INVESTIGATING READING CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY INTERMEDIATE PHASE LEARNERS IN SEKGOSESE WEST CIRCUIT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

by

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DECLARATION

I, Mamabolo J.S declare that this thesis entitled **"INVESTIGATING READING CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY INTERMEDIATE PHASE IN SEKGOSESE WEST CIRCUIT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE"** is my own work. All the sources that I have used or quoted have been duly acknowledged in the references. This thesis has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

Signature: ………………   Date: ……………………….

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Almighty God, my mother Nakedi Mamabolo, my fiancé, Moloko Ramaotswa, my kids, Tshiamo and Oarabile who have always been there, supporting and loving me unconditionally throughout my research journey. To all of you who contributed to the completion of this thesis in one way or another, I say "Thank you".
May God bless all of you!

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate reading challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase learners at Mamothibi Lower Primary school and Molemole Lower primary school at Sekgosese West Circuit, Limpopo province. The study used qualitative research method investigate reading challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase learners. The population consisted of 42 Intermediate Phase learners and four English First Additional Language teachers. Non-probability and probability sampling procedures were used to generate the sample as well as purposive and convenient sampling due to the qualities respondents possess. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and class observation. Data was analysed thematically. The findings of the study indicate that there are various factors that cause poor reading among learners such as poor command of vocabulary because learners do not practice extensive reading; no interest to learn creativity in reading but the goal to pass examination; lack of confidence to practice how to read in class; poor motivation and interest from teachers and parents to help develop the interest in learners; learners lack knowledge of reading strategies and teachers' inadequate knowledge on using reading strategies to teach reading skill. The study recommends that the Department of Basic Education should arrange on-going training on reading strategies for teachers and subject Advisors should continuously give teachers support on reading strategies.

Keywords: Reading skills; reading comprehension; reading strategies; poor reading; English First Additional Language.

Table of contents

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

Reading is important for many different activities in many areas of our lives (Land and Lyster, 2015: 5). Reading fluently with understanding can make one well informed and have better opportunities in life. It plays a very important role in learners' educational success as most curriculum subjects use text-based materials for study. Reading comprehension is a strategic process in which readers combine cues from the text with their existing knowledge and previous experience to make predictions and construct meaning from the text (Gilakjani, 2016; Madikiza et al., 2018). It plays a crucial role in learners' academic success and future life outcomes. Olifant, Cekiso and Rautenbach (2019) state that poor reading ability displayed by learners is a great challenge worldwide. There are 40% of children in the United States experiencing challenges to become competent readers. Also, Britain declared the year 2008 as a National year of Reading because of poor reading competence of learners in English (Chaka, 2015). Furthermore, a study conducted in Francophone Guinea states that most learners do not know the entire alphabet by the time they complete Grade two (Olifant, Cekiso & Rautenbach, 2019).

Similarly, in South Africa, learners in primary, secondary and tertiary exhibit inadequately developed reading skills. Numerous researchers affirm that, learners (in primary, secondary and tertiary) in South Africa display poor reading ability which is cause for concern (Mukhuba and Marutla, 2019; Thaba and Motlhaka, 2022). It negatively impacts on learners' performance. As they have difficulty in comprehending what they read. The analysis of average performance per sub-question expressed as a percentage in paper one in EFAL shows that learners achieved 59% in comprehension passage. It points that learners lack vocabulary skill to express themselves effortlessly. When they were answering some of the questions, they quoted from the paragraph, instead of explaining the meaning of words in their own words. In addition, Mukhuba and Marutla (2019) found that word recognition is the foundational process of reading and is needed to support vocabulary attainment and reading comprehension. They prove that learners struggle with reading of words within a sentence structure and therefore they are

unable to comprehend the meaning within a sentence and consequently paragraphs then the whole text which affected their understanding of the text. As such, this study is relevant as it investigated the reading challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase learners using the case of Mamothibi Lower Primary School and Molemole Lower Primary School at Sekgosese West Circuit, Limpopo Province. It examined the strategies to mitigate poor reading amongst learners.

Reading is very important for children who will be using English as the LoLT in Grade 4 because they will read and write in their other subjects in English, and use English textbooks in the Intermediate Phase. In Intermediate Phase, teachers are expected to use guided group reading and independent/pair reading methods and gradually get learners to do more and more independent reading through sufficient Big Books and alternate with storytelling (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement-Intermediate Phase (Grade 4-6)-English First Additional Language, 2011). This could be achieved through reading process which consists of pre-reading, reading and post reading stages. Reading gives learners more exposure to their additional language wherein their vocabulary development is heavily dependent on the amount of reading they do through shared reading at the beginning of Grade 4 to guide them into this phase. Children who are taught to read and write in schools acquire reading skills better than those who learn skills independently (Menard and Wilson, 2014: 6). With overcrowded classrooms that most South African educators face and the workload that they have, from the administration of school activities to extracurricular activities, it becomes problematic since educators may not have time to intrinsically help learners with reading (Nkosi, 2016:156).

Several studies suggest that learners should be able to decode texts of a suitable size to expand their knowledge on the course contents. Carrell and Grabe (2002:233) found that the ability to read is significant for academic learning. In a related longitudinal study of the challenges encountered by learners in the Intermediate Phase by Nkosi (2016:156), it was found that many learners in the Intermediate phase cannot read to understand because they have not learned these reading skills and have difficulty adapting to the society due to their inadequate reading literacy.

As parents are the first people with whom children form relationships, they can be the first to know if a child has a reading challenge. Parental observation is important because some of the first signs that suggest a reading challenge can be seen already in the Foundational Phase and Intermediate Phase (Land and Lyster, 2015:7). The researcher is an Intermediate Phase teacher who witnesses these difficulties in her classroom. Each early education programme is aimed at developing learners with good reading skills. Reading helps learners to expand their language and learn about the world (Victori and Lockhart, 1995:223-234). Reading is also the key to success in spelling and writing. One has to read fluently to be able to spell words correctly and write meaningful texts. If learners cannot read, they will have a problem answering questions, hence they will not be able to understand what the questions require of them, and they will not give the correct answers. This can affect their confidence and motivation to learn (Nkosi, 2016:58). It is this background that motivated the researcher to investigate the reading challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase learners using the case of Mamothibi Lower Primary School and Molemole Lower Primary School at Sekgosese West Circuit, Limpopo Province.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The researcher observed that learners at Intermediate Phase at Mamothibi Lower Primary School and Molemole Lower Primary School at Sekgosese West Circuit, Limpopo Province struggle with reading of words within a sentence structure and therefore they are unable to comprehend the meaning within a sentence and consequently paragraphs then the whole text which affected their understanding of the text. The Intermediate Phase is a transition phase between the Foundation Phase and the Senior Phase which begins from grade 4 to 6. This is where many challenges arise because at this stage, learners begin to use English as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). In addition, many content subjects are introduced in English by different educators, unlike the Foundation Phase, in which the learner was taught by a single teacher in their home language. The acquired language is learned better than the learned language because learners must concentrate to understand which is difficult for learners because there is also a difference in the combination of letters between the mother tongue and English. The decoding

method used by learners to decode words in the mother tongue does not apply in the second language. Assessment criteria often underestimate learners' potential for academic progress because they are expected to meet promotion requirements. This exacerbates learners' performance because the ability to read becomes a challenge that causes frustration and low self-esteem. This is especially true if the reading is in an additional language.

The researcher's observation is supported by research which showed that, there are more concerns raised by teachers about learners who cannot read and how that affects their overall achievements in schools. Despite all the efforts to improve learner's reading, South African children remain at the lowest levels in reading as compared with other nations (Mukhuba & Marutla, 2019). Learners in the Intermediate Phase must learn and master the skills of reading, since this basic technique will be necessary throughout their lives. They are expected to use this basic ability academically from the Senior Phase and FET to tertiary level. If learners have not properly understood this skill, it will be difficult for them to master the results of the curriculum in that phase. There are numerous challenges in the education system in South Africa. For example, children cannot read with confidence and with conception at the end of third grade. Nkosi (2016:2) asserts that in the Intermediate Phase, reading is supposed to be advanced, since learners can interpret texts. Rule and Land (2017:1) affirm that learners cannot read to understand because they move away from the main objective of what reading should be. The teaching of reading is no longer about developing skill, but about oral presentations where the weight is put on correction and articulation. South African children cannot read at expected levels and cannot perform tasks that demonstrate key skills associated with reading literacy. The purpose of this study is to investigate the reading challenges experienced by learners in the Intermediate Phase. This study examined the strategies to mitigate poor reading amongst learners struggle with reading of words within a sentence structure and therefore they are unable to comprehend the meaning within a sentence and consequently paragraphs then the whole text which affected their understanding of the text.

1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section explores the general overview of the reading challenges that Intermediate Phase learners experience.

1.3.1 Reading

Reading refers to the act of decoding written symbols to get meaning out of them. This is a skill of thinking about what is written to understand a message or a directory. In order for one to be a good reader, vocabulary has to be developed as well as word recognition (Sokolava, 2011:13). According to Bojovic (2010: 5), the skill of reading is about being able to interact with a text and making meaning out of written symbols. This shows clearly that for Intermediate Phase learners to be able to get a clear message from what is written, they have to effectively acquire the reading skill because it is needed throughout everyone's lives.

1.3.2 The importance of developing the reading skill

The most important element of high quality education is literacy and without the ability to read, learners are denied relevant information on health, social, cultural and political issues as well as sources of pleasure and enrichment. Reading is important for learning because it offers learners independent access to a vast world of information as well as achievement and fun. The National Department of Education (DoE) recognizes that reading is part of nation building which is the most important language skill to be developed in young learners (DoE, 2008:5). The ability to read is a fundamental component of school success and there is a strong correlation between poor reading ability and school failure. Reading is essential for learning and if learners have not mastered the skill adequately, their potential for success in the learning context is hampered.

According to Van der Merwe and Nel (2012:138), it is important to teach learners how to read and write. In this ever changing society, where the use of technology is the centre of everyday lives, it is not enough to only be able to read and write without understanding what you have read about. Having mastered the reading skill forms the basis for being able to use the mobile gadgets, computers and any other technological appliances (Van der Merwe and Nel, 2012:138).

Intermediate Phase learners need to have the ability to read for understanding, because unlike in the Foundation Phase these learners have to read question papers independently without the help of the educators, when answering questions

in the exam room. The inability to interpret what the questions require of them will result in a failure to pass the test or exam (Van der Merwe and Nel, 2012:138).

1.3.4 Global overview

The 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand supported the idea that every child in every country should have the opportunity to get a primary education (Bruns, Mingat and Rakotomalala, 2003:1). United Nations Education for All (EFA) is fundamentally committed to ensuring that children, youth and adults acquire the knowledge and skills they need to improve their lives and play a role in building more peaceful and just societies. For quality learning to occur, reading and reading achievement are among the basic requirements but in some schools, this simply remains an ambition.

Internationally, research indicates that in many countries around the world there is a growing concern that learners may not have the reading skills necessary to succeed in the academic years at school and in tertiary-level institutions. In the United States of America (USA), 40% of children have significant problems becoming proficient readers, and 40% of fourth and third grade learners cannot read at the level considered primary school work to elementary school (Hugo, le Roux, Muller and Nel, 2005:210). In French-speaking Guinea, only one in ten learners knew the complete alphabet by the end of the second year, and the average learners could only read four of the 20 words presented. The samples in Peru showed that only 25% of grade 1 learners and 45% of grade 2 learners could read simple alphabets and simple words (Abadzi, 2008: 4). According to Houtveen and Van de Grift (2007:405), in an international comparative study on reading comprehension, Dutch learners achieved a higher average performance level than their European counterparts, with only 7% able to read enough to operate proficiently. Independent in a broader society than the European average of just over 17%.

1.3.5 South Africa overview

The reading crisis in South Africa has existed since 1994 (Chisholm, 2011:12), as shown by the results of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2011:14) which indicates that learners in South Africa are doing poorly in academic literacy. Ramalepe (2013:79) reveals that there are many strategies that have been put in place to develop the reading skills of learners in South African schools, but on

the contrary, the reading levels of learners in the Intermediate phase are still not desirable.

Research in South Africa indicates that, in general, learners' reading skills are underdeveloped, and this applies from elementary school to tertiary level (Pretorius and Machet, 2004:47). Research reports indicate that many young learners have a reading problem and that there has long been a misunderstanding of the teacher's role in teaching reading, both with the 2005 Curriculum and with the National Curriculum Declaration (NCS) (Badugela, 2012:13). Many teachers believe that they should not "teach" to read, but simply "facilitate" the process, believing that learners would be taught to read. Furthermore, many teachers do not know how to teach reading (Hugo, 2010:133; DoE 2008 (b): 5, 8).

South Africa participated in an international reading literacy assessment study that investigated how level 4 learners read and made a national comparison of their results. The results suggested that they were struggling to develop the skills necessary to successfully change the use of reading as a learning tool and academic success (Zimmerman, Howie & Smit, 2013:218). In 2001 and 2004, two national systemic assessments to establish literacy and numeracy levels in primary schools showed low levels of reading ability across the country (DoE, 2008 (b):4), while another in 2008, according to the results for 1,000 grade 3 classes indicates that eight out of 10 learners scored less than 50% in language and Math skills and 35% of grade 3 learners nationwide scored between 0% and 34% for literacy, which included reading (Hugo, 2010:133).

The South African School Act, on 2(3) of Act 84 of 1996 prior to amendment by Act 100 of 1997 states that every parent must cause every learner for whom he or she is responsible to attend a school from the first school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of seven years until the last school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of fifteen years or the ninth grade, whichever occurs first.

The literature mentioned above indicates that researchers have focused more on learners' reading levels, looking at them from a holistic perspective, in the hope of locating the challenges in all South African schools. This study will take a slight change and will examine the reading challenges that learners face in English First

Additional Language, especially in deep rural areas, as EFAL is mainly offered to learners who do not have English as their mother tongue.

1.4 ROLE OF THEORY IN THE STUDY

The theoretical framework that will underpin this study is the social constructivism.

1.4.1 The social constructivism

Social constructivism is a theory of knowledge in communication and sociology and the theory verifies how knowledge is generated and developed (Vygotsky, 1978: 38). Vygotsky (1978: 112) asserts that people first learn from their communication with each other, before they can understand the environment; this is what he calls cognitive growth. Social constructivism is relevant to study because it advocates for knowledge developed through social interaction and language use in the classroom as a shared, rather than an individual experience among learners and teachers. In social sciences, social constructivism theory gives learners an understanding of the real world around them as far as language use is concern in different contexts. Vygotsky (2006: 80) puts more weight on the social environment as a learning and development assistant. Other people play an important role in the growth of a child, when they communicate with the child by playing, sharing toys and giving objects. A child depends on other people, such as his parents, during the early stages of life as the socio-cultural environment continues to give the child challenges and activities to explore (Turuk, 2008:247). In this case, learners need the teacher as a mediator to help them explore the world (Vygotsky, 2006:44).

It is necessary to have a mediator between the child and the world for operational learning to take place, and in this case, the educator will be the best mediator. The ability to learn through mediation is a characteristic of human intelligence (Bruner, 1984:23). Mediation helps the children to understand more than they can do on their own, it can also help as the mediator can close the gaps that the child is making by filling in the relevant information, the children with the knowledge they acquire will then learn to do things on their own, and Vygotsky called this "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 2012:133).

