reader brings to a text (Alptekin, 1993; 2002; 2003; Stott, 2001; Singhal, 1998) such as knowledge about people, the world, culture, and the universe (Brown, 2001). According to Alderson (2000), readers need knowledge about the content of the passage to be able to understand it. Yule (1996:87) points out that **cultural schemata** are developed "... in the context of our basic experiences". Bedir (1992:8) mentions **cultural schemata** and he defines them as "...the background knowledge about cultural aspects of the language being learned..." Ozyaka (2001) defines **cultural schema** as culture specific world knowledge. Thus, to comprehend a text, appropriate cultural schemata is considered to be necessary.

#### *2.2.1.3 Schemata and the Reading Process*

In the reading process it is claimed that "the first part of a text activates a schema ... which is either confirmed or disconfirmed by what follows" (Wallace, 1992:33). In addition, the reading process involves identification of genre, formal structure and topic, all of which activate schemata and allow readers to comprehend the text (Swales, 1990). In this, it is assumed that readers not only possess all the relevant schemata, but also that these schemata actually are activated. According to Swales (1990), information that does not fit into this schema may

not be comprehended or may be comprehended incorrectly. This is the reason why readers have a difficult time comprehending a text on a subject they are not familiar with even if the person comprehends the meaning of the individual words in the passage.

According to Armbruster (1996), the way that learners acquire knowledge under schema theory is determined by three different reactions that a learner can have to new information: accretation, tuning, and restructuring. In accretation, learners take the new input and assimilate it into their existing schema without making any changes to the overall schema. Tuning occurs when learners realize that their existing schema is inadequate for the new knowledge and modify their existing schema accordingly. Restructuring is the process of creating a new schema addressing the inconsistencies between the old schema and the newly acquired information. In addition to schema, learners are also thought to have mental models, which are dynamic models for problem solving based on a learner's existing schema and perceptions of task demand and task performance. According to Driscoll (1994:152), "what this means is that people bring to tasks imprecise, partial, and idiosyncratic understandings that evolve with experience".

Research has shown that ESL readers would be in a better position to understand a text when it deals with aspects familiar to them or related to their culture (i.e., for which they can activate the appropriate schemata) (Harmer, 2001; Wallace, 2001, Anderson; 1999; Nuttall, 1996; Parry, 1987). Yule (1996:87) cautions, however, that cultural schemata may sometimes give rise to misinterpretations when different cultures attach different meaning to concepts: "Something good in one person's schema can sound like something bad in another's". Parry (1987:62) points out that those ESL readers whose cultural background differs vastly from that of the writer of the text are unlikely to have the appropriate schemata for understanding the message conveyed by the text. Lack of familiarity with the cultural context of the text is likely to lead to comprehension difficulties. Miller et al. (1998) specifically refer to the South African situation by stating that the background schemata of under-prepared students, who are predominantly from an African culture, do not have a

facilitating effect on the comprehension of textual material rooted in a Western culture. Kilfoil (1997:180) believes that the disparity between African students' frames of reference and the Western philosophy underlying academic discourse at South African universities has an "alienating" effect on students, which effectively excludes them "from all, but superficial rote-learning." Pillay (1988) points out that even if readers do have the appropriate background schemata, whether cultural or otherwise, it does not necessarily guarantee that they will be able to interpret the text correctly. He further states that second language readers often do not use background information effectively, even when this is explicitly provided in the text. It seems that reading in the second language sometimes requires so much effort in terms of linguistic processing.

From the above discussion about schema theory, it seems that schema theory is a valid explanation for how learners process and interpret information. However, it has been observed that schema-theoretic applications do not always result in improvements in comprehension, particularly where they result in insufficient attention to textual detail, or where there is an increase in schema-interference by, for example, the activation of dominant or negative schemata. The following section focuses on the readers' awareness and use of reading strategies in order to facilitate comprehension of the text.

## **2.3 READING STRATEGIES**

### **2.3.1 Definition**

In the past several years, both first and second language reading research has begun to focus on reading strategies. Carrell (1991) points out that reading strategies are of interest for what they reveal about the ways readers manage interactions with written text and also for how strategies are related to reading comprehension. According to Carrell (1991), the term 'strategies' refers to actions that readers select and control to achieve desired goals or objectives. Thus, the term 'strategies' emphasizes the reader's active participation and actual way of doing something or the reader's performance. According to Carrell (1991:160), strategies may be relatively conscious and non-automatic, or relatively subconscious and automatic. Arabsolghar and Elkins (2001:155)

define a reading strategy as an activity or a series of activities that aids comprehension and thus plays an important role in reading.

According to Garner (1984:301), "a strategy is a sequence of activities, not a single event and learners may have acquired some of the sequence, but not all". According to Garner (1987b), teaching children a reading strategy often does not result in their being able to use it in contexts other than that in which they first learned it. To transfer this skill across time and contexts, readers need to acquire meta-cognitive knowledge of what conditions warrant the use of the strategy, as well as the ability to monitor comprehension and the environment to detect when these conditions are met. Thus, readers who know a range of strategies and when, where and why to use them, are considered to be strategic readers (Paris et al., 1983). In addition, Anderson (1991:470) points out that it is not sufficient to know about strategies; a reader must also be able to apply them strategically. He further states that strategies are deliberate, cognitive steps that learners can take to assist in acquiring, storing, and retrieving new information. Research has shown that learners' awareness and use of the reading strategies includes, among other factors, what reading strategies to apply, how to apply them effectively, when each strategy should be applied and why (e.g., Arabsolghar & Elkins, 2001; Chan, 1996; Anderson, 1991). Such knowledge allows the reader, under various reading conditions, to identify, select and use appropriate strategies. In addition, it provides learners with a variety of strategies to use before, during and after reading for constructing meaning. As this is one of the important skills efficient readers should master in order to enhance their comprehension of the text, it is discussed in detail in the next section.

### **2.3.2 Classification of Reading Strategies**

Reading strategies are classified according to the role they play before reading, during reading and after reading.

### 2.3.2.1 *Before Reading*

According to Chastain (1988), the purpose of pre-reading activities is to motivate the learners to want to read the assignment and to prepare them to be able to read it. Ringler and Weber (1984) call pre-reading activities enabling activities, because they provide a reader with necessary background to organize activity and to comprehend the material. These experiences involve understanding the purpose(s) for reading and building a knowledge base necessary for dealing with the content and the structure of the material. Ringler and Weber (1984) further state that pre-reading activities elicit prior knowledge, build background and focus attention.

According to Chastain (1988), pre-reading activities motivate readers to read the text and when they are motivated they get prepared for the reading activity and also they complete the activity better and with less effort and are eager to participate in the activity since they have gained confidence. Activating readers' prior knowledge of a topic before they begin to read may help students' comprehension (Grabe, 1991; Ur, 1996). The following section focuses on predicting what is to come in a text, as an example of a pre-reading strategy.

#### 2.3.2.1.1 *Predicting What Is To Come In A Text*

Swaffar et al. (1991) point out the benefits of predicting techniques that allow students to formulate hypotheses about the text. By taking advantage of contextual clues, titles, headings, and pictures, students are encouraged to draw inferences prior to reading. In addition, Swaffar et al. (1991) view identification of text genre, such as articles, poetry, non-fiction and plays, as a very important pre-reading exercise. They suggest that engaging in this type of analysis enables students to identify the probable rhetorical grammar, stylistic markers and possible constraints on the development of ideas.

According to Chia (2001), the aim of predicting activities is to help readers predict or make some educated guesses about what is in the text and thus activate

effective top-down processing for reading comprehension. Several stimuli in a text, such as the title, photographs, illustrations, or subtitles, are usually closely connected to the author's ideas and content. So, based on any of them, students can make predictions about the content of the text. Predicting before reading can activate learners' prior knowledge and experiences about a topic. Robb (1995) points out that recall and comprehension can improve when readers think about what they know about a topic before they even open the front cover of the book. He further states that as good readers move further into a story, they continue to predict and support, confirm or adjust their hunches as the narrative unfolds.

### *2.3.2.2 During Reading*

According to Brown (2002), Nunan (1999) and Hyland (1990), skimming and scanning are important during reading strategies. Through skimming, a reader is able to predict the purpose of the passage, and perceive the writer's message (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). In this way readers are asked to predict the whole text, though they do not read all of it. Alderson (2000) states that skimming is a metacognitive skill that is used by good readers. Bachman and Cohen (1998) and Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) also state that skimming allows readers to read for general understanding. Brown (2001) points out that readers scan to get specific information in a text, such as names, dates, etc. During reading activities help learners to self monitor reading and also focus on details or concepts that are relevant to the purpose of reading. The following section focuses on how readers make inferences about the text based on their experience and observations on the text.

#### *2.3.2.2.1 Making Inferences*

Making inferences requires the reader to make connections between what the author wants his readers to understand. Inferences are always based on something, as in the author's descriptions, facts, opinions, experience and observations (Robb, 1995). Using the information the author has presented, readers must also comprehend more information than what is directly stated.

Milan (1995) points out that to infer means to draw a conclusion from what has been implied. In other words, when you make inferences you “read between the lines.” For example, one can infer that a man wearing a ring on the fourth finger of his left hand is married. Based on our “commonly accepted expressions” this inference is probably accurate, but is not necessarily true. The man wearing a ring may be a widower.

The implication of the students’ awareness about how inferences operate is that students are able to form conclusions from a text and better comprehension is likely to occur. Inferences are critical acts of comprehension, since they allow students to make words and phrases meaningful and join together prepositions and sentences (Johnston, 1984). Johnston (1984) further states that the opinion on inference has shifted over the past few years from regarding it as a single process, almost an optional extra, to seeing it as a selection of fairly well-differentiated types of inference upon which virtually all comprehension is predicted. Garner (1987a:137) calls inference, text-connecting. Text-connecting is the semantic or logical relations that the student establishes between prepositions expressed in the text and events discussed in the text. Wiener and Bazerman (1988) define inferencing as the process whereby students use hints to gather information. However, inferences must be based on valid, available information and not simply on vague suspicions or wild guesses. In the next section another similar strategy (i.e., guessing meaning of words from the context) is discussed, as it also facilitates the comprehension of the text.

#### *2.3.2.2.2 Guessing Meaning Of Words From The Context*

Some ESL readers have a misconception, namely that in order to understand a text they must know the meaning of all the words that appear in the text (Laviosa, 1994). This task is time consuming as readers at times are faced with large volumes of reading material. To address this problem researchers have recommended that teachers should train the learners to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words by using the context and clues surrounding the words. Grellet

(1994:38) points out that the following types of relation between the word and the context may help the reader take a good guess:

- Equivalence: a synonym is mentioned in the text.
- Contrast: the word means the opposite of another word or expression given in the text.
- Cause: the meaning of the word can be guessed because it is the cause of something described in the text.
- Consequence: the word describes or appears in the description of the consequence of something. If the cause is known, it may be possible to guess what the consequence is.
- Purpose: the word applies to an object whose purpose is described in the text.
- Explanation/ illustration: the meaning of the word is explained or an example is given.
- Generalization/specification: the word is just one specific instance of a more general thing or idea mentioned in the text, or, on the contrary, after a number of specific examples have been given, a generalization is made.

The following section focuses on the learners' ability to identify a main idea in a paragraph, as it is one of the important strategies that enhance comprehension.

#### *2.3.2.2.3 Identifying A Main Idea In A Paragraph*

Readers need to be able to employ specific strategies to identify and substantiate important information (e.g., the main idea). Students are often asked to read a piece of text and find the main idea or ideas. According to Grellet (1994), the main idea may be implied and require the reader to connect information and make inferences. He further states that sometimes text has no main idea, simply

enumeration of detail. In that case, efficient readers need to be able to recognize facts and details that are important to achieve their purpose.

Directly stated main ideas are sometimes called topic sentences and they focus the reader's attention on the most important idea in the passage or the central idea which the author wants his readers to understand about the subject matter. Main ideas are mostly presented in the first sentence of the paragraph. However, they can also be found either in the middle or at the end of a paragraph (Arnaudet & Barrett, 1984).

According to Arnaudet and Barrett (1984:135), the following are some of the advantages of determining the main ideas of the paragraphs read:

- As actively seeking main ideas helps readers concentrate on what they read, this lessens distraction since there is a purpose for the reading;
- Since the main idea holds the details of the paragraph together, readers will be able to recall many more of the details that support the main idea;
- Readers will find that determining the main idea is an aid in studying. For example, readers will be able to identify and mark important information in their textbooks. They will also be able to take effective notes and outline material more efficiently;
- Identifying the main ideas of separate paragraphs enables efficient writing of summaries.

Writers present their ideas paragraph by paragraph with one main idea in each paragraph. In a paragraph there is usually one sentence which states the main idea. This makes the reading task easier. However, the reader still needs to determine the sentence that states the main idea. Main ideas can sometimes be stated indirectly or can just be implied.

#### i) *Formulating Implied Main Ideas*

When the main idea of a paragraph is not actually stated, that is to say when there is no topic sentence, the students may find it more difficult to decide what

the general meaning of that paragraph is (Grellet, 1994). In such cases, readers will therefore have to formulate their own ideas on the basis of the information given. In order to understand the paragraph more clearly, readers need to formulate the main idea in their own words. When main ideas of paragraphs are implied, it is the responsibility of the reader to formulate these ideas in his/her own words for better understanding to take place.

Cortina et al. (1989:183) present several ways in which a writer may present main ideas indirectly: although the writer may have presented most of the main idea in one sentence, the reader must sometimes add a word or phrase from another sentence to create a complete main idea. Another way of expressing main ideas indirectly is to present parts of the main idea in two different sentences. These sentences may follow one another in the paragraph or they may be separated. A more common way of expressing main ideas indirectly is one in which the author expects the reader to combine and interpret important ideas from several sentences. In this situation, readers must combine and interpret the author's ideas according to their own experience and knowledge. Readers will have to use several of their own words to express the author's main ideas. On their own, main ideas do not make sense (Cortina et al., 1989). In order to enable readers to follow the writer's argument and see how one idea links with the next, writers use supporting ideas. As this is one of the important components of texts, it is discussed next.

## *ii) Identifying Supporting Details*

It is important for the learners to be able to identify supporting details as this enables them to follow the writer's argument and see how one idea links with the next. If each paragraph is supposed to have only one idea, then learners may wonder what all those other words and sentences are there for in that paragraph. These are used to enhance the main idea and they are therefore called supporting ideas (Murray & Johnstone, 1989). The following are some of the benefits of examining and understanding the details which support the main idea of a paragraph as outlined by Cretchley and Stacey (1986: 165):

- Understanding the supporting details is a key to understanding the main idea completely.
- Understanding supporting details makes it easier to remember significant information from the passage because material that is understood is easier to remember.
- Related to memory is the fact that understanding supporting details helps readers grasp the organization of the entire paragraph. This enables readers to take notes from and mark their textbooks intelligently and effectively.
- During tests and examinations, questions are based on supporting details.

Although every detail in the passage pertains to the main idea, some are more important than others. The most important supporting details are essential to the reader's complete understanding of the main idea. The other details may add interest, colour or clarification. Supporting details can therefore be said to be obvious and logical extensions of the main idea. The supporting detail question leads readers to details that further explain the main idea (Arnaudet & Barrett, 1984; Cortina et al., 1989; Murray & Johanson, 1989). Mastering the skills of locating the main idea and supporting details are the basis for becoming a successful reader and learner. They are an important step towards critical thinking which any reader needs in order to interact with the text. Mastering the skill of locating main ideas and supporting details also assist the reader with a firm grasp of the important details so that they can easily summarize a text and that is the focus of the next discussion.

### *2.3.2.3 After Reading*

According to Chastain (1988), after-reading activities help readers to clarify any unclear meaning where the focus is on the meaning not on the grammatical or lexical aspects of the text. After reading strategies help students reflect on, and respond to text. They also assist students to select, organize and use relevant information for a specific purpose. This helps readers to have strategies that help them to draw conclusions and make judgments and generalizations.

### 2.3.2.3.1 *Summarizing*

After reading a text, whether narrative or expository, students are frequently expected to recall main ideas and concepts from the assigned passage and to provide support for their decisions. To do this, they must process the content and determine which ideas are important. According to Garrigus (1999:121), “a summary is simply a shortened version of an action or communication that still provides the key elements”. When readers are studying for an examination or preparing a report, they find themselves needing to put lengthy material into a form they can manage.

A good summary can be written by first using the strategies that have been discussed above, to understand and organize information. For example, writing a summary forces one to review the author’s controlling idea, main ideas, and important details. Skidell and Becker (1999) point out that in a summary, a reader restates or paraphrases this important information in his/her own words. If a student can easily write an accurate summary he/she probably has a very good understanding of the material he/she has read. Skidell and Becker (1999: 140) suggest the following steps to be considered in writing a summary:

- Think and decide on the controlling idea of the selection.
- Make a map or outline of the selection.
- Write a first sentence that paraphrases the controlling idea of the text.
- Write more sentences to restate the main ideas and, if necessary, important details that are essential to making the controlling idea clearly understood.

Garrigus (1999) states that summarizing is more than a mechanical process of shortening; it requires thinking about and evaluating the material. Thus, a summary must reduce the length of the source material, but it does so by retaining only the main idea and key pattern elements. According to Garrigus (1999:122), this means that:

- Some parts of the original text may be shortened very little or not at all.
- Some lengthy supporting examples or other detail may be shortened drastically or left out entirely.
- The organization of a summary in the way points are taken up may be very different from the original text.

Researchers have found that teaching students in regular education classrooms how to summarize expository text after reading has resulted in improved comprehension and memory of information (e.g., Bean & Steenwyk, 1984; Rinehart, Stahl & Erickson, 1986; Taylor & Beach, 1984).

The following section focuses on the factors affecting reading strategy use, for example, students' learning styles, motivation, culture and gender.

## **2.4 FACTORS AFFECTING READING STRATEGY USE**

Language learning never occurs in a vacuum. A multitude of situational and personal factors also impinge on the language learning and teaching process, including gender (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995), motivation (Gardner, 1985; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989), cognitive style (Stansfield & Hansen, 1983), culture (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990), and so on. A review of the literature on strategy use indicates that the use of strategies is fairly prevalent among language learners and seems to depend on the interaction of learner characteristics and the demands of the situation (Oxford & Nyikos, 1996).

### **2.4.1 Students' Learning Styles**

The term "learning style" refers to a person's general approach to learning and problem solving (Reid, 1995; 1997). Learning styles are "relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment" (Keefe, 1979:4). According to Dunn and Griggs (1988:3), "learning style is the biologically and developmentally imposed set of characteristics that make the same teaching wonderful for some and terrible for others."

Nam and Oxford (1998) point out that learning style preferences often help shape the learner's choice of learning strategies. For instance, a student who has a strong visual learning style tends to use the strategies of taking notes and outlining, whereas an auditory-style learner tends to use the strategies of recording lectures and listening to a tape after the class is over. Learners who have an analytic learning style often like to use strategies involving breaking material down into smaller pieces in an accurate fashion, whereas global-style learners prefer strategies that help them get the main idea quickly without attending to the finer points.

The results of a study conducted by Dreyer (1998) indicate the following main trends with regard to learners' perceptual preferences: Visual learners tended to use strategies related to visualization or visual stimulation (e.g., relate sound and mental pictures, make mental pictures, use flashcards, remember location of new words on page, watch L2 media, write L2 notes/letters, skim read, and then go back). Auditory learners frequently used strategies that encourage conversation where they receive aural stimulation (e.g., try to talk like native speaker, practice sounds of language, start L2 conversations, look for conversations, practice with others, ask a for native speaker's help, ask questions in L2). Hands-on learners used strategies related to movement (e.g., use rhymes, act out words, make guesses and use gestures).

Extraverted learners used strategies related to socialization and collaboration (e.g., start L2 conversations, look for conversations, practice with others, ask questions in L2), while introverted learners tended to avoid these strategies such as read for pleasure in L2, skim read, and then go back. The learners who were intuitive also tended to be global and they used strategies such as guessing, prediction from a few details and they also used compensation strategies and engaged in social conversation. Concrete-sequential and analytic learners also tended to use similar strategies, especially a focus on details, structure and the analysis of words and sentences into their component parts. Closure-oriented learners reviewed lessons and used metacognitive strategies very often,

indicating their need for clarity, planning and lack of ambiguity. The results of the study conducted by Dreyer (1998) seem to indicate that the choice of language learning strategies is related to learning styles. This finding is consistent with other reported research (Oxford, 1989a; Rossi-Le, 1996; Ehrman, Lou Leaver & Oxford, 2003).

#### **2.4.2 Motivation**

Guthrie et al. (2000) point out that since reading is an effortful activity that involves choice, motivation is fundamentally important to reading comprehension. They also state that evidence shows that reading motivation is multifaceted, consisting of such processes as self-efficacy, goals for achievement, values and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for reading. They further state that these motivational processes energise and direct the cognitive strategies central to reading comprehension. According to Kaylani (1996), since humans are seen as being motivated by a complex set of interrelated factors, it is essential to view motivation as a largely social process. He states that the factors that influence an individual's motivation are partly represented by gender, age, level of learning, attitudes toward learning, expectancy, interest and needs.

It is postulated that learners' beliefs about their ability will affect their goals and motivational patterns, which in turn will influence their learning behaviours and strategy use. Pintrich et al. (1989) studied the relationship between students' motivation and strategy use (e.g., Pintrich, 1989; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). Based on a general expectancy-value framework, Pintrich (1989) proposed that students' motivation consists of three components: expectancy, value, and affect. The expectancy component refers to students' beliefs about their ability to perform a task (i.e., self-efficacy) and the value component includes students' goals for the task as well as their beliefs about the importance, utility, and interest of the task. The affective component includes students' emotional reactions to the task, such as test anxiety (Garcia & Pintrich, 1995). Pintrich et al. (1989) found that self-efficacy beliefs (the expectancy component of motivation) and intrinsic values (the value component) are both positively related to the use of

cognitive strategies (e.g., rehearsal and elaboration), metacognitive strategies (e.g., planning and monitoring), and effort management (e.g., persistence and working diligently), whereas text anxiety (an important affective component) is negatively related to the three aspects of self-regulated learning (Pintrich, 1989; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). In other words, students who are more confident in their ability (i.e., have stronger self-efficacy beliefs) to do course work are also more likely to be cognitively engaged in their work and more likely to report attempts to control their thinking and efforts.

