

Parental involvement in the development of reading among Grade R children in an Indian community

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ABSTRACT

This ethnographic case study explores parental involvement in the development of Grade R children's early reading in four Indian homes in a South African community. Existing research shows that there is reason for grave concern in South Africa regarding the reading achievements of a large fraction of children. However, parental involvement in reading development at Grade R level in South Africa is conspicuously under-researched, more especially within the Indian community. The study addresses this through the capturing of rich descriptions of reading activities in four South African Indian families who have a child in Grade R.

The study draws on a socio-psycholinguistic approach to reading, mediated learning theory and ecological theory to understand parental involvement in children's reading development. Adopting an interpretative, qualitative, ethnographic case study design, it uses questionnaires, interviews, observations and personal reflections to gather data and thematic content analysis to analyse the data.

The findings in this study highlight the mediating role of parents in their children's early reading development. In these families, the children's microsystem (parents, grandparents, siblings, and caregivers) mediated their reading development which was enriched through imaginative play. In addition, religious practices influenced the culture of reading in the families. The roles of parents in their child's reading development were informed by their own personal early reading development experiences as well as their understanding of the importance of early reading development. Consequently, parents focused on developing their child's vocabulary and comprehension skills, and influenced and encouraged their child's imaginative play.

<p>Key words: Grade R; parental involvement; Indian community; reading; ethnography; mediated learning.</p>
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DECLARATION

I, Mitasha Nehal, declare that:

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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Signed: 

Mitasha Nehal

As the candidate's supervisor I agree to the submission of this thesis.

Signed: 

Dr. Peter Neville Rule, Supervisor

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my precious family:

Rupan & Romilla Nehal; Pravind & Veena Singh

Divesh Singh,

Akash Singh,

Surina & Rishay Singh,

Shaveer & Heshika Nehal,

Letisha & Vishaad Bodasingh

Vihaan Singh

Vibha Singh

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to study

Twenty minutes a day; you have the time, And so do they.

Read while the laundry is in the machine, read while dinner cooks,

Tuck a child in the crook of your arm and reach for the library books.

Hide the remote, let the computer games cool,

For one day your child will be off to school.

Make it fun! You have the choice.

Let them hear their first tales, in the sound of your voice.

Reading in the morning, reading over noon, read by the light of

Goodnight moon.

Turn the pages together, sitting as close as you'll fit,

'Till a small voice beside you says,

"Hey don't quit!"

Author: Unknown

This poem provides a vivid scenario of the engagement that parents and their young children should cultivate in their home, as reading is a vital life skill that children need to completely develop in order to be successful. However, there are many South Africans that have not yet fully acquired the skills needed for reading and this seems to be an ongoing downward spiral resulting in more and more South Africans being disadvantaged. According to a study by

Taylor and Von Fintel (2016), between 2010 and 2015, only half of the students that started Grade 2 got to Matric. Although there are many factors that contribute to high dropout levels, these levels are a large contributing factor to illiteracy in adults. This further results in a high rate of unemployment as our youth have very little education and are unskilled. Additionally, many studies conducted in South Africa have found that children at primary school demonstrate low literacy skills (Pretorius, 2002; PIRLS, 2001, 2006 and 2011; SACMEQ, 2000, 2007) when compared to our sister countries.

The literacy problems encountered in South Africa have been identified as a holistic problem and have not been differentiated in terms of racial groups in South Africa. Hence, I have identified an underlying gap in that there is very little or no scholarship regarding South African Indian reading practices and reading culture. However, there has been much research with significant literature that covers the Indian Diaspora in South Africa, acknowledging that the first generation of indentured labourers that arrived in South Africa were in fact illiterate (Meer, 1969; Govinden, 2008; Hassim, 2002; Vahed & Desai, 2010; and many more writers). Despite this, and embedded within this literature, is their view of the importance of education and their support and encouragement of sending their children to schools that were initially opened on the plantations by missionaries. This view of the importance of education has been passed down from generation to generation and is still to date a belief of many South African Indians.