This theory was used mainly in the analysis of the findings of this study as it alludes to learners being part of the learning process that gives learners a chance to be able

to construct meaning of the knowledge that they have gained at home and in Foundation Phase. In Foundation Phase, learners mainly rely on the teachers' meaning; they grow from all that the teachers provide. But in the Intermediate Phase, it is where the learners are required to think critically about what they learn. The theory encourages the use of rewards as an important part of the learning process. In this case, Intermediate Phase teachers teach learners how to read, giving them tasks that encourage them to read more and in this way, the teachers' job is to act as a facilitator and mediator between the learners and the learning process.

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate reading challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase learners using the case of Mamothibi Lower Primary school and Molemole Lower primary school at Sekgosese West Circuit, Limpopo province.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are factors contributing to the reading challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase learners?
- What are the challenges teachers encounter when teaching Intermediate Phase learners?
- How will teachers address challenges faced by learners in a reading classroom in Intermediate Phase?

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.7.1 Research design

This study used the interpretative research design wherein the researcher placed the participants at the centre of the research project to get meaning out of the participants' lived experiences. Interpretative research design gives the researcher an opportunity to study participants in their social context, and to understand how they perceive their world (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). In other words, this study gave participants the opportunity to express their realities and how they could address challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase learners using the case of Mamothibi

Lower Primary school and Molemole Lower primary school at Sekgosese West Circuit, Limpopo province.

1.8 RESEARCH PARADIGM

This study adopted interpretivist paradigm, which is the belief that reason is the best way to generate knowledge about reality. The interpretivists aim to obtain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context, not to generalize a whole population (Creswell, 2007: 245). This worked well with the study, as it used interviews and observations to generate knowledge of the participants' experiences about the world around them.

1.9 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

1.9.1 Population

Study population refers to the whole set of "individuals" "units" to which the study question refers or for which we intend to conclude something (Silverman, 2016: 245). The population of this study included 102 Intermediate learners and 4 teachers from two selected schools, with 53 learners and 2 teachers from school A and 49 and 2 teachers from School B.

1.9.2 Sample and Sampling

A sample is a subset that is faithfully representative of the population (Quinlan et al., 2019: 43). This study used simple random sample which entails randomly selecting subset of a population. In this sampling method, each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2013). The sample for this study included 106 participants comprising of 102 Intermediate learners from grade 4 and grade 6 and 4 educators from two selected primary schools. Four classes were selected from the two schools as this is an entry point from the base Phase to the Intermediate Phase and Grade 6 because this is the starting point of the Senior Phase, so the researcher is interested in knowing if the problem overlaps to Senior Phase or if it only happens in the Intermediate Phase. Preference were given to the English FAL, as it is the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). The researcher verified the grade record sheets that teachers use in class to enter the grade to identify the performance levels of the selected learners.

1.10 DATA COLLECTION

Below is the outline of the methods that the researcher used in collecting data:

1.10.1 Interview method

An interview was conducted with teachers to respond to questions about their experiences in teaching reading in the Intermediate Phase. It was also used to obtain a clear picture of the context in which the learners find themselves to verify their participation in the language class as well as to identify learners' gaps in the acquisition of reading skills.

1.10.2 Observation method

This method was used when four teachers give learners books to read, then observe each learner as they read, focusing on their confidence, whether they maintain eye contact or not, their audibility and the rate at which they are reading.

1.10.3 Document Analysis

The researcher read and interpret documents related to reading in the Intermediate Phase, for example, she verified and interpreted what the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) implies according to the level at which learners must be able to read at this phase. The researcher observed the English record sheets to determine the performance levels of learners.

1.11 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis is an on-going process, which means that data collection, processing and analysis are entangled (Kobus, 2015: 60). The researcher used inductive thematic analysis to analyse data in this study because it is concerned with trying to understand the lived experiences and with how respondents themselves make sense of their experiences of addressing their challenges of learning and teaching English language in an Intermediate Phase. This is consistent with Strauss and Corbin's (1998) description of inductive thematic analysis. In other words, the researcher will begin with an area of study and allow the theory to emerge from the data wherein themes were derived from transcribed semi-structured interview and data observation. The researcher read transcribed recordings as well as the analysis of the observation several times until she reached a saturation point.

1.12 CREDIBILITY AND RELIABILITY

The researcher assessed or increased legitimacy and expand engagement by conducting the study long enough to obtain adequate representation of the voices in the study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006:239). The researcher used triangulation for

credibility purposes to confirm the evidence from collected data through semi-structured interviews and observation schedule. The researcher verified the results with the study participants and use a recorder to provide accurate data and evidence. Participants quoted literally, with translations and clarifications to substantiate the results.

1.13 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is essential to study the reading challenges faced by learners in the Intermediate Phase because:

➢ Learners need reading skills when they grow up to answer questions in exam papers and understand letters written for them, read Bibles in churches etc.

➢ In order for learners to become educated and better citizens of this world, they need this basic skill to help them progress in this constantly changing society.

➢ It is necessary to study these challenges that our learners face, because we have to develop a world of readers, so that we can come up with strategies that will help improve our economy, and engage with international countries to solve issues like climate change.

➢ So that we can share ideas with different political parties to solve problems such as teenage pregnancy and drug addiction in our country.

➢ The study will encourage language teachers as well as programme designers to make more efforts to equip learners with this lifelong skill.

➢ This study will provide a clear focal point to examine the problem of learners who unable to read.

1.14 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics refer to what is morally acceptable and immoral when interacting or obtaining information from participants (Macmillan and Schumacher, 1997:117). The researcher was transparent and open with the participants by informing them about all the aspects of the research. The researcher was accountable for safeguarding the rights and security of the participants. The researcher observed the following ethical considerations:

1.14.1 Permission

The researcher asked parents of the learners for permission to conduct the study with their children, as she will work with minor children. She sent assent forms to be

signed by parents and consent forms to be signed by teachers to show that they agree to participate in the study. The researcher wrote a letter of request to the principals of the schools to ask for permission to conduct the study. The research proposal was sent to TREC as it is the key advisory body to the authority on research policy issues, for them to pre-screen if all the protocols for collecting data have been observed before the researcher can conduct the study.

1.14.2 Voluntary and Confidentiality

The researcher informed the participants of the purpose of the study and the procedures so that participation can be voluntary. The researcher ensured that there is mutual respect between her and the participants and that the identity of the participants remains unknown, in this way, their privacy was protected. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw if they wish, without facing any problem. The researcher used numbers and alphabets in place of the participants' names rather than using the participants' identity. The participants were informed about their right to privacy and that the information provided will not be made available to any other person.

1.14.3 Safety

The researcher carried out the study in the classrooms to ensure the safety of the learners since the classrooms are free from any form of physical harm. Due to the current pandemic of Covid-19, the researcher was guided by the Disaster Management Act regulations relating to social distancing during interviews and wearing of face masks. The researcher had a one-on-one interaction with the participants in a separate classroom rather than collecting data in a crowded classroom to avoid embarrassment. The researcher used the debriefing method to prevent psychological harm that the participants may experience, in doing this, the researcher informed the participants about the procedures that will take place in conducting the study, and this included the study title, researchers name and contact details, also all the aspects in the study. The researcher provided the participants an opportunity to withdraw their consent to participate or to withdraw their data from the study if they so wish. The full study may be provided to the participants after completion. Should the participants experience psychological harm, they will be taken to the nearby clinic for counselling.

1.14.4 Risks/ Harm associated with the study

These are physical, emotional and psychological uneasiness that participants may face during or after the completion of this study.

➢ The study has a potential risk of causing anxiety to the participants.

➢ It can lower the participants'' self-esteem as a result cause distress.

➢ Their identity may be published in papers, by themselves or others.

1.14.5 Benefits of the study

➢ The study will give the Department of Education a clear point of focus when identifying the arrears that need improvement in the education system.

➢ The study will help learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses in terms of reading

➢ It will give teachers a light on the methods that the use for teaching reading in the intermediate Phase, whether the teaching methods are effective or not.

1.15 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

All the chapters are described to present a well-structured research report in which the content flows in a chronological order, as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and background

This chapter describes the background of the study, the purpose of the study, the research questions. It also provides a brief discussion of the research design and methodology, data analysis, definition of key concepts as well the organization of chapters.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter provides the theoretical framework and literature substantiating the research.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

In chapter 3, the research methodology of the present study is outlined. The research design, methods and procedures that are used in the data collection process and data analysis are outlined. The sample size and the sampling techniques as well as the issue of validity, reliability and ethical considerations employed are discussed.

Chapter 4: Presentation and analysis of data

This chapter provides feedback on the data collected. The findings from the interviews, and semi-structured interviews as well as the themes emerging from the data are discussed in detail.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter presents summary of the main findings of the research, the significance of the study, recommendations from the study, the limitations of the study, further research. The chapter concluded the implications and conclusion of findings of the study.

1.16 Summary

This chapter has presented the context of the present study, the background of problems to be addressed in this study, the aim of the study, the rationale, the research questions and the organization of chapters.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the problem statement, aim and objectives of the study, research questions and significance of the study, and limitation of the study as well as the definition of key concepts. This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework and literature review related to the concept of reading, the importance of reading, reading difficulties in South Africa, factors contributing to reading difficulties, the language of learning and teaching, the importance of reading in Intermediate Phase and theories of reading comprehension. The second part of this chapter focuses on theoretical framework. Finally, the chapter provides a summary of what it entails and what the subsequent chapter covers.

2.2. Literature review

This section focuses on literature review related to the concept of reading, the importance of reading, reading difficulties in South Africa, factors contributing to reading difficulties, the language of learning and teaching, the importance of reading in Intermediate Phase and theories of reading comprehension.

2.2.1. The concept of reading

Reading is generally defined as making meaning from information written in a text form (Jamaludin, Alias, Khir, DeWitt & Kenayathula, 2015; Adeniji & Omale, 2010; Pang, 2003). According to Adeniji and Omale (2010), reading is a recognition of printed or written symbols, which serve as stimuli for the remembrance of meaning built up through the learners' experience. Reading is considered as a process influenced by the brain, as well as emotions and beliefs, exhibited when reading (Weaver, 2009). In other words, reading is characterised by cognitive, affective, psychomotor and social domains (Morara, 2013). This cognitive process empowers learners with knowledge to understand the text properly and helps them organise their thoughts and be able to present their ideas (Mafokwane, 2017). According to

Pang, Muaka, Bernhardt and Kamil (2003), reading process consists of two processes: word recognition and comprehension.

One the other hand, word recognition can be explained as making meaning from written words/symbols and how they correspond with ones spoken language while comprehension is when a reader or writer makes a meaning of words or sentences. In other words, it involves recognition perceiving how written symbols correspond to one's spoken language. On the other hand, comprehension involves making sense of words, sentences and connected text. Pang, Mauka, Bernhardt and Kamil (2003) assert that readers generally use background knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, experience with text and other strategies to help them understand written text. Reading is the act of decoding the text to get meaning. According to Bojovic (2010: 5), a reading skill is a cognitive skill that a person can use when interacting with written text. Effective reading strategies considered significant skills that have received particular attention to students' reading comprehension skills (Gilakjani, 2016). Reading is currently a major concern in South Africa, where most students, including fourth graders, are reading below grade level. According to Van Der Merwe and Nel (2012: 138), the teaching of reading is above all a critical element of primary education. Knowing how to read and write is not enough in the 21st century, even young children must master the new and changing literacies that come with the advancement of science, technology and culture. According to Oxenham (2017), learning to read and write is a cognitive process but also a social and cultural activity that contributes to creating links between culture and knowledge. Children are anxious to learn about the things they see at home, on the street, on television, on the Internet. This learning involves learning to read, since this is what helps us understand our environment (Oxenham, 2017).

Learning to read implies understanding the meaning, the knowledge that the written language wants to transmit to us. Hence the importance of working from an early age on the relationships between letters and sounds; as well as it is also vital to awaken children's interest in the discovery of the messages camouflaged behind the letters. Reading is a cognitive activity that requires a subject involved in obtaining meanings and in the search for understanding (Oxenham, 2017). It is not enough for children to see written material on the street, or in the classroom itself, but it must be interesting enough for them to want to discover the knowledge it transmits. Creating

a positive environment in which to interact with written language is essential for the development of reading. In short, the dilemma arises again before the methods for teaching reading. Since the written language is not only a tool to access knowledge, but also an "object of knowledge in itself", the reading methods do not determine the learning process, but it is the students and their characteristics that mark (Oxenham, 2017). In the same way that we have seen in the previous section the general teaching methods of literacy, I also consider it important to take into account the various models that exist to carry out the reading process. In this case I go, once again, to the classification established by Oxenham (2017), in which he distinguishes three types of reading processes: the ascending model, the descending model and the interactive model. The ascending model, also called bottom up, gets its name because it begins in the spelling and rises to the letter, word, phrase, text. Therefore, it begins with the minimum unit, the letter, and gradually advances until it reaches the most complex unit, the text. For this model, reading is conceived as a sequential and hierarchical process (Oxenham, 2017). It focuses on decoding the written code, the text, but does not take into account the reader's understanding, so it gives greater importance to the result than to the process, an aspect that greatly limits the quality of the teaching-learning process (Oxenham, 2017).

The descending, or top-down, model takes the word or phrase as a starting point and descends to the syllable and letter. It is just the opposite of the ascending model in that it follows a descending order, but unidirectional and hierarchical processing is postulated as well (Willinsky, 2017). Furthermore, the focus is on the reader and the meaning that the reader perceives through reading, not the text itself. In this model, the core of reading is understanding, and takes into account the student's prior knowledge. However, although its strong point and main objective is meaning, its great drawback is that it neglects the process that leads to the goal of understanding (Willinsky, 2017). The interactive model arises from the cognitive model, like the descending model, but, on the contrary, considers that reading is a simultaneous process. He considers that "reading is a complex cognitive activity" and that the reader is an "active processor of the information contained in the text. In short, the centre is neither the text nor the reader, but both are necessary to reach understanding. The reader contributes her own experience and knowledge when interpreting the meaning of what she is reading. This model offers us an

interpretation of reading as the process by which written language is understood (Willinsky, 2017). Therefore, it takes into account the procedure that leads us to achieve the objective of understanding, an aspect that was neglected in the ascending and descending models. These three models have in common that they pursue reading comprehension. However, it should be noted that the task we are dealing with is very complex and largely conditioned by the characteristics of the reader. Consequently, it is an activity in which the reader and the text interact. In fact, according to Willinsky (2017), each text offers us particular textual stimuli and each of us, as readers, is responsible for making the text come alive. From this quote, we can see that the reading process is complex, since it implies, on the one hand, the identification of words, and on the other hand, access to understanding. In the document Guide of good practices. The identification of the words is called the lexical process. This lexical process can be, in turn, direct or indirect. It is a direct procedure when we recognize a word because we have already seen it before and it is part of our knowledge. But, since we do not know all the words of our language, to read those that are new to us, we must carry out the indirect or phonological procedure, which consists of transforming letters and their combinations into sounds (Bradford et al., 2019).

Access to the meaning of words and phrases involves a series of syntactic and semantic processes, relating through them the meaning of each word in connection with the others (syntactic process) and, in turn, the relationship of all these words and phrases in the whole text (semantic process). In conclusion, the teaching of reading comprises a very complicated process in which many factors intervene. However, despite its difficulty, this process could never be understood without teaching writing in parallel, since both are united and related to each other.

2.2.2. The importance of reading

The importance of reading in the learning process has been well documented (Jamaludin et al., 2015; Lekota, 2014; Zuze and Reddy, 2014; Suggate, Schaughency & Reese, 2013). According to Jamaludin et al. (2015), reading is a basic life skill and a foundation for a learner's success at school and throughout life. Similarly, Zuze and Reddy (2014) are of the view that proficiency in reading is essential for learners' personal development, educational opportunities and

wellbeing. In addition, being a proficient reader is a necessity to succeed in life and a basic skill for all the academic subjects (Nel, Nel & Hugo, 2012). It is therefore important that learners are exposed to reading as early as possible as it has long-term benefits on their future.