Chan (2003) points out that as the ability to use reading strategies has the strongest relation with reading comprehension, intrinsic motivation and strategy attribution might facilitate reading development through their positive relation with strategy use. Highly motivated students use a variety of strategies which leads to more successful learning of a language. According to Chan (2003), achievement motivates students to perform better and become more interested in their tasks. Thus, motivated students are more creative, predict the outcome of a story and make statements.

Research findings have clearly supported the close relation between cognitive and motivational factors as well as the effects of motivational factors on students' reading comprehension (Borkowski, 1992; Guthrie et al., 1996; Licht, 1993; Shell, Colvin & Bruning, 1995; Van Kraayenoord & Schneider, 1999). Based on these findings, it is contended that motivational factors need to be incorporated with cognitive factors to achieve a more complete understanding of text comprehension (Borkowski & Mathukrishma., 1992; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). The focus in the next section is on the influence of culture on the students' choice of reading strategies.

### **2.4.3 Culture**

Among the many factors which might influence a language learner's choice of strategies is the learner's culture or ethnicity (Oxford, 1989a, 1989b, 1990; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Reid, 1995). As defined by Brown (1981:123), "culture

refers to the ideas, customs, skills, arts and tools which characterize a group of people in a given period of time". In addition, culture includes how and why one thinks, learns, worships, fights and relaxes. Keesing (1989:59) defines culture as "an idealized body of competence differentially distributed in a population yet partially realized in the minds of individuals .... Culture in this view is ordered not simply as a collection of symbols fitted together by the analyst but as a system of knowledge, shaped and constrained by the way the human brain acquires and processes information and creates internal models of reality."

Language interacts closely with culture; one's native language is both a reflection of and an influence of one's culture (Kaylani, 1996). Students' perceptions and judgements are influenced by assumptions shared by the unique social groups to which students belong. These perceptions will serve as guidelines for selecting and ordering information (Pritchard, 1990). A culturally unfamiliar text is more difficult to comprehend than one of which the style is familiar to the student. The background knowledge students use to comprehend is often culture-specific. This strong bond between culture and language must be maintained if students are to have complete understanding of the meaning of the language that is used. The differences in values and attitudes are one of the main sources of problems in second or foreign language learning. Culture-specific values may be significant to comprehension if the values expressed in the text differ from those held by the student (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983).

Empirical studies have shown additional influences of culture or ethnicity on language learning strategies. Scarcella (1990) notes that many Asian cultures view the book as containing all knowledge and wisdom. Memorization of the book word-for-word is therefore seen as the best way to gain knowledge in such cultures. Empirical studies of language learning strategies show that memorization is a strongly preferred strategy among Asian students (Politzer & McGroarty, 1985). Kachru (1988) suggests that many Chinese people dislike language learning strategies that involve theoretical models and prefer dealing with strategies that handle practical questions, because the Chinese language lacks implicational statements. Guessing meanings is common among Chinese

learners, both mainland and Taiwanese (Yang, 1992), but less common among Puerto Ricans (Green & Oxford, 1993), so it might be a culturally-influenced strategy. Two SILL studies illustrate some of the language learning strategy preferences reported by students in different cultural contexts. A study of ethnically Chinese, bilingual Singaporean University students studying a foreign language (French or Japanese) found that students reported a preference for social strategies as well as a disinclination to use affective strategies (Wharton, 2000).

#### **2.4.4 Gender**

Gender differences also influence the selection of language learning strategies. Dreyer (1992) stresses the fact that gender differences cannot be ignored but must be examined from both theoretical and practical viewpoints. Oxford (1990), Oxford and Nyikos (1989), and Dreyer (1992) examined this phenomenon and found that females make greater use of language learning strategies than males. Politzer (1983) found that females used social learning strategies and formal rule-related practice strategies significantly more often than males.

According to Kaylani (1996), gender differences have been found in many areas of human social and cognitive development. A comprehensive review of social development studies showed several gender differences such as: females show more interest in social activities than males; females tend to prefer less aggressive interaction than males; females are less competitive and more cooperative than males (Oxford, 1993). Other studies reveal that females have a bigger desire to please and gain approval through good grades and social behaviour than males (Nyikos, 1990; Oxford et al., 1988). Females also tend to show greater ability in articulation, are more fluent and utter longer and more complexly formed sentences than males (Oxford, 1993; 1994a). Girls also usually score higher than boys in verbal ability and reading tests, especially from age eleven on (Slavin, 1988).

The results of a number of studies have consistently shown that gender plays an important role in language learning and strategy choice. For instance, in Taguchi's (2002) investigation of gender and motivation, he also reported choice of language learning strategies. He found that gender, levels of English proficiency and motivation levels of learners were the main factors affecting the reported choice of language learning strategies. He also found that female learners reported the use of a wider range of language learning strategies more often than did their male counterparts in Japan.

Other similar studies have found that the common pattern is for females to use more language learning strategies than males. For example, Green and Oxford (1995), using a sample of 374 University of Puerto Rico students, found that there was greater use of learning strategies by women than by men. In another study, Ehrman and Oxford (1988) used the SILL and the MBTI instruments to study the language learner strategies of 79 adults who were associated with a US government agency. In this study, gender differences were extremely strong despite the small size of the sample, specifically females reported significantly greater use of language learning strategies than males.

Not only has it been found that females use more strategies in general, but also in terms of specific strategies. For example, it has been found that females more frequently used social and compensation strategies. In a study that investigated the relationship between learner factors and the reported choice of language learning strategies in both EFL context (Japan) and an ESL context (Australia), Taguchi (2002) found that gender was one of the factors affecting the reported choice of particular language learning strategies. He administered a revised version of Oxford's (1990) SILL to 46 Japanese learners of English who were studying at language centres in Melbourne in Australia at varying periods between 1998 and 2000 and found that the females reported greater use of compensation strategies. He suggests that this may occur because females have superior verbal aptitude and social orientation and tend to create more opportunities to use English and therefore have a greater need for compensation strategies.

Politzer (1983) supports this claim that females have a greater need for social strategies than males in his report about a study of the language learning behaviours of 90 undergraduate students enrolled in French, Spanish, and German courses at a university in the USA. He used a questionnaire to investigate the frequency in which they engaged in selected behaviours extracted from the good language learners' studies. He found that gender differences, although minor, favoured women and women generally displayed more social orientation than males (see also Oxford, Nyikos, & Ehrman, 1988).

However, not all studies suggest superiority of females in all areas of strategy use. For example, when Nyikos (1987) investigated the strategy use by 135 first-semester university students of German, and in particular their use of associative memory strategies for learning German noun clusters, she found that the female students performed better when the treatment conditions were combined. She assigned eight classes to four conditions: three training conditions received written instructions and examples on how to use three different kinds of memory strategies per condition: 1) the colour-only group associated certain colours with grammatical gender of each noun cluster to be learned; 2) the picture-only group associated each item with a drawing; and 3) the multiple-association or colour – plus – picture group used a combination strategy involving a colour-coded drawing. The fourth group (control) received no instruction regarding use of memory strategies to help them learn the noun clusters. Nyikos (1987) found that men outscored women in a colour-plus condition, whereas women outscored men in both the picture-only and colour-only condition.

Various reasons have been given to explain why females and males use language learning strategies differently. According to Nyikos (1990), the school environment, with its role modes, may promote one gender group over another in specific discipline areas. Furthermore, Eccles, Adler, Futterman, Goff, Kaczela and Meece (1983) indicate that social forces such as parental attitude and gender-related beliefs influence the subject matter the students choose, and that

the beliefs of males and females about their learning is greatly influenced by the classroom climate set by the teaching style. For example, as Eccles et al. (1983) noted, in classrooms with low levels of competition with coral drills and practice, females are more confident and positive about their subject matter than their male counterparts. On the other hand, males were found to do better in teacher-fronted classrooms where raised hands dominated the discussions regardless of the teacher's gender. Classes with more cooperative activities and with hands-on problem solving performed in small groups were identified as beneficial to both males and females. Even so, in Politzer's (1983) study of language learning strategies, females reported a significantly greater propensity than males to engage in second-language social interactions with others outside of class. In conclusion, most language learning strategy studies have found that females outperform males in the use of general and specific language learning strategies.

The focus of the following section is on the relationship between reading strategy use and reading comprehension.

## **2.5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN READING STRATEGY USE AND READING COMPREHENSION**

Various studies (e.g., Arabsolghar & Elkins, 2001; Kozminsky & Kozminsky, 2001; Dreyer, 1998; Laviosa, 1994) have attempted to show that a positive relationship exists between reading strategy use and reading comprehension. In most of these studies it was shown that good readers plan their reading, compose a tentative meaning as they read, and constantly revise that meaning in accordance with new information they gain from the text's blueprint and from their prior linguistic and cultural knowledge.

Laviosa (1994) points out that efficient reading requires the use of various problem-solving strategies, for example, it is impossible for students to know the exact meaning of every word they read, but by developing their guessing ability, they can often understand enough to arrive at the total meaning of the sentence, paragraph or essay. In addition, researchers have found that teaching students

in regular education classrooms how to summarize expository text after reading has resulted in improved comprehension and memory of the information (e.g., Bean & Steenwyk, 1984; Rinehart, Stahl & Erikson, 1986; Taylor & Beach, 1984). Researchers have consistently demonstrated that students with learning and reading problems can learn metacognitive comprehension strategies and that these strategies help students improve their understanding of text (Swanson & De La Paz, 1998).

Reading strategies are used by students to develop their comprehension of language. Garner (1987b:116) states that “strategies that increase the likelihood of comprehension and retrieval of important content, given in the finite resources available, are essential”. Understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible. For example, Grellet (1994:3) states that learners apply different reading strategies when looking at a notice board to see if there is an advertisement for a particular type of flat and when carefully reading an article of special interest in a scientific journal. In the first case, a competent reader will quickly reject the irrelevant information and find what he is looking for. In the second case, it is not enough to understand the gist of the text; more detailed comprehension is necessary. It is therefore necessary to use various reading strategies in order to achieve various levels of comprehension depending on the reading purpose.

Readers who know a range of strategies and when, where and why to use them, are considered to be strategic readers (Arabsolghar & Elkins, 2001). Good readers select and apply reading strategies to understand different kinds of reading materials, to achieve new knowledge, and to monitor and evaluate their comprehension (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Lorch et al., 1993; Pressley & McCormick, 1995; Zwaan & Brown, 1996). Thus, they can read in different ways for different purposes. For example, when they read for a test they slow down and engage in more extensive activities than when reading for fun or general comprehension purposes. In contrast, poor readers often fail to use appropriate strategies in reading for different purposes, cannot use cognitive strategies and seldom look forward and backward in the text to monitor and regulate

comprehension (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Paris, Wasik & Turner, 1991). In a discussion of the processes that improve comprehension and lead to efficient learning from a text, Brown, Palincsar and Armbruster (1994:133) list six activities that provide the basis for the reader's knowledge of strategies: clarifying the purpose of reading, activating relevant background knowledge, allocating attention and focusing on the major content, critical evaluation of content, monitoring ongoing activities, and drawing and testing inferences. Use of these activities permit the students to regulate their reading so as to improve comprehension (Brown & Day, 1983; Loranger, 1997).

Studies reveal that poor students have difficulty in using strategies that contribute to reading comprehension (Brown & Palincsar, 1982; Ryan, 1981). The results of a study conducted by Brown et al. (1994) in which readers were coached in four strategies: summarizing, self-questioning, clarification and predictions – using a reciprocal teaching approach, point to a significant improvement in reading comprehension among a range of students. Another study (Gajria & Salvia, 1992) examined the effects of summarization instruction on text comprehension of students with learning disabilities. They found that instruction in the summarization strategy significantly increased the reading comprehension of expository texts, and that this strategy was maintained over time and students generalized its use to other tasks.

A number of studies (e.g., Barnett, 1988; Carrell et al., 1989; Kern, 1989; Park-Oh, 1994; Loranger, 1997) have investigated the effects of reading strategy instruction on gains in reading comprehension. A vast body of literature in first language acquisition has shown that learners' awareness of their own reading processes plays a significant role in improving reading comprehension (e.g., Baker & Brown, 1984; Bereiter & Bird, 1985). There is consensus among researchers that through overt strategy instruction learners can be helped in four ways: (1) to become aware of the strategies they currently use; (2) to apply task-specific strategies that can make learning more efficient and allow them to compensate for nervousness, inability to remember, and lack of wait time; (3) to monitor for strategy effectiveness, and (4) to create new strategies or weed out

ineffective ones via metacognitive control (Wenden, 1985; Chamot & Kupper, 1989; Nyikos, 1991).

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

Research has shown that a learner's awareness of the reading process, purpose and strategies are regarded as an integral component of reading (e.g., Arabsolghar & Elkins 2001; Kozminsky & Kozminsky, 2001). Various studies have shown that there is a relationship between reading strategy use and reading comprehension. While skilled readers know how to use effective strategies to facilitate the functioning of various cognitive processes and construct meaningful understanding of the text, poor readers simply read the text word by word without using any strategies (Chan, 2003). Cohen (1990) states that there is growing consensus that reading comprehension improves when there is greater conscious awareness of reading strategies. In addition, strategy research suggests that less competent students may improve their skills through training in strategies evidenced by more successful learners.

## CHAPTER 3

### READING STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

An overview of the literature indicates that it is difficult to find an article about reading comprehension that does not make reference to strategy instruction (Lau & Chan, 2003; Kozminsky & Kozminsky, 2001; Dreyer, 1998; Kern, 1989). To some extent, this is due to the fact that researchers have come to understand that competent reading is highly strategic (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 1997). Since strong readers coordinate multiple strategies to improve their understanding and memory of text, strategy development has emerged as an important component of reading instruction. Dreyer and van der Walt (1995) point out that an important question for training purposes is the question whether learners must be made conscious of the strategies they are taught, or whether just providing practice opportunities is sufficient.

Pressley and Harris (1990) point out that many students do not learn strategies automatically. To address this problem, Oxford (1990) points out that conscious skill in self-directed learning and in strategy use must be sharpened through training. In addition, strategy training is especially necessary in the area of second and foreign languages as research shows that learners who receive strategy training generally learn better than those who do not, and that certain techniques for such training are more beneficial than others (Dreyer, 1998; Oxford, 1994a; Chamot & Kupper, 1989).

The purpose of this chapter is to give an analysis of reading strategy intervention programmes and also their effect on reading comprehension.

## **3.2 AN ANALYSIS OF READING STRATEGY INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES AND APPROACHES**

The following reading strategy intervention programmes and approaches are analysed in terms of their purpose, outline of the content, target group, instruction, classroom procedure, and assessment.

### **3.2.1 The Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) Adolescent Literacy Programme**

This programme seeks to develop high school students' reading and writing skills, by focusing on, amongst other aspects, strategies.

#### *3.2.1.1 Purpose*

This programme has been prompted by a concern about the high failure rate among adolescents in mastering the literacy skills they need to succeed in school or compete for jobs. This programme, according to the Centre for Research on Learning – University of Kansas (2003) provides the solid base of skills high school students need to become proficient readers. The programme, encompassing all of the essential ingredients embodied in proficient reading, helps students build a repertoire of strategies and skills to approach the difficult demands of secondary school.

#### *3.2.1.2 Outline of the content*

The SIM Adolescent Literacy Programme involves two main reading components: a reading instruction core that helps students develop accurate word recognition and increased fluency and a linguistic comprehension instruction core that focuses on the skills and strategies needed to bring meaning to reading. The programme also includes instruction in writing strategies. Not only do students learn to read a variety of text structures (e.g., sequence, description, compare and contrast, cause and effect, problem/solution) using

several related and mutually supportive strategies, but they also learn to write those text structures.

#### *3.2.1.2.1 Reading Components*

The reading components of the SIM Adolescent Literacy Programme include the following:

##### **FLUENCY**

The Fluency component involves explicitly teaching and modelling for students how to read fluently. Students repeatedly read passages aloud with partners and track the number of words read accurately per minute.

##### **VOCABULARY**

Students learn several memory strategies designed to help them identify vocabulary words and learn and remember the meaning of those words.

##### **COMPREHENSION**

According to the SIM Adolescent Literacy Programme, students learn to use the foundational reading comprehension strategies of imagery, summarization, prediction, questioning and monitoring.

##### **THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING**

All the instructional programmes associated with the SIM Adolescent Literacy Programme contain elements that promote independent thinking and problem-solving, including steps related to monitoring whether responses make sense, checking for understanding, and correcting errors.

##### **TECHNOLOGY**

Interactive hypermedia instructional programmes augment SIM strategy instruction. Some of the programmes provide additional instruction and practice, others teach students such skills as how to use spellcheckers.

## WRITING

Two SIM writing strategies – the paragraph writing strategy and the theme writing strategy – are closely aligned with reading instruction. Both focus on a process – writing approach in which students learn how to plan, write, provide or accept feedback on their writing, and edit their writing.

### *3.2.1.3 Other Aspects*

Other aspects of the SIM Adolescent Literacy Programme include the following:

## MOTIVATION AND BEHAVIOUR

Students learn how they are expected to act in the classroom and how to create a productive learning community. Instruction includes teaching a repertoire of appropriate behaviours for such classroom situations as lecture/discussion, independent work, and small group work.

## ADVANCED PHONICS AND DECODING

Students learn a strategy specifically designed for decoding multi-syllabi words. Other instruction is individualized to meet students' needs.

### *3.2.1.4 Instruction*

All instruction is provided in an environment that promotes and motivates learning. Supports are in place to focus student behaviour and attention on relevant academic work. The social skills to be used in cooperative groups or partnership activities are taught explicitly and students participate in the Possible Selves Programme, in which they analyse their current lives and then set and work toward goals to enhance their future lives.

### *3.2.1.5 Classroom Procedure*

The SIM Adolescent Literacy Programme is a structured year-long course that allows for highly individual instruction in targeted strategies as well as large-group activities. Depending on the needs of students, instruction involves both

teacher-led whole-group discussions and guided-practice activities as well as lessons in which students work independently at stations set up throughout the classrooms. Station activities might include the following:

- At one station, the teacher may meet with one student to measure his or her progress while a pair of students practises a targeted reading strategy aloud.
- At a second station, students work individually at computers using the interactive hypermedia programmes that support reading instruction.
- At a third station, pairs of students engage in fluency activities.
- At a fourth station, students design memory aids and study cards for vocabulary words and test each other for vocabulary development.
- At a fifth station, students practise a strategy independently, take a text, or complete another activity related to integrating several strategies simultaneously, adapting a strategy, or applying a strategy to subject-area assignments.

#### *3.2.1.6 Assessment*

All instruction involves high-interest reading materials that have been chosen to ensure that they engage students and address the academic needs. Progress measures are gathered as part of instruction for each strategy. These data allow the teacher to make decisions with regard to when a student has mastered a strategy. Scores for each practice session are plotted on a progress chart graph, and the student and teacher discuss the students' progress and goals for future practice attempts.

### **3.2.2 Reciprocal Teaching Approach (RTA)**

The Reciprocal Teaching Approach is a model originally developed by Palinscar and Brown during the mid 1980's (Palinscar & Brown, 1984, 1986). It is based on the cognitive constructivist theory of reading. This view of reading says that reading is a process in which the reader actively searches for meaning in the

text. It also recognizes the important role played by the reader's background knowledge in order to make the text meaningful.

### *3.2.2.1 Purpose of the RTA*

Allen (2003) points out that the purpose of the Reciprocal Teaching Approach is to provide support to the reader so as to make reading an enjoyable and fruitful process. "Scaffolding," an instructional process to support the reader, allows the student to do something that he or she might not have been able to do without help (Allen, 2003). This view is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) "zone of proximal development." The RTA, through teacher scaffolding envisages to support the students. Gradually, as students become more competent, the scaffolding is removed and readers gradually take increased responsibility for their learning. However, Allen (2003) points out that as students lose the scaffolding that has been placed around something they have just learned to accomplish independently new scaffolding is set up to aid learning of more difficult material. Research on the Reciprocal Teaching Approach is based on the hypothesis that the active discussion of text in a small group of peers will enhance learning by aiding students' understanding of the text (reading comprehension), their ability to develop self-regulatory and monitoring skills and their overall improvement in motivation (Borkowski, 1992).

#### *3.2.2.1.1 Target Group*

The Reciprocal Teaching Approach has been extensively researched on many age groups and reading abilities, first graders, sixth and seventh graders (in the original study), college students (Fillenworth, 1995; Palinscar & Brown 1986; Palinscar & David, 1991), and fourth, fifth, and sixth-grade students with learning disabilities (Lederer, 2000).

### *3.2.2.2 Outline of the Content*

Palinscar and Brown (1984), in their original RTA study of sixth- and seventh – grade readers, used the four selected reading strategies that are generally associated with the Reciprocal Teaching Approach: generating questions, clarifying issues, summarizing, and making predictions (Palinscar & Brown, 1984). The Reciprocal Teaching Approach is based on the cognitive-constructivist theory of reading. This view of reading states that reading is a process in which the reader actively searches for meaning in the text. Having a store of background knowledge makes this search feasible for the reader, and because of that, one is able to make the assertion that the reader is “constructing” the meaning from a combination of text and background. Constructivism emphasizes the fact that comprehending a text is very much an active, constructive process. In this process, the reader must consider the text he or she is currently reading and how it links with others they have already interpreted, as well as ideas, topics and events that form the basis of his or her background knowledge.

### *3.2.2.3 Instruction*

Sixteen RTA studies were reviewed by Rosenshine and Meister (1994) in an attempt to determine the effectiveness of this type of strategy instruction. In their review they discovered what they felt to be two types of RTA teaching. The first they called “reciprocal teaching only” and the second “explicit teaching before reciprocal teaching”. These were differentiated by the way in which the strategies were taught during the dialogues (i.e., small group work). “Reciprocal teaching only” meant that the strategies used in the small groups were not taught before the beginning of the discussions, while “explicit teaching before reciprocal teaching” referred to studies in which the students were introduced to the four strategies before dialogue began, principally through worksheets and whole class discussions.

One example of “explicit teaching before reciprocal teaching” is Lederer’s (2000) study on “Teaching social studies in inclusive elementary classrooms”. In this study Lederer worked with 128 fourth, fifth, and sixth-grade participants in small groups, including 25 children identified as learning disabled. No group had more than one learning disabled student. The interventions were from 15 to 17 days long, depending on the class. Preceding this intervention, the experimenter described reciprocal teaching and demonstrated the strategies that would be used (i.e., formulating questions, making summaries, clarifying text, and making predictions). For the first five days of the actual reciprocal teaching, the experimenter structured the process and monitored the students step by step in their use of the four strategies. Students were given procedural feedback each day and at the midpoint of the intervention were assigned to completely different groups to prevent assumption of a passive or non-helping role. The results showed significant positive changes in the three dependent variables (ability to generate questions, ability to answer questions, and ability to compose summaries) when measuring reading comprehension by comparing experimental and control groups, and also when comparing grade levels.