The South African Department of Education (DoE) administered a countrywide survey in 2004 to examine and reflect on the literacy levels in primary schools. It was discovered that students across the country had low levels of reading ability (DoE, 2005). The National

Strategy for Reading, which was a programme that encouraged reading at schools to improve the skill of reading and the reading levels of all students, was therefore implemented by the government across all schooling institutions in South Africa to help overcome this problem (DoE, 2008, p.3). Despite the implementation of this programme students in various grades were still performing poorly - they were unable to read, comprehend or spell words correctly yet were being promoted to the next grade. This has been evident in the Annual National Assessments (ANA, 2013): the performance in Home Languages was at an average mark of close to 50% and First Additional Language tests offered in Grades 4 to 6 and 9, were at a lower level of performance. Thus, it is clear that we are still producing learners that are encountering difficulties in reading, writing and comprehension (DoE, 2013).

Several studies indicate that the South African educational system tends to focus on surface decoding skills rather than developing comprehension skills, despite teachers and practitioners' knowledge that the objective of primary education is the mastery of reading comprehension, as this provides the foundation for most learning that takes place in secondary school (Sporer, Brunstein & Kieschke 2009). The predominant focus on decoding skills was found in the research conducted by Pretorius (2002), where there was an overemphasis on decoding skills, with very little attention given to the development of comprehension skills during the 'learn to read' phase (Grade 1–3). Pretorius (2000, p.34) acknowledges, "decoding is a necessary reading skill but it alone does not constitute reading: comprehension is the *sine qua non* of reading". Hence, it is important that all reading components (decoding, comprehension, fluency, phonemics and vocabulary) are integrated during the development of reading which needs to start at an early age, before children begin school.

In recent years there have been several large studies conducted in South Africa by various organisations (PIRLS, 2001, 2006, 2011; SACMEQ, 2002, 2007) together with local researchers (Pretorius, 2000; Matjila & Pretorius, 2004; Pretorius & Ribbens, 2005; Fleisch, 2007) and the Department of South African Education (DoE, 2003; ANA, 2013); and many more smaller studies, to identify learners' reading achievements and abilities over various grades. The results of all these studies showed that South African learners were performing dismally in literacy compared to their peers regionally and internationally. Table 1 provides a summary of the results of the different studies which highlight the poor reading results obtained in South Africa.

Table 1: Summary of reading results in South Africa		
YEAR	ORGANISATION	RESULT
2002	SACMEQ	<u>Reading test</u> - the mean scores of South African students placed the country 9th out of the 14 African countries
2007	SACMEQ	<u>Reading test</u> – South African schools placed 10 th out of 15 African countries
2006	PIRLS	<u>Reading achievement</u> – Grade 5 learners gained the lowest score of 45 countries that participated
2011	PIRLS	43% of Grade 5 learners in South African schools have not developed the basic skills of reading required at an equivalent international Grade 4 level
2001	Systematic Evaluation – Grade 3	54 000 Grade 3 learners in 2 000 schools, participated, with an average score of 30% in literacy
2007	Systematic Evaluation – Grade 3	54 000 Grade 3 learners in 2 000 schools participated with an average score of 36% in literacy

Although the summary of results in Table 1 highlights the poor state of learners' reading abilities and reading achievements, it is important to acknowledge the contributing factors

which have a considerable influence on the reading crisis in South Africa. A few of these contributing factors were highlighted in the PIRLS 2006 and 2011 Summary Report by Howie et al. (2008 & 2012), namely: economic factors, social inequality, language barriers and class sizes. Many learners come from impoverished backgrounds and disadvantaged homes thus resulting in a lack of reading material and resources. This has a disadvantaging effect on learners as they lack materials and support at home. In addition it makes teaching reading difficult at school as learners lack the basic knowledge and skills which would help them considerably in the classroom, such as vocabulary. As a result van der Berg, Girdwood, Shepherd et al. (2013) suggest that Grade R should be affiliated with ECD pedagogical practice and should not be a simpler version of Grade 1. In addition, they affirm that the Grade R curriculum must be clear about the foundations for literacy and must encourage active, child-centred, participatory methods of teaching and learning which develops children's emergent literacy through the exposure to reading, pictures and mediated explanations of text which are essentially important. They further state that a strong, quality sound programme may not be able to remove the serious economic problems and social indifferences experienced by children in South Africa however, it could be a powerful equaliser to reduce disadvantages.