2.2.3. Reading difficulties in South Africa

Reading difficulties refer to the literacy problems that people experience, it is possible to have children who can pronounce words clearly without understanding what they have read, the child can recite from the class reader, the child can read story books that are below their age level. They can call out words from a book without understanding or recognition of printed words also the child can be in upper primary and has not learned to read at all (Andzayi, 2004). Qrqez and Rashid (2017: 421) in their study of "Difficulty understanding reading among English as a foreign language" revealed that respondents face different problems in the reading process, such as ambiguous words, unknown vocabulary and limited time available to elaborate cognitively the text. Van der Merwe and Nel (2012: 65) indicate that students cannot accurately define and identify the literacy components of reading. There is much confusion among students about what they should know about the reading and writing components.

Hornery, Seaton, Tracey, Graven, and Yeung (2014: 132) suggest that reading difficulties, if not addressed in the early stages, have dire consequences. The future of children with reading difficulties is compromised as insufficient reading limits the possibilities available for people to participate in the workforce and contribute to the growth of a nation in a technologically advanced world market. To address early reading difficulties for children, a more student-centered approach is necessary, including the applications of strong psychological, social and educational research.

Oberholzer (2005: 15) points out that children with reading problems have to focus so much on the mechanical aspects of reading, such as the analysis and synthesis of letters and words, that the meaning of the word becomes secondary and sometimes even you can lose. In these circumstances, very little pleasure is

obtained from reading. Instead, it becomes a laborious task, leading to feelings of failure and anxiety. These children simply do not develop a love for reading and the written word is inaccessible to them. They usually need additional assistance, which usually takes the form of classroom reading instructions and an additional program such as remedial reading.

According to DBE (2014), only 48% of grade 9 learners achieved a literacy rate of 50% or more between 2012 and 2014. ANA (2014) suggests that South Africa has lost touch in teaching of reading and the circumstances force teachers to find the lost spark in reading education so that the story of reading quality in our education system can be improved. In other words, there is a need to investigate causes of reading difficulties in grade 9 especially in rural schools. Hence, the focus of this study is in rural school.

Furthermore, Dreikrurs, Gronwall and Peper (1998) assert that teachers should be in a position to recognize learner's academic problem and issues of reading from a holistic point so that they can be able to encourage the learner to excel academically. Lerner (2006) posits that teachers should be able to identify learners' reading problems at their early age rather than practicing the policy of wait-and-fail method. Most of teachers tend to believe that learners do not have well developed reading abilities. Zuze and Reddy (2014) argue that proficiency in reading is critical for personal development and that there is a powerful connection between reading literacy and educational opportunities and well-being. Adeniji and Omale (2010) argue that it is of a great value that learners have access to reading and learning materials at an early age and their educators to compliment learning of reading with relevant teaching method in a conducive and, diversified environment. Moreover, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (2011) highlights that it is important for learners to be taught their home language in the foundation phase, because one cannot separate reading and language. Learners' lack of vocabulary prevents them from developing reading skills. It is therefore important for schools to at least have libraries with collection of various update books. However, in the case of Baltimore circuit in Limpopo province, learners have limited access to textbooks as the libraries are not sufficiently equipped with resources. This hinders learners from practicing reading.

Limited exposure to EFAL outside classroom is a serious barrier to learners in rural schools. Most learners in public schools are not really exposed to EFAL reading texts skill because they learn other subjects in their home languages. This is in support by Chaka (2015) as he explains that South African learners find it difficult to read comprehension. Teachers are also identified as one of the factors contributing to learners' difficulties in reading because they are noted as barriers as they are not proficient in English as they are not the native speakers of English First Additional Language, South African learners have a challenge of being taught by teachers whose own English proficiency is limited.

2.2.4. Literacy in English

As we well know, mastering a language depends on four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. These capacities are in turn grouped into two dimensions, depending on whether they are receptive or productive skills. On the one hand, receptive skills refer to reading and listening comprehension (reading and listening); and on the other hand, productive skills refer to oral and written production (speaking and writing).

Sometimes there are people who understand what they hear, but who do not understand what they read in a certain language, or conversely, who can communicate orally, but not in writing. Each ability has been developed in a different way. For this reason, it is important to find a balance between the four skills we are dealing with and, if any of them is left aside, this balance is very difficult to achieve.

In order to achieve communication, language skills have to work together, in an integrated way and in relation to each other. In other words, achieving communicative competence involves working linguistic skills in an integrated way, allowing the balanced development of productive and receptive skills. In 1959, Lambert stated: "the closer the individual is to balanced bilingualism, the more capable he will be of perceiving and reading in both languages with similar frequency and of actively using the vocabulary in both languages." It is not to achieve bilingualism itself what is intended in bilingual education, but to seek balance in learning the skills of a language.

As we have seen, the teaching of the foreign language is being introduced from early stages. In principle, introducing the language orally at these stages is not presenting

too many problems, as long as the teachers are well trained. It is at later levels when greater difficulties have been found, especially when it comes to dealing with reading and writing. But, if we want to offer bilingual education, where languages are considered the means of transmitting knowledge, the child must learn to read and write in both languages. What does vary is its combination when it comes to forming words and its grammatical rules to form sentences. In fact, psycholinguists like consider that when two languages have a similar writing system, the transfer of information from one to the other is not difficult; the main difficulty comes with phonetic and orthographic differences. This is why it is so important to teach students to read and write in the second language, so that they learn to decipher each combination of letters different from those they know in their first language.

Once the importance of reading and writing in learning a foreign language is understood, the following dilemma arises: Is it better to start reading and writing in the mother tongue and then work on it in the foreign language? Should I start backwards? Or conversely, can literacy be started at the same time in both languages? In this aspect the opinions are very varied. Schoenbach, Greenleaf and Murphy (2016), for example, conclude that it would be prudent to say that "in principle it is preferable to start reading and writing in the first language and then move on to the second language" (Schoenbach, Greenleaf and Murphy, 2016). However, the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) methodology on which the majority of bilingual educational programs are currently based, is committed to a parallel introduction of literacy in both languages, although the progression of the contents is slower in what refers to the foreign language, and the type of activities that are carried out are more oral at the beginning, given the difficulties it presents. Therefore, what is intended is to learn to read and write in both languages more or less at the same time and to continue learning the language through the different areas of the curriculum (Barrett & Riddell, 2019).

However, there is one clear thing in learning a language, which is decisive when starting the process of literacy. A baby acquires a language unconsciously, only by habitual contact with the language. First, he learns to understand the language to which he is exposed and then begins speaking. In learning a language the steps to follow are similar. On the one hand, oral comprehension is achieved much earlier than oral expression, and therefore, reading must precede writing, although this does

not mean that one has to separate from the other, since these two skills complement each other themselves (Schoenbach, Greenleaf & Murphy, 2016).

Having made these reflections on the teaching-learning of literacy in a foreign language, it remains to establish the techniques that are mainly used to teach reading and writing in English. According to Mary Slattery and Jane Willis, writers of the English for Primary teachers (2001) manual, the two strategies that are carried out the most are:

- look and say: it consists of learning to read words by constant contact with them. Words are usually introduced contextually around a topic of interest. It requires an oral and then a written approach, always adapted to the level we are at. Based on seeing how the teacher refers to things orally and seeing the word in writing next to a picture or the real object, the child ends up relating how each thing is said with the written form of the word.
- Phonics (phonemes): it is about teaching the letters used to represent each sound, as well as its possible combinations. This strategy is based on teaching how each letter sounds and establishing a sound-spelling relationship, which combining them in different ways gives rise to the words. Later, I will delve into the characteristics of this method since it seems very interesting and recommended to work on reading and writing.

The first technique is the one that has been habitually used in the teaching of the foreign language in Spain, and the second technique is the one that is beginning to work in some of the centres that we popularly known as bilingual teaching models. In addition, it is one of the methods used in English-speaking countries to teach reading and writing. However, in many cases the phonics-based method is not supplanting the look and say method, but is being alternated or merged for a more complete teaching-learning process (Oxenham, 2017).

2.2.5. Reading fluency

Reading fluency is an important reading skill that is crucial to understanding text. If children do not speak fluently, they cannot make connections and fully understand reading. Reading fluency is an important skill to master, as it creates a bridge to understand reading. Fluency is the ability to read with speed, precision and correct

expression (Rasinski, Rikli & Johnston, 2009). Reading fluency is one of the five components of reading along with phonemic awareness, phonetics, vocabulary, and comprehension. This suggests that fluency in reading is closely related to comprehension, meaning that if a student is a fluent reader of a language, those students can decode the text and understand its content. Fluent reading is important because it connects word recognition and understanding. It allows the student to focus on what the text says. They can network between what they are reading and their situational awareness, they can even predict the conclusion of what they are reading.

Fluency is essential in reading, since it allows students to read to understand, it avoids the need to decode texts to read them, since it will make them forget what the text is about. Fluent readers can focus their attention on understanding the text. Since non-fluent readers focus much of their attention on word search, they have less attention to devote to comprehension (Stecker, Lembke & Foegen, 2008).

Reading fluency is gaining new recognition as an essential element of any reading program, especially for students who have difficulty reading. Reading fluency is one of the hallmarks of good readers, and lack of fluency is a common characteristic of poor readers. Differences in reading fluency not only distinguish good readers from poor people, but lack of reading fluency is also a reliable predictor of reading comprehension problems (Hudson, Lane & Pullen, 2005).

Naghdipour (2015, 53) in his study on "The impact of the directionality of reading the first language on the fluency of reading the second language" found that, despite the significant differences in some areas, the directionality of reading the EI Students' first language does not have a significant effect on all aspects of English language proficiency. However, the observed differences between the average scores of the reading fluency components may have pedagogical implications for classroom practice. Fluency development is often overlooked or considered unimportant as teachers and students believe that it does not add value to what they already know. They feel that they should always have something new to learn and that the development of fluency does not fall within these perimeters. Contrary to what the development of fluency implies the realization of the maximum of what is currently known (Grabe, 2010).

A fluent reader can maintain routine for long periods of time, can retain ability after long periods of inactivity, and can generalize across texts. Also, a fluent reader is not easily distracted and reads smoothly and effortlessly. The most compelling reason to focus teaching efforts on students who become fluent readers compared to those of less able readers. Faster readers also perform smaller bindings, longer jumps between bindings, and fewer regressions than slow readers (Hudson, Lane & Pullen, 2005).

In order for our students to be good language readers, they must learn to read fluently and with understanding. Teachers, as they are primarily the mediators between the light learning process and the learning process, must emphasize the need to read fluently at the required pace. It doesn't help for students to write instead of reading words, because they may not understand what they read after completion.

2.2.6. Factors contributing to reading difficulties

Numerous factors contribute to learners reading difficulties. These include amongst others socio-economic factors, parents' involvement, contextual barriers and lack of resources (Mafokwane, 2017; Matchet & Tiemensma, 2009).

2.2.6.1. Socio-economic status

Most public schools are attended by children who come from poor background and the schools in rural settlement experience have a shortage of resources such as library, lack of staff members and their library open for certain hours and days. The quality of education that public school learners get is poor compared to the one private school learners get. The most contributor to SES is schools than family. This can be considered as the most contributor to poor reading skill because the only time learners hear about the importance of reading is at school while at home they never get time to learn reading.

Learners who are frequently absent from school are destroying their opportunity to learn. Gottfried (2010) outlines that learners who have good school attendance are likely to perform well. Nag, Vagh, Dulay and Snowling (2019) demonstrate that home environments impact literacy development. Furthermore, Nag et al. (2019) indicate that many children who come from poor families use a different language at home than in school. This can delay their process of early reading development. The

environment where the process of teaching and learning is taking place has a positive impact to the education of learners. Family economic status has an influence in the education of learners and if parents show no support towards their children's education, children are likely to have no interest in school. According to Mistry et al. (2009), family economic status and financial status affect learners emotionally as well as their academic outcomes. When learners don't have support from their parents or rather get rejection are likely to feel discouraged and will show no interest at school.

2.2.6.2. Lack of libraries

The challenge of lack of libraries impact negatively on their reading skill. Learners need to get familiar with library at a younger age as it will help them develop their reading skill and make it easy when they get to higher education. Moreover, most public schools in rural areas their libraries are not functioning at all and this disadvantages learners as they have nowhere to practice reading skill. Mojapelo (2018) notes that majority (73 %) of the schools in rural communities do not have library facility and it becomes serious challenge to parents who do not have income to buy their children books.

According to Matchet and Tiemensma (2009), South Africa has 85 percent of population lives beyond the reach of public library. Studies point out that in other rural areas learners do not have access to local libraries (Mojapelo, 2018). For example, Erikson and Markuson (2007) argue that when learners have a library, they will be able to explore the knowledge of the world. In other words, learners who have access to library facilities are empowered and knowledgeable. Bailey (2007) alluded that having libraries and qualified librarians in schools can influence positive impact on learners. This suggests that learners who have access to library facilities are likely to perform better than their counterparts who have no access to libraries.

2.2.6.3. Parental involvement

 The home is an environment from which the student builds the foundation for the first time, the home environment plays a vital role in the growth and development of

the child. If a student comes from a family environment that does not promote reading, the student may not have a great interest in reading, as they do not understand the importance of reading. You may find that the student only reads when she is at school, where she only reads when requested by the teacher. This prevents them from getting used to reading and influencing their exposure to new words and fluency (Rammala, 2009). The creation of the home literacy environment in which the home environment indirectly influences the progress of the student's reading and decoding skills through vocabulary. Creating an enriched home literacy environment from early childhood can play a vital role in learning to read, indirectly through improving first language skills. Lack of children's vocabulary can pose a serious challenge to children's early literacy development, particularly among those with lower vocabulary levels.

There is an indirect (or passive) influence of the home literacy environment on children's outcomes, experienced parents provide good role models for family members who are learning to read. Moderate influences are generally assessed by measures of parental literacy orientation or by the occurrence of literary activities in which they participate, and it is widely believed that homes of more educated parents offer better literacy opportunities than those of parents with low levels of education. These parents create good role models for their developing children (Puglisi, Hulme & Hamilton, 2017). An accessible home in a literacy setting is connected with a child-centred orientation to literacy. Early paediatricians and professionals can promote the benefits of literacy-related activities to families at risk of poor child-centred literacy counselling. The primary caregivers of the children, in most cases the parents, can provide guidance while the little ones try to read and clarify their mistakes while they are busy reading (Mascarenhas, Moorakonda & Agarwal, 2017). The family environment parents can provide emotional well-being and intellectual stimulation. For example, the initial development of a child's self-concept depends on the support and encouragement of the parents. Studies comparing good and poor readers show that successful students are much more likely to have a favourable family environment.

Lot of parents in rural areas are unable to read, and are not supportive towards their children education. Parents are known to be primary teachers of their children, so they are expected to take full responsibility of their children education. Studies have

outlined that learners who have their parents support normally achieve better than learners who lack parental support. The reading strategy for the general education and training (2013) demonstrates that parent involvement in their children's learning is positively related to achievement. In other words, when parents are actively involved in their children's learning, they are more likely to succeed.