#### *3.2.2.4 Classroom Procedure*

Initially, the students are divided into small groups, and then the text is read silently, orally by one of the students, or orally by the teacher, depending on the group’s ability. Then the designated leader within the group, either teacher or students, begins asking questions about the text to stimulate discussion. During the discussion, others are encouraged to participate by responding to the text, asking questions to help clarify it, and rereading it when there are disagreements. Next, the group moves on to identify the gist of the text and synthesizing the reading. It is the job of the group leader to offer the initial summary, then encourage discussion to clarify whatever is unfamiliar or misunderstood, and finally generate predictions from the discussion.

Initially, the teacher models the RTA process, breaking down the steps, monitoring student learning, scaffolding, providing feedback, and tailoring the

sessions to student needs and abilities. However, because the purpose of the Reciprocal Teaching Approach is to have the students actively involved in the strategies, the teacher increasingly hands over the leadership responsibility to the students. Palinscar and Brown (1984) emphasized several points to help students in this process:

First, the acquisition of the strategies is a joint responsibility that is shared by the teacher and students. Second, although the teacher initially assumes the major responsibility for the instruction and modelling of strategies, responsibility is gradually transferred to the students. Third, all students are expected to participate in the discussion. The teacher enables all students to participate by providing scaffolds in the form of supporting statements and prompts or altering the demands on the student. Finally, students are continually reminded that the strategies are useful methods that will help to improve their comprehension of text. By continually trying to construct meaning from text, students come to realize that reading requires not only the ability to decode words but also metacognitive strategies that facilitate constructive and evaluative activities. (Palinscar & Brown, 1984; cited in Lederer, 2000:3).

#### *3.2.2.5 Assessment*

Progress measures are gathered as part of instruction for each strategy. These data allow the teacher to make decisions with regard to when a student has mastered a strategy. Scores for each practice session are plotted on a progress chart graph, and the student and teacher discuss the student's progress and goals for future practice attempts.

#### **3.2.3 Transactional Strategy Instruction (TSI)**

According to Allen (2003), the term, "Transactional Strategy Instruction" was coined by Pressley et al. 1992. They attempted to understand the nature of viable classroom comprehension strategies and how they were effectively taught. In other words, the TSI approach focuses on the ability of teachers to facilitate

discussions in which learners collaborate to form joint interpretations of text and explicitly discuss the mental processes and cognitive strategies that are involved in comprehension.

### *3.2.3.1 Purpose*

According to Pressley and Wharton-McDonald (1997), TSI teachers believe that learners who construct their own knowledge of subject areas rather than being “taught” such knowledge have a greater ownership of the material. They also credit the learner with a partly tacit understanding of how to use the knowledge that has been created, being able to transfer learning strategies from one subject area to another. Using learning strategies gives the student “an opportunity to acquire a deep, personal understanding of the intellectual processes being acquired” (Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 1997:12). It is against this background that Pressley and Wharton-McDonald (1997) point out that the goal of Transactional Strategy Instruction is to produce students who are good readers. They argue that sometimes it is necessary to teach strategies in isolation so that students can use them fluidly when reading and verbalise different processes that help to create complete understanding of the text. They also point out that good strategy instruction encourages using multiple processes in the understanding of authentic texts, a holistic goal of the constructivists. In addition, teachers in the TSI discuss with individual children their strategy problems in the same dialogue format that is used in peer groups, helping the students to construct an understanding of their strategies and how to use them, thus understanding the needs of the individual students.

#### *3.2.3.1.1 Target group*

One of the early studies dealt with fifth- and sixth-grade students who received comprehension strategy instruction three days a week for one semester. Strategies included, but were not limited to, looking for patterns and principles in arguments presented in the text, analyzing decision making, problem solving, adapting text ideas, and negotiating interpretations of text in the groups. A quasi-experimental study looked at Transactional Strategy Instruction with 10 second-

grade classes over the course of a school year. In the fall, five classes that received instruction in comprehension strategies were paired with five classes whose instructors were considered well-qualified language teachers but who did not teach comprehension strategies. Low-achieving readers were identified in each class. The 10 classes did not differ in either comprehension or word-attack skills at the beginning of the year. By Spring there was clear differentiation, in the two groups, favouring the students who had Transactional Strategy Instruction. Moreover, the TSI students had richer and more diverse interpretations of the texts, and the TSI group understood and retained more of the content of the daily lessons (Brown et al., 1996). Reading disabled students also benefit from TSI, as shown in a study conducted by Valerie Anderson with learning disabled students in grades six through eleven (Anderson, 1992; Anderson & Roit, 1993).

### *3.2.3.2 Outline Of The Content*

Transactional Strategy Instruction generally included the following strategies: (a) prediction based on prior-knowledge activation, (b) question generation, (c) clarification – seeking when confused, (d) mental imagery, (e) relating prior knowledge to text content, and (f) summarization (Pressley & Wharton–McDonald, 1997:8).

Transactional Strategy Instruction also tries to look at how comprehension strategies link to other subject areas, how students exhibit various cognitive and metacognitive competencies, how they show the knowledge that text can mean different things to different people, and how students react to these strategies. The Transactional Strategy Instruction includes more strategies and gives more freedom to both student and teacher.

### *3.2.3.2.1 Other Aspects*

Casteel, Isom, and Jordan (2000) were interested not only in Transactional Strategy Instruction's effect on reading comprehension but also in the views that

TSI students held of themselves as readers. Students with high self-efficacy who viewed themselves as able to read well were more likely to read and more persistent (Henk & Melnick, 1995). The results of this study indicated that Transactional Strategy Instruction helped students in both reading comprehension and supporting their positive self-perception as readers.

### *3.2.3.3 Instruction*

Research on TSI is based on the hypothesis that long-term instruction coordinating memory and comprehension strategies with the interpretive processes will result in skilled readers. The basic concept of TSI research includes the knowledge that both the intervention and the research takes place over a long period of time, unlike the Reciprocal Teaching Approach, which generally lasts somewhere between two or three weeks and two or three months. For this reason TSI research is often in the form of ethnographies, ethnographic interviews, long-term case studies, and analysis of classroom discourse (Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 1997).

### *3.2.3.4 Classroom Procedure*

In the TSI, teachers introduce only a few new strategies at a time, with introduction of new strategies extending over a long period of time. Teachers model use of strategies, verbally explaining their thinking processes. Teachers explicitly explain to students the value of strategies being learned, including why they aid performance and when they can be used. Teachers provide feedback about student progress during practice and application of strategies, including tailored re-explanations directed at individual difficulties. They cue students to transfer the strategies being learned to other situations, providing both hints about when to transfer and feedback when opportunities for transfer are missed. Teachers attempt to keep academic activation high. They encourage habitual reflection and planning before responding (Pressley et al., 1992:514).

### *3.2.3.5 Assessment*

Assessment in the TSI includes long-term quasi-experimental studies, in which students receiving strategy instruction are compared to those without strategy instruction. Assessment is flexible in that teachers assess, learners; use of a variety of strategies and impact of performance.

## **3.2.4 The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA)**

According to Allen (2003), the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach endeavours to confirm that when multiple, explicitly modelled strategies are used, students are able to learn academic language in content subjects.

### *3.2.4.1 Purpose*

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach was developed by Chamot and O'Malley (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994). Their interest in research on L2 learning strategies led to a desire to help learners and teachers become more aware of reading strategies that could lead to greater success for L2 learners. The Cognitive Academic Language Approach endeavours to confirm that when multiple, explicitly modelled strategies are used, learners are able to learn academic language in content subjects. The idea was to help students and teachers become more aware of strategies that could lead to greater success for L2 learners. Chamot and O'Malley (1994) determined that the differences between successful and unsuccessful language learners had less to do with the specific strategies that students understood and more to do with selecting and coordinating strategies that were appropriate to the task. Chamot and O'Malley (1994:7) then turned to the problem of English as a second language (ESL) students who were able to speak and understand English but unable to "use English as a tool for learning". They noted that students frequently lacked cognitive language proficiency because the academic language of schooling often lacks the visual and non-verbal clues associated with non-academic or social languages. The desire to remedy this situation and prepare ESL students

for content classrooms led to the creation of the cognitive academic language learning approach. Thus, CALLA research concentrates on ways to help L2 students learn more effectively.

#### *3.2.4.1.1 Target Group*

According to Chamot (1995), the implementation of the CALLA programme in a school system in Virginia (USA) demonstrates the potential of this approach. A mathematics programme in that school system serves secondary ESL students whose mathematics scores are lower than fourth-grade. The science programme is for middle-school ESL students at the beginning and intermediate levels and high school students at the intermediate level. Both programmes (i.e., science and mathematics) are intended to improve student performance in content, language, and use of learning strategies. In other words, the academic language activities are integrated with content and teaching learning strategies.

#### *3.2.4.2 Outline of the Content*

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach is rooted in four areas of theory constructivism, which emphasizes the fact that comprehending a text is very much an active, constructive process; cognitive information processing, which focuses on the learner's mental processes and different types of knowledge; schema theory, which emphasizes how the mind organizes information into schemata or mental structures; and social-cognitive theory, which explains how people interact to create learning (Allen, 2003).

Briefly, the cognitive information processing model considers the thinking processes that govern how we learn and remember and how this immediate information becomes stored in long-term memory. The model suggests that learning new information requires mental processing through organizing the information, elaborating it and linking it with existing knowledge. This is the reason for CALLA's emphasis on cognitive strategies, such as summarizing, making inferences, and predicting what will come next in a reading text.

Cognitive information processing also includes metacognition (“thinking about thinking”), which has its own forms of declarative and procedural knowledge. In metacognition, declarative knowledge concerns knowing about one’s own thinking processes and strategy usage, and procedural knowledge involves the actual, habitual use of learning behaviours that are by now automatic and therefore no longer conscious strategies. To support metacognitive thinking, it is important to explicitly introduce strategies (as declarative knowledge), telling students where and why they are useful, and then give students plenty of opportunity to practise them until they become automatic (procedural knowledge) (Anderson, 1983; Schunk, 1996). Schema theory, a set of concepts relevant to the declarative-knowledge aspect of cognitive information processing but deepened and expanded, proposes that true learning occurs as readers try to organize and understand information according to what they already know, their pre-existing knowledge. Readers store prior knowledge as “concept maps” or schemata with a central idea and associated concepts. “Having a schema, or relevant prior knowledge, allows us to make predictions, visualize events, draw inferences, monitor comprehension, and create summaries” (Chamot et al., 1999:158).

Social-cognitive theory, includes an emphasis on learners’ motivation and sense of self-efficacy, a belief that one has the capacity to succeed at a given task. Because learning does not occur in a vacuum, the CALLA took into consideration the social nature of learning to explain not only why strategies work but also how they can be taught. Learning strategies can build self-efficacy when used appropriately, and such strategies also encourage willingness and persistence in task accomplishment. Students develop effective learning behaviours by watching teachers and other experts as they perform learning tasks. Then by practising these behaviours with support until they are able to do them alone, students can internalize them.

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach has three main components. First, the content in the ESL classroom is aligned with the content in the mainstream grade – level classroom. Science, with its hands-on

component and extensive contextual supports for L2 development, is an excellent subject to start with because most students find it interesting and motivating. However, CALLA can be used in any content area. Second, academic language development includes all four language skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. These are taught in the content area subject. In this way students can learn concepts and skills such as analyzing, evaluating, justifying, and persuading that are necessary in the academic world of school. Third, learning strategies are “taught explicitly by naming the strategy, telling students, what the strategy does to assist learning, and then providing ample instructional supports while students practise and apply the strategy” (Chamot & O’Malley, 1994:11).

#### *3.2.4.3 Instruction*

Instruction in the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach is based on the belief that explicitly modelled and explained multiple strategies, when practiced in groups, aid students in learning academic language in content subjects.

#### *3.2.4.4 Classroom Procedure*

These three broad components (i.e., the content in the ESL classroom, academic language development which includes all four language skills and learning strategies) are translated into a five-stage instructional sequence. Although these stages are not always followed in a strict order, they are always present as new content, language, and strategies are introduced. The stages can be viewed almost as a spiral, with the emphasis shifting depending on the needs of the students and forming an “interplay of instructional practices” (Chamot & O’Malley, 1996:260):

1. *Preparation* is used to help students become aware of their prior knowledge of the subject and the strategies that they might already be using (metacognitive awareness). This alerts the teacher to the

instructional needs in the classroom. And while this is similar in non-CALLA classrooms, here the teacher takes special care in the way this knowledge is elicited, builds in language opportunities, and provides support for the content of the answer rather than the form.

2. *Presentation* focuses on conveying new information using meaningful content with lots of visuals and demonstrations. Teacher modelling is extremely important in this stage.
3. During the *practice* stages, students use the new information in many ways, with oral and written academic language and applying strategies in classroom activities, often working collaboratively with classmates.
4. *Evaluation* allows the student to develop metacognitive awareness of their accomplishments and learning processes as they assess their worth.
5. *Expansion* allows the students to take what they have learned and apply it to their culture and the outside world, a significant undertaking (Chamot & O'Malley, 1996).

#### 3.2.4.5 Assessment

Criterion-referenced, standardized, self-evaluation and performance-based assessments of student progress were used. The California Achievement Test's Mathematics Subtest showed consistently above-average scores for CALLA students (Thomas, 1992). Upper elementary and secondary students in the CALLA mathematics programme were randomly selected to participate in think-aloud interviews concerning mathematical word problems. Some had been in high-implementation classrooms, in which teachers had participated more actively in CALLA staff development and had employed more CALLA techniques in the classrooms. Other students came from low-implementation classrooms, in which teachers were only marginally involved in the CALLA project. Students in high-implementation classrooms, as compared with those in low-implementation classrooms, used more metacognitive strategies, employed a sequential problem-solving procedure more frequently, and were more successful at finding correct solutions to problems (Thomas, 1992).

### **3.2.5 Evaluation of Strategy Training Programmes**

The four models of strategy instruction described above share many features. For example, according to Allen (2003), all four approaches are based at least in part in constructivist philosophy, which suggests that readers actively seek and construct the meaning of the text. However, he points out that Transactional Strategy Instruction takes constructivist theory one step further. In this view, when the students work in groups they are able to exchange their individual responses to the text, transfer personal meaning, and create greater comprehension in the group. The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach, partly in the constructivist tradition, has its strongest roots in cognitive information processing theory, schema theory, and social-cognitive theory.

All four models of strategy training programmes agree on the importance of developing learners' understanding of the value of learning strategies and suggest that this is facilitated through teacher demonstration and modelling. They all emphasise the importance of providing multiple, practice opportunities with the strategies so that learners can use them autonomously. The four models of strategy training programmes suggest that learners should evaluate how well a strategy has worked, choose strategies for a task, and actively transfer strategies to new tasks.

The basic research hypothesis is also different for each instructional approach. The Reciprocal Teaching Approach undertakes to prove that teaching certain strategies and including discussions of the strategies following the lesson will increase student reading comprehension. Transactional Strategy Instruction attempts to prove that teaching comprehension strategy instruction over the long term will result in skilled readers. The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach endeavours to confirm that when multiple, explicitly modelled strategies are used, students are able to learn academic language in content subjects. The SIM Adolescent Literacy Programme involves two main reading components: a reading instruction core that helps students develop accurate word recognition and increased fluency and a linguistic comprehension

instruction core that focuses on the skills and strategies needed to bring meaning to reading. Like the TSI, the SIM Adolescent Literacy Programme is a structured year-long course that allows for highly individualized instruction in targeted strategies as well as large-group activities.

The difference in the basic research hypothesis of the four models is of paramount importance as it serves to reveal the strong points or strengths for each approach. For example, TSI research includes the knowledge that both the intervention and the research takes place over a long period of time, unlike the Reciprocal Teaching Approach, which generally lasts somewhere between two or three weeks and two or three months. The idea of the long-term strategy training is also supported by Oxford (1990). She points out that long-term strategy training also involves learning and practising strategies with actual language tasks. Learners learn the significance of particular strategies, when and how to use them and how to monitor and evaluate their own performance. Oxford (1990) further states that long-term strategy training is more prolonged and covers a greater number of strategies. Therefore, it is likely to be more effective than other strategy training approaches. In this view, the SIM Adolescent Literacy Programme and Transactional Strategy Instruction are likely to have more effect. The four approaches have several instructional perspectives in common. All view learning strategies as basic to comprehension of text. All emphasise students' awareness of both cognitive and metacognitive strategies for learning. All recognize the social aspects of learning and use cooperative learning as a facet of strategy instruction. All use direct modelling and explicit instruction. For example, the strategy is named, the educator tells students what the strategy does to assist them, and also practise and apply the strategy.

However, the four models differ in some ways, (for example, designers of the approach, theoretical orientation, research hypothesis, typical research designs and practices and variables of greatest interests). In addition, Allen (2003) believes that each approach builds on the research that precedes it. In this case, Pressley et al. (1992) expanded on the Reciprocal Teaching Approach because they felt that it was too rigid and prescribed, especially the teaching sequence,

which limited the flexibility of discussion. In addition, the number of strategies was also restricted. In contrast, TSI places fewer restrictions on strategies and group discussion procedures, on which students can participate and when. Transactional Strategy Instruction claims to generate greater student engagement because of its flexibility.

Chamot and O'Malley (1994) take strategies several steps further with the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach. Not only do teachers follow the five practices of preparation, presentation, practice, evaluation and expansion, but they also apply them in content area subjects. While the Reciprocal Teaching Approach and Transactional Strategy Instruction were developed for reading only, the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach encompasses all language skills and a variety of content areas. On the other hand, the SIM Adolescent Literacy Programme covers reading, technology and writing.

In conclusion, among the four strategy training programmes, TSI seems to be more effective, especially when one looks at the role of the learners. Its collaborative nature puts emphasis on the interactive exchange among learners in the classroom, hence use of the term "transactional".

### **3.3 TYPES OF STRATEGY INSTRUCTION**

In this section the focus is on direct instruction and implicit instruction. Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of both strategy instruction in promoting learners' strategic reading comprehension.

#### **3.3.1 Direct Instruction**

Strategy instruction can either be conducted separately from regular classroom activities or it can be integrated into the regular classroom activities. Arguments in favour of separate strategy instruction programmes advance the notion that strategies are generalizable to various contexts and that students will learn

strategies better if they can focus all their attention on developing strategic skills rather than try to focus on the content at the same time (Jones et al., 1987). A study conducted by Flaitz and Feyten (1996) indicated that students benefited from short-term separate strategy instruction and managed to transfer it to their own learning, thus improving their language achievement. Direct strategy instruction includes providing students with an introduction about the value of language learning strategies, definition and explanations of how to use the strategies, and activities for practising and evaluating the strategies. Chamot et al. (1996:181-187) report on a study where the direct teaching of language learning strategies was done successfully in Japanese, Russian and Spanish classrooms.

The National Reading Panel (2000) points out that the Direct Explanation approach was designed to improve on the standard direct instruction approach to strategy instruction used in most of the early studies, in which students are simply taught to use one or several strategies. In this approach, teachers do not teach individual strategies but focus instead on helping students to:

- View reading as a problem-solving task that necessitates the use of strategic thinking.
- Learn to think strategically about solving reading comprehension problems. The focus in Direct Explanation is on developing teachers' ability to explain the reasoning and mental processes involved in successful reading comprehension in an explicit manner, hence the use of the term "direct explanation". During direct explanation, teachers do not teach individual strategies but focus instead on helping learners view reading as a problem-solving task that necessitates the use of strategic thinking, and learning to think strategically about solving reading comprehension problems.

Vacca et al. (2006) point out that a direct instruction model, is rooted in behavioural principles of learning. Students are taught what to do, given immediate feedback, and afforded extensive practice until discrete skills become

habitual and automatic in their use. Students seldom grasp the rationale or payoff underlying the particular skills that are taught. When teachers make instruction explicit, however, students construct knowledge about the use of skills and strategies. Explicit instruction involves strategic learning, not habit formation (Vacca et al., 2006). According to Vacca et al. (2006:49), mini-lessons follow a pattern that usually includes:

- Creating awareness of the strategy;
- Modelling the strategy;
- Providing practice in the use of the strategy; and
- Applying the strategy in authentic reading situations. Awareness of a strategy often involves a give-and-take exchange of ideas between teacher and students. These exchanges may include explanations and strategy tips and are built around questions such as “Why is the strategy useful?” “What is the payoff for students?” and “What are the rules, guidelines, or procedures for being successful with the skill or strategy?”

### **3.3.2 Implicit Instruction**

Those in favour of implicit (integrated) strategy instruction programmes argue that learning in context is more effective than learning separate skills whose immediate applicability may not be evident to the learner (Wenden, 1987), and that practising strategies on authentic academic and language tasks facilitates the transfer of strategies to similar tasks encountered in other classes (Chamot & O'Malley, 1987; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990).

In implicit or embedded strategy instruction, the tasks or materials cause the students “subconsciously” or “unconsciously” to use particular learning strategies. In implicit strategy instruction, the language tasks and materials do not provide any explicit information to the student about the nature or importance of learning strategies, nor about how to transfer them to new situations (cf. Oxford, 1992, 1993). Oxford (1990) states that implicit strategy instruction provide indirect support for language learning through focusing, planning, evaluating, seeking opportunities, controlling anxiety, increasing cooperation and empathy and other

means. They are used for general management of learning. They ensure the provision of data, stimulate the subconscious acquisition process (data are processed), and stimulate enjoyment. Most strategies used are of the indirect type. According to Oxford (1990:9), there are three types of indirect strategies:

- *Metacognitive strategies* are general learning strategies, rather than LLS's themselves. They allow learners to control their own cognition, and involve the utilization of all resources in the production and comprehension of language.
- *Affective strategies* help regulate emotions, motivations and attitudes.
- *Social strategies* help students learn through interaction with others.

Oxford (1990) points out that learners sometimes rebel against strategy training that is not sufficiently linked with their own language training. When strategy training is closely integrated with language learning, learners better understand how the strategies can be used in a significant, meaningful context. Meaningfulness makes it easier to remember the strategies.