Furthermore, due to poverty and the social inequalities that exist among South Africans, many learners do not attend preschool which also affects reading scores because many important skills that are developed early in a child's life in a preschool context are lacking. Language barriers also affect reading scores as many learners are learning in a language that is not their mother-tongue. According to the National Education and Evaluation Development Unit's (NEEDU) 2012 report, many children in the Foundation Phase are being taught in a

language that is not their mother-tongue and they are being exposed to resource materials at school that are in a language which they are unfamiliar with, hence, poor reading development and poor results. In addition, a South African study found that language delays remained constant between Grades R to 3, suggesting that education was not powerful enough to overcome an entrenched problem (van der Berg et al., 2013). As a result, “a South African study found that 65% of Grade R learners enter Grade 1 without the necessary skills or concepts to master reading” (van der Berg et al., 2013, p.3). Also, class sizes in some schools in South Africa are large (Howie, Venter, Van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Du Toit, Scherman & Archer, 2008). Howie (2012) states that, due to the poor educational and schooling systems in rural areas, many parents are moving their children to urban schools so that their literacy skills can improve and they can receive a better education.

The most recent outcry concerning poor reading levels among our children in South Africa, erupted following the announcement by Angie Motshekga, the Minister of Basic Education in South Africa, in August 2016 during a ‘Lead to Read’ Conference held in Cape Town that only 14% of South Africans read books while only 5% of parents read to their children. Thus, the Department of Education has begun its newest campaign called ‘Read to Lead’ which was launched in 2015, as part of a countrywide government initiative to instil a reading culture in pupils and to improve children’s ability to read. Motshekga stated that this initiative will run until 2019 and will provide teachers with clear directives on the Department’s expectations of achieving the expected levels of performance. In addition, she explained the aims of the campaign are to ensure learners are able to demonstrate age appropriate levels of reading by 2019, as well as to motivate learners to make reading a lifestyle choice. She highlighted that in order to achieve these aims the entire country needs to be responsible in providing collective support in changing attitudes and in instilling a passion in each child for this

critical skill. Furthermore, the government is hoping that in the long term, a culture of reading will be reflected in schools, homes, communities and businesses (Peterson, 2016).

Over and above South Africa's reading crisis at schools, it is clear that learners lack basic reading skills which can be developed early in a child's life. In addition, the lack of parental involvement, reading materials and support all contribute to learners' lack of basic early reading skills. There is evidence that one of the factors influencing poor reading performance is the lack of parental involvement. Rose's (2004) study that was conducted with indigenous Australian children shows that learners that lacked parental involvement performed poorly in reading. Thus, parental involvement in the development and encouragement of reading from a young age is crucial as it assists children in becoming successful and competent readers at school and in society. As Denessen (2007, p.237) argues,

Many early literacy programmes emphasise the role of parents in supporting their child's early literacy development. Suggested parent involvement activities in these programmes mainly focus on reading activities (e.g. reading to children, shared reading), which are said to be very effective in promoting children's literacy skills.

There is a body of literature that shows that children from middle-class homes do better at school because school-based literacy practices correspond with what they learn at home. Again, Rose's (2004) research found that parents who were highly literate, scaffold their children's literacy development before they begin school, while children who did not receive this support were instantaneously disadvantaged and were unable to cope in terms of succeeding in their reading development. Similarly, many learners in South Africa learn to

read in English, which in many cases is a second language which they are only just beginning to learn. This has a negative impact on their reading performance, as many students do not have the support at home or materials that can positively influence their reading performance. Therefore, it is important that parents - or others who are connected to the home environment, such as older siblings, if the parents cannot read - assist in developing their children's reading skills and abilities by encouraging reading at home. This should be done by using different methods and techniques to engage their children in reading as well as providing support and guidance to children in order for them to become successful readers.