When parents are involved in their children's education (reading) will not only improve academic performance, but it will create a positive attitude and behaviour towards learners. In secondary school when a parent encourages a child it can influence the child to stay in school and if the child does not get support and encouragement it can cause a child to drop out. When parents create time to read together with their children at home regularly, it will improve learners' ability to read. Reading aloud with a child contributes significantly to the child's reading abilities. Significant parental involvement is most likely to develop when schools actively seek out ways to get parents involved and offer training programs to teach parents how to get involved in their children's education. Parents who are unable to read may find it challenging to help their children to acquire reading skill because they cannot read.

2.2.6.4. Contextual barriers

The social background of learners affects their learning process because most public school learners reside at rural area where the most common language is their home language. In most cases, rural public school learners are only exposed to English First Additional Language when they are at school. Hoover, Baca and Klingner (2016) outline that learners struggle with reading EFAL because they speak their first language which is not English and they are in the process of learning English as their additional language. In rural areas, most of the parents are illiterate and learners do not get opportunity to be taught or practice English language at home with their parents. This can make learners to struggle with the language (English) as they only learn it at school. The challenge in learning English language is when the learner comes across words that she/he sees for the first time as it will be difficult to pronounce and understand. Home languages that learners speak at home are completely different from EFAL which make learners experience difficulty in reading English First Additional Language. PIRLS (2016) found that learners who are familiar with native language stand a good chance to master the native language. Checking

learners who attend private schools, one can notice that they are competent and fluent in English when compared to those who attend public schools.

Researchers outline that teaching and learning do not happen in a bubble. The process of learning and teaching is affected by the world beyond the classroom. Contextual factors categorize outside effects which are attributes of the community, the students and the school itself that may affect the process of teaching and learning. For having successful classrooms, teachers need to consider the different needs of the learners based on their contextual information. The community where the school is located plays a huge role in learning and teaching and it also influences learner's attitude towards learning. Teachers must create time to get to know their school's community by understanding its geographic location, how strongly the community supports education and most importantly, its socio economic makes up society that is dominated by poverty, learners experience challenges in classrooms because some don't have money to buy study materials while other parents don't see education as a first priority they end up neglecting their children's education.

2.2.6.5. Teacher competency

According to National Reading Strategy (2008), most teachers in South Africa lack understanding of teaching literacy, reading and writing. Majority of teachers do not know how to teach reading. Teachers know only one method of teaching reading, which may not suit the learning style of all learners. Teachers do not know how to stimulate reading inside and outside the classroom. Curriculum 2005 has shown the misunderstanding about the role of teacher in teaching reading and has also appeared in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS).

Researchers have outlined that most of the foundation phase teachers have not really been exposed to teaching reading training. This makes it difficult for them to assist learners with reading difficulties then as a result many teachers have resorted to rote teaching as the only option, and tend to be satisfied with rote learning by their learners. Adler and Reed (2002) indicate conceptual knowledge base is the most challenge to lot of teachers in South Africa. Teachers who find it difficult to know what to do for learners to acquire the skill of reading, is a problem to the education system. According to DOE (2008), hiring educators who are not well qualified has a very negative outcome on the quality of education.

2.2.6.6. Inadequate vocabulary

Vocabulary can be thought of as connections for contextual knowledge, concepts about the world, understanding discipline content, integration of new learning with what is known and illustration of abstract understandings. AlqahtanI (2015:21) expresses vocabulary learning as an essential part in foreign language learning as the meanings of new words are very often emphasized, whether in books or in classrooms. It is also central to language teaching and is of paramount importance to a language learner.

In order for learner's especially young ones to read properly and with understanding, it means their vocabulary must be developed. This will help in activating their background knowledge when they come across a written text symbols. Wasik, Hindman and Snell (2016: 55) believe that book reading as one of the fundamental strategies that can be used for the exposure and development of learners' vocabulary.

Vocabulary has a noticeable impact on the meaningful comprehension of text for struggling through talented readers. Clearly placed readers who know the meaning to the words they come across when reading a text are more likely to understand that text; readers with large vocabularies tend to be more capable readers. Therefore, vocabulary emphasis should be a major feature of every reading teaching program.

Sidek and Rahima (2015: 50) found that a reader's level of vocabulary knowledge is one of the elements that play an impacting role in determining reading comprehension performance in that language. Vocabulary and comprehension work hand in hand in helping an individual to be able to comprehend written words, vocabulary emphasises the knowledge of certain objects or materials while comprehension does not dwell much on background knowledge, but focuses on understanding.

Teaching vocabulary may be difficult because many teachers are not self-assured about the best practice in vocabulary teaching and at times do not know where to begin to form an instructional emphasis on word learning. These suggest that most teachers are not yet immense with the skill of developing language learners' vocabulary (Alqahtani, 2015). Zhang and Annual (2008: 52) concur with this after

their study revealed that vocabulary knowledge in relation to the different measures intended to test learners' reading comprehension and summary abilities, vocabulary knowledge levels correlated to their reading comprehension, the more words a reader knows and understands, the better they are able to comprehend what they have read.

Reading a text clearly for learners does not predict whether they understand the text. This is caused by inadequate vocabulary skills and limited language competence. Because of poor vocabulary in some learners, this state that learners need to acquire more vocabulary so that they can be able to comprehend what they are meaning, which will help them to be able to understand the text they are reading. A lack of grade-level vocabulary can delay comprehension if the child does not know the meaning of most of the words he is reading. Most students are not well exposed to vocabulary because they don't give themselves a time to read. In other words, students suffer mainly from understanding vocabulary. This problem may fall into multiple categories among them, learners may have difficulties for example with words that have similar lexical forms; some words seem to be phonetically the same (in terms of sounds) as in "boss" and "bus", also in "cut" and "cat", other words seem to be similar at the level of morphology like the words "receptive" and "deceptive". This shows that some students still get confused on how to pronounce and differentiate some words during reading process because without the knowledge of vocabulary students will always find it difficult to read. Hence students should be able to have reading readiness skills, letter recognition, sound recognition and the skill to match them together. The results showed that the students had various problems with reading, especially with vocabulary (Kasim & Raisha, 2017). Most students face reading challenges which affect their progress in comprehending text meaning and understanding the authors' idea which results in poor performance when answering questions that are based on the comprehension text.

2.2.6.7. Lack of phonological awareness

Phonetics refers to a method of teaching English speakers to read and write that language. Phonetics involves teaching how to connect the sounds of spoken English with letters or groups of letters and teaching them to combine the sounds of letters to produce approximate pronunciations of unknown words. This is the study of the

relationship between sounds and symbols to learn to decode the meaning and spell, this mainly involves written symbols. Phonetic awareness leads to word knowledge. Knowing the phonetics and lots of reading experience, students begin to read words fluently with light energy. Phonetic instruction helps students learn written correspondences between letters, letter patterns, and sounds. It should be noted that phonetics is an element of a comprehensive literacy program that should also include practice in terms of comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, writing and thinking (International Literacy Association, 2018).

Individual must have a repertoire of strategies on which to build in order to be a skilful and fluent reader of any language. Strategies involve the use of knowledge of spelling relationships, which is knowledge of phonetics. Phonetic instructions improve the student's ability to identify words. The teaching of phonetics is primarily designed for first language beginners in primary school and for children who have difficulty learning to read, it can be applied to second language students to use sound symbols, vocabulary and meaning to decode and understand texts. Educating children to "phonetics" provides direct lessons on how to make this recording sound. The phonetic instructions teach children how the visual symbol system of their language means hundreds of words in their language.

Useful phonetic strategies include teaching students the sounds of words in isolation, then in words, and then teaching how to combine these sounds to produce proper pronunciation of words. However, Goswami and Wyse (2008: 2) believe that while it is important to teach students phonetics, this does not mean that it is the cornerstone for teaching students to read. We must keep in mind that the objective of teaching to read is not to teach children to probe or "attack" words, but rather to help them understand what is given to them. It is of great importance that teachers use differentiated teaching methods when teaching students to read, to satisfy the different learning styles of individual students.

The results of the study by Coates, Gorham and Nicholas (2017: 43) established the neurological results of the use of prosody in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) and confirmed the validity of phonetic techniques. Torgerson, Brooks, Gascoine and Higgins (2019), say that systematic phonetic training can help children at different levels of success, they developed this insight here, since their

cohort was larger than a typical phonetic cohort. Teaching students phonics in the intermediate phase can be helpful, as it will allow students to have knowledge of the sounds of words, which will help them develop their reading skills.

Caviness (2021) discovered that intermediate stage students cannot pronounce words correctly. They don't know how to convert letters and combine them into sounds and how to combine sounds to form recognizable words. They could tell the meaning of the word by listening to the sound, but they couldn't read any written word. This clearly indicates the need to develop phonological awareness and phonetic skills in intermediate stage students.

Pupils lack the knowledge in blending sounds within words and there are also signs of interferences in the ability of the pupils to fluently read out words. The most common cause of difficulties in acquiring early word reading skills is weakness in the ability to process the phonological features of language. This suggests that learners lack phonic skills in reading out letter by letter and it will be hard for them to be able to read fluently. Nigerian, Zambian, and South African learners experience challenges in EFAL in reading comprehension due to cultural background, phonology, semantics, syntax, and rhetorical styles. Cultural background influence learner's knowledge, how they think and how they believe things are done, more especially their native language which sometimes learners read English using it, not noticing that their native language phonology elements differ from the English First Additional Language, and it results in hampering their competence in comprehending reading text. Hamza Al-Jarrah and Nur Salina Binti Ismail (2018) in their study found that "one of the most significant factors is phonemic knowledge, which refers to ability to process the distinct sounds of letters required for word recognition. For example, a reader should be able to differentiate the three individual phonemes in the word 'bug', and then compose the sounds to pronounce the word". Difficulty sounding out the words on a text can lead to reading comprehension difficulties, learners must have awareness of the phonetic aspects because it enables learners to decode reading in the correct way.

2.2.6.8. Mispronunciation of words

"The mispronunciation of words shows that the reader is less knowledgeable of words (Mutepe, Makananise & Madima, 2021). Mispronunciation of words by EFAL

speakers reveals an unconscious lack of word knowledge, which hinders reading comprehension of written text". This means that most learners do not usually read, and they have low vocabulary which leads them to find it hard to pronounce words, and more especially some try to read English using their home language which they end up pronouncing words wrongly.

2.2.6.9. Lack of background knowledge

Background knowledge in language comprehension provides guidelines for the reader. Moreover, learners with no background knowledge should be provided background knowledge by the teacher (Smith, Snow, Serry & Hammond, 2021). Background knowledge, as stated in the schema theory, enhances reading comprehension, because learners, as readers, are able to comprehend the written text. This can be illustrated by attitudes, beliefs, and ideas they already have. Learners needs background knowledge in order to be able to construct a sentence and understand the meaning of it when reading comprehension hence, they will be building new vocabulary or information on the existing one which they already have.

2.2.6.10. Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic Awareness (PA) is a specific sub-skill of phonological awareness, it is the refined ability to segment words into constituting sounds and blend these sounds to form new words, it is the ability to break down parts of a word for better understanding of it (Yeong & Liow, 2012). Phonemic awareness is classically defined as an understanding of spoken language and in particular about the division of resonances that are used in speech communication. Phonemic awareness is the insight that every spoken word can be considered as a sequence of phonemes. Because phonemes are the units of sound that are represented by the letters of letters, an awareness of phonemes is key to understanding the logic of the alphabetic principle and thus to the learnability of phonics and spelling.

Phonemic awareness is branded in terms of the ability of the learner to manipulate the sounds of verbal speech. This is the most serious phonological element for the advance of reading and spelling. Phonemic awareness is the ability to focus on the distinct, single sounds in words, the phonemes, and be able to blend, segment and manipulate them. Phonemes are the smallest unit of sound that make a difference to

the meaning of words (Keesey, Konrad & Joseph, 2015). In other words, phonics are measured as the most important skill for children when they learn to read in first language situations. The importance of phonics and the success in phonics instruction depends on the level of acquisition of the prerequisites: phonemic awareness and alphabet recognition.

It could be concluded that if learners lack the phonemic awareness skill from a young age they could suffer in the long run because they will not be able to blend sound in words for proper understanding of them. For this difficulty to be reduced, there must be an early intervention on making sure that learners acquire the skill. He reckons that all learners can be able to read if they are given the right basics to the reading development, which in this case, he encourages the awareness of sound that are found in words.

The lack of sufficiently developed phonological awareness skills is worrying, as these skills are considered the best predictor for reading skills during the first years of school (Le Roux, Geertsema, Jordaan & Prinsloo, 2017). Of these, segmentation and fusion are the most important sub-skills required when a child begins to read (Yeong & Liow, 2012). A sufficient level of these skills will allow the learner to decode words during the early stages of literacy (Koda, 2007).

Pretorius, Jackson, Mckay, and Murray (2016: 22) agree with this and infer that the most common reason for early reading difficulties is weakness in phonemic awareness and phonological processing. Due to the above, children cannot transcode printed and oral language. Children identified with decoding problems need intense, structured, systematic, and explicit instructions about phonological awareness, letter sound relationships, mixing, using context to support decoding, polysyllabic word strategies (which are common in African languages) and automatic recognition of high-frequency morphemes (e.g. prefixes) and words.

2.2.6.11. Lack of motivation

Learners may run into a variety of reading comprehension difficulties while reading a text. Several factors include the learner's word knowledge, content knowledge, motivation, reading strategies, and the reading process (Marashi & Rahmati, 2017). Most students lack motivation from their teachers and their classmate which leads them to be not able to read appropriate because they will be fearing their classmate

if they laugh at them or if they make joke of how they read instead of motivating by correcting them. Furthermore, reading strategy is important to help with how learners read and think, and it gives them confidence while reading.

2.2.6.12. Lack of self-confidence

National Academy of Sciences (2018) highlights that pupils' perception of their ability or self-confidence is the central mediating construct of their achievement strivings in reading. In support to what the National Academy of Sciences had said, The American Library Association (2018) highlights that confidence plays a huge role in a child's successes in reading and in other school subjects. Furthermore, to confirm this highlight made by the American Library Association (2018), the National Academy of Sciences (2018) concurs that the major influence in the acquisition of expert performance in reading by pupils is the confidence and motivation to persist. Self-confidence drives learners to be better readers with no fears. I agree with the argument of (The National Academy of Sciences, 2018) and (The American Library Association, 2018) Learners with low self- confidence face challenges when participating in the classroom because they don't believe in themselves, they fear making mistakes and it results in, failure to comprehend and understand the comprehension text when they are reading.

2.2.6.13. Having stress or anxiety

Matthew Lynch (2020) state that having difficulty with reading comprehension can cause stress or anxiety about schoolwork, which in turn leads to greater difficulty with reading comprehension. This is mostly caused by low self – confidence. Teachers have to help learners feel easy when reading comprehension so that they don't panic and be stressed by means of that, learners must allow themselves to be corrected when they made mistakes and they should not feel like they are stupid since there's no one who knows everything.

2.2.6.14. Poor or struggling of word decoding

Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) indicate that decoding or word recognition has an impact on learners' reading comprehension. Readers who have problems in decoding and recognizing words find it difficult to understand the meaning of passages than those without decoding problems. When learners engage in debate in

class and using English to communicate, it helps them to know many words as possible and when they are reading comprehension, they will be able to recognize them and be able to comprehend their meaning since it won't be for the first time hearing them. It is important for learners to engage themselves in debate in school or classroom. Other learners may struggle with reading due to underlying difficulties with word decoding or oral language comprehension. Some learners struggle with word decoding because they lack prior knowledge, a core phonological deficit, and lack of exposure to more words and experience with text. Warren Erica (2021) believes that students that have underdeveloped word decoding skills find it hard to read. Since decoding skills include the ability to break words into syllables, apply knowledge of letter sounds, and correctly pronounce words. This means that learners must develop their decoding skills so that when they are reading, they can be able to correctly pronounce words and stop struggling with reading fluency.