### **3.4 THE EFFECT OF READING STRATEGY INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES ON READING COMPREHENSION**

Research has been conducted on how to improve L2 students' learning strategies. In many investigations, attempts to teach learners to use learning strategies (called strategy training or learner training) have produced good results (Thompson & Rubin, 1993). However, not all L2 strategy training studies have been successful or conclusive. Some training has been effective in various skill areas but not in others, even within the same study (Oxford, 1994b).

#### **3.4.1 Chamot and Kupper's (1989) Project**

Due to the apparent link between language learning strategies and acquisition, many studies have been undertaken to investigate how to teach L2 learners to use them. For example, Chamot and Kupper (1989) conducted a project in which they investigated the use of learning strategies by foreign language learners and their teachers. There were three different aspects to this project:

1. a descriptive study that identified foreign language learning strategies;
2. a longitudinal study which compared strategy use of effective and ineffective language learners; and
3. a course development study, in which foreign language instructors taught students how to apply learning strategies in order to improve their reading comprehension ability.

The results of the research indicated that learners of all levels and abilities used strategies when learning a foreign language, but differences existed with regard to how the strategies were used and how they contributed to different degrees of success in reading comprehension. Therefore, Chamot and Kupper (1989) suggested that more should be done to find out what type of strategies are used by the most effective foreign language students and to identify ways of teaching these strategies to less effective learners.

#### **3.4.2 O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzarenos, Kupper & Rocco's (1985) Training Study**

O'Malley et al. (1985) conducted a training study to determine which language learning strategy combinations would facilitate language learning. The sample for this study consisted of Hispanic, Asian, and students from other ethnic backgrounds. These students were put into three different groups comprising two treatment groups and one control group. The first treatment group received instruction in how to use a combination of metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies. The second treatment group was not instructed on how to use any metacognitive strategies, whereas the control group did not receive any instruction on language learning strategies at all. Each group had two sets of tasks involving listening and speaking. The results showed that the two treatment groups clearly performed much better than the control group in speaking tasks. However, overall, the results of the listening tasks did not distinguish between groups, possibly because listening tasks were too difficult. The study concluded that language learning strategy instruction fitted well into regular language programmes and that language

learning strategies were as important to foreign language learning as strategies are for any other learning area.

### **3.4.3 Recommendations for More Beneficial Strategy Training to Learners**

Recommendations about strategy training have been made by a number of researchers. For example, Vogely (1995) suggests that learners should be given training that helps them to become more self-reliant. Khaldieh (2000) suggests that training should focus on the cognitive and affective domain and that it should integrate both product and process – oriented approaches. This adds support to Oxford's claim (1993) that strategy training should take account of affective factors, be grounded on students' attitudes and beliefs, and at the same time, issues like anxiety, motivation and interests should be directly addressed. Further, Oxford (1993) suggests that the strategies chosen should mesh with and support each other, whilst fitting the requirements of the language task, the learners' goals, and their styles of learning. Finally, strategy training should be interwoven into regular L2 activities and be undertaken over a long period of time (a semester or a year) rather than taught as a separate, short intervention (O'Malley, 1987).

### **3.4.4 NEGATIVE FACTORS THAT AFFECT STRATEGY TRAINING**

Although strategy training has been reported to produce good results, not all of it has been uniformly successful or conclusive (Oxford, 1993; Oxford & Ehrman, 1993). Oxford (1993) indicates that this has occurred because of limitations in the research, such as: too short a period of training; a disproportionate ease or difficulty of the training task; an overemphasis on the more purely intellectual aspects of language learning; a lack of attention to affective and social strategies that are potentially important to language learning; a lack of integration of training into normal language class work and the perceived irrelevance of the training; and an inadequate pre-training assessment of learners' current strategy use, learning styles, and needs. She therefore suggests a balanced focus on cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social strategies because the "whole

learner” should be taken into account during learning strategy training. She also calls for more research in the area of L2 strategy training and on the differing approaches used in research for assessing strategy training.

In the second language learning arena, background (e.g., language and culture) as well as individual learner differences (e.g., learning styles) can be expected to play a part in both identifying the set of reading strategies students bring to a task and the ease or difficulty with which new strategies can be taught. Part of the background of students is their prior educational experience. For example, students whose initial educational training emphasized “spoon-feeding” and rote memorization, as most disadvantaged students within South Africa received, may have developed quite effective memory strategies, but be rather inexperienced with comprehension strategies (Dreyer, 1998).

The National Reading Panel (2000) points out that proficient reading involves much more than utilizing individual strategies; it involves a constant, ongoing adaptation of many cognitive processes. To help develop these processes in students, teachers must be skilful in their instruction. In other words, teachers themselves must have a firm grasp not only of the strategies that they are teaching the children, but also of instructional strategies that they can employ to achieve their goal (National Reading Panel, 2000).

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

The discussion of strategy training programmes clearly indicates that the teaching of reading strategies, by whatever method chosen, enhances the learning of reading and other language skills. The four models of strategy instruction described in this chapter have much in common. For example, they all view learning strategies as basic to comprehension of text and they all use direct modelling and explicit instruction. However, they differ slightly according to their basic research hypotheses and their research designs.

Research suggests that strategy instruction is useful for diverse groups of learners, including L1, L2 and teaching disabled students (Lederer, 2000; Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 1997; Collins, 1991). Instruction in reading comprehension strategies is particularly beneficial if strategy instruction is included in content areas. For example, in the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach, students learn how to use strategies, such as connecting what they already know with new information, to enhance content knowledge, L2 reading and other skills.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHOD OF RESEARCH

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to give an outline of the methodology employed in this study. The main aspects addressed in this chapter include the design used in this study, the subjects that participated, the instruments that were used to collect the data, an outline of the data collection procedure followed, a justification of the data analysis techniques utilised in the study, as well as a section highlighting the ethical considerations followed in this study.

#### 4.2 EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

##### 4.2.1 Design

A quasi-experimental pretest – posttest control group design was used in this study.

A quasi-experimental design is most frequently used when it is not feasible for the researcher to use random assignment. Real life situations in ESL/EFL classroom research create many instances when experimental research is not possible, but some type of causal inference is needed. The purpose of the quasi-experimental design is to approximate the conditions of the true experiment (Gribbons & Herman, 1997)

The majority of classroom research involves the use of classes where students have already been assigned on the basis of some principle. This is called an intact group. In this research it is impossible randomly to select students to begin with. In intact group studies, researchers are unable randomly to select or randomly to assign students for research purposes.

In classroom research where researchers wish to see the effects of a teaching/learning treatment, the design often uses the intact group (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991:86). While such designs will not allow researchers to make causal statements about the findings, they will allow researchers to give evidence in support of links between variables of these particular classes.

#### **4.2.2 Subjects**

The accessible population comprised of 60 grade 11 Xhosa-speaking learners taking English as a Second Language (ESL) at Kusile Comprehensive School in the Eastern Cape. Kusile Comprehensive School was selected by means of convenience sampling. In convenience sampling, the selection of students from the population is based on easy availability and/or accessibility.

The major disadvantage of this technique is that researchers have no idea how representative the information collected about the sample is to the population as a whole. But the information could still provide some fairly significant insights, and be a good source of data in exploratory research (cf. Ary et al., 2005). The subjects were in two intact classes (cf. 4.2.1) in order to prevent disruption to the normal teaching day at school. There were four Grade 11 classes in Kusile Comprehensive School. One class was randomly assigned, using a random numbers table, to the experimental group (N = 30) and the other to the control group (N = 30). The ages of the subjects ranged from 18 – 22 and the sample consisted of both males (N = 19) and females (N = 41).

#### **4.2.3 Instrumentation**

The Reading Performance Test in English: Advanced Level (Roux, 1996) was used to determine the students' reading performance level in English within the range of Senior Secondary Performance Levels (i.e., Grades 10, 11 and 12). The term "reading performance" in this context refers to the ability to get meaning from print (i.e., reading comprehension). This standardised test consists of 50 items. Questions are based on prose, passages, advertisements, a film review, a cartoon and two cloze-test passages. All the questions are in multiple-choice

form consisting of four options per item. The raw scores of the students are converted to a stanine scale. The stanine scale is a nine-point standard scale according to which raw scores are divided into nine intervals. It provides standard scores ranging from 1 (very poor) to 9 (very good) with a mean of 5 and a standard deviation of 1.96. The norms for second language speakers are specified in Roux (1996:22). The Reading Performance Test in English is a standardised test used by the HSRC. The details of the norms as well as the content of the test can, therefore, not be discussed or published in this study. For more detailed information on this test, including the norms, consult Roux (1996).

A Reading Strategies Questionnaire, based on the work of Oxford (1990), Pressley and Afflerbach (1995), and Pressley et al. (1995), was used to determine students' use of reading strategies (cf. Appendix F). The reading questionnaire included *before, during and after* reading strategies.

Students answer in terms of how well a certain statement describes them. For example, a typical statement would be: "I briefly skim the text before reading." The student must choose one of the following:

- Never or almost never true of me
- Usually not true of me
- Somewhat true of me
- Usually true of me
- Always or almost always true of me

Each of the three parts is then summed to get the total for each part. The sum of each part is then divided by the number of items contained in each part in order to get the students' average use of that particular group of strategies. The following guide was used to assess the frequency of strategy use:

High	Always or almost used	4.5 - 5.0
	Usually used	3.5 - 4.4
Medium	Sometimes	2.5 - 3.4

Low	Usually not used	1.5 - 2.4
	Never or almost never used	1.0- 1.4

(Oxford, 1990: 300).

#### **4.2.4 Data Collection Procedure**

In this study all subjects took the tests (e.g., reading strategies questionnaire and reading comprehension tests) during their regular classroom periods. All participants received uniform instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, which was taken on the first day by both groups. Prior to completing the questionnaire, the subjects were informed that the study was not associated with their regular instruction, they would not be required to identify themselves in the questionnaire and, of utmost importance, the obtained responses would be handled with absolute confidentiality.

The reading strategies questionnaire was followed by the reading performance test in English which was used as a pretest and was administered to both groups (control and experimental) on the following day. Both groups wrote the test in their classrooms under the supervision of the educator. On the third day, the educator focused only on the experimental group.

The experimental group received the strategy instruction which lasted for three months (i.e., 12 weeks). In this study the researcher was also the educator who conducted the strategy training. The researcher is a teacher at Kusile Comprehensive School and this ensured that the students were familiar with the educator and did not perform differently merely because they were participating in a study (i.e., Hawthorn effect) (cf. Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991). In a study conducted by Dreyer (1998: 23) she stated that the three-month interval between administrations was deemed long enough to control for any short-term memory effects, since subjects were not provided with the correct answers after the pretest, even were they to remember how they had answered a question the first time, they had no way of knowing whether that answer was correct. In addition,

the interval was considered short enough to control for any significant learning except for that due to the instruction.

The control group did not receive the treatment on the reading strategy instruction. However, in the course of their normal teaching they were also exposed to strategy training (e.g., skimming, identifying main ideas, etc.). This was however, not done explicitly. At the end of the twelfth week, the posttests (reading comprehension test and strategy questionnaire) were administered to both groups on the same day, but in consecutive periods. The two groups were allowed the same time to complete the tests as before. The learners were given exactly the same tests they received for the pre-testing. The rationale for using exactly the same test for both pre- and post-testing was to assure exactly comparable tests, thus avoiding the problem of equating different forms of pre- and posttest.

#### **4.2.5 Data Analysis**

The data were analysed by means of the *STATISTICA* software package. *STATISTICA* includes not only general purpose statistical, graphical, and analytic data management procedures, but also comprehensive implementations of specialized methods for data analysis (e.g., data mining, business, social sciences, biomedical research, or engineering applications).

Some of the unique features of the *STATISTICA* line of software include:

- the breadth of selection and comprehensiveness of implementation of analytical procedures,
- the unparalleled selection, quality, and customizability of graphics integrated seamlessly with every computational procedure,
- a wide selection of advanced software technologies that are responsible for *STATISTICA*'s practically unlimited capacity, performance (speed, responsiveness), and application customization options,
- the efficient and user-friendly user interface, and

- the fully integrated, industry standard *STATISTICA* Visual Basic that adds more than 11,000 new functions to the comprehensive syntax of Microsoft Visual Basic, thus comprising one of the most extensive development environments available (cf. Statsoft, 2005).

One of the most unique and important features of the *STATISTICA* family of applications is that these technologies allow even inexperienced users to tailor *STATISTICA* to their specific preferences. The same version of *STATISTICA* can be used:

- By novices to perform routine tasks using the default (e.g., Quick) analysis startup dialogs (containing just a few, self-explanatory buttons), or even by accessing *STATISTICA* with their Web browsers (and a highly simplified "front end"), and
- By experienced analysts, professional statisticians, and advanced application developers who can integrate any of *STATISTICA*'s highly optimized procedures (more than 11,000 functions) into custom applications or computing environments, using any of the cutting edge, object-oriented, and/or Web-embedded software technologies (Statsoft, 2005).

A t-test was used to determine whether the mean scores of the experimental and control group differed reliably from each other (cf. Tables 2 and 3). The t-test is a procedure that tests the difference between two groups for normally distributed interval data (where the mean and standard deviation and appropriate measures of central tendency and variability of the scores) (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991: 249).

The assumptions underlying the use of t-tests include:

- There are only two levels (groups) of one independent variable (reading strategy use) to compare.
- The data are truly continuous.
- The mean and standard deviation are the most appropriate measures to describe the data (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991: 263-264).

A relationship can be regarded as statistically significant if the results are significant at the specified alpha level (i.e., Probability of chance occurrence). Alpha is established as a criterion, and results either meet the criterion or they do not. In Behavioural research, alpha is frequently set at  $p < 0,05$  or  $p < 0,1$  (i.e., the odds that the findings are due to chance are either 5 in 100 or 1 in 100) (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991).

A relationship can be regarded as practically significant if the results are of practical value to the researcher, language practitioner or educator. Cohen (1977) established various scales according to which a relationship or difference between means can be regarded as practically significant. Cohen's (1977: 20-27) effect size  $d$  was used to calculate the difference between two means. Cohen uses the following scale for the  $d$  – values:

Small effect  $d = 0,2$

Medium effect  $d = 0,5$

Large effect  $d = 0,8$

### **4.3 Reading Strategy Instruction**

The reading strategy instruction was administered to the experimental group over a period of 12 weeks. The content of the reading strategy instruction was based on the following reading strategies:

#### **4.3.1 Reading Strategy Instruction (Experimental Group)**

##### *i) Introduction*

Week 1 & 2. In the introductory session the educator and the learners brainstormed about their current strategies (based on the results of the Reading Strategy Questionnaire). Then the educator introduced the learners to reading strategies, the rationale for their use, when and where to use them, how to evaluate the use of the strategy, and how to apply strategies to other tasks and

contexts. The learners' attention was drawn to the following five reading strategies:

Identifying the main idea

Making inferences

Predicting what is to come in a text

Guessing the meaning of words from the context

Summarising

#### **4.3.2 Identifying the Main Idea**

##### *i) Presentation*

Week 3 & 4. During this week identifying the main idea in a text as a reading strategy was introduced. The session took five days of fifty minutes each day. The instruction involved the completion of worksheets to teach the following:

- The definition of the main idea.
- How to find the main idea in different locations in the paragraphs.
- Why such sentences are more important than others.

##### *ii) Practice*

During the practice session the students were given specific tasks to complete and also very clear guidelines as to how the ability to locate the main idea in the text facilitates comprehension. For example, learners were asked to locate the theme and the main characters in the Short Story Book. The learners were encouraged to apply the reading strategy (find the main idea) to other similar tasks as well as to other subjects/learning areas (cf. Appendix A).

##### *(iii) Evaluation*

The learners were asked to state how they used clues in the text to find the main idea. This exercise was done by learners in pairs and sometimes in groups and they used their prescribed Short Story Book (cf. Appendix A).

### 4.3.3 Making Inferences

#### i) *Presentation*

Week 5 & 6. During this period, making inferences as a reading strategy was introduced. The instruction covered the following:

- Making inferences was defined as getting information by “reading between the lines.”
- Guidelines to infer the implied meaning in the text.
- The educator explaining how the process of inferencing plays a facilitative role in reading comprehension.

#### ii) *Practice*

The educator gave the learners a task to perform where learners labelled the inferences as probably accurate, probably inaccurate and insufficient evidence. A list of statements was provided. Learners were encouraged to use the same reading strategy in similar tasks and in other subjects in order to comprehend the text better (cf. Appendix B).

#### iii) *Evaluation*

The teacher asked the learners to compare their inferences and also to explain how they arrived at such inferences. (i) “A student yawns several times”. In this situation students inferred that the student is hungry or drowsy. (ii) “A student falls asleep”. The students inferred that the student is sick or drowsy. (iii) “A student returns from recess crying”. Students inferred that old students bully the young ones or the crying student simply needs the teacher’s attention.

#### **4.3.4 Predicting What is to Come in a Text**

##### *i) Presentation*

Week 7 & 8. During this period, instruction in prediction was given. The instruction given focused on:

- The definition of prediction which was given in the form of guessing what the text or reading material was about before one reads, by making use of a book cover, the pictures in the book or text and other cues that could help one assess and decide whether to read intensively or not.
- When is prediction used?
- Why is it used?
- How is prediction applied as a strategy? (cf. Appendix C)

##### *ii) Practice*

The educator worked with the entire class and modelled how making predictions works before and during reading. A prediction chart was developed as a framework for organizing thinking and helping learners sort out whether predictions come from clues in the text or their own experiences (cf. Table I).

**TABLE 1: THE WINNER (BARBARA KIMENYE)**

Can you predict what this story will be about?

<b>1. Predictions before reading</b>	<b>Based on</b>
(a) The story is about someone who has won a race.	On the title and personal experience.
(b) The story is about someone who has won in the voting polls.	On the title and personal experience.
(c) The story is about someone who has won a game or competition.	On the title and personal experience.
<b>2. Adjustments/confirmations after reading</b>	<b>Based on</b>
(a) The story is about Pius Ndawula who has won the football pools.	On the clues in the content of the actual story.

*iii) Evaluation*

The teacher invited the learners to return to the prediction chart to confirm and adjust their ideas. The adjustments were written on the chart with a different colour marker pen so that they could easily compare *initial predictions* with what actually occurred in the story. The educator further asked the learners to mark the words in the text that support or help them correct their predictions. In addition, pair work and group work was encouraged so that learners could check how close peers' predictions were to what the book really was about.

### **4.3.5 Guessing the Meaning of Words from the Context**

#### *i) Presentation*

Week 9 & 10. Guessing the meaning of words from the context as a reading strategy was introduced. The instruction covered the following:

- Use of hints from the context to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words.
- Learners were encouraged to read the story more than once and try to find clues in the sentences and that their guesses should make sense.

#### *ii) Practice*

Passages from the prescribed text were used. Learners were given a passage with some words deleted. They were asked to choose the most appropriate word from the three possible choices including the deleted word. After two lessons, options were not provided, learners were encouraged to rely on the context and make appropriate guesses (cf. Appendix D).

#### *iii) Evaluation*

While learners were working in small groups, the teacher visited each group, checking for understanding, offering support and modelling the verification process as necessary. He would review the group's answers and listen as they explained.

### **4.3.6 Summarising**

#### *i) Presentation*

Week 11 & 12. Learners were taught how to write summaries. Instruction covered the following:

- The definition of a summary was given as a short or condensed version of information in fewer words without losing what the longer text states by making use of key sentences and some of their supporting ideas.
- Why summarizing is an important strategy.
- How to write a summary (cf. Appendix E).

## *ii) Practice*

Learners were given passages and complete short stories from their text to summarise following Garrigus's (1991:123) five-step summary process:

Step 1. The first task is to determine the topic of the source material. Usually the title gives a clear clue. If not, look for a word or phrase that seems to be frequently repeated. When you have decided on a topic, write it down.

Step 2. Test to see if the reading text has a main idea. Does it answer a main "what about the topic" question? If so, verify your hypothesis by tracking the idea throughout. Then, look away and write the main idea in your own words in a complete sentence.

Step 3. If the material has a topical organization, use a topical pattern map or a traditional outline in your own words to list main topics and major details. To determine these, think how your source provides answers to the questions who, what, when, where, why and how. Look away from the text as you write. If the source is organized around a main idea, determine the organizational pattern (steps in a process, reasons supporting an opinion, etc.). Create a map to help you visualize the main pattern elements. Look away from the text and write the pattern elements in your own words.

Step 4. Survey supporting minor detail-examples, for example, statistics, historical data, expert opinion and studies. Decide how much minor detail you wish to include; the length of the summary will depend on one's purposes and/or the length requested by the educator.

Step 5. The outline or pattern map – not the original text – will now determine the organization of your summary.

### *iii) Evaluation*

The educator asked the groups to present their summaries. Each summary was judged according to its relevance to Garrigus's five-step summary process.

## **4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

At the beginning of 2003, the Eastern Cape Department of Education as well as the headmaster of Kusile Comprehensive School was approached in order to obtain permission to conduct the study at Kusile Comprehensive School. Permission by both the Department of Education and the headmaster was granted. It was also felt that permission from the parents of the participating learners was vital. The researcher sent an indemnity form to all parents of the specific learners and parents were requested to sign the form and return it to the researcher if permission was granted for their children to participate in the study. At the beginning of the study, the learners were also requested by the researcher to sign if they were willing to participate in the study.

## **4.5 CONCLUSION**

The methodological overview in this chapter was aimed at providing an accurate description of the various steps taken in the research process in order to facilitate future replicability, as well as to serve as a basis for the discussion of the results in chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5

### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is devoted to the presentation and discussion of the analysed data. The aim of this chapter is to attempt to address the following research questions posed in chapter 1:

- What reading strategies do Grade 11 ESL learners use?
- What is the effect of an implemented reading strategy training programme on the reading comprehension of the Grade 11 ESL learners participating in this study?

#### 5.2 THE PRE-TEST READING STRATEGY USE PROFILE OF GRADE 11 ESL LEARNERS

In terms of reading strategy use the results (pre-test) indicated that there was not a statistically significant or a practically significant difference in the reading strategies used by the learners in the experimental and control groups (cf. Table 2). Specifically the results of the strategy analysis indicated that the learners in the experimental group and the learners in the control group do not significantly differ in the use of the strategies at the before-reading, during reading and after reading stages.