2.2.6.15. Difficulty in concentration

Hidayati Dasrul (2018) found that difficulty in concentration during reading can be caused by a psychological factor. Bad concentration will lead the students fail to comprehend the text. It can be worse when the students do reading test. Furthermore, difficulty in concentration is another reason for students' poor reading because concentration is an important factor for a good and effective reading. In addition, if the learners are being disturbed with something that is occurring at home such as parents break up, it might take their attention and they lose focus especially when they are reading because when they are reading the can be thinking about what is happening at home and start to lose concentration which at the end will leads to poor performance.

2.2.6.16. Underdeveloped Environmental factors

Hangula (2021) found that one factor which may also contribute to reading difficult is the environmental factor which consists of the school and home environment. It will be very difficult for a child to have interest in reading if she/he is not motivated at home or school. Some learners come from poorly environment whereby they lack facilities to study and also materials to use when studying which results in poor exposure to reading materials. Learners who come from underdeveloped village are disadvantaged in becoming good readers.

Therefore, Mohammed and Amponsah (2018) found that factors contributing to the low reading abilities of the pupils include their lack of confidence to practice how to read in class, poor motivation from teachers and parents to help develop the interest of the pupils in reading, lack of pre-reader books in school and at home, lack of library, teachers inadequate knowledge on phonemic awareness strategy of teaching reading, lack of reading clubs and lack of reading competition among the pupils in the school.

2.2.6.17. The school

School as an environment can affect the way students learn to read, it can also prevent them from effective learning if some elements are not met, the ability of teachers to provide good reading instructions is the most powerful factor in determining how well students learn to read. Adequate resources, adequate human resources, and material resources are an integral part of teaching reading (Mthethwa, 2015). Rule (2017: 86) expresses how the traditional teaching method, in which path learning has been emphasized, meant that skinny people pronounced words accurately and fluently, but there was no evidence of understanding. Schools as a learning institution and also as a second residence for students have a strong relationship with the academic performance of students. Teachers through their exact roles have a negative or positive influence on the academic performance of students.

Therefore, teachers should improve a friendly learning environment in which students are free to consult them when they need it, provide adequate learning structures, and awaken students' interest in working hard, as well as developing a good relationship with teachers. Students help to disappoint if a student faces challenges. This can be seen in a decrease in their academic performance. Even when problems such as bulling arise, the student will not be afraid to discuss it with the teacher. Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016: 1) agree with this, saying that the results of their study show that many teachers are not immersed in enriching reading practices. Many teachers claim to do more than is reflected in their schools' literacy results, and teachers generally do not appear to have a clear understanding of the concepts of reading, reading development, and reading methodology. Van Staden (2016:10) believes that because students are taught in their native language during the foundation phase, they are exposed to the second language of the fourth grade.

This has an impact on the reading challenges these students experience, also emphasizing that the severity of their discovery is exacerbated by the fact that these students were assessed in the language in which they had received instructions during the founding phase of the school.

2.2.6.18. Language barriers and classroom setting

The diversity of languages or multilingualism seems to be a challenge for both teachers, instead of being considered a resource. In other words, teachers did not use students' home languages as a good basis for learning FAL English. The teachers themselves seemed to have difficulties in English which they use as their first additional language (Tuswa, 2016). One factor that has been frequently studied is the teacher-pupil relationship. Although this measure is not calculated comparatively in different studies, there is reason to believe that a higher teacher-pupil ratio contributes to the achievement of reading by students in the lower classes (Ferguson, 1991). In other words, a number of teachers taught reading without reading books to students who do not have the opportunity to read when they are at home. This requires more reading time for students to read in rural schools. It was also discovered that teachers used code-switching (CS) to teach FAL reading while many students struggled to read and understand what they were reading. The issue of support was also another important issue that was discovered when teachers claimed that they were not getting enough support from parents and DBE.

Lenyai (2011: 01) agrees with these and says that the methods used by teachers to teach English as an additional first language have not developed children's understanding and communication skills. He argues that if teachers do not use methods that encourage children to communicate in English, children may not acquire the skills necessary to use English as a Grade 4 learning language. Teachers have significant difficulties in implementing reading strategies to achieve the levels of competence required by the CAPS document. Respondents in this research found that they were heavily tested when it came to implementing CAPS strategies recommended to students. It has also been noted that there are distinct gaps in teaching reading to students in the foundation phase. In addition, teachers struggled to interpret reading methods as indicated in the policy framework.

Lumadi (2016:102) found that students write wrong times and use wrong prepositions through the notebooks that students use for class work. The main difficulties are punctuation, pronunciation, spelling errors and the use of the wrong times. These are the difficulties that students experience in reading and writing. Pretorius and Klapwik (2016: 8) mention that although teachers claim to "do the right things" in their classes in terms of reading instruction, their schools' literacy outcomes hold otherwise, meaning that the understanding of teachers in methodologies and concepts required for effective reading instructions do not correspond to what is required. In other words, at a deeper level they are not yet "understanding" or "understanding it well". In this regard, the result of the current study that effective literacy education is linked to teachers' reading habits is also related. If teachers need to develop strong literacy skills and habits in their learners, they themselves must be skilled readers and knowledgeable about reading and books.

Sebetoa (2016) adds that most South African teachers do not take English as the main subject in their teaching career. This is one of the reasons why reading at the intermediate stage in rural schools is almost impossible. Similarly, Mthethwa (2015: 48) confirms that teachers' ability to provide good reading instructions is the most powerful factor in determining how students learn to read. Teachers face many challenges in teaching reading and include limited training and lack of teacher support, basic student skills, and language difficulties.

Makhubele (2015: 35), in her study of the challenges teachers face in implementing reading practices, she shows that teachers face overcrowded classes, lack of parental involvement, and lack of support from the department, principals, and department chief. This prevents effective teaching resulting in a lack of reading skills on the part of the students. This is in line with the results of the study by Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016: 1) that indicates that many teachers are not immersed in enriching reading practices; many teachers claim to do more than is reflected in the literacy of their students. School results and teachers generally do not appear to have a clear understanding of the concepts of reading, reading development, and reading methodology. Although the curriculum places a strong emphasis on oral language, it has been widely recognized that implementing the oral language element has proven to be challenging and that some teachers may have had

difficulty implementing this component because the underlying framework was not for them clear. There are a growing number of English learners in early childhood classrooms that have created challenges for teachers serving general education. Traditional teacher preparation programs tend to lack a curriculum focused on second language teaching and learning.

In a related study, Duff, Tomblin and Catts (2015) deduce that children can enter school with poor listening, speaking and / or phonological processing skills. Children with poor hearing and speaking are estimated to have language problems or developmental language disorders and it is estimated that about 10% of children entering schools have a language development disorder. There are other children for whom phonological processing skills are poor and these children are at risk of reading disorders. Estimates of the prevalence of reading disorder among school-age children typically range from 10 to 18%. While language learning and reading disorders in the early school years can occur on their own, it is very common for a child to have both. This bears the blame on the teachers, as it is proof that some reading disorders stem from the students' backgrounds.

2.2.6.18. Physical factors

These are factors that can affect one's overall being, physical health relates to the functioning of the physical body. There are many diseases, conditions and disabilities that can impair functioning.

2.2.6.18.1. Disabilities and illnesses

There are many disabilities that affect a child's reading proficiency. Thurlow, Moen and Altman (2006) mention some of the characteristics of students who have one or more than seven disabilities that are specific learning difficulties, language or language disorders, mental retardation disorders, emotional / disability behaviour, autism, deaf or hard of hearing, vision problems and indicated some of the best known problems and approaches to instruct and evaluate these students in reading. Reading difficulties are observed among students with learning difficulties more than any other problem area of academic achievement. It is the most common type of

academic difficulty for students with learning difficulties. It is estimated that around 90% of students with learning difficulties have reading difficulties and even low estimates are around 60%.

Aladwani and Al Shaye (2012) present dyslexia as a language-based learning disability. Dyslexia refers to a series of indications, leading to people who have difficulties with specific language skills, especially reading. Students with dyslexia generally face difficulties with other language skills, such as spelling, writing, and pronouncing words. Dyslexia affects people throughout their lives; however, its impact can change at different stages of a person's life. It is known as a learning disability because dyslexia can make it difficult for a student to prosper academically in the classical teaching environment. Dyslexic children have trouble acquiring fluent reading. The growing body of evidence indicates that dyslexic readers have trouble acquiring certain reading skills, such as fluent and accurate word recognition. Weakness of phonological decoding ability is also assumed to be the main cause of reading difficulties, as acquisition of all word recognition skills is believed to depend on the alphabet process.

The degree of difficulty a child with dyslexia has with interpretation, spelling, and / or speech varies from person to person due to innate differences in brain development, as well as the type of instruction the person receives. The brain is normal, often very "intelligent", but with strengths in other areas besides the linguistic area. This "difference" is not detected until the person finds it difficult to learn to read and write.

People with dyslexia are unique, but the multisensory approach is flexible enough to serve a wide range of ages and learning differences. A multisensory approach can be valuable to many. For the dyslexic child, it is essential. Teaching competence is the key. The intent of this toolkit is to provide classroom teachers with basic information about dyslexia, dispel some of the myths and misconceptions that surround it, and to be a resource that will increase their ability to ensure the success of different groups of students in his classes (International Dyslexia Association, 2017).

Dyslexic students in public schools are exposed to mistreatment by other students who have despised, ridiculed, abused, and weakened them. The results also revealed that teachers in public schools were not patient with dyslexic students, did

not pay special attention to them, and that some teachers used negative comments that embarrassed them. Lack of widespread recognition of disability means that families will continue to experience difficulties evaluating their child, recognizing the diagnosis of dyslexia, and consequently keeping their child in school. It is important to use the traditional and newer approaches used in teaching to enhance the educational experience and reach dyslexic students who will be introduced and discussed to provide an updated review of these approaches inside and outside the classroom. Emphasis will be placed on the most widely used approaches, in particular those that have generated the most field studies. Children with learning difficulties are a heterogeneous group. These children are a diverse group of individuals who present potential difficulties in many different areas. For example, one child with a learning disability may have significant reading problems, while another may not have reading problems, but has significant difficulties.

2.2.7. Strategies to improve reading ability

Comprehension strategies are conscious or intentional plans that people use to achieve a goal and are deliberately used to make sense of the text. Readers consciously use strategies to make sense of text, critical ideas, and integrate new learning into existing patterns or prior knowledge. Students must learn to use strategies independently, to recognize and solve problems, and to deepen the text to make connections and inferences. South Africa has developed a national reading strategy that is the response of the Minister and the Department of Education to promote reading in South African schools. It is a management tool that affirms the vision to improve students' proficiency and reading levels. This strategy indicates how the Department of Education intends to achieve this vision (DoE, 2008).

Improving reading comprehension means teaching students to think while reading. Students who can improve reading skills with the help of teachers may be better prepared for the next grade than those who earn it as content (Palinscar and Brown, 1984). The investigation revealed the importance of students developing independent and self-regulating behaviours in the use of strategies based on codes and meanings, such as knowing when and how to focus attention, how to intentionally use a variety of strategies to read and write unknown words and how to monitor and adjust the meaning of the text. Recognizing that interest, motivation,

basic knowledge, culture, socioeconomic status, and past experiences also play a critical role in learning to read is important. It becomes vital to take advantage of students' basic knowledge and interests by teaching and instilling reading skills (International Literacy Association, 2019). Reading strategies are not the same as teaching strategies. The goal of teaching strategies is to teach students to make sense of the text. Teaching strategies are the plans used by the teacher to teach understanding. They include, among others, explicit explanations, modelling, prior teaching, learning organization, and scaffolding. Defined strategies emphasize teaching and student engagement. There must be an interaction between reading and didactic strategies, the language teachers of the magicians of the intermediate phase tend to be the intermediary between the two.

Most children who enter the Foundation and the Intermediate Phase without being able to read for a correct understanding run the risk of failing to read and can learn to read at medium or higher levels, but only if they identify themselves in advance and Equipped with Systematic and explicit systems and an intensive education in phonemic awareness, phonetics, reading fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension strategies, this means that students who have fallen behind during those elementary years can still get help. That becomes the role of language teachers to make sure that the gaps these students have are filled.

For effective reading instruction in a school setting, the school setting must be inclusive of all students. To be inclusive, therefore, traditional schools in general and specific classrooms need to be reformed and restructured to be more responsive to students who encounter obstacles to learning and development. This requires advanced teaching methods and flexible support systems. Welcoming diversity requires recognition of each student's uniqueness to meet individual needs. This should be facilitated when, in compiling a reading program to meet individual needs, the reader, text, and context are combined through assessment and education.

Vacca and Vanna (1981) developed a guide that guides professionals through teaching the main mutual reading skills to strengthen confidence in teaching reading comprehension and provides models and models on how to structure comprehension lessons. In order for children to understand what they read, they must first be able to read the words on the page. They must be aware of the letters

and sounds they produce and understand that they must merge these sounds to create words. This is decoding. Good readers determine if the words they read make sense in a sentence. If the words don't make sense Reading is a thought process. Effective readers know that when they read, what they read must make sense. They monitor their understanding and when they lose the meaning of what they are reading, they often unwittingly select and use a reading strategy (such as rereading or asking questions) that will help them reconnect with the meaning of the text. Reading skills and strategies can be explicitly taught as students learn subject-specific content through authentic reading activities (Monet, 2003).

Tierney (1985: 553) argues that reading is a thought process. Effective readers know that when they read, what they read must make sense. They monitor their understanding and when they lose the meaning of what they are reading, they often unwittingly select and use a reading strategy (such as rereading or asking questions) that will help them reconnect with the meaning of the text. Reading skills and strategies can be explicitly taught as students learn subject-specific content through authentic reading activities. Effective readers use strategies to understand what they read before, during, and after reading.

Before reading, they:

- use previous knowledge to reflect on the topic.
- Make predictions about the probable meaning of the text.
- preview the text by scrolling and scanning to get an idea of the general meaning. As they read, they:
- supervise comprehension by asking questions, reflecting and reflecting on the ideas and information in the text.

After reading, they:

- reflect on the ideas and information in the text.
- relate what they have read to their experiences and knowledge.
- clarify your understanding of the text.
- expand your understanding critically and creatively.

Talley's study (2017:86) concluded that reading instruction changes when a distressed reader is introduced to multiple grouping strategies, vocabulary instruction, and comprehensive comprehension strategies in education. The results

of the study identified that games, group work, texts of great interest, games or poetry influence readers who struggle to participate in the reading process.

2.2.8. Theories of reading

In order to improve the techniques of teaching reading, teachers must have an understanding of these three topics, which are the theory of top-down, bottom-up, and meta-cognitive. By doing so, the reading proficiency of learners of English as a foreign language could be significantly enhanced.

2.2.8.1. Top down model

In top-down models of reading, the cognitive and linguistic competence of the reader plays a key role in the construction of meaning from printed materials, meaning, in this case, understanding, according to these models, is obtained using only the necessary information from the graphic, syntactic and semantic indication. Other ideas are based on the linguistic competence of the reader (Ngabut, 2015). This means that if attendees know the language in which the text is written, they will be able to read it for a better understanding, the reader's background and vocabulary also play a role in decoding the written symbols. All meaningful text has a major impact on reading comprehension that cannot be clarified through experimental procedures that have examined letters, words, and sentences in isolation.

In this model, reading is not simply extracting meaning from a text, but a process of connecting information in the text with the knowledge that the reader brings to the act of reading. In this sense, reading is a dialogue between the reader and the text that involves an active cognitive process in which the reader's basic knowledge plays a key role in creating meaning (Pardede, 2017).

In the top-down reading model, the emphasis is placed on student engagement with the text. It is not enough to convince students to simply know the word they see, understand its general meaning, and know how to pronounce it if they read aloud. The goal of top-down reading theory is to convince students to become active readers. Active readers have a greater understanding and broader vocabularies and are better able to engage in abstract and logical thinking. If a reader is aware that a current text is related to a previous text, this understanding could guide the evaluation of the knowledge activated by the previous text through ascending

resonance mechanisms. A possible starting point for this evaluation process is a title. A title is known to help the reader understand a text she is reading, particularly when that text is relatively difficult to understand.

2.2.8.2. Bottom up model

This model sees reading essentially as a process of translation, decoding or coding. Here the reader begins with larger letters or units, and while dealing with them begins to anticipate the words he spells. When words are identified, they are decoded into internal words from which the reader derives the meaning in the same way that he hears. In this process, reading comprehension is believed to be an automatic result of accurate word recognition.

This model requires students to match letters and sounds in a defined sequence. According to this opinion, reading is a linear process by which readers decode the text word by word, connecting words in sentences and then in sentences. Bottom-up processes are those that collect stimuli from letters and words from the outside world, to read and manage such information with a small use of higher-level knowledge. This means that reading is determined by the upward processing of visual information. As the signal spreads through an increasingly complex hierarchy of neural sensors, mental operations become increasingly elaborate. In particular, the left occipito-temporal cortex is gradually responsive to lexical information, ranging from single letters and bigrams to morphemes, and eventually to full words. This model is in line with phonemic awareness and phonetic reading type, so students are forced to read phonetics before they can deal with the whole word.

2.2.8.3. Schema theory

Pearson-Casanave (1980:34) points out that a schema theory is basically a theory of knowledge. It is a theory of how knowledge is represented and how this representation facilitates the use of knowledge in particular ways. According to schema theories, all knowledge is grouped into units. These units are the patterns. In addition to the knowledge itself, these knowledge packages incorporate information on how to use this knowledge. Therefore, a schema is a data structure to represent generic concepts stored in memory.

The basic principle of schema theory assumes that written text has no meaning of its own. Rather, a text only provides guidance to readers on how they should retrieve or generate meaning from their previously acquired knowledge. This prior knowledge is called basic reader knowledge (prior knowledge), and previously acquired knowledge structures are called patterns. According to the schema theory, understanding a text is an interactive process between the basic knowledge of the reader and the text. Efficient understanding requires the ability to relate textual material to one's knowledge.

These theories not only influence the way information is interpreted, which affects understanding, but also continue to change when new information is received. The patterns can represent knowledge at all levels, from ideologies and cultural truths to knowing the meaning of a given word, to knowing which excitation patterns are associated with which letters of the alphabet. We have schemes to represent all levels of our experience, at all levels of abstraction. Our patterns are our knowledge. All our generic knowledge is integrated into the schemas. The importance of schema theory for reading comprehension also lies in the way the reader uses schemas.

This is in line with the study by Al-Issa (2006: 43) that concluded that the closer the correspondence between the reader's outline and the text, the greater the understanding. Understanding of any kind depends on knowledge; that is to say, relating what we do not know (that is, new information, with what we already know, which is not a random collection of facts but a world theory). In other words, our understanding of a text depends on the amount of related schema that we as readers possess in reading. Consequently, the inability of first and second language readers to make sense of a text is due to the lack of an appropriate outline that can be easily adapted to the content of the text. This lack of an appropriate schema can be content, formal, or linguistic.

2.2.8.4. Mega-cognitive

Metacognitive knowledge is defined as the knowledge of the mental processes that are involved in different types of learning. Metacognition has two fundamental aspects that are cognition knowledge and self-directed thinking. Self-directed thinking is regulated by evaluation, planning and regulatory activities.

Metacognition involves active monitoring and the consequent regulation and orchestration of cognitive processes to achieve cognitive goals. Metacognition is deliberate, planned, intentional, goal-oriented, and future-oriented mental processing that can be used to perform cognitive tasks. Metacognitive strategies differ from cognitive strategies in that they span multiple subject areas, while cognitive strategies are likely encapsulated within a disciplinary area, so readers who know met cognitively know what to do when they encounter learning difficulties.

Metacognitive strategies indicate self-thinking and can facilitate increased learning and developed performance, especially among students who are extremely concerned with understanding the written context. Recognizing and monitoring cognitive processes can be one of the most important skills that teachers, instructors, and instructors can help improve EFL / ESL students. Students are said to become aware of their mental processes. This includes recognizing which types of learning tasks cause difficulties, which approaches to remembering information work better than others, and how to solve different types of problems (Zare-ee, 2007). Knowledge of the metacognitive reading strategy is a higher order performance element that involves planning the causes of learning, monitoring, clarifying and repairing the failure of understanding or evaluating the success of a learning activity, that is, own strategies - planning, self-control, self-regulation, questioning and self-reflection (Pressley, 1995).

2.2.9. The language of learning and teaching

The language of learning and teaching (LOLT) is the language used to teach school subjects in the classroom. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) states that "every learner has the right to receive a basic education in the language of his/her choice". Through this right, learners' diversity and individuality is recognized and this can facilitate the important objective of unlocking their potential. The significant of higher education value is knowledge and when the learner lacks the capability to read, he then lacks knowledge wherein pupils are not given relevant material about health, social, cultural and political issues, as well as foundations of preference and enhancement. Reading is important for learning because it gives the learner opportunity to be independent and be able to grasp information in the world

of education (Gunning, 2007). The National Department of Education recognizes that reading is part of nation- building and that it is the most significant linguistic skill that needs to be established in undeveloped learners (DOE, 2008).

Reading is important for learning and if pupils have not correctly grasped the skill their prospective for achievement in the learning setting is vulnerable. Research in South Africa specifies that, in overall pupils reading skills are poorly established and this relates from primary school over to tertiary level. Children (beginners) normally encounter reading difficulty and those at foundation phase are still struggling to read. According to the Department of Basic Education (2008), there is growing awareness of lack of early reading failure which is carried over into the Senior Phase. The cause of this can be with the negligence of the teacher and curriculum 2005 or National Curriculum Statement as most of teachers have believed that it is not necessary for them to teach reading as learners will just learn to read eventually. Also, many teachers struggled simply because they did not know how to teach reading.

2.2.10. The importance of reading in Intermediate Phase

It is important for parents to make sure that their children succeed in reading from early age then progressing to reading together, until children are able to read on their own. According to National Reading Strategy (2008), reading promotes confidence as an individual in a modern society and as a member of a national and world community. It further outlines that reading enables us to act creatively and critically in a world which is ever changing, and it also provides rapid, ready access to new information and knowledge that will help us in life-long learning. In other words, reading is key for lifelong learning and learning is the minimum requirement for success in any field. Therefore, it is important for children to develop love for books and reading at an early age.

2.3. Theoretical framework

Social constructivism is used as theoretical framework for this study. Social constructivism is a theory of knowledge in communication and sociology and the theory verifies how knowledge is generated and developed (Vygotsky, 1978: 38). Vygotsky (1978: 112) asserts that people first learn from their communication with each other, before they can understand the environment; this is what he calls cognitive growth. Social constructivism is relevant to study because it advocates for

knowledge developed through social interaction and language use in the classroom as a shared, rather than an individual experience among learners and teachers. In social sciences, social constructivism theory gives learners an understanding of the real world around them as far as language use is concern in different contexts. Vygotsky (2006: 80) puts more weight on the social environment as a learning and development assistant. Other people play an important role in the growth of a child, when they communicate with the child by playing, sharing toys and giving objects. A child depends on other people, such as his parents, during the early stages of life as the socio-cultural environment continues to give the child challenges and activities to explore (Turuk, 2008:247). In this case, learners need the teacher as a mediator to help them explore the world (Vygotsky, 2006:44).

It is necessary to have a mediator between the child and the world for operational learning to take place, and in this case, the educator will be the best mediator. The ability to learn through mediation is a characteristic of human intelligence (Bruner, 1984:23). Mediation helps the children to understand more than they can do on their own, it can also help as the mediator can close the gaps that the child is making by filling in the relevant information, the children with the knowledge they acquire will then learn to do things on their own, and Vygotsky called this "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 2012:133).

This theory was used mainly in the analysis of the findings of this study as it alludes to learners being part of the learning process that gives learners a chance to be able to construct meaning of the knowledge that they have gained at home and in Foundation Phase. In Foundation Phase, learners mainly rely on the teachers' meaning; they grow from all that the teachers provide. But in the Intermediate Phase, it is where the learners are required to think critically about what they learn. The theory encourages the use of rewards as an important part of the learning process. In this case, Intermediate Phase teachers teach learners how to read, giving them tasks that encourage them to read more and in this way, the teachers' job is to act as a facilitator and mediator between the learners and the learning process.

2.4. Summary

This chapter discussed literature related to concept of reading, the importance of reading, reading difficulties in South Africa, factors contributing to reading difficulties,

the language of learning and teaching, the importance of reading in Intermediate Phase and theories of reading comprehension. The following chapter outlines the research design and describes the population and sampling process, data collection methods and the data analysis procedures adopted in this study as well as ethical consideration.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, different literatures were reviewed to convey to the researcher what knowledge and ideas have been established on the research topic, and what their strengths and weaknesses are by guiding concept on the research objectives, and the research problem under discussion. The aim of the chapter was to build a broader understanding about the nature and meaning of the research problem by discussing and distinguishing what has been done from what needs to be done. This chapter describes the methodological approach that was adopted in this study. It justifies the qualitative approach, which was adopted. It presents a brief discussion of the sample population, sampling techniques, data collection

instruments and data analysis tools used in this study. The overall aim of this study is to investigate the reading challenges experienced by learners in the Intermediate Phase.

3.2. Research methodology/approach

According to Pilot and Hungler (2004: 233), research methodology is a way of obtaining, organising and analysing data. Methodology decisions depend on the nature of the research question.

This research has adopted the qualitative research methodology, as a research methodology which is characterised by its aims which relate to understanding some aspects of social life, and its methods which generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis. This is qualitative research method whereby factual data is being used, the researcher used face-to-face interactions with the participants in order to obtain data about the reading challenges that they are facing.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 20) define qualitative research as a situated activity, which locates the observer in the world. It involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world, i.e. qualitative researchers study phenomena in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpreting phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. A qualitative approach includes research concepts and methods from multiple established fields. The aim of a qualitative research project varies with the discipline background, such as psychologists seeking in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern such behaviour for example. The researcher becomes involved and immersed in the phenomenon to become familiar with it. The immersion of the researcher helps to provide dense descriptions from the narrative data gathered from the participants, to interpret and portray their experiences, and to generate empathetic and experiential understanding. A qualitative case study was relevant to this study because it enabled the researcher to use multiple methods and sources of data such as semi-structured interviews and observation method to generate data to understand reading challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase learners at Mamothibi Lower Primary school and Molemole Lower primary school at Sekgosese West Circuit, Limpopo province.

3.2 Research design

Research design is the overall plan for conducting the conceptual research problem to the pertinent empirical research. A research design refers to the structure of an enquiry, it is a logical matter rather than a logical one. The role of a research design is to minimise the chance of drawing incorrect casual inferences from data. This is a basic plan that guides the data collection and analysis phases of the research project. It provides the framework that specifies the type of information to be collected, its sources and collection procedure. It is the blue print that is followed to complete the study and it ensures that the study is relevant to the problem and will use economic procedure (Kinnerar & Taylor, 1996).

A research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. In fact, the research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data.

As such the design includes an outline of what the researcher will do from writing the hypothesis and its operational implications to the final analysis of data. The research adopts a non-experimental research design, which is defined by Kothari (1990: 31) as a research in which an independent variable is not manipulated.

A research design may be qualitative or quantitative. According to Creswell (1998:15), qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed vies of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting.

In this study, the researcher as a passive participant, collects data by just observing, scoring points on a set rubric and then conducts an interview. The researcher used a pure descriptive research design under the non-experimental design whereby the information will be about the current existing problem. According Pilot (2001, 1878), non- experimental research is used in studies whose purpose is description and where it is unethical to manipulate the independent variable. Non-experiential research is suitable for research constrains such as time, personnel and the type of participants, make the non-experimental research more feasible.

This study used the interpretative research design wherein the researcher placed the participants at the centre of the research project, meaning she will get meaning out of the participants' lived experiences. Interpretative research design gives the researcher an opportunity to study participants in their social context, and to understand how they perceive their world (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). In other words, this study gave participants the opportunity to express their realities and how they could address challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase learners using the case study of two primary schools at Sekgosese West Circuit, Limpopo province.

3.3 Research paradigm

This study adopted interpretivist paradigm, which is the belief that reason is the best way to generate knowledge about reality. The interpretivists aim to obtain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context, not to generalize a whole population (Creswell, 2007: 245). This worked well with the study, as it used interviews and observations to generate knowledge of the participants' experiences about the world around them.

3.4. POPULATION AND SAMPLING

3.4.1. Population

Study population refers to the whole set of "individuals" "units" to which the study question refers or for which we intend to conclude something (Silverman, 2016: 245). The population for this study included 102 Intermediate learners and 4 teachers from two selected schools, with 53 learners and 2 teachers from school A and 49 and 2 teachers from School B.

3.4.2. Sampling

A sample is a subset that is faithfully representative of the population (Quinlan et al., 2019: 43). This study used the simple random sampling which entails randomly selecting subset of a population. In this sampling method, each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2013). The sample for this study included 106 participants comprising of 102 Intermediate learners from Grade 4 and Grade 6 and 4 educators from two selected primary schools. Four classes were selected from the two schools as this is an entry point from the base Phase to the Intermediate Phase and Grade 6 with 21 from each school were selected because this is the starting point of the Senior Phase, so the

researcher was interested in knowing if the problem overlaps to Senior Phase or if it only happens in the Intermediate Phase. Preference was given to the English FAL, as it is the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). The researcher verified the grade record sheets that teachers use in class to enter the grade to identify the performance levels of the selected learners.

3.5 Data collection

According to Bay (1994: 2), data collection is the process of obtaining useful information. Data collection can involve multiple decisions by data collectors. When preparing a data collection plan, one should try to eliminate as many subjective choices as possible by operationally defining the parameters needed to do the job correctly. This is done by establishing separate criteria and a specific way to judge when a step begins and when it ends.

3.5.1. Observation method

The observation method which is a way of gathering information/data by watching behaviours, events, or noting physical characteristics in their natural setting, will be used whereby the researcher will observe the participants when reading, she will do this while rating their performances according to the set rubric. Observation can be overt or covert. In this study the researcher will adopt the covert style whereby the participants being young children will not be aware that they are being observed this is done because the participants might not be comfortable and not be their usual selves, so this will in turn give false results. The observation will be direct wherein the observer will watch the interactions, processes, and behaviours as they occur (DHHS, 2008).

3.5.2. Semi-structured interview

Interviews which is a natural and socially accepted way of collecting data as it can be used in various situations covering a variety of topics. An interview is a conversation whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the world- life of the interviewee, with the respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena. An interview was conducted with teachers to respond to questions about their experiences in teaching reading in the Intermediate Phase. It was used to obtain a clear picture of

the context in which the learners find themselves to verify their participation in the language class as well as to identify learners' gaps in the acquisition of reading skills.

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is described as messy, ambiguous and time consuming, but also as a creative and fascinating process (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). In this study, the researcher used a thematic data analysis for data analysis, whereby the information gathered was organised according to themes.