An analysis of the before-reading stage strategy use indicates that both groups used the following reading strategies for more frequently than other reading strategies (Table 2): "I briefly skim the text before reading" (experimental group – 2.99; control group – 2.99) and "I skim/scan to get the main idea" (experimental group – 2.98, control group – 3.00). The least frequently used strategies at the before-reading stage included the following reading strategies: "I often look for

how the text is organised and pay attention to headings and sub-headings” (experimental group – 2.55, control group – 2.44); “I try to anticipate information in the text” (experimental group – 2.13, control group - 2.20); “I set goals for reading (e.g. studying for a multiple-choice test, reading for a research paper) (experimental group – 2.39, control group – 2.26); “I usually make predictions as to what will follow next” (experimental group – 1.99, control group – 2.00). An analysis of the before-reading stage strategy use indicates that for both groups (experimental and control) the gap between the frequently used and the least frequently used strategies is not wide. Moreover, the frequently used reading strategies do not reveal a high frequency use of such reading strategies (cf. Table 2). Therefore, the pre-test strategy use profile of both groups shows that the averages were low indicating limited reading strategy use.

In the during reading stage, the learners used the following reading strategies far more frequently than other reading strategies (cf. Table 2): “I pay greater attention to important information than other information” (experimental group - 2.66; control group – 2.68); “I try to underline when reading in order to remember the text” (experimental group 3.40; control group – 3.38) and “I search out information relevant to my reading goals” (experimental group – 2.99; control group – 2.89). The least frequently used reading strategies at this stage included the following reading strategies: “While I am reading, I reconsider and revise my background knowledge about the subject based on the text’s content” (experimental group – 1.70; control group – 1.75) and “When reading, I ask myself questions about the text content to better remember the text” (experimental group – 1.98; control group – 1.99). An analysis of during reading stage strategy use indicates that for both groups (experimental and control) the gap between the frequently used reading strategies and the least frequently used reading strategies is wider than in the before-reading stage. However, the mean scores for the least frequently used reading strategies in during reading stage are lower than the mean scores in the before-reading stage.

An analysis of the after reading stage strategy use indicates that both groups used the following reading strategies far more frequently than other reading

strategies (cf. Table 2): “I summarise/paraphrase the material that I am reading in order to remember the text” (experimental group – 3.52; control group – 3.54); “After I have read a text, I review it” (experimental group – 3.35; control group – 3.34), and “After I have read a text, I summarise it” (experimental group – 3.56; control group – 3.48). These three reading strategies fell in the high usage category (mean of 3.5 or higher). The least frequently used reading strategies at this stage were the following reading strategies: “After I have read a text I try to interpret what I have read” (experimental group – 2.87; control group 2.79) and “After I have read a text, I evaluate what I have read” (experimental group – 2.33; control group – 2.19). An analysis of the after reading stage strategy use indicates that for both groups (experimental and control) the mean scores for the frequently used reading strategies as well as for the least frequently used reading strategies are higher as compared to the other two reading strategy stages (i.e., before-reading and during reading). In other words, the learners appear to be using the after reading strategies more than the before-reading strategies and during reading strategies. This could be attributed to the fact that the teachers’ presentations of lessons and class activities are relevant for the development of such strategies.

**Table 2: The pre-test reading strategy use profile of Grade 11 ESL learners: experimental group versus control group**

Strategies	Experimental (Pretest) (N=30)		Control (Pretest) (N=30)		p
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	
I briefly skim the text before reading.	2.99	0.66	2.99	0.58	
I skim/scan to get the main idea.	2.98	0.71	3.00	0.70	
I pay greater attention to important information than other information.	2.66	0.50	2.68	0.54	

I try to relate the important points in the text to one another in an attempt to understand the entire text	2.28	0.58	2.44	0.60	
While I am reading, I reconsider and revise my prior questions about the text based on the text's content.	2.23	0.54	2.17	0.56	
While I am reading, I reconsider and revise my back-ground knowledge about the subject based on the text's content.	1.70	0.60	1.75	0.57	
I plan how I am going to read a text	2.11	0.60	2.07	0.58	
I often look for how the text is organized and pay attention to headings and sub-headings.	2.55	0.70	2.44	0.73	
I usually make predictions as to what will follow next.	1.99	0.48	2.00	0.54	
While I am reading, try to determine the meaning of unknown words that seem critical to the meaning of the text	2.11	0.58	2.10	0.52	
I try to underline when reading in order to remember the text.	3.40	0.71	3.38	0.64	
When appropriate, I try to visualize the descriptions in the text that I am reading in order to remember the text.	2.11	0.59	2.19	0.61	

I summarize/paraphrase the material that I am reading in order to remember the text.	3.52	0.63	3.54	0.64	
When reading, I ask myself question about the text content to better remember the text.	1.98	0.44	1.99	0.50	
When I think that I am not comprehending a text, I change my reading strategies (e.g. re-reading).	2.39	0.66	2.37	0.68	
As I am reading, I evaluate the text to determine whether it contributes to my knowledge/understanding of the subject	2.34	0.54	2.34	0.53	
After I have read a text, I review it.	3.35	0.63	3.34	0.69	
After I have read a text, I try to interpret what I have read	2.87	0.71	2.79	0.78	
After I have read a text, I evaluate what I have read.	2.33	0.66	2.19	0.66	
While reading, I jump forward and/or backward in the text to find the important information.	2.12	0.49	2.14	0.53	
While reading, I distinguish between information I already know and new information	2.00	0.54	2.10	0.56	
I try to anticipate information in the text.	2.13	0.63	2.20	0.69	
As I read along, I check whether I anticipated information correctly.	2.15	0.61	2.19	0.64	
I set goals for reading (e.g. studying for a multiple-choice test, reading for a research paper).	2.39	0.71	2.26	0.69	

I search out information relevant to my reading goals.	2.99	0.66	2.89	0.67	
I evaluate whether what I am reading is relevant to my reading goals	2.20	0.56	2.20	0.56	
I vary my reading style depending on my reading goals.	1.99	0.53	2.00	0.5	
After I have read a text I summarize it.	3.56	0.68	3.48	0.69	

### 5.3 THE POST-TEST READING STRATEGY USE PROFILE OF GRADE 11 ESL LEARNERS

The posttest results indicate that the learners in the experimental group use certain strategies statistically ( $p < 0.05$ ), as well as practically significantly (small to large effect sizes), more often than the learners in the control group (cf. Table 3). An analysis of the reading strategies that discriminate between the learners revealed that there is a difference in terms of the process that occur before reading, during reading and after reading. The post-test results cited in Table 3 reveal an improvement in the frequency of usage of the reading strategies by the experimental group. During the pre-reading stage, the frequency of use of the following reading strategies improved "I briefly skim the text before reading" (experimental group pre-test – 2.99; post-test – 3.60) and "I often look for how the text is organised and pay attention to headings and subheadings" (experimental group pre-test 2.55; post-test – 2.98).

During reading strategies and after reading strategies also show an improvement when the frequency of usage of reading strategies during the pre-testis compared to the frequency of usage of reading strategies during the post-test. Table 3 shows that learners in the experimental group used a wide range of reading strategies they did not use before (pre-test). Specifically, an improvement is witnessed in the strategies that formed the content of the reading strategy instruction. In other words, the findings regarding knowledge and use of reading

strategies suggest that the reading strategy instruction resulted in an increased reported use of reading strategies.

The following reading strategies were used to train the learners during strategy instruction: The strategy "I usually make predictions as to what will follow next" was used more frequently by the learners in the experimental group during the posttest (2.88) than during the pretest (1.00). Learners' exposure and training in the use of this strategy seem to have been effective. The strategy "While I am reading, I try to determine the meaning of unknown words that seem critical to the meaning of the text" was also used by learners in the experimental group more frequently during the post-test (2.88) than during pre-test (2.11). The strategy "I try to anticipate information in the text" showed a great improvement during post-test (3.20) than during the pre-test (2.13). The strategy "While reading, I jump forward and/or backward in the text to find the important information" showed an improvement as indicated by the results of the experimental group during the post-test (3.54). Another improvement was witnessed in the strategy "After I have read a text I summarise it". Although learners in both the experimental and control groups frequently used this strategy during the pre-test more than other strategies, the experimental group showed more frequent usage of this reading strategy (3.62) than the control group (3.22).

**Table 3: The post-test reading strategy use profile of Grade 11 ESL learners: experimental group versus control group**

Strategies	Experimental (Posttest) (N=30)		Control (Posttest) (N=30)		p	d
	M.	S.D.	M.	S.D.		
I briefly skim the text before reading.	3.60	0.71	2.98	0.67	*	0.87
I skim/scan to get the main idea.	3.54	0.80	3.20	0.74	*	0.42

I pay greater attention to important information than other information.	3.03	0.77	3.02	0.65		
I try to relate the important points in the text to one another in an attempt to understand the entire text	2.40	0.60	2.44	0.54		
While I am reading, I reconsider and revise my prior questions about the text based on the text's content.	2.40	0.60	2.41	0.60		
While I am reading, I reconsider and revise my back-ground knowledge about the subject based on the text's content.	2.54	0.61	2.00	0.63	*	0.85
I plan how I am going to read a text	2.40	0.56	2.48	0.67		
I often look for how the text is organized and pay attention to headings and sub-headings.	3.00	0.70	2.98	0.69		
I usually make predictions as to what will follow next.	2.88	0.57	2.00	0.51	*	1.50
While I am reading, I try to determine the meaning of unknown words that seem critical to the meaning of the text	3.05	0.66	2.81	0.61	*	0.36
I try to underline when reading in order to remember the text.	3.51	0.66	3.49	0.54		
When appropriate, I try to visualize the descriptions in the text that I am reading in order to remember the text.	2.40	0.61	2.42	0.54		
I summarize/paraphrase the material that I am reading in order to remember the text.	3.65	0.58	3.58	0.56		

When reading, I ask myself question about the text content to better remember the text.	3.4	0.74	2.96	0.75	*	0.65
When I think that I am not comprehending a text, I change my reading strategies (e.g. re-reading).	3.00	0.64	3.01	0.60		
As I am reading, I evaluate the text to determine whether it contributes to my knowledge/understanding of the subject	3.00	0.61	3.00	0.57		
After I have read a text, I review it.	3.42	0.53	3.34	0.60		
After I have read a text, I try to interpret what I have read	3.48	0.60	3.3	0.55	*	0.30
After I have read a text, I evaluate what I have read.	3.01	0.61	2.99	0.69		
While reading, I jump forward and/ or backward in the text to find the important information.	3.54	0.75	3.30	0.57	*	0.32
While reading, I distinguish between information I already know and new information	3.00	0.60	2.90	0.51		
I try to anticipate information in the text.	3.20	0.77	2.88	0.60	*	0.41
As I read along, I check whether I anticipated information correctly.	3.00	0.56	2.32	0.49	*	1.21
I set goals for reading (e.g. studying for a multiple-choice test, reading for a research paper).	3.82	0.68	3.00	0.71	*	1.15

I search out information relevant to my reading goals.	3.38	0.57	3.44	0.56		
I evaluate whether what I am reading is relevant to my reading goals	3.56	0.68	3.29	0.73	*	0.37
I vary my reading style depending on my reading goals.	3.12	0.67	2.76	0.51	*	0.48
After I have read a text I summarize it.	3.62	0.58	3.22	0.57	*	0.68

*Practical significance:*  $d = 0.2$  (small effect size);  $d = 0.5$  (medium effect size);  $d = 0.8$  (large effect size) *Statistical significance* \*  $p < 0.05$ .

#### 5.4 THE READING COMPREHENSION PROFILE OF GRADE 11 ESL LEARNERS

An analysis of the pretest reading comprehension scores of the Grade 11 ESL learners in the experimental and control groups indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference in their mean scores on the reading comprehension test (cf. Table 4). The pre-test reading comprehension scores indicate that both experimental and control groups scores were weak and below 50% (experimental group – 37.53, control group – 36.73). Their weak reading comprehension had a negative effect on their performance in the language class and also in other content areas. The situation is true if one considers that reading comprehension has come to be the essence of reading (Durkin, 1993), essential not only to academic learning in all subjects areas but also to professional success and to lifelong learning (Pritchard et al. 1999; Rings, 1994; Strydom, 1997).

**Table 4: The reading comprehension test profile of Grade 11 ESL learners: experimental group vs. control group**

Variables	Experimental (Pretest) (N=30)		Control (Pretest) (N=30)		Experimental (Posttest) (N=30)		Control (Posttest) (N=30)		p	d
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
English reading Comprehension	37.53	15.80	36.73	13.42	50.40	16.85	40.86	16.13	***	0.56

*Practical significance:*  $d=0.2$  (small effect size);  $d=0.5$  (medium effect size);  $d=0.8$  (large effect size) *Statistical significance:*  $p < 0.05$ .

An analysis of the post-test reading comprehension scores of Grade 11 ESL learners in the experimental and control groups indicate that learners in the experimental group achieved statistically significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) higher mean scores on the reading comprehension test in comparison to the Grade 11 ESL learners in the control group (cf. Table 4). The mean difference indicates a medium effect size. The results, therefore, seem to indicate that those learners who are taught to apply and evaluate as well as transfer strategy use to other relevant contexts or tasks receive the greatest benefit (i.e. intentionality and control), whereas learners who are not taught to apply strategies or transfer were incapable of seeing their relevance to the tasks contained in the reading comprehension test. This also confirms the hypothesis formulated in chapter 1, namely that a well-developed reading strategy instruction programme may significantly affect Grade 11 ESL learners' reading comprehension.

## 5.5 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results of this study seem to indicate that a well-developed reading strategy instruction programme can have a strong positive effect on the Grade 11 ESL learners' reading comprehension. In other words, the results indicate that reading strategy instruction can and does make a contribution in increasing the reading comprehension ability of learners. This finding is consistent with other reported research (e.g., Van Keer & Verhaeghe, 2005; Lau & Chan, 2003; Alfassi, 1998; Dreyer, 1998; Kern, 1989). The learners in the experimental group

improved their performance significantly after the intervention, whereas the learners in the control group did not improve their performance. Thus, the findings portray the intervention as a viable method for enhancing the reading comprehension of the Grade 11 ESL learners. The findings in this study support the current view of reading comprehension as a process of emerging expertise in which readers create meaning through the flexible use of reading strategies to foster, monitor, regulate, and maintain comprehension (Alexander & Jetton, 2000; Dole et al., 1991; Glaser, 1990; Wittrock, 1998).

Findings in the present study also reveal that explicit instruction in the use of reading strategies was essential to bring about more increased use of reading strategies for learners in the experimental group. These results are congruent with previous research confirming the positive effect of explicit strategies instruction on reading comprehension achievement (e.g., Van Keer & Verhaeghe, 2005; Pressley et al., 1989). In the current study, explicit reading strategies instruction was made possible by means of modelling strategic reasoning and explicit teacher explanations of why, where, and when to use them.

The results of this study indicate that learner' ability to use reading strategies is the most critical factor in their reading comprehension performance. Thus, the close relation between strategy use and reading comprehension provided support for the possibility that educators could enhance the learners' reading comprehension through explicit reading strategies instruction.

## **5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

Certain limitations of this study may have influenced the results. One of the limitations of this study is that the sample size was relatively small and was only drawn from one high school, making it difficult to generalise the findings of this research to the entire population of learners in the Eastern Cape or in South Africa. Thus, the need for cross-replication in future studies with a larger and more representative sample should be emphasised. However, it is important to point out that the learners used in this study share important common attributes.

For example, they all belong to government or government-aided schools, their ages do not vary a lot, they use the same English syllabus and they write common English examinations at the end of their final year.

The results indicated that the treatment period was of crucial importance. It is clear that a treatment period of much longer than twelve weeks is required for possible better retention and transfer. Also, a sustained period of intensive instruction and practice in reading strategies seems to be required. Moreover, the results of this study would have been more meaningful if learners were classified according to their proficiency levels. This would give the researcher an opportunity to compare the relationship between proficiency and strategy use.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

In the above discussion an attempt was made to address the research questions in chapter one. The results indicated that learners benefit from strategic reading instruction. However, Dreyer (1998) points out that it is important to note that reading strategy instruction is not a magical formula to improve learners' reading ability in all instances. Various variables (e.g., context, teacher educational background, etc.) can affect the extent to which reading strategy instruction can facilitate the development of reading comprehension ability. The research evidence, in both L1 and L2 contexts, however, leads one to feel confident that such instruction properly carried out, can assist learners in becoming more self-directed and autonomous language learners.

## CHAPTER 6

### **GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING A READING STRATEGY INSTRUCTION PROGRAMME**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter guidelines are provided, and reference is made to relevant literature to support the importance and rationale of the guidelines, to assist teachers in future when they have to integrate and or develop a reading strategy instruction programme. The guidelines provided in this chapter were utilized by the instructor when developing and implementing the programme specified in this study. The following aspects are addressed:

- What reading strategies should be taught?
- How and when should reading strategies be taught?
- What should an effective reading strategy programme look like?

#### **6.2 WHAT READING STRATEGIES SHOULD BE TAUGHT?**

Selection of reading strategies is a complex task as it is not guided by a simple factor but by several factors. Many reading strategies have been proposed but only some have proven potent for ESL reading comprehension. According to Pressley et al. (1989), recommended strategies are those strategies supported by research evidence. Pressley et al. (1984:4) point out that "not all strategies recommended in the literature have been evaluated adequately, and many have not been evaluated at all. Some have been studied and continued to be recommended, despite scientific evidence that they do not produce memory or comprehension gains." Thus, only strategic procedures that enjoy clear scientific support should be recommended to educators. Such strategies have proven their worth in studies that permit cause-and-effect conclusions (Pressley et al., 1989). De La Paz (1998) points out that each recommended strategy should have been formally evaluated and found to be effective for improving learners' reading comprehension. The compilation of the reading strategies should be

inspired by contemporary reading research and recurrent strategies in explicit strategy instruction programmes (e.g., Brown et al., 1996; De Corte et al., 2001; Palinscar & Brown, 1984). Such research should provide information about strategies to educators to make informed decisions about which strategies to teach.

Ellis (1994:558) states that much of the research on language learning strategies "has been based on the assumption that there are 'good' learning strategies". However, Ehrman et al. (2003) point out that a given learning strategy is neither good nor bad; it is essentially neutral until it is considered in context. Ehrman et al. (2003:315) further state that a strategy is useful under these conditions: 1) the strategy relates well to the L2 task at hand, 2) the strategy fits the particular learner's learning style preferences to one degree or another, and 3) the learner employs the strategy effectively and links it with other relevant strategies. Strategies that fulfil these conditions "make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990: 8) and enable more independent, autonomous, lifelong learning (Allwright, 1990; Little, 1991). Ehrman (1996) states that reading strategies should be chosen for the demands of the learning task and be consistent with the learners' style. In addition, Ehrman (1996:185) points out that "there is no cookbook of learning strategies." This is supported by the fact that some researchers (e.g., Reid, 1998; Oxford et al., 1993; Oxford & Crookall, 1989; Oxford, 1989) suggest that there is no single strategy pattern used by effective language learners. In fact, successful learners use an array of strategies, matching those strategies to their own learning style and personality and to the demands of the task.

Pressley et al. (1995), as well as numerous other intervention researchers (e.g., Collins, 1997; Graham, Harris, MacArthur, & Schwartz, 1997; Ellis (1994) have advocated teaching learners strategies in contexts that are relevant and appropriate for their use. Pressley et al. (1995) state that learners learn to use strategies as the need arises and when a particular set of heuristics is appropriate for an assigned task. In addition, Oxford (1994: 3) points out that

"strategies should be chosen so that they mesh with and support each other and so that they fit the requirements of the language task, the learners' goals, and the learners style of learning." Graham (1997:170) states that educators who have thought carefully about which strategies are most appropriate for which task, are more likely to be successful in developing "strategic competence" in their learners.

An analysis of proficient readers' reading behaviour has revealed that skilled reading does not involve the use of a single potent strategy but the coordination of multiple strategies (Brown et al., 1996). There are so many learning strategies that a variety of schemes have arisen for accounting for them. Among the relatively early taxonomies is that of Weinstein and her associates; their model is represented by the LASSI questionnaire (Weinstein, 1987; Weinstein et al., 1987; 1988). Around the same time, Oxford (1990, 1992) was developing her strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) which uses factor analysis to group strategies into six categories. Oxford (1990) identified six major groups of L2 learning strategies:

- **Cognitive strategies** enable the learner to manipulate the language material in direct ways, e.g., through reasoning analysis, note-taking, and synthesizing.
- **Metacognitive strategies** (e.g., identifying one's own preferences and needs, planning task success) are used to manage the learning process overall.
- **Memory-related strategies** (e.g., acronyms, sound similarities, images, key words) help learners link one L2 item or concept with another but do not necessarily involve deep understanding.
- **Compensatory strategies** (e.g., guessing from the context; circumlocution; and gestures and pause words) help make up for missing knowledge.
- **Affective strategies** (e.g., identifying one's mood and anxiety level, talking and using deep breathing or positive self-talk) help learners manage their emotions and motivation level.

- **Social strategies** (e.g., asking questions, asking for clarification, asking for help, talking with a native speaking conversation partner, and exploring cultural and social norms) enable the learner to learn via interaction with others and understand the target culture.

Both Weinstein and Oxford base their work on categorizing heterogeneous strategies into a smaller number of categories. An alternative taxonomy has been offered by O'Malley and Charmot (1990), who emphasise the interaction of teacher and learner and place emphasis on scaffolding and the development of metacognitive strategies, under the rubric of CALLA (Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach).

Ehrman et al. (2003) point out that another approach to bringing order and more simplicity into the seemingly infinite universe of learning strategies is to group learning approaches by the purpose of learning, for example, Biggs (1992) model, which uses his Study Process Questionnaire. Biggs' work is based on that of Schmeck (1998). This model and instrument addresses both motivation and learning strategies, categorising each into:

- Surface (to get a task done with little personal investment),
- Achieving (to succeed in competition and get good marks), and
- Deep (to make personal investment in the task through associations and elaboration).

Ehrman (1996:173) describes deep processing as an active process of making associations with material that is already familiar, examining interrelationships within the new material, elaborating the stimulus through associations with it and further development of it, connecting the new material with personal experience, and considering alternative interpretations. The learner may use the new material to actively reconstruct his or her conceptual frameworks.