Qualitative data analysis is an on-going process, which means that data collection, processing and analysis are entangled (Kobus, 2015: 60). The researcher used inductive thematic analysis to analyse data in this study because it is concerned with trying to understand the lived experiences and with how respondents themselves make sense of their experiences of addressing their challenges of learning and teaching English language in an Intermediate Phase. This is consistent with Strauss and Corbin's (1998) description of inductive thematic analysis. In other words, the researcher began with an area of study and allowed the theory to emerge from the data wherein themes were derived from transcribed semi-structured interview and data observation. The researcher read transcribed recordings as well as the analysis of the observation several times until she reached a saturation point.

3.7. CREDIBILITY AND RELIABILITY

The researcher assessed or increased legitimacy and expand engagement by conducting the study long enough to obtain adequate representation of the voices in the study. The researcher used triangulation for credibility purposes to confirm the evidence from collected data through semi-structured interviews and observation schedule. The researcher verified the results with the study participants and use a recorder to provide accurate data and evidence. Participants quoted literally, with translations and clarifications to substantiate the results.

3.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics refer to what is morally acceptable and immoral when interacting or obtaining information from participants (Macmillan and Schumacher, 1997:117). The researcher was transparent and open with the participants by informing them about all the aspects of the research. The researcher was accountable for safeguarding the

rights and security of the participants. The researcher observed the following ethical considerations:

3.8.1. Permission

The researcher asked parents of the learners for permission to conduct the study with their kids, as she will work with minor children. She sent assent forms to be signed by parents and consent forms to be signed by teachers to show that they agree to participate in the study. The researcher wrote a letter of request to the principals of the schools to ask for permission to conduct the study. The research proposal was sent to TREC as it is the key advisory body to the authority on research policy issues, for them to pre-screen if all the protocols for collecting data have been observed before the researcher can conduct the study.

3.8.2. Voluntary and Confidentiality

The researcher informed the participants of the purpose of the study and the procedures so that participation can be voluntary. The researcher ensured that there is mutual respect between her and the participants and that the identity of the participants remains unknown, in this way, their privacy was protected. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw if they wish, without facing any problem. The researcher used numbers and alphabets in place of the participants' names rather than using the participants' identity. The participants were informed about their right to privacy and that the information provided will not be made available to any other person.

3.8.3. Safety

The researcher carried out the study in the classrooms to ensure the safety of the learners since the classrooms are free from any form of physical harm. Due to the current pandemic of Covid-19, the researcher was guided by the Disaster Management Act regulations relating to social distancing during interviews and wearing of face masks. The researcher had a one-on-one interaction with the participants in a separate classroom rather than collecting data in a crowded classroom to avoid embarrassment. The researcher used the debriefing method to prevent psychological harm that the participants may experience, in doing this, the researcher informed the participants about the procedures that will take place in conducting the study, and this included the study title, researchers name and contact details, also all the aspects in the study. The researcher provided the participants an opportunity to withdraw their consent to participate or to withdraw their data from the

study if they so wish. The full study may be provided to the participants after completion. Should the participants experience psychological harm, they will be taken to the nearby clinic for counselling.

3.8.4. Risks/ Harm associated with the study

These are physical, emotional and psychological uneasiness that participants may face during or after the completion of this study.

 ➢ The study has a potential risk of causing anxiety to the participants.
 ➢ It can lower the participants'' self-esteem as a result cause distress.
 ➢ Their identity may be published in papers, by themselves or others.

3.9. CONCLUSION

The methodology used in gathering data for this study was described in the chapter. Sampling, data collection strategies and tools were elaborated upon. The learners were referred to using numbers for confidentiality and anonymity. The data was collected using interviews and observations. The chapter was concluded with ethical considerations relevant to this study. Analysis and interpretation of data collected, as well as conclusion will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted the methods used to address the research objectives of the study. It also outlined the research approach, research design, and demarcation of the population, sampling techniques used to select the research site and of actual participants. This chapter presents findings and analysis of data on investigation of reading challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase learners using the case of Mamothibi Lower Primary school and Molemole Lower primary school at Sekgosese West Circuit, Limpopo province.

4.1. Data presentation of quantitative and qualitative data

The analysis and interpretation of the findings are guided by the overall argument of the reading challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase learners using the case of Mamothibi Lower Primary school and Molemole Lower primary school at Sekgosese West Circuit, Limpopo province. The overall argument is informed by three objectives of this study which summarise the gap identified in the existing literature. The analysis and interpretation adopts a sequential and integrative account in accordance with the data collection instruments as indicated in chapter 3.

4.1.1. Interview Schedule

The interview schedule has biographical information of respondents with nine open-ended questions.

4.2.1. Biographical information

The biographical information sought to establish the gender, age, experience and educational level of English First Additional Language teachers in the Intermediate Phase between the age of 25 to 55.

4.2.1.1. Gender representation

The gender difference was an important variable in the analysis of the study because it shows the exact number respondents per gender and demonstrate how a dominant gender would affect the overall outcome of the study. Descriptive statistics was used to calculate the frequency counts of gender as illustrated in table 1 below:

Gender Representation					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	1	25	25	45.2
	Female	3	75	75	100.0
	Total	4	100.0	100.0	

Table 1: Frequency of gender representation

Table 1 indicates that there were four (4) respondents who participated in the study. The frequency distribution in table 1 above indicates that one of the

respondents was male, representing 25% and three respondents are female, representing 75%. The respondents are a small portion of the population representing the whole population of English First Additional Language teachers in the Intermediate Phase between the age of 25 to 55. In accordance with table 1, the study statistically shows that there was no gender balance between the male and female respondents due to the frequency of one male and three female respondents.

4.2.1.2. Age representation

The age difference was an important variable in the analysis of the study because it shows the most age range of respondents and to demonstrate how an age range would affect the overall outcome of the study. Descriptive statistics was used to calculate the frequency counts of the age range as illustrated in table 2 below:

Age Representation					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	25-40 years	3	75	75	75
	41-55 years	1	25	25	25
	Total	4	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2: Frequency of Age Representation

The frequency distribution in table 2 above revealed that the majority of respondents were from age category 1 with 75% (*n=3*), representing 25-40 years followed by age category 2 a with 25% each (*n=1*).

4.2.1.2. Education level representation

The education level representation was an important variable in the analysis of the study because it shows knowledge and expertise of English First Additional Language teachers in teaching reading in the Intermediate Phase as illustrated in table 2 below:

Educational level representation					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bed Foundation Phase	1	25	25	25
	Bed Senior Phase and FET	1	25	25	25
	PGCE	1	25	25	25
	BA Language Education	1	25	25	25
	Total	4	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2: **Educational level representation**

The frequency distribution in table 2 above revealed that the respondents were having different educational qualifications with category 1 with Bed Foundation Phase 25% (*n=1*), category 2 with Bed Senior Phase and FET representing 1 (15%), category 3 with PGCE Bed Senior Phase and FET representing 1 (25%) and category 4 with BA Language Education representing 1 (25%).

Teaching experience

The frequency distribution in table 3 below revealed teaching experience of English First Additional Language teachers in teaching reading in the Intermediate Phase as illustrated in table 3 below:

Teaching experience representation					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-5	2	50	50	50
	6-10	2	50	50	50
	Total	4	100.0	100.0	100.0

The frequency distribution in table 3 above revealed teaching experience of English First Additional Language teachers in teaching reading in the Intermediate Phase with category 1 with 1-5 years teaching experience 50% (*n=2*), category 2 with 5-10 years teaching experience 1 (50%).

4.3. Presentation and interpretation of qualitative data from interview schedule of English First Additional Language teachers

Semi-structured interview was conducted with four English First Additional Language teachers in the Intermediate Phase wherein respondents and the researcher talked about the challenges experienced learners in the Intermediate Phase First Additional Language reading classroom based on the following research questions:

4.3.1. How is the performance level of the learners you are teaching now, compared to the learners you have taught in the past?

This question seeks to determine the performance level of learners in the English First Additional Language reading classroom by comparing the previous cohort with the current cohort. English First Additional Language teachers in the Intermediate Phase indicated the following to explain the performance level of learners in the English First Additional Language reading classroom by comparing the previous cohort with the current cohort:

Teacher 1- fairly poor

Teacher 2- their performance if very low compared to those in the past.

Teacher 3- the learners' performance has downgraded drastically as opposed to the previous years.

Teacher 4- I would say the current learners are performing poorly, compared to the ones I have taught for the past two years.

The above responses show that the reading performance of the current cohort is poor as compared to the reading performance of the previous cohort. The findings of this study suggest that learners who enter the Foundation and the Intermediate Phase without being able to read for a correct understanding run the risk of failing to read and can learn to read at medium or higher levels, but only if they identify themselves in advance and equipped with systematic and explicit systems and an

intensive education in phonemic awareness, phonetics, reading fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension strategies, this means that students who have fallen behind during those elementary years can still get help. This finding is supported by Qrqez and Ab Rashid (2017: 421) who found that respondents face different problems in the reading process, such as ambiguous words, unknown vocabulary and limited time available to elaborate cognitively the text.

4.3.2. Out of the all the subsections in the English subject, which one do your learners perform good in?

This question seeks to determine the subsections in the English subject that learners perform good in. English First Additional Language teachers in the Intermediate Phase indicated the following to explain subsections in the English subject that learners perform good in:

Teacher 1- comprehension passage and summary

Teacher 2- they seem to enjoy and understand advertisements as they are practical, hence they perform fairly good at it.

Teacher 3- shorter transactional texts, as they involve too much of practical work.

Teacher 4- shorter transactional texts, those that involve writing letters and the like.

The above responses show that learners are performing good in comprehension passage and summary, advertisements and shorter transactional texts because they involve writing. This finding reveals the importance of learners developing independent and self-regulating behaviours in the use of strategies based on codes and meanings, such as knowing when and how to focus attention, how to intentionally use a variety of strategies to read and write unknown words and how to monitor and adjust the meaning of the text. Recognizing that interest, motivation, basic knowledge, culture, socioeconomic status, and past experiences also play a critical role in learning to read is important. It becomes vital to take advantage of learners' basic knowledge and interests by teaching and instilling reading skills (International Literacy Association, 2019).

4.3.3. In which subsection in EFAL do they perform poorly?

This question seeks to determine the subsections in the English subject that learners perform poorly. English First Additional Language teachers in the Intermediate Phase indicated the following to explain subsections in the English subject that learners perform poorly:

Teacher 1- longer transactional text (comprehension passage)

Teacher 2- visual literacy/ text

Teacher 3- summary

Teacher 4- comprehension passage

The above responses show that learners are performing poorly in comprehension passage, summary writing, longer transactional text and visual literacy. The findings of this study are supported by Siu (2018) who found that poor comprehension hinders learners ability to incorporate source materials in their summary writing when it comes to providing a clear account of the most important information without copying the text and missing valuable.

4.3.4. How can you rate the level of reading comprehension, as compared to other subsections?

This question seeks to determine the level of reading comprehension as compared to other subsections amongst English First Additional Language learners in the Intermediate Phase. English First Additional Language teachers in the Intermediate Phase indicated the following to explain the level of reading comprehension amongst learners as indicated below:

Teacher 1- it is poor

Teacher 2- the level would be 5 of 10

Teacher 3- it is average

Teacher 4- average

The above responses show that learners are performing poorly in comprehension passage, summary writing, longer transactional text and visual literacy. The teachers' responses are supported by Iqbal et al. (2015) who found that learners are not able to read fluently because they are not able to pronounce or read some words. These words seem alien to them as they must recognise the words written in an alien script. This affect their comprehension of the text.

4.3.5. Are there any challenges that you encounter when teaching reading in EFAL in the Intermediate Phase?

This question seeks to determine challenges encountered by teachers when teaching reading in EFAL in the Intermediate Phase. English First Additional Language teachers in the Intermediate Phase indicated the following challenges:

Teacher 1- the pronunciation is very poor, so the text loses is meaning.

Teacher 2- some of the learners are unable to read and write

Teacher 3- teaching them how to read means having to go back to teaching them how to speak using the language, so all that becomes difficult as we have a little time to do that.

Teacher 4- we have less contact time with the learners, doing the actual teaching and learning, because there is too much school admin that we have to work on.

The above responses show that learners are having poor pronunciation of words and they also lack reading basics which makes it difficult for teachers to teaching reading in the Intermediate Phase. The above responses also show that teachers are having less contact time with the learners because they are doing too much school admin that affects the actual teaching of reading. Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2018:6) concur with the findings of this study when indicating that most learners do not usually read, and they have low vocabulary which leads them to find it hard to pronounce words, and more especially some try to read English using their home language which they end up pronouncing words wrongly.

67

4.3.6. How is your learners' attitude towards learning how to read in EFAL?

This question seeks to determine learners' attitude towards learning in EFAL reading classroom and Intermediate Phase. English First Additional Language teachers in the Intermediate Phase indicated the following:

Teacher 1- negative, because they do not want to practice this how to speak using this language and reading forces them to speak.

Teacher 2- most of them are not positive

Teacher 3- sceptical

Teacher 4- negative, most of these learners already have a bad attitude towards this language and they are somewhat scared to use it.

The above responses show that learners are having negative attitudes towards English First Additional Language because they don't want to practice how to speak this language even reading. The above responses also show that learners are scared to read and speak in English because of their inadequate English proficiency. The findings of this study are supported by Lynch (2020) who state that having difficulty with reading comprehension can cause stress or anxiety about schoolwork, which in turn leads to greater difficulty with reading comprehension.

4.3.7. Based on your experience of teaching reading in EFAL, do you think there are strategies which can be adopted to improve the reading levels of learners?

This question seeks to determine teaching strategies that could be used by teachers to improve the reading levels of learners. English First Additional Language teachers in the Intermediate Phase indicated the following:

Teacher 1- yes, by affording learners an opportunity to bring articles of their favourite topics and read them to the class.

Teacher 2- yes, skimming and scanning. There should be pre-reading, during reading and post reading activities e.g. answering questions, drawing conclusions etc.

Teacher 3- yes, bringing magazine and newspapers at school for learners to read.

Teacher 4- yes, learners must be given more time to read, this can be at least 30 minutes every day, meaning that schools must have enough books in the libraries for leaners to read.

The above responses indicate that teachers should afford learners the opportunity to bring articles, magazine and newspapers of their favourite topics and read in the class as way of trying stimulate their interest in reading. Respondents indicated that learners must be given more time to read, at least 30 minutes every day, meaning that schools must have enough books in the libraries for leaners to read. Respondents also indicated that there should be pre-reading, during reading and post reading activities e.g. answering questions, drawing conclusions etc. as way of improving learners' reading proficiency. This finding further suggests that teaching reading should be inclusive which requires advanced teaching methods and flexible support systems. In other words, reading strategies require recognition of each learner's uniqueness to meet individual needs. This should be facilitated when, in compiling a reading program to meet individual needs, the reader, text, and context are combined through assessment and education.

To be inclusive, therefore, traditional schools in general and specific classrooms need to be reformed and restructured to be more responsive to students who encounter obstacles to learning and development.