Surface processing, on the other hand, is completion of the task, with minimum conceptual effort, with the result that much less information will stay in memory, because it has been encountered much less and there is no emotional or

cognitive investment in it. Ehrman (1996) suggests that the most successful combination of these strategies and motivations is deep and achieving strategies, though she indicates that there is a place for surface strategies, because sometimes the cost/benefit ratio of task does not justify only deeper investment.

Lessard-Clouston (1997) points out that in order for educators to select relevant reading strategies for their learners, at first it is crucial for educators to study their teaching context, paying special attention to their learners, their materials, and their own teaching. It is also crucial for educators to know something about their learners' interests, motivations, learning styles, etc. By observing the learners' behaviour in class educators will be able to see, what language learning strategies their learners already appear to be using. Do they often ask for clarification, verification, or correction? Do they co-operate with their peers or seem to have much contact outside of class with proficient L2/FL users? Beyond observation, however, one can prepare a short questionnaire that learners can fill in at the beginning of a course, describing themselves and their language learning. Sharkey (1994/1995), for example, asked learners to complete statements such as "In this class I want to/will/won't.....", "My favourite/least favourite kinds of class activities are .....". "I am studying English because ....," etc. (Sharkey, 1994/1995: 19).

The idea of administering a questionnaire before the beginning of the course is also supported by Anderson (1999). After administering a reading strategy questionnaire, Anderson (1999) asked his learners to talk about which strategies they used that were helpful in reading. They discussed this in small groups and came up with a list of strategies which could be used to help learners improve their reading. This exercise enabled the learners to use different strategies and they saw how others approach reading and were able to discuss why some strategies were more helpful than others.

Beyond the learners, however, one's teaching materials are also important in considering reading strategies. Textbooks, for example, should be analysed to use whether they already include reading strategies. Audiotapes, videotapes,

handouts, and other materials for the course at hand should also be examined for reading strategies (Lessard-Clouston, 1997). According to Lessard-Clouston (1997), after educators have studied their teaching context, they should begin to focus on specific reading strategies in their regular teaching that are relevant to their learners, materials, and their own teaching style.

According to Carrell (1991), several studies have similarly shown relationships between various reading strategies and successful or unsuccessful second language reading (e.g., Arabsolghar & Elkins, 2001; Lessard-Clouston, 1997). Researchers point out that the use of certain reading strategies does not always lead to successful reading comprehension, while use of other strategies does not always result in unsuccessful reading comprehension. Research results reported by Anderson (1990) show that there are no simple correlations or one-to-one relationships between particular strategies and successful or unsuccessful reading comprehension. His research, with native Spanish-speaking university level intensive ESL learners reading in English as their second language and self-reporting their strategy use, suggests much individual variation in successful or unsuccessful use of the very same reading strategies. Rather than a single set of processing strategies that significantly contributed to successful reading comprehension the same kinds of strategies were used by both high and low comprehending readers.

### **6.3 HOW SHOULD READING STRATEGIES BE TAUGHT?**

In order to address the next research question (i.e., how should reading strategies be taught), an important question to ask is whether learners must be made conscious of the reading strategies they are taught, or whether just providing practice opportunities is sufficient. This is related to the problem of determining whether a strategy is used consciously or subconsciously (Dreyer & van der Walt, 1995).

Weinstein (1988) suggests the following procedure for the teaching of reading strategies: The instructor introduces the strategy and explains how it can be

used to solve a problem, then the key elements of the strategy are presented along with a few examples. This is immediately followed by practice and feedback sessions. The learner is thus made conscious of the strategy. Oxford (1990) also mentions creating "awareness" in the learner as a way of teaching strategies. She points out that during awareness training, participants become aware of and familiar with the general idea of language learning strategies and the way such strategies can help them accomplish various language tasks. Oxford (1990; add the page number) states that in the "how to" of strategy training, the following eight steps are important: 1) determine the learners' needs and the time available; 2) select strategies well; 3) consider integration of strategy training; 4) consider motivational issues; 5) prepare material and activities; 6) conduct "completely informed training"; 7) evaluate the strategy training; 8) revise the strategy training.

Weinstein and Meyer (1991) point out that it is important not to teach only about the strategies, but to provide practice also, followed by feedback. When training learners in strategy use, therefore, teachers should provide both conscious exercise and practice opportunities. Strategies may be seen as conscious or at least potentially conscious, something which the learner employs intentionally. The learner can take a conscious decision to take control of learning (Oxford, 1990:12) and to deploy a strategy to overcome a learning problem. The concept of strategy starts from the learner's choice – the learner is a human being with a free will to opt for one thing or the other (Cook, 1993:137).

Modelling is one of the most powerful ways of teaching strategies. The teacher uses a strategy during a learning task, and constantly points out what he/she is doing, and what strategies are being followed. For example, if the task is to read a passage, the teacher asks: What do we want to find out? What must we do to find out? What must we do to find out? This is the planning stage, and then the teacher monitors the task whilst it is in progress: Are we achieving what we set out to achieve? Teacher and class think aloud together, and if an error is made, it must be corrected, so that learners can learn to regulate their learning.

Another example of modelling a short story, is when the teacher models the process by presenting reading as a bet. The teacher put "I bet ..." on a chart in the front of the room, read the title of a story from an overhead and made a bet. After this, the teacher put the phrase, "I already know that ..." on the chart and explained that sometimes people make bets or guesses based on what they know. Then reader-based inferencing was modelled. Next, the teacher wrote on the chart "The text says ..." and explained that sometimes we make bets or guesses because the text has hints, about our bets. The teacher modelled text-based inferencing with the next line of the text. Thus, the prediction was made and the source of information used to make the bet explained (Walker, 1990:4). When incongruencies occurred, the process of revising predictions was modelled.

Coaching is another most powerful way of teaching strategies. For example, after the introduction of chart and modelling the self-questions the teacher used betting throughout the text as the strategies of prediction and revision were used alternately between the learners and the teacher. To change the instructional context, learners discussed their predictions in small groups of three learners. At the prediction points in the story, learners summarized and reread the text and then discussed predictions and revisions. Then each group shared their divergent responses and the reasons for these responses with the teacher and the learners. As they shared their thinking, the teacher identified problem areas, and modelled alternative ways to think through the story

Coaching does not only apply to learners but also to educators. In a study conducted by Van Keer and Verhaeghe (2005), it was felt that at the beginning of intervention coaching was necessary for educators. In this programme educators were provided with a manual giving step by step instructions on how to conduct the instructional innovations. The manual presented to educators included an extensive general description of the rationale, aims and the organisation of the innovation. Since educators need evidence that the innovative approaches do actually work (Butler et al., 2004; Stein, Smith and Silver, 1999) educators during this coaching session focused on developing understanding of the characteristics

of reading instruction that successfully improve learners' comprehension of texts. During coaching a short video film made the innovations more concrete and outlined how to introduce them in the regular instructional practice. As recommended by Loucks-Horsely, Hewson, Love and Stiles (1998) educators were in this respect helped to translate their knowledge of the innovative practices into practice. Hollingsworth (2000, 2002) also recognizes the need to contextualize teaching and educator development by employing cases, and more especially video cases, as a means to situate the professional development of educators in realistic contexts. In Van Keer and Verhaeghe's (2005) study, coaching meetings more specifically comprised an observation of a preparatory or explicit strategy instruction lesson, a detailed discussion of the attended and other already completed lessons, and a preparation of the coming lessons. According to Van Keer and Verhaeghe (2005), precisely selected extracts from the video film were used to stimulate discussion and debate about the importance of the educators' role in supervising and coaching the reading dyads.

Tutoring is another way of teaching reading strategies. Peer tutoring is structurally embedded in the curriculum and classroom organisation and is characterized by specific role taking: One person has the job of tutor, while the other is the tutee (Topping, 1996). Moreover, effective peer tutoring is characterized by preceding tutor training (Bentz & Fuchs, 1996). Peer tutoring has been successful in a variety of curriculum areas and age groups. Research has indicated positive effects on academic achievement for both tutor and tutee (Cohen, Kulik & Kulik, 1982; Fantuzzo, Davis & Ginsburg, 1995; Greenwood et al., 1988; Matches et al., 2001). In this respect, peer tutoring is not only about transmission from the more able and experienced to the less able (Topping, 1996); tutors seem to benefit even more from tutoring than learners who receive the individual tuition (Fitz-Gibbon, 1988). This can be explained by the nature of tutoring a peer: Tutors are challenged to consider the subject fully from different perspectives, to engage in active monitoring to identify and correct errors to organize and clarify their own knowledge and understandings, and to elaborate on information in their explanations (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2000). Because the application of reading strategies requires actively monitoring the reading process,

peer tutoring may be considered a powerful learning environment for the acquisition of reading comprehension skills. Monitoring the reading process of another reader might facilitate the acquisition of self-monitoring skills and, hence, the adequate application of reading strategies.

Another important way that teachers achieve a complete instruction programme is to scaffold instruction so that learners become aware of and competent in the use of reading strategies they need to be successful. According to Vacca et al. (2006), the scaffold metaphor suggests helping learners do what they cannot do on their own at first. Instructional scaffolding allows teachers to support literacy learning by showing learners how to use reading strategies that will lead to independent learning. Vacca et al. (2006) further states that instructional scaffolding means giving learners a better chance of being successful with reading. Teachers provide literacy scaffolds through the use of well-timed questions, explanations, demonstrations, practice, and application. These scaffolds provide instructional support for learners in two ways: 1) the application of strategies at the point of actual use during reading, and 2) explicit instruction in the development of strategies through mini lessons.

According to Pressley et al. (1992:514), good strategy instruction is not rote learning. Learners are not just memorizing steps and mechanically executing them; strategy instructors are not drill sergeants. Rather, good strategy instruction entails making learners aware of purposes of strategies, how and why they work, and when and where they can be used. Learners are given extensive practice in the context of ongoing school instruction, practice which produces a personalized mastery of the method.

The Rand Reading Study Group (2002: add page numbers) recommends the following principles for educators on how reading strategies should be taught:

- Use comprehensive monitoring strategies, such as cooperative learning, graphic organisers, reading chapter summaries first, question generation (e.g., turning headings into questions), concept mapping, story structure,

and summarizing to help learners become aware of their understanding of the reading material.

- When learners get stuck in their reading comprehension, have them connect the text to their lives, make a prediction, stop and think about what they've already read, ask themselves a question and try to answer it, reflect in writing what they've read, visualize, use print conventions (bold print, punctuation, etc.), recall what they've read, reread, notice patterns in the text structure, and adjust the reading rate by slowing down or speeding up. Demonstrate the use of specific cognitive strategies until learners are able to use them independently.
- Teach learners how to draw inferences from their reading (ask questions, look for important clues, think about what they know about the evidence, use this information to try to answer the original question).
- Use a variety of instructional strategies that relate specifically to reading comprehension: ask high level questions that require learners to think beyond the text, help learners connect what they read to their personal lives, use small group instruction to meet varied learning needs, provide reading materials at an appropriate reading level for each learner, and monitor reading performance.
- To increase textbook comprehension, use visual organisers, peer reading, collaborative summarizing, and questioning the author to enhance pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading effectiveness (Strong et al., 2002).
- Use multiple strategies for enhancing vocabulary: explicit discussion of words and definitions; exposure to words in reading and multimedia; repeated use of the words in context connecting new words with existing vocabulary; and teaching vocabulary before, during, and after the reading activity. Teach vocabulary directly (e.g., learning words before reading a text) and indirectly (e.g., reading or listening to others read). Have learners keep a journal of definitions of key concepts in the content area.
- Strengthen the organization and processing of new vocabulary by visualization (graphic organizers, pictures), inductive learning (e.g., classifying words), and peer practice. Connect new vocabulary with

existing vocabulary by encouraging learners to build associations and generate preliminary definitions of new words (Strong et al., 2002).

#### **6.4 WHEN SHOULD READING STRATEGIES BE TAUGHT?**

This part of the research question pertains to the relevant stage at which the reading strategies should be taught. Traditionally, there has been a tendency among educators to view the primary grades as the time to have word-recognition skills, with comprehension developed in the later grades (Pressley, 2001). Increasingly, this view is rejected, with many demonstrations that interventions aimed at improving comprehension, that is, interventions beyond word-recognition instruction, make an impact during the primary years. When researchers have asked primary-level learners to use comprehension strategies and monitoring the learners benefited greatly from it (Brown et al., 1996). There is definitely interest in expanding comprehension instruction in the early elementary grades, with the expectation that such instruction will affect 5 to 8 year olds dramatically in the short term and perhaps lead to development of better comprehension skills over the long term.

However, some researchers focused their attention on the reading strategies of the primary school learners. For example, Arabsolghar and Elkins (2003) focused on the reading strategies of the Grade 3, 5 and 7 learners. Chan (1996) also focused on the reading strategies of the Grade 7 (13 year old) classes. Both studies showed good results with regard to the development of reading comprehension ability. On the other hand, some studies focused their attention on the reading strategies of high school and tertiary institution learners. Paris, Wasik, and Turner (1991) identified developmental trends in strategic reading. Children acquire a large repertoire of strategies between the ages of seven and thirteen. Some are explicitly taught and others are spontaneously generated. Therefore beginning readers require guidance in the use of strategies. But beyond the age of ten children exhibit increasing abilities to select and control the use of strategies.

According to the Rand Reading Study Group (2002) report, research has shown that many third grade learners who are reading at grade level will not automatically become proficient readers in later grades; teachers must explicitly teach reading comprehension strategies from the primary through the high school years. The case is very strong that teaching elementary, middle school, and high school learners to use a repertoire of comprehension strategies increases their comprehension of text (Pressley, 2000). Considering the fact that many intervention programmes aimed at improving comprehension make an impact during the primary years, it is wise for educators to introduce the reading strategy intervention programmes as early as primary level. This could raise learners' awareness and strategy use so as to make learning manageable.

### **6.5 WHAT SHOULD AN EFFECTIVE READING STRATEGY PROGRAMME LOOK LIKE?**

In order to address this question, general guidelines for teachers that derive from the research evidence on comprehension instruction programmes used in similar contexts to this study are provided. These relate to the format, outcomes, content, teaching method/approach, etc. According to Van Keer and Verhaeghe (2005), two decades ago, strategy intervention research was in vogue, but only recently has comprehension instruction received renewed attention, with current studies building on what was accomplished in the 1980's. Currently, the challenge in reading comprehension research is to increase the efficacy of instruction in elementary, middle and high school by identifying the instructional practices and activities that best serve to develop learners' self-monitoring for comprehension.

Alexander (1996:90) points out that for learners to become mindful, motivated strategy users, they need "systematically orchestrated instruction or training". Thus, learners need to be exposed to a set of interlocking, related, and mutually supportive strategies. Grabe (1991:393) points out that "effective strategy training is not a simple or easy matter." He states that the duration of training,

clarity of training procedures, learner responsibility, and strategy transfer are variables that influence strategy training.

Literature revealed that effective reading strategy programmes begin by identifying learners' current reading strategies through activities such as completing questionnaires, engaging in discussions about familiar tasks, and reflecting on strategies used immediately after performing a task. Most effective reading strategy programmes suggest that the educator should model the new strategy, thus making the instruction explicit. Instruction is explicit when specific directions are given. Regarding the explicit reading strategies instruction, the key elements in a study conducted by Van Keer and Verhaeghe (2005) were (a) instruction and practising a repertoire of reading strategies instead of focusing on one strategy; (b) phasing in the strategies gradually throughout the school year; (c) introducing each strategy and practice in isolation in three steps, representing a transfer from teacher regulation to learners self-regulation (explicit teacher explanations and modelling by thinking aloud, practice characterized by teachers scaffolding and coaching and more independent practice to internalize strategy use); (d) following the strategies with a period of practising the given number of strategies as a repertoire; and (e) the teacher recursively cycling back to modelling and re-explanations during each phase of the strategies introduction or practice.

Chamot (2004) points out that an effective reading strategy programme also provides educators with the support concerning all materials necessary to conduct the innovation at the beginning of the programme (i.e., a description of the intervention's rationale and organisation; lesson scenarios describing the objectives, materials, and successive phases of each lesson). Literature reveals that effective reading strategy programmes take into consideration the integration of reading strategies and the school curriculum. Alfassi (1998) reports on studies that were designed to determine the effectiveness of combined strategy instruction incorporated into the school curricula in promoting strategic reading while fostering learners' ability to perform reading comprehension tasks that require high levels of knowledge construction. Langer (2001) points out that

some schools infuse the needed strategies and knowledge into the curriculum, and educators instruct learners to be more reflective about their reading. The findings are commensurate with the claim that strategies are best learned and applied when taught throughout the curriculum as part of the actual academic tasks that learners encounter (Snyder & Pressley, 1995; Wilkinson & Silliman, 2000), thus advocating that educators incorporate reading into the regular curriculum as a comprehension tool for learning. Graham (1997:169) states that strategies training "needs to be integrated into learners' regular classes if they are going to appreciate their relevance for language learning tasks; learners need to constantly monitor and evaluate the strategies they develop and use; and they need to be aware of the nature, function and importance of such strategies".

The following guidelines (Pressley, 1995: 68) may be useful in developing a reading strategy instruction programme for middle and secondary learners:

- Instruction needs to match learners' zone of proximal development. The tasks must be simple enough to sustain motivation (simple tests) yet also be challenging (they need to learn to use the strategy).
- Teachers should model the strategies they are teaching and provide much practice using authentic, real-world tasks.
- Learners should learn and practice only one or two new strategies at the same time. While it may take longer to learn each of the new strategies, they will be more durable (not forgotten), transferable to different disciplines, and more likely to be used when needed.
- Learners must be able to use the strategy automatically before they are taught to monitor how well it is working, because taking attention away from learning the strategy itself can interfere with its acquisition.
- When they are able to use a strategy automatically, learners should monitor learning on a regular basis. They must also understand that their assessment of how well they are doing may be flawed; they may have been better or worse than they thought they were. They need to keep making the connections between their perceived success and their real success.

- To increase and sustain their motivation, learners need to understand how useful the strategy can be when they are attempting to learn something new. They also must have lots of opportunities to experience success by working hard so they understand that effort can lead to accomplishment.

## 6.6 STRUCTURE OF A LESSON PLAN

The following is a presentation of how the lessons in this study were organized. Only one reading strategy is demonstrated (i.e., predicting what is to come in a text).

### 1. Unit 1: Favourite Clothes

#### **Task No. 1 Making a mini book**

**Purpose:** To enable learners to use simple language to express their opinions and to accept the opinions of others regarding personal tastes.

**Broad Areas of Learning:** Citizenship and community life.

**Time:** 120 minutes

**Strategy/ies:** Predicting what is to come in a text.

ESL COMPETENCY 1	INTERACT ORALLY IN ENGLISH	
<p>Context for learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities to interact with peers and the teacher.</li> <li>• Numerous occasions to practice and experiment with functional language.</li> <li>• Opportunities to develop compensatory and reading strategies through use.</li> </ul>	<p>Key Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The learner takes the initiative to transmit oral messages using strategies.</li> <li>• The learner reacts to messages using strategies</li> <li>• The learner maintains oral interaction using strategies.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Evaluation Criteria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of strategies.</li> <li>• Use of functional language.</li> <li>• Participation in exchange.</li> </ul>

<b>ESL COMPETENCY 2</b>	<b>TO REINVEST UNDERSTANDING OF ORAL &amp; WRITTEN TEXT</b>	
<b>Contexts for learning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Themes that are familiar and interesting.</li> <li>• Opportunities to interact with peers and teachers</li> </ul>	<b>Key Features</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The learner demonstrates understanding of oral and written text using strategies.</li> <li>• The learner carries out meaningful tasks using strategies.</li> </ul>	<b>Evaluation Criteria</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstration of understanding of key elements &amp; overall meaning e.g. predicts content and identifies key elements.</li> <li>• Carrying out tasks e.g. follows instructions, plan tasks, express ideas, feelings, interests, opinions etc.</li> </ul>

	<b>TASK</b>	<b>EVALUATION</b>
Phase 1 Phase 2	Setting the tone  Activity 1 Activity 2  Activity 3 Activity 4	Strategy kit Handout (Mary Molly Martin) Tape Tape Handout
Phase 3	Reflecting on the task	

<b>TEACHER</b>	<b>LEARNERS</b>	<b>EVALUATION</b>
Setting the tone <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show a few items of clothing or pictures of clothing to the learners.</li> <li>• Ask learners what they think the unit will be about.</li> <li>• Quote the page</li> <li>• Read the title</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipate the topic of Clothing.</li> <li>• Look at the title page.</li> </ul>	Informal ongoing assessment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe learners' participation and motivation.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go over the clothing words with the learners, eliciting the colours of the articles.</li> <li>• Find out whether or not the learners like the colours shown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen, activate prior knowledge of colours.</li> <li>• Respond, indicating their personal tastes in colours.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe learners' level of motivation.</li> </ul>
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TEACHER	LEARNERS	EVALUATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read and explain the task</li> <li>• Inform learners that in order to write their mini-book, they will need to know colours, the names of articles of clothing and to understand a story about someone's taste in colours and clothing.</li> <li>• Point out the competencies that will be activated in the task.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen and mentally prepare the task.</li> <li>• Become aware of what they need to know.</li> <li>• Become aware of the competencies they will develop.</li> </ul>	

TEACHER	LEARNERS	EVALUATION
<p>Activity 1: The story, Mary Molly Martin.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quote page</li> <li>• Inform learners that they are going to listen to the story, Mary Molly Martin.</li> <li>• Draw learners' attention to the picture of Mary Molly Martin and say her name.</li> <li>• Read the title.</li> <li>• Draw learners' attention to the illustrations.</li> <li>• Remind them that looking at the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at the illustration.</li> <li>• Identify the strategy.</li> </ul>	

<p>illustrations will help them understand difficult words and make predictions about the story.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the strategy box and introduce the strategy, <u>predicting what is to come in a text</u>.</li> <li>• Tell learners that guessing at the content of the text before reading by looking at the title or pictures is called, predicting what is to come in a text.</li> <li>• Explain to the learners that predicting the content of the text before actual reading will increase their interest to read a text.</li> <li>• Ask learners question number 1: Looking at Mary Molly Martin's picture of her new outfit (A – G), what is Mary's favourite colour?</li> <li>• Tell learners to look at the picture of Mary Molly Martin's new outfit from A to G.</li> <li>• Have learners compare their answers.</li> <li>• Have a few pairs share their answers with the class.</li> <li>• Confirm the answer.</li> <li>• Tell learners that they will do a few more examples to practise this strategy.</li> <li>• Ask them question 2: Can you guess what</li> </ul>	<p>Look at the illustrations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become aware of the strategy, predicting the content.</li> <li>• Look at the colour of items in the new outfit from A to G.</li> <li>• Turn to a partner and compare their answers.</li> <li>• Report their answers as requested : - yellow.</li> <li>• Listen.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe learners' ability to find the dominant colour quickly.</li> </ul>
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<p>Can you guess what colour of clothes Mary Molly will put on for the special occasion at school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give learners two minutes to take a guess.</li> <li>• Tell learners to compare their answers.</li> <li>• Confirm the answers.</li> <li>• Write the following questions on the board ahead of time. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think will happen to Mary Molly when she passes Alex pedalling faster and faster?</li> <li>2. What will happen to Mary Molly when the front wheel of her bike hits a rock?</li> <li>3. What do you think will be her mother's attitude when Mary Molly reports an accident?</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Explain the questions. Ask learners to guess at the answers before they read the story.</li> <li>• Write the learners' answers on the board.</li> <li>• Tell learners that as they read the text they must check if they are happy with the answers given before reading. If not happy they must adjust their answers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners guess at the colour of clothes based on what they already know about Mary Molly Martin's favourite colour and in that way they practice the strategy.</li> <li>• Turn to a partner and compare their answers.</li> <li>• Share their answers with the class.</li> <li>• Practice the strategy.</li> <li>• Read the text in order to adjust or confirm their previous answers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe learners growing awareness of the strategy.</li> </ul>
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<p>adjust their answers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw learners' attention to the guesses on the board made before reading.</li> <li>• Ask them if they find the answers correct after reading.</li> <li>• Tell them to share their answers with a partner.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have pairs share them with the class.</li> <li>• Confirm appropriate answers.</li> <li>• Ask learners how the strategy, <u>Predicting what is to come in a text</u>, helped them.</li> </ul> <p>ACTIVITY 2 : Poor Mary Molly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quote the page.</li> <li>• Draw learners' attention to the illustration.</li> <li>• Tell them that Mary Molly has returned home after the accident.</li> <li>• Inform them that her mother is going to wash her clothes because they are full of mud.</li> <li>• Ask them to predict the conversation between Mary Molly and her mother before you play the tape.</li> <li>• Ask them to share their answers with a partner.</li> <li>• Have pairs share with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn to their partners and compare their answers.</li> <li>• Report their answers to the class.</li> <li>• Say how the strategy helped.</li> <li>• Become aware that the strategy, Predicting what is to come in a text helps them to guess at the content of the text and therefore facilitates their understanding of the content.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practise the strategy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor learners' comprehension of the general idea of the story.</li> <li>• Observe learners' comprehension of the strategy and give feedback.</li> </ul>
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<p>the class.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play tape and tell learners to listen carefully and compare their predictions with the actual conversation between Mary Molly and her mother.</li> <li>• Contract with learners.</li> </ul> <p>ACTIVITY 3: Mary Molly's new outfit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quote page.</li> <li>• Draw learners' attention to the illustrations.</li> <li>• Read the title and ask learners to predict what is to come.</li> <li>• Ask them to write down their predictions.</li> <li>• Play tape.</li> <li>• Correct with learners.</li> </ul> <p>ACTIVITY 4: All dressed-up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute handout</li> <li>• Draw learners' attention to Mary Molly and Alex in part A.</li> <li>• Ask them to read the descriptions and to colour the illustrations accordingly.</li> <li>• Tell learners that they will draw a classmate and write a description of his/her clothing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn to their partners and compare their answers.</li> <li>• Report their answers to the class.</li> <li>• Listen carefully and confirm or adjust their guesses where appropriate.</li> <li>• Participate in the correction.</li> <li>• Look at the title and the illustration.</li> <li>• Guess about the content.</li> <li>• Write down their guesses about the context.</li> <li>• Listen to tape.</li> <li>• Participate in the correction.</li> <li>• Read, draw and colour Mary's and Alex's clothing according to the descriptions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verify learners' comprehension of the motions.</li> <li>• Verify learners' comprehension of the notion.</li> <li>• Check learners' comprehension of the descriptions.</li> </ul>
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<p>will draw a classmate and write a description of his/her clothing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the different grammar points in the help box: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- pronouns (he/she)</li> <li>- possessive adjectives (his/her)</li> <li>- position of adjective</li> <li>- verb (is, are)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Tell learners to focus on these grammar points in order to write a good description.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to the explanations of the grammar points.</li> <li>• Recall the position of the adjective with regard to the noun in English word order.</li> <li>• Draw, colour and describe their friend's clothing, referring to the explicit models in handout.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe learners' comprehension of the grammar points.</li> <li>• Verify learners ability to write a description following an explicit model.</li> <li>• Monitor their usage of appropriate pronouns and position of the adjective with regard to the noun in English word order.</li> </ul>
<p><i>TASK: Making a mini-book</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell learners that they will now get ready to write their story for the mini-book.</li> <li>• Place the learners in groups of four.</li> <li>• Tell them that it is now time to write their own story in groups.</li> <li>• Explain that each learner in a group will be responsible for one page.</li> <li>• Tell learners that their story must be based on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to the explanations.</li> </ul>	

<p>story must be based on a Special Occasion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a model story.</li> <li>• Draw learners' attention to the models of mini-books.</li> <li>• Point out the different ways in which the book could be assembled: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- punch holes on one side and tie with a string;</li> <li>- staple it;</li> <li>- make each part, or just the cover page, on the computer;</li> <li>- etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Have learners complete their mini-book</li> <li>• Display the books for everyone to see and read.</li> </ul> <p><i>Reflecting on the task</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congratulate students on their effort.</li> <li>• Ask them how they were able to make their book in English: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What did you learn?</li> <li>- How did the strategy help you?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete their story referring to the explicit model.</li> <li>• Observe the models.</li> <li>• Use expressions to agree on a way of making their cover pages and assembling their mini-books.</li> <li>• Make their own cover page, write the title and the names of the authors on it, and assemble their book.</li> <li>• Recall collectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circulate and monitor, helping out where needed.</li> <li>• Circulate and monitor learners' recollection of the expressions and their use of English during the process.</li> <li>• Observe their creativity.</li> <li>• Take note of learners' level of satisfaction.</li> </ul>
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help you?	what they did and how they learned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- names of clothing; reviewed colours.</li> <li>- By using strategies, by listening to a story and a conversation about someone's taste in clothing.</li> </ul>	
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**6.7 CONCLUSION**

In the above discussion mention has been made that the selection of reading strategies is governed by several factors. Among these factors are the teaching contexts, learners' interests, materials and the teaching styles. Attention has also been paid on the procedure for the teaching of reading strategies. Modelling, coaching and tutoring have been highlighted as ways of teaching reading strategies. It has also been mentioned that reading strategies should be taught as early as the primary grades.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a conclusion and recommendations for future research.

#### 7.2 CONCLUSION

In summary, this study provided a reading strategy use profile of the Grade 11 Xhosa-speaking learners in the Eastern Cape as well as empirical evidence for the relationship between reading strategy use and reading comprehension. A review of the literature has shown that learners' awareness and use of the reading strategies includes, among other factors, what reading strategies to apply, how to apply them effectively, when each strategy should be applied and why. Such knowledge allows the reader in various reading conditions, to identify, select and use appropriate strategies.

The findings of this research support previous language learning strategy research that through overt strategy instruction learners can be helped in four ways (1) to become aware of the strategies they currently use; (2) to apply task-specific strategies that can make learning more efficient and allow them to compensate for nervousness; (3) to monitor for strategy effectiveness, and (4) to create new strategies or weed out ineffective ones. The most important outcome of the current study is that learners' awareness of their own reading process plays a significant role in improving reading comprehension. In other words, learners who receive strategy training generally learn better than those who do not and that certain techniques for such training are more beneficial than others. Similar findings were obtained by Arabsolghar and Elkins (2001); Dreyer (1998); Lan and Chan (2003); and Van Keer and Verhaeghe (2005).

This study is not only identifies the reading strategies employed by Grade 11 ESL learners but also reveals the effect of an implemented reading strategy training programme on the reading comprehension of the Grade 11 ESL learners. This study has added another dimension to the language learning strategy research by providing information about the use of strategies in a different cultural context. This research has opened up important areas for future research.

### **7.2.1 Literature review**

Reading strategies are tools that assist a reader in unlocking the meaning behind the printed word. These strategies can be helpful before, during and after the actual reading event. Recent L2 reading research suggests that readers' awareness of their reading process and strategies enhances comprehension ability. Researchers such as Oxford (1990), Cohen (1987), and O'Malley and Chamot (1990) have stressed that effective learners use a variety of different reading strategies in order to solve problems that they face while acquiring or producing the language. Investigations involving language learners often showed that the most successful learners tended to use learning strategies that are suitable to the task, material, self-objective, needs, motivation and stage of learning (Oxford, 1990).

Much of the current literature on reading instruction supports the idea of teaching learners a series of reading strategies. Based on such research, it has been suggested that strategy instruction can have beneficial effects on reading performance, because this instruction enables learners to become more aware of their reading processes and strategies. Literature reveals that strategy instruction can either be conducted separately from regular classroom activities or it can be integrated into the regular classroom activities. Arguments in favour of separate strategy instruction programmes advance the notion that strategies are generalizable to various contexts and that learners will learn strategies better if they can focus all their attention on developing strategic skills rather than try to focus on the content at the same time (cf. Jones et al., 1987). Those in favour of

integrated strategy instruction programmes, on the other hand, argue that learning in context is more effective than learning separate skills whose immediate applicability may not be evident to the learner (Wenden, 1987), and that practising strategies on authentic academic and language tasks facilitates the transfer of strategies to similar tasks encountered in other classes (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). However, it is important to note that reading strategy instruction is not a magical formula to improve learners' reading ability in all instances. Various variables (e.g., context, teacher, educational background, etc.) can affect the extent to which reading strategy instruction can facilitate the development of reading comprehension ability. The research evidence, in both L1 and L2 contexts, however, leads one to feel confident that such instruction, properly carried out, can assist learners in becoming more self-direct and autonomous language learners.

### **7.2.2 Empirical study**

The results of this research indicated that the learners who followed the reading strategy programme and received strategic reading instruction (experimental group) obtained both statistically and practically significantly higher marks on the reading comprehension test (post-test) than did the learners in the control group. The post-test results indicated that the learners in the experimental group used certain strategies statistically ( $p < 0.05$ ) as well as practically significantly (small to large effect size) more often than the learners in the control group.

### **7.2.3 Reading Strategy Training Guidelines**

The programme designed follows guidelines that research has demonstrated to be effective in training strategy use. Specifically, explicit strategy training was used as literature revealed that it can easily be adapted to teach a variety of comprehension strategies. The following guidelines were implemented:

- Informed by the learners' needs, the educator identified the relevant reading strategies.
- The tasks were simple yet also challenging.
- Integration of the reading strategies with the curriculum.
- The educator explicitly explained and modelled why, how, and when a specific strategy can be used in order to enhance comprehension.
- The teacher-led lesson in which a new reading strategy was introduced and practiced together with the learners was followed by the independent practice of that strategy by learners in another context.
- Learners learn and practice only one new strategy at a time.
- By working together, learners learn that people often have different views of what they are learning and may do things in different ways, and that many ways can lead to success.

### **7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Although the research has shown significant results, there is still much to do. At this point there is no assurance that what the learners have acquired from the intervention programme will be transferred to other tasks and to other subjects in the curriculum. Longitudinal research on the development and continuation of strategy applications as learners increase their language proficiency would help to further determine an appropriate sequence for strategies instruction at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of language study. Considerable research remains to be done on teaching methods for strategies instruction. The amount and timing of explicit instruction needs to be further explored perhaps through simple experiments with strategies for specific language tasks. Similarly, the amount and type of professional development for teachers, interested in integrating strategies instruction in their ESL classroom needs greater attention.

This study recommends more research to investigate learners' reading strategies in combination with gender, culture, learning styles and motivation. In

conclusion, strategy instruction research is important in assessing learners' strategy use, therefore, there is a need for conducting research that will pave the way for building the theory that seems necessary for more reading strategies work to be relevant to current second language teaching practice.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **STRATEGY 1 - IDENTIFYING THE MAIN IDEA IN A PASSAGE**

#### **LESSON I**

LEVEL: Grade 11 (ESL Class)

AIM: To train the learners to discriminate between general and specific statements.

OBJECTIVES: Learners should be able to find the main idea or the important information.

AIDS: Text

TIME: 45 Minutes

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In order to read efficiently, one must be able to recognise the topic sentences of the text, since they carry the main information. When the main idea of a paragraph is not actually stated, that is to say when there is no such thing as a topic sentence, the learners may find it more difficult to decide what the general meaning of that paragraph is. It is therefore necessary to train learners to find out the *main idea in passages of that type*.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE TEACHING PROCEDURE**

Learners first read the paragraph silently (“CHIEF SEKOTO HOLDS COURT” BY BESSIE HEAD). Then, as a group, learners summarize the paragraph by producing a single phrase or sentence. They repeat the procedure for each paragraph. When all paragraphs have been treated in this way they examine the phrases and decide whether the final results have captured the meaning.

## **STRATEGY PRACTICE**

The teacher and the learners revisit the learners’ summaries, noting how they used the clues in the text to track down the main idea. The following questions can help learners track down the main idea: “Did I ask myself who, what, where and why?” “Have I used the clues to track down the main ideas?” “Did I get the Main Idea?”

## **EVALUATING STUDENTS’ STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

The teacher gives the learners another text to identify the main ideas. “The woman who changed education - Maria Montessori.” The students are asked to state how they use clues in the text to find the main idea. They also state how they classify sentences in each paragraph so as to arrive at the most important sentence that carries the Main Idea.

## **LESSON II**

LEVEL: Grade 11 (ESL Class)

AIM: To train the learners to find the main idea of a paragraph.

OBJECTIVES: Learners should know where the main idea can be found in a text.

AIDS: Text and transparency

TIME: 45 Minutes

### **INTRODUCTION**

The main idea may be stated in a topic sentence and require literal translation. It may be implied and require the reader to connect information and make inferences. Sometimes text has no main idea, simply enumeration of detail. Efficient readers need to be able to recognise facts and details that are important to achieve their purpose.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE TEACHING PROCEDURE**

The teacher and the learners read a paragraph. The teacher offers a selection of statements about the text. The teacher asks the learners to select one statement that summarizes or make generalization about the text. The teacher and the learners also discuss why particular statements are more suitable than others.

STRATEGY PRACTICE (Adapted from Du Plooy: Reading strategies for effective reading comprehension)

The teacher refers the learners to transparency I. The idea of this text is to practice to find the main idea in different locations in the paragraphs. The

teacher will put the transparency on the overhead projector and cover all the paragraphs except paragraph one. He asks the learners to identify the main idea, e.g.

QUESTION: What is the main idea of this paragraph and where do you find it?

ANSWER: The scene from the bridge was beautiful. Can you see that the main idea can be in the beginning of a paragraph? The teacher covers the main idea with the coloured transparency so that the main idea is very clear.

QUESTION: Read paragraph 2, give the main idea and say where you find it?

ANSWER: Despite the fact that the number of television sets in the United States has virtually reached a saturation point, the amount of time spent watching television has declined since 1976. The main idea can also be in the middle of a paragraph. The teacher covers the main idea with the coloured transparency so that the main idea is very clear.

QUESTION: Read paragraph 3, give the main idea and say where you find it?

ANSWER: Dogs make warm friendly pets, but they can also be very troublesome.

The teacher covers the main idea with the coloured transparency so that the main idea is very clear.

## **EVALUATING STUDENTS' STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

Students are asked to read a Newspaper article about Nelson Mandela's childhood. They are further requested to identify the main idea in each paragraph. The teacher also asks the learners to tell why they think such sentences are more important than the others. "How do they differ from other sentences?"

## TRANSPARENCY I: IDENTIFYING THE MAIN IDEA IN A PASSAGE”

As the sun went down, the scene from the bridge was beautiful. It had been a perfect day. Up and down either side of New York the bright blue water lay gently rippling, while to the south it merged into the great bay and disappeared toward the sea. The vast cities spread away on both sides. Beyond rolled the hilly country until it was lost in the mist of the sky. All up and down the harbour the shipping, piers, and buildings were still gaily decorated. On the housetops of both Brooklyn and New York were multitudes of people.

There are 74.5 million television sets in the United States. At least one set for 98% of all American homes. 48% of all U.S. homes have more than one set, and some families even have a set for every person in the house. Yet, despite the fact that the number of sets in the United States has virtually reached a saturation point, the amount of time spent watching television has declined steadily since 1976. Explanations vary from the increasingly poor quality of network shows to the rising popularity of home video equipment, but the fact remains that we are owning more sets but enjoying them less.

Although the buildings are tall, none of them blots out the sky. People rush about as in New York, but someone always stops to answer a question about directions. A person will listen when he or she is asked a question. Often a sudden smile will flash from the crowds of strangers pushing down State Street. It is a smile of welcome and of happiness at the same time. And the traffic; it is tough, noisy, active, but a person never feels as if he takes his life in his hands when he crosses the street. Of course, there is always the presence of the lake, the vast, shimmering lake that shines like an ocean of silver. Something about that lake each time it spreads around and turns an Lakeshore says, "Hello. It's good to see you again." Chicago is a fine, friendly city.

Dogs make warm, friendly pets. But they can also be very troublesome. No one will deny the feeling of friendship when after a long day's work, a wet pink tongue of greeting licks a master's hand at the door. And watching television or reading

a book, a man or woman can reach down over the side of the coach and feel a warm furry patch of life, hear the quiet contending breathing of a good friend. However, try to plan a trip without your faithful pet and your life is very difficult. Where will you leave him? Who will feed him? Further, leaving a cosy house in the midst of winter and facing a howling frozen wind so the dog may take his walk is no pleasure at all. I often wonder why people put up with such demands upon their time and energy.

Adapted from Du Plooy (1995) "Reading strategies for effective reading comprehension".

## **APPENDIX B**

### **STRATEGY 2 - MAKING INFERENCES I**

#### **LESSON I**

LEVEL: Grade 11 (ESL Classroom)

AIM: To train the children to understand the inference process and therefore to get information by "reading between the lines."

OBJECTIVES: Learners will be able to infer the implied meaning in the text.

AIDS: Text and transparency

TIME: 45 Minutes

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In real life we make inferences by drawing conclusions from our observations or from a set of facts. For example, we infer that a man wearing a ring on the fourth finger of his left hand is married. Based on our "commonly accepted expressions" this inference is probably accurate, but is not necessarily true. The man wearing the wedding ring may be a widower. Inferences, then, are merely reasonable or probably accurate conclusions you may draw from a situation or from the printed page. Your life experiences and cultural heritage play a key role on making inferences. For example, if we go back to the wedding ring example, in many European countries men and women wear their wedding bands on the right hand. A South African might wrongfully infer that a European man with no ring on his left hand is unmarried, merely because of differing cultural practices.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE TEACHING PROCEDURE**

The teacher refers the learners to transparency II in which the meaning and entertainment is enhance by inferences. Adapted from Du Plooy "Reading strategies for effective reading comprehension."

## **STRATEGY PRACTICE**

The teacher will create situations that learners can dramatize for the class, and then invite the learners to infer and draw conclusions. The partial list of possible situations below can be used as mini-dramas that allow learners to observe and discover a range of possible inferences or implied meanings. Make these statements to learners, and then ask what inferences they'd draw if.

1. A student yawns several times
2. Two students pass notes to one another
3. A student falls asleep
4. One student takes a pen from a classmate's desk
5. group of students has not completed homework
6. A group of students copies homework from one student
7. Three students leave the room without permission
8. A student returns from recess crying

Adapted from Garrigus 1999 "Design in reading."

## **EVALUATING STUDENTS' STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

The teacher asks the learners to compare their inferences and also to explain how they arrived at such inferences. The teacher draws the learners' attention to the fact that one situation can result to a range of possible inferences or implied meanings.

## TRANSPARENCY II: MAKING INFERENCES



SPACE RESERVED FOR PICTURE

From the child's question we can infer that

- (a) the man's eyes were also open during prayers.
- (b) she has an excellent vocabulary for a child of her age.
- (c) she can not hear what the man is saying.
- (d) all of the above.

The humour in the cartoon is based on the fact that the child's question

- (a) is silly.
- (b) can be overheard by everyone surrounding her in church.
- (c) is rude and disrespectful.
- (d) serves to criticize the man for doing the same thing that he thinks the child is wrong for doing.

The setting of the cartoon is probably

- (a) a movie theatre.
- (b) a church.
- (c) a political rally.
- (d) a classroom.

We may infer that the man who is speaking believes that

- (a) children are annoying.
- (b) it's not right to keep your eyes open when you pray.
- (c) the preacher's sermon was quite stimulating.
- (d) nobody should close his eyes during prayers.

The man is screening his mouth with his hand probably because he

- (a) wants everybody to hear him.
- (b) is afraid he might cough.
- (c) wants the preacher to see him criticizing the child.
- (d) doesn't want anyone but the child to hear him.

Adapted from Du Plooy (1995) "Reading strategies for effective reading comprehension."

## **STRATEGY 2 - MAKING INFERENCES B**

### **LESSON II**

LEVEL: Grade 11 (ESL Class)

AIM: To explain to the students that the process of inferencing plays a facilitative role in reading comprehension.

OBJECTIVES: At the end of the lesson the learners must be able to make inferences to comprehend better.

AIDS: Text

TIME: 45 Minutes

### **INTRODUCTION**

Review making inferences with the learners. Thereafter the teacher explains that the inference process goes beyond mere literal comprehension. First, we need to distinguish between two often confused verbs: "imply" and "infer". To imply means to hint at or suggest an idea indirectly. To infer means to draw a conclusion from what has been implied. In other words, when you make inferences, you "read between the lines."

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE TEACHING PROCEDURE**

The teacher works with the entire class and demonstrates how the inference process works in reading simple sentences. The teacher asks the learners to consider the following example from History textbook.

"During the 1950's, Germany and Japan prospered once again, because American aid helped them from the losses they suffered in World War II.

Based on the sentence, these inferences are probably accurate:

- Germany and Japan had been prosperous before their defeat.
- America thought helping to rebuild Japan and Germany was important
- Without American aid Germany and Japan might not have regained prosperity so quickly.