4.4. Presentation and interpretation of observation data

It is outlined in chapter three that observation is the process of watching the daily life and behaviours of participants in their natural setting such as the classroom to record aspects such as actions and interactions (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). Moreover, Creswell (2014) points that one of the key elements of collecting data in qualitative research is to observe participants' behaviours during their engagement in activities. Thus, the observations of learners' behaviour were done during teacher-learner interactions in the classroom to assess the teaching and learning of reading

skills. Observations were done to assess learners' behaviour (attitudes and habits) during their engagement in reading activities. The researcher observed that learners hide their face behind the book/ text, they are anxious; they show fear and annoyance when they are asked to read and make unnecessary comments to avoid reading. Most of the learners do not voluntarily read in class, they wait for the teacher to ask them to read. This shows that they have no interest to read. The findings of this study are supported Lynch (2020) who found that teachers have to help learners feel easy when reading comprehension so that they don't panic and be stressed by means of that, learners must allow themselves to be corrected when they made mistakes and they should not feel like they are stupid since there's no one who knows everything. This is mostly caused by low self – confidence. They want to be forced to read. Furthermore, the teacher's teaching strategies were observed. It was revealed that teachers lack knowledge and the application of reading strategies. They do not give reading activities enough time. The only time learners are engaged in reading is during oral activities and during the literature lesson, whereby learners read the novels, drama books and poems one by one. The learners are not motivated and encouraged to read. This finding is supported by National Reading Strategy (2008) which found that most teachers in South Africa lack understanding of teaching literacy, reading and writing. Majority of teachers don't know how to teach reading. Thus, teachers know only one method of teaching reading, which may not suit the learning style of all learners and they don't know how to stimulate reading inside and outside the classroom.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has presented qualitative data collected using interviews and observation method. In the subsequent chapter, the focus will be on the summary of the main findings in the study, recommendations from the study, the limitations of the study, further research and conclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE: **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 Introduction

This study aimed to investigate reading challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase learners at Mamothibi Lower Primary school and Molemole Lower primary school at Sekgosese West Circuit, Limpopo province and determine effective strategies to use to develop and improve learners' reading skill. This chapter presents the discussion of the findings, summary of the findings and conclusions drawn from the study as well as the limitation and proposed recommendations.

5.2. Overview of the study

In chapter one, the researcher outlined the background as well as research problem. It was followed by literature review in chapter two, whereby the background on

learners' reading proficiency in South Africa was explored. As well as the causes and strategies of reading skill. Chapter three outlined the research methodology, followed by the data analysis and interpretation in chapter four. Lastly, the summary, conclusion, limitations and recommendations of the study were outlined in chapter five of the study. Therefore, this chapter presents the summary of the findings and proposed recommendations towards teaching reading skill among learners in the Intermediate Phase. The findings of this study suggest that the various reading strategies should be integrated to develop and improve reading skill among learners. This argument is supported by Kucukoglu (2012). In his study on improving reading skills through effective reading strategies revealed that the learners had an improvement to a great extend have been taught about the reading strategies. Therefore, it is important that teachers use various reading strategies to improve learners reading skills.

5.3 Discussion of the findings

The findings reported in this study were collected from semi-structured interview and observation method. Four teachers were interviewed and forty-two learners were observed during reading lesson for one hour.

5.4 Summary of the main findings in the study

The finding indicate that learners in Intermediate Phase read below their grade level and this is a cause for concern. At this level, learners should be able to read fluently and with understanding as they work towards achieving their goals. This suggests that without strong reading literacy development, learners will battle to be successful in their educational progression throughout schooling, which has unpleasant consequences for their prospects. Thus, this part of the study will present the summary of the main findings of the study into themes below:

a) The causes of poor reading among learners

It is evident from the findings of the study that there are various factors that cause poor reading among learners such as poor command of vocabulary because learners do not practice extensive reading; no interest to learn creativity in reading but the goal to pass examination; lack of confidence to practice how to read in class;

poor motivation and interest from teachers and parents to help develop the interest in learners; learners lack knowledge of reading strategies and teachers' inadequate knowledge on using different reading strategies to teach reading skill.

b) Challenges faced by learners in reading

There are challenges faced by learners in reading that affect their comprehension. The study found that learners are unable to infer meaning of words from the context because of lack of vocabulary knowledge; they have challenges of pronunciation of words and they become anxious when asked to read in class. The study revealed that learners are not motivated and encouraged to read but they only read in the classroom when asked by the teacher.

c) Strategies or methods to use to improve learners' reading skill

It is evident form the findings of the study that learners view extensive reading strategy as the best strategy that can assist to improve their reading skill. Thus, it is important that teachers and parents motivate and encourage learners to read various English textbooks, magazines, and newspaper articles for pleasure. It was revealed that teachers are not aware of various reading strategies and the application skills. In line with the literature in chapter two, there are various reading strategies that teachers can employ to develop learners' reading skill. It is evident that teachers be skilled through workshops on the application of these reading strategies.

It is clear from data presented in chapter four that strategies need to be integrated. Moreover, the responses from teachers show limited understanding and application of reading strategies. It is important for teachers to be trained on the application of reading strategies in an EFAL classroom. The analysis of data from observation gave conclusive evidence that learners need to be motivated and encouraged to read. They need to be taught how to integrate various strategies to mitigate their poor reading skill.

5.4 Significance of the findings and the contribution of the study

It is outlined in chapter one that reading skill is one of the most significant skill in English. It is therefore important for Intermediate Phase learners to be assisted in improving this skill before they can face challenges in Senior Phase. The findings of

this study reveal that learners need to be encouraged, motivated and taught about reading strategies. Teachers should be workshopped on the application of various reading strategies in their classrooms. Thus, the findings encourage parents to be involved in their learners' learning. The Department of Basic Education must train qualified teachers in English to teach this crucial skill. Multiple ways of teaching reading skill including strategies proposed in this study will be of significant because it will assist the English teachers in teaching reading skill to Intermediate Phase learners. In addition, learners will develop the love for reading since reading skill plays a crucial role in their educational success.

5.5 The limitations of the study

The study aimed to investigate learners' reading skill but only had four teachers to participate in the study because they were the only teachers teaching English in the Intermediate Phase.

5.6 Recommendations

Considering the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Learners need to be motivated and encouraged to read extensively by teachers and parents at home. They should practice reading of interesting books at home such as magazines and newspaper articles.
- Department of Basic Education should arrange on-going training on reading strategies for teachers. They will be able apply them in the EFAL classroom to improve reading skill among learners.
- Subject advisors should continuously give teachers support on reading strategies.
- Teachers should teach learners to integrate various reading strategies when engaging in reading activities.
- Reading should be given enough time to be taught to learners.

5.7 Conclusion

It is revealed from this study that poor reading among learners is a cause for concern, as it affects their education negatively. Hence, some researchers blame

learners' poor reading skill to teachers' lack of knowledge about different reading strategies and application. Thus, it is crucial that teachers be skilled through workshop, and learners be taught to use reading strategies and to be motivated to read to develop the love of reading. The findings of this study encourage the curriculum advisers, planners and teachers to work hard in finding ways to plan, design and apply various reading strategies to improve reading skill among learners.

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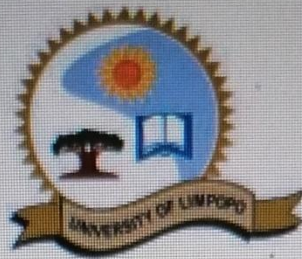
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLERANCE CERTIFICATE

APPENDIX B: REQUEST LETTER TO CONDUCT A STUDY

P O BOX 154

BOYNE

0728

05.11.2019

THE MANAGER

MAMOTHIBI LP SCHOOL

PO BOX 19

DWARSRIVER

0812

Sir/ Madam

Re: Request for permission to conduct a study

I, Mamabolo J.S, currently registered for Masters of Education in Language Education at the University of Limpopo request for permission to conduct a research on reading challenges that are experienced by Intermediate Phase learners at your school

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the school with a bound copy of the full research report.
Hoping for a positive response

Yours sincerely

_____

Mamabolo J.S

(Researcher)

APPENDIX C: REQUEST LETTER TO CONDUCT A STUDY

P O BOX 154

BOYNE

0728

05.11.2019

THE MANAGER

MOLEMOLE JUNIOR PRIMARY SCHOOL

PO BOX 225

DWARSRIVER

0812

Sir/ Madam

Re: Request for permission to conduct a study

I, Mamabolo J.S, currently registered for Masters of Education in Language Education at the University of Limpopo, request for permission to conduct a research on reading challenges that are experienced by Intermediate phase learners at your school.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the school with a bound copy of the full research report.

Hoping for a positive response

Yours sincerely

Mamabolo J.S

(Researcher)

APPENDIX D: REQUEST LETTER TO CONDUCT A STUDY

<div align="right">

P O BOX 154

BOYNE

0728

05.11.2019

</div>

THE CIRCUIT MANAGER

SEKGOSESE WEST CIRCUIT

PRIVATE BAG X152

DWARSRIVER

0812

Sir/ Madam

Re: Request for permission to conduct a study

I, Mamabolo J.S, currently registered for Masters of Education in language Education at the University of Limpopo, request for permission to conduct a research on reading challenges that are experienced by Intermediate phase learners at Mamothibi Lower primary school and Molemole junior primary school.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the Department of Education with a bound copy of the full research report.

Hoping for a positive response

Yours sincerely

_____

Mamabolo J.S

APPENDIX E: ASSENT FORM TO LEARNERS' PARENTS

Tittle of the research project: Investigating reading challenges of Intermediate Phase learners in Sekgosese West Circuit, Limpopo province.

Researcher's name   : Mamabolo J.S

Name of Institution   : University of Limpopo

Faculty   : Humanities

I am Mamabolo Johanna Selelo, currently registered for Masters in Language Education. I am undertaking a study to investigate the reading challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase learners. I am asking your child to take part in the research study because they are relevant for the study.

For this research, the researcher will keep all the respondents' answers private. Only the teacher, the researcher and the participants will be present when the learners read. We don't think that any big problems will happen to your child as part of this study, but they might feel overwhelmed because they will have to read out loudly. This study might help your child in building up their confidence for reading in front of unfamiliar faces.

You can feel good about helping us to investigate the reading challenges that are faced by most South African children.

➢ The learner does not have to be in this study if he or she does not want to.
➢ The learner may discontinue being in the study at any time.

➢ The learner is allowed to refuse to take part in the study even if their parents/ guardians have agreed.
➢ You are free to ask the researcher questions related to the study, now or later.

      Feel free to contact me on this number 0790224102.

Sign this form only if you:

> ➢ have understood what your child will be doing for this study,
> ➢ Have had all your queries answered.

Name of parent/guardian   :_____

Signature   : _____

Name of the researcher who explains the study : _____

Signature   : _____

APPENDIX F: CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

Tittle of the study: Investigating reading challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase learners in Sekgosese West Circuit, Limpopo province

Researcher   : Mamabolo J.S

Discipline   : Masters of Education in Language Education

Email address   : johanna.mams@gmail.com

Purpose of the study: The purpose of the study is to investigate the reading challenges experienced by grade 4 learners in the Intermediate Phase.

Procedures: The researcher will activate the tape recorder; she will then ask you questions based on your experience of teaching. You will then give answers based on what you know.

Duration and location: The procedure will take appropriately 30 minutes. The research will take place in the classroom.

Participant's requirements: The participant will only be required to answer to the set questions and give an explanation of what they know based on the asked questions.

Risks: there will not be any harm and risks other than the risks that are there in the everyday life. You may feel tired during the interview, and should that happen you may take self-paced breaks.

Benefits: The information collected may help you as a teacher in knowing the levels at which your leaners are performing, which can help in identifying the gaps that your learners have in learning how to read. This will help you to know how to vary your teaching methods.

Compensation and costs: There will not be any cost for participating in this study. Participation in the study is voluntary.

Confidentiality: by taking part in this study, you agree that you understand that you may be required to disclose your consent from, and the tape record, if it is required by the law, subpoena or court order. The records of the interview will only be in the hands of the researcher and will only be disclosed to other researchers, by signing to participate in the study and agreeing that the information gathered in the study may be disclosed or used by the University of Limpopo for educational purposes. But your name, address, contact numbers and other personal identifiers will remain protected.

Rights: You have the right to stop with the interview and will not face any penalty, as participation in the study is completely voluntary. The interviewer has the right to remove you from the participating in the study for whatever reasons, should that happen you will not have to face any consequence.

Right to ask questions and contact information

You have the right to ask questions about the procedures and any other query you might have based on the study. You may ask the question now or later on the study. Feel free to contact the researcher by mail.

Voluntary consent

By signing this form, it means you have understood and agreed to participate in the study.

_____   _____

Participant's signature   **Date**

I confirm that I have explained the procedure to the participant, the possible benefits and the risks that may be associated with the study, and that I will answer to their questions during the process of the study and in future as they arise.

_____   _____

Researcher's signature   **Date**

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY

1. For how many years have you taught English First Additional Language in the Intermediate Phase?

2. How is the performance level of the learners you are teaching now, compared to the learners you have taught in the past?

3. Out of the all the subsections in the English subject, which one do your learners perform good in?

4. In which subsection in EFAL do they perform poorly?

5. How can you rate the level of reading comprehension, as compared to other subsections?

6. Are there any challenges that you encounter when teaching reading in EFAL in the Intermediate Phase?

7. Which challenges do you face, if you have answered 'yes' to the above question?

8. How is your learners' attitude towards learning how to read in EFAL?

9. Based on your experience of teaching reading in EFAL, do you think there are strategies which can be adopted to improve the reading levels of learners?

10. Is there anything else you would like to bring to the attention of the researcher, pertaining to reading in EFAL in the Intermediate Phase?

APPENDIX H: RUBRIC FOR SCORING LEARNERS READING LEVELS

Learner_____

Grade readers books	4	3	2	1
Word recognition skills	Use phonics, contextual clues to read unfamiliar words in context.	Uses some phonics, contextual clues to read unfamiliar words in context.	Improper use of phonics, struggle to read unfamiliar words.	Does not recognise phonics, fails to read unfamiliar words.
Comprehension skills	Use visual clues to make meaning of written text.	Use some visual clues to make meaning of written text.	Struggles to relate visual clues to get meaning of the written text.	Fails to use visual clues to make meaning of the text.
Fluency	Read aloud a familiar text with understanding, comprehension skills (discusses characters, plot)	Read aloud a familiar text with some understanding and there is some presence of comprehension skills	Read aloud familiar text without understanding and little evidence of comprehension skills.	Fails to read aloud and no comprehension skills.
Story book				
Word recognition	Use a range of self-correcting	Use some range of self-	Use a little range of self-	No evidence of self-correcting

skills	methods to read unseen words in text	correcting methods to read unseen words in text.	correcting methods to read unseen words in text.	methods to read unseen word.
Comprehension skills	Express an opinion, sequence events in a story.	Express some opinions, and fair sequence of events in a story.	Only tell what has been asked with the sequence of events not well structured.	No opinions, improper sequence of events.
Fluency	Read aloud with expression, using pause and intonation.	Read aloud with some expressions, recognises some punctuations	Read aloud without expressions, punctuations are not all recognised.	Does not read aloud, does not recognised

Total_____

APPENDIX I: EDITING LETTER

30 September 2022

To whom it may concern,

This is to confirm that I proofread and re-edited Ms **MAMABOLO JS** (Masters dissertation entitled *"Investigating reading challenges experienced by intermediate phase learners in Sekgosese West Circuit, Limpopo Province"* Her dissertation read fairly well. Errors attended to included but were not limited to concordance, repeti-tions, genitives, determiness, colloquialism, as well as discourse markers. After attending to these errors, Ms Mamabolo's dissertation now reads perfectly well. **It however remains her sole responsibility to effect the changes outlined therein.**
Should you require any clarification, my contact details follow below:
Cell: 0784803023 or 0607589535

Email: 68ngwenya@gmail.com
Or: ngwenyachris@webmail.co.za

Sincerely,

Ngwenya Christopher (PhD).