The teacher tells the learners that you can label an inference statement probably accurate if it is based on the author's words - it is very likely true or accurate. The inference is a logical statement that follows from the sentence, it does not misinterpret the author's words. Based on the same sentence, this inference is probably inaccurate:

- Germany and Japan could have recovered just as quickly without American aid.

The following inferences based on the same sentence should be labeled as insufficient evidence:

- The American public favoured foreign aid to Germany and Japan.
- In contrast to Germany and Japan, America remained economically strong during World War II

## **STRATEGY PRACTICE**

The teacher explains that an inference in reading can be made safely only from the author's words, and thus it must be fairly narrow. You should not go beyond the limits of the author's words because, inferring based on your own experience, attitudes, or values may result in misreading. The teacher gives the learners one practice example where learners label the inferences as probably accurate, probably inaccurate and insufficient evidence.

The example comes from Nien Chang's autobiographical work, *Life and Death in Shanghai*. "In Mao Zedong's China, going to prison did not mean the same thing as it did in the democracies. A man was always presumed guilty until he could

prove himself innocent. The accused were judged not by their own deeds but by the acreage of land once possessed by their ancestors. A cloud of suspicion always hung over the heads of those with the wrong class origins. Nien Chang, "Life and Death in Shanghai."

The teacher asks the learners to label the following statements as probably accurate (PA), probably inaccurate (PI) or insufficient evidence (IE).

1. In a democracy like the United States, one is presumed innocent until proven guilty.
2. During the Cultural Revolution, one's socioeconomic class had no political significance.
3. Nien Chang, the author of the passage, was sent to prison for participating in illegal revolutionary activities.

ANSWER: (1) PA; (2) PI (3) IE.

### **EVALUATING STUDENTS'S STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

The teacher invites the learners to return to the above inferences and support their choices. The teacher and the learners go through the answers one by one. The first inference should be labeled PA because sentence 1 contrasts Mao Zedong's China with democratic nations. In our country, there is the presumption of innocence until one's guilt has been proved. Chang turns around this familiar democratic tenet, suggesting that the opposite was the case in China during the Cultural Revolution.

The second inference is probably inaccurate because of what sentence 3 implies: that one's deeds did not matter as much as economic class, represented by the amount of land one's family owned. The last sentence further confirms the inaccuracy with the phrase "a cloud of suspicion." And in the final inference, which should be marked IE, Chang does not indicate her own "crime" or even her reason for writing on this subject. There is nothing about her in the passage.

## APPENDIX C

### STRATEGY 3 - PREDICTING WHAT IS TO COME IN A TEXT

#### LESSON I

LEVEL: Grade 11 (ESL Class)

AIM: To train the learners to make predictions and guesses when reading as they seek to make sense of text.

#### OBJECTIVES

1. Learners will be able to identify the important information in the text and also to activate their background knowledge.
2. Learners to be able to predict what information may be in a passage.
3. Learners to be able to make guesses that are later rejected or confirmed.

AIDS: Text

TIME: 45 Minutes

#### INTRODUCTION

What do we mean by "prediction?"

ANSWER: Prediction refers to question one asks himself/herself about what should follow at different points in the passage. This helps learners to see the various directions in which a text may naturally develop. Efficient readers are constantly making and revising predictions as they seek to make sense of text.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE TEACHING PROCEDURE**

The teacher asks the learners to describe their feelings when they have won something. He writes the title of the short story on the chalkboard, "THE WINNER" and ask the learners to brainstorm what the story is about. The teacher then reads a portion of the story. He asks the learners to predict who is the real winner between Pius Ndawula and Sarah. The teacher then demonstrates how readers become aware of the strategies they use to develop meaning. For example, in Aesop's Fable : "The Tortoise and the Hare" one would predict before reading that the hare would win the race because we all know something about the body of this animal. But after reading one notices that the tortoise won the race. This is ridiculous, but one is forced to change his/her prediction after reading. The teacher asks the learners about how they made their predictions.

## **STRATEGY PRACTICE**

The teacher and the learners revisit the learners' predictions, noting how they used their experiences. The teacher and the learners read the following paragraphs of the short story and stop from time to time and asks the learners to predict what is to follow, noting the students' predictions and the strategies they used. Learners may then compare and contrast their prediction strategies with those of others during a small group discussion.

## **EVALUATING STUDENTS' STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

To observe students' awareness of the strategies that they use while reading, the teacher will introduce another short story and ask the learners to mark the words in the text that support or help them correct their predictions. Learners' attention should be brought to the clues that lead to their predictions. Additional questions might include the following: "Did you need to change your prediction?" Where? Why? "How did you know your prediction needed changing?"

## **LESSON II**

LEVEL: Grade 11 (ESL Class)

AIM: To train the children to make predictions and guesses when reading as they seek to make sense of the text.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Learners will be able to identify important information in the text and also to activate their background knowledge.
2. Learners to be able to predict what information may be in a passage.
3. Learners to be able to make guesses that are later rejected or confirmed.

AIDS: Text and Chart

TIME: 45 Minutes

### **INTRODUCTION**

Predictions can be made before reading, while reading and after reading. Predictions can activate learners' prior knowledge and experiences about a topic. Recall and comprehension can improve when readers think about what they know about a topic before they even open the front cover of the book. Predictions become more logical as readers collect information from the text and think about their hunches.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE TEACHING PROCEDURE**

The teacher works with the entire class and models how making predictions works before and during reading. The teacher records the learners' responses on a large chart paper. Prediction chart, as a framework for organising thinking and helps learners sort out whether predictions come from clues in the text or their own experiences, consists of two headings: Predictions and Support.

As reading proceeds, the teacher stops once or twice and invite students to predict e.g. in the story "THE WINNER" How do you think Pius Ndwula will behave after being told by Musisi that the pools firm say that the prize money is to be shared among three hundred other people and therefore he no longer won three thousand pounds but only a thousand shillings?"

## **STRATEGY PRACTICE**

The prediction practice opens with a question "Can you predict what this story will be about?" This time the teacher provides a text with a picture and asks the learners to study the cover. Learners are asked to use clues in the cover as support. The teacher encourages the students to explain their predictions with questions such as: "What made you to say that? Are your predictions based on the text, illustrations, your own experiences, peers' comments or a combination of all four?"

## **EVALUATING STUDENTS' STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

After finishing a story, the teacher invites the learners to return to the prediction chart to confirm and adjust their ideas. The adjustments are written on the chart with a different colour marker pen so that they can easily compare initial predictions with what actually occurred in the story.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **STRATEGY 4 - GUESSING THE MEANING OF WORDS FROM THE CONTEXT**

#### **LESSON 1**

**LEVEL:** Grade 11 (ESL class)

**AIM:** To train the learners to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context and to help them to analyze their process of inference:

**OBJECTIVES:** At the end of the lesson learners will be able to use hints from the context to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words.

**AIDS:** Text

**TIME:** 45 Minutes

#### **INTRODUCTION**

What do you do when you read a passage and you get to an unfamiliar word?

**ANSWER:** Look it up in the dictionary, skip and ignore it.

Read on to see if the rest of the context doesn't help to explain the meaning.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE TEACHING PROCEDURE** (Adapted from Du Plooy: (1995) Reading strategies for effective reading comprehension)

The teacher will put transparency III on the projector. Cover the hints and explanations. Read the first example to the learners.

QUESTION: What does origami mean?

ANSWER: Japanese folding paper.

QUESTION: How did you know it?

ANSWER: The sentence includes the definition.

Reveal the hint to the learners and read it aloud to them. Reveal the explanation and show them the other forms of punctuation that possibly can be used. Continue with the exercise until all the hints are revealed. (Transparency III)

The teacher and the learners read the text with some words deleted, "What is apartheid?" (Transparency IV). Students are asked to choose the most appropriate word from the three possible choices including the deleted word e.g. "It is the policy of keeping Africans inferior, and separated from Europeans." The teacher covers the word "inferior" and list the possibilities: "superior", "equal" and "inferior". Ask the learners to choose the best word for the sentence, and explain their choice. Superior and equal do not make sense in this context. "Separate from Europeans" tells us that the Africans are inferior, therefore, the word "inferior" is the most appropriate. Verify the answer against the actual text. The teacher and the students will do the same with all the covered words (see Transparency II). This kind of exercise can be useful in preliminary training exercises.

STRATEGY PRACTICE: The teacher asks the learners to form small cooperative learning groups and distributes to each group the following short story: FLIGHT BY DORIS LESSING. The small groups will read the passage/text together. In each passage the teacher covers selected words offering three options/possibilities for each. The learners work together to decide what is the best choice for each of the missing words and to defend their answers. Then they uncover the words to verify their guesses by checking whether the uncovered words match their choices based on the clues in the text.

## **EVALUATING STUDENTS' STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

While learners are working in small groups, the teacher visits each group, checking for understanding, offering support and modeling the verification process as necessary. He review the group's answers and listens as they explain.

### TRANSPARENCY III

#### GUESSING THE MEANING OF WORDS BY USING THE CONTEXT

HINT	EXAMPLE	EXPLANATION
Some sentences set off the definition for a difficult word by means of punctuation.	Origami-Japanese paper folding – is family fun. Fibrin, elastic threads of protein, helps blood to clod.	Dashees- Parentheses ( ) Brackets [ ] Commas ,
Sometimes helpline words, along with punctuation, provide important clues.	Mary felt perturbed that is, she was greatly disturbed by her sister's actions.	Helping words: That is, meaning, such as, or, is called.
Some sentences tell the opposite of what a new word means. From its opposite, you can figure out the meaning of the word.	Parents who constantly spank their children can not be called lenient.	If you are lenient you do not often punish your children. Merciful or gentle would be a good guess for the meaning of lenient. Helping words to show opposites: not, but, although, however, on the other had.
Sometimes you can use your own experiences to figure out the definition of a word.	The cacophonous rattling made Maria cover her ears.	A noise that would make you cover your ears would be unpleasant or jarring.
Sentences before or after a sentence containing a difficult word sometimes explain the meaning of the word.	Mozart gave his first public recital at the age of six. By age thirteen he had written symphonies and an operetta. He is justly called a child prodigy.	It would certainly take a remarkably talented person to do these things. An extra ordinary person, then, would be a prodigy.
Some sentences are written just to give the definitions of difficult words – words that readers will need to know in order to understand what they are reading.	One of the remarkable features of the Nile Valley is the fertility of its soil. This rich earth that supported plant growth made it possible for Egyptians to thrive in a dry region.	The second sentence, which tells you that the soil was rich and that is supported plant growth, explains fertility.

Because some sentences give examples for a new word, you can build a definition.	Select a periodical from among the following: Time, You, Sarie, Fair Lady, or Reader's Digest.	The sentence doesn't say that a periodical is a magazine, but you can figure that out from the examples.
Some sentences use a word you do know to help explain a word you do not know	A formidable enemy is one to be feared.	Formidable - through the clues in this sentence - means fearful or dreadful.

Adapted from Du Plooy (1995) "Reading strategies for effective reading comprehension".

## TRANSPARENCY IV - GUESSING THE MEANING OF WORDS FROM THE CONTEXT

### LESSON I

READ THE FOLLOWING TEXT AND COMPLETE THE BLANKS BY CHOOSING THE MOST APPROPRIATE OPTION.

What is apartheid?

It is the policy of keeping Africans .....(1)....., and separate from Europeans. They are to be kept separate by not being .....(2)..... to live as citizens with rights in .....(3)..... towns.

They .....(4).....go to European towns to .....(5)....., but they may not have their families .....(6)....., they must live in Bantustans, the .....(7) areas. They are .....(8).....to .....(9).....with Europeans by sitting in .....(10).....cafes, waiting -rooms, compartments of trains, seats in parks.

(Adapted from Britain in the Modern World by E.N. Nash and A.M. Newth)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. (a) superior<br>(b) inferior<br>(c) equal    | 4. (a) cannot<br>(b) may<br>(c) should     |
| 2. (a) obliged<br>(b) encouraged<br>(c) allowed | 5. (a) work<br>(b) live<br>(c) drink       |
| 3. (a) British<br>(b) African<br>(c) European   | 6. (a) working<br>(b) there<br>(c) at home |
| 7. (a) European<br>(b) native<br>(c) white      | 8. (a) sometimes<br>(b) often<br>(c) not   |

9. (a) play  
(b) mix  
(c) not

10. (a) the same  
(b) other  
(c) the black

## **LESSON II**

LEVEL: Grade 11 (ESL class)

AIM: To train the learners to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context and to help them to analyze their process of guessing.

OBJECTIVES: At the end of the lesson learners will be able to use hints from the context to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words.

AIDS: Text and Transparency

TIME: 45 Minutes

### **INTRODUCTION**

Review Transparency III

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE TEACHING PROCEDURE**

The teacher explains to the learners that they will read a short story: "The Winner" from their prescribed text and those learners are asked to make a good guess for the meaning of the underlined words. The teacher will point out that the learners should read the story more than once and try to find clues in the sentences and that their guesses should make sense. Next, the teacher will model what he wants the learners to do. Point out that his guess is a good guess because it make sense using specific clues in the text.

As the students make good guesses for the underlined words, the teacher will use this opportunity to specifically discuss what clues they found in the sentences to help them, and other strategies they used to find a word that makes sense. For instance, reading beyond the word, searching for clues and returning to the

beginning of a sentence to try again are both good strategies to use to gather meaning from the text. (Also refer to transparency III)

### **STRATEGY PRACTICE**

The teacher suggests that the learners must read other stories and as they read bear in mind that they are reading for meaning. Thus, they are using clues in the text that enables them to make good guesses. Finally, as the students become more and more proficient at using clues in the immediate sentence, have them look in the surrounding text for additional clues. If they miss clues that could have helped them make a better guess, suggest that they reread a passage specifically looking for missed clues.

### **EVALUATING STUDENTS' STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

The teacher will select subsequent pages and ask individual learners to consider sentences containing underlined words and then give their special guesses, explanation of them and verification process. Students are encouraged to share their lists of new words and tell how they remember them.

## **APPENDIX E**

### **STRATEGY 5 - SUMMARIZING I**

#### **LESSON 1**

LEVEL: Grade 11 (ESL Class)

AIM: Students to master the summarizing techniques e.g. understanding of the main purpose or main idea, select and organize information, etc. so as to facilitate comprehension.

OBJECTIVES: At the end of the lesson students must be able to identify and extract important information.

AIDS: Text

TIME: 45 Minutes

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Suppose, on returning to school in January, you run into a friend or teacher who casually asks about your holiday. Your response to this question about a period of one and a half months or so would probably be made in a few sentences and take no longer than a minute or two. Your reaction would be an example of a very important thinking process in communication, the ability to summarize. In many situations in life, at home, in school, on the job, at a public meeting, you will need this skill.

A summary is a short or condensed version of the information you have read. It is written in your own words in complete sentences. When you summarize, you are making sure that you understand and remember the most important information in the text.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE TEACHING PROCEDURE

The teacher works with the entire class and explain how a summary is written. For example, he tells the learners that writing a summary forces one to review the author's controlling idea, main ideas, and important details. In a summary, you restate or paraphrase this important information in your own words. The teacher further tells the learners that if they can easily write an accurate summary, they probably have a very good understanding of the material they have read. If they have difficulty writing a summary, they probably need to reread and reapply the strategies they have learned.

The teacher refers the students to a short story by Barbara Kimenye (THE WINNER). In cooperative groups, students think and decide on the controlling idea. After that they are asked to write a first sentence that paraphrases the controlling idea of the text. Learners are further asked to write more sentences, to restate the main ideas and, if necessary, important details that are essential to making the controlling idea clearly understood. The teacher tells the learners that, if they write their summaries, they must bear in mind that the controlling idea is in the first sentence of the summary and that the main idea and details are paraphrased in the same order they were found in the text.

## STRATEGY PRACTICE

The teacher asks the students to summarize other short stories in the text and as they do those consider the following guidelines (Adapted from Garrigus, R (1999) "Design in Reading.")

1. You must determine the main idea and pattern elements through careful reading and analysis before you ever attempt to write a summary.
2. Summarizing is more than a mechanical process of shortening, it requires thinking about and evaluating your material. Your summary must reduce the length of your source material, but it does so by retaining only the main idea and key pattern elements.

3. Remember: a summary must focus on the most important ideas in the text and must be written in your own words.

## **EVALUATING STUDENTS' STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

The teacher encourages students to reflect on the summarized ideas they have produced considering whether they have captured the main ideas of the text.

## **LESSON II**

**LEVEL:** Grade 11 (ESL Class)

**AIM:** Learners to master the summarizing techniques in order to enhance comprehension of the text.

**OBJECTIVES:** At the end of the lesson learners must be able to write a summary following a sequence suggested by Garrigus (1999) i.e. a sequence that takes the learners from the text (A) to an outline/pattern map (B) to your summary (C).

**AIDS:** Text

**TIME:** 45 Minutes

**INTRODUCTION:** Review the previous lesson.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE TEACHING PROCEDURE**

The teacher draws the students' attention to the diagram designed by Garrigus (1999). This diagram shows the sequence of developing a summary moving from the original text (A) to the pattern map or outline (B) and then to the learners' summary (C). This sequence is against moving directly from A to C i.e. from the text to the summary as the learners might find themselves trying to summarize line by line and the original dictating their organization. The teacher encourages the learners to look away from the original as they are mapping or writing their summary. The teacher tells the learners that they go back to the text to check a fact or reread a passage, they must always put the original aside before they begin writing again.

## STRATEGY PRACTICE

The teacher asks the learners in groups to summarize “Learning lessons of the Qunu veld” (Transparency V). They do the exercise following Garrigus’s process or steps.

### Transparency VI

STEP 1: Your first step is to determine the topic of the source material. Usually the title gives a clear clue. If not, look for a word or phrase that seems to be frequently repeated. When you have decided on the topic, write it down.

STEP 2: Test to see if the reading has a main idea. Does it answer a main “what about the topic” question? If so, verify your hypotheses by tracking the idea throughout. Then, look away and write the main idea in your own words in a complete sentence.

STEP 3: If the material has a topical organization, use a topical pattern map or a traditional outline in your own words to list main topics and major details. To determine these, think how your source provides answers to the questions who, what, when, where, why and how. Look away from the text as you write.

STEP 4: Survey supporting minor detail - examples, statistics, historical data, expert opinion, studies, etc. Decide how much minor detail you wish to include, the length of your summary will depend on your purposes and/or the length requested by your instructor.

STEP 5: Your outline or pattern map - not the original text - will now determine the organization of your summary.

## EVALUATING STUDENTS’ DEVELOPMENT

The teacher asks the groups to present their summaries. Each summary is judged according to its relevance to Garrigus’s five-step summary process.

## TRANSPARENCY V

### SUMMARIZING: LESSON I

#### QUNU VELD

Our new home was in Qunu, a large village near Umtata, where many of our relatives lived. It stands in a narrow, grassy valley surrounded by green hills and clear streams.

Qunu was a village of women and children. The men were forced to leave and work on white-owned farms and mines. They came home once or twice a year to plough the fields. The hoeing, weeding and harvesting were left to the women and children.

From an early age, I spent most of my time playing in the veld with the other boys of the village. I learned how to shoot birds out of the sky with a slingshot, to gather wild honey and fruit, to drink warm milk straight from the cow and to catch fish with sharpened bits of wire.

Our favourite game was a war-game that we called thinti. We would stand two sticks in the ground, a hundred feet apart. Each side then had to try and knock the other side's stick down.

After playing with my friends, I would go home for supper. By the fireside, after eating, my mother often told us wonderful stories. These were more than just stories - they carried with them important lessons.

She once told the story of a traveller who met an old woman who could not see because she had cataracts growing over her eyes. The woman asked the traveller for help, but the man turned away. Another traveller came along and once again, the old woman asked for help.

This man was kind - he gently wiped her eyes clean. Suddenly, the old woman turned into a beautiful young woman. They married and became healthy, wealthy and happy.

It is a simple story, but with a strong message: if you are good and kind, you will be rewarded in ways that you can never know.

## APPENDIX F

### READING STRATEGIES QUESTIONNAIRE

Using the scale below indicate the degree to which you use the following strategies when you reading materials for information (e.g. textbooks, articles, reports). Please reading each item carefully.

- 1 = Never or almost never true of me**  
**2 = Usually not true of me**  
**3 = Somewhat true of me**  
**4 = Usually true of me**  
**5 = Always or almost always true of me**

1. I briefly skim the text before reading.
2. I look for important information in the text.
3. I pay greater attention to important information than other information in the text.
4. I try to relate the important points in the text to one another in an attempt to understand the entire text.
5. I try to draw on my knowledge of the subject to help me understand what I am reading.
6. I use my knowledge of the subject to generate questions about the text.
7. While I am reading, I reconsider and revise my prior questions about the text based on the text's content.
8. While I am reading, I reconsider and revise my background knowledge about the subject based on the text's content.
9. When information critical to my understanding of the text is not directly stated, I try to infer that information from the text.
10. While I am reading, I try to determine the meaning of unknown words that seem critical to the meaning of the text.
11. I try to underline when reading in order to remember the text.
12. I read material more than once in order to remember the text.

13. I make notes when reading in order to remember the text.
14. When appropriate, I try to visualize the descriptions in the text that I am reading in order to remember the text.
15. I summarize/paraphrase the material that I am reading in order to remember the text.
16. When reading, I ask myself questions about the text content to better remember the text.
17. When I think that I am not comprehending a text, I change my reading strategies (e.g. slowing down, re-reading).
18. As I am reading, I evaluate the text to determine whether it contributes to my knowledge/understanding of the subject.
19. After I have read a text, I review it.
20. After I have read a text, I summarize it.
21. After I have read a text, I try to interpret what I have read.
22. After I have read a text, I evaluate what I have read.
23. After I have read a text, I consider other possible interpretations to determine whether I understood the text.
24. After I have read a text, I anticipate how I will use the knowledge that I have gained from reading the text.
25. While reading, I jump forward and/or backward in the text to find the important information.
26. I note how hard or easy a text is to read.
27. As I am reading, I distinguish between information that I already know and new information.
28. When I am reading, I note when I am interested in or bored with the text.
29. I try to anticipate information in the text.
30. As I read along, I check whether I anticipated information correctly.
31. I set goals for reading (e.g. studying for a multiple-choice test, reading for a research paper).
32. I search out information relevant to my reading goals.
33. I evaluate whether what I am reading is relevant to my reading goals.
34. I vary my reading style depending on my reading goals.
35. At the conclusion of reading, I try to construct an overall summary.