Furthermore, family literacy, as a complement to school literacy, plays an important role in the development of early literacy. Hammack et al. (2012) states that young children benefit when their teachers and families engage, unite and participate with each other in ways that assist them to learn, grow and feel confident. "Students learn more and succeed at higher levels when home, school, and community work together to support students' learning and development" (Epstein & Sanders, 2006, p.87). Therefore, it is important that teachers and families engage in ways that develop a positive link between home and school to develop learners' early reading skills.

1.2. Focus and Purpose of the Study

This study focuses on the involvement of parents in the development of reading among their children in a South African Indian community. The research was conducted with four English-speaking families that reside in a town in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, who have a child/children in Grade R. This research focus included the methods and techniques that

parents used to develop reading skills and abilities among their children and the culture of reading that informs these practices in their homes.

The broad purpose of the study was to investigate, analyse and understand the involvement of parents in the development of reading among their young children within the South African Indian community.

1.3. Rationale

The first aspect of the rationale for this study stems from my own experience as a teacher of reading. As an educator I am faced with the challenge of learners experiencing difficulties with reading; in particular, their vocabulary is limited and they encounter difficulties pronouncing longer multi-syllable words. While many learners are able to decode words, they encounter difficulty with comprehension. Many learners struggle with understanding the deeper meaning of texts. Also, many learners have a limited knowledge of different types of literacy. This made me question how involved parents are in the development and promotion of reading among their children, and whether reading is being encouraged at home and if parents sit with their children to develop important skills and abilities of reading or simply expect reading to be developed at school only by their teachers.

A second reason for the study concerns the national state of reading in schools. Society in general is entirely aware that reading is a crucial life skill that forms an important basis in the life of every child. As a result, reading is being taught at schools; however, schools may be encountering difficulties teaching children to read because many learners do not have a

strong reading background. Consequently, the literacy gap in South Africa is widening. This is evident in research conducted by PIRLS in 2006 (Mullis, Martin, Kennedy & Foy, 2007), in which South African grade four learners' performance in reading tests was so poor that it was ranked last out of 40 countries. South Africa's reading crisis is still an ongoing problem and a national concern, as evident in the current Minister of Education, Angie Motshekga, joining hands with a reading initiative programme, 'Lead to Read', as a country-wide initiative to develop a reading culture in children and to develop their reading skills. This initiative started in 2015 and will be run for four years by the 'Lead to Read' organization and the South African Department of Basic Education.

Through my personal experiences I noticed that primary school learners are still struggling to read despite the efforts of government initiatives and school policies. This was confirmed by my Masters study which found that teachers focused more on learners' ability to read rather than reading to learn. Also, the mechanics of being able to read received attention from teachers but the comprehension of reading was neglected (Nehal, 2013, p.112). In addition, the Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statements (CAPS) (DoE, 2011) also places great emphasis on the teaching of reading in the classroom. In fact reading and viewing are among many outcomes that teachers are supposed to be implementing in the classroom so that learners become better readers with a good sense of comprehension.

A third reason for the study explores the deficiency of scholarship that has been written about parental involvement in reading in the South African context. Although it is a well-established area of research internationally, studies of parental involvement in their children's reading development are lacking in South Africa. Although some studies have dealt with

school-based literacy in South Africa (Verbeek, 2010; Pretorius & Spaul, 2016), very few studies have actually investigated and focused on the involvement of parents in the development of reading among their young children (in the 5 year age group which is Grade R) in South Africa. This has created the desire within me to go into homes and investigate the involvement of parents in reading development among their children. In particular, there are no studies in this regard of the Indian community in South Africa.

The fourth reason for this study is the fact that I am a new mother myself and have a keen personal interest in understanding the reading development of my own children and my role in this. Thus, I would like to understand and explore how other parents within the Indian community deal with the development of reading among their young children.

These have all contributed to my decision to investigate parental involvement in the development of reading within an Indian community.

1.4. Key Research Questions

- What is the nature of parental involvement in the development of children's reading?
- How do we account for the levels and nature of parents' engagement in children's reading development?

The following are sub-questions that assist in building a strong study in response to the main research questions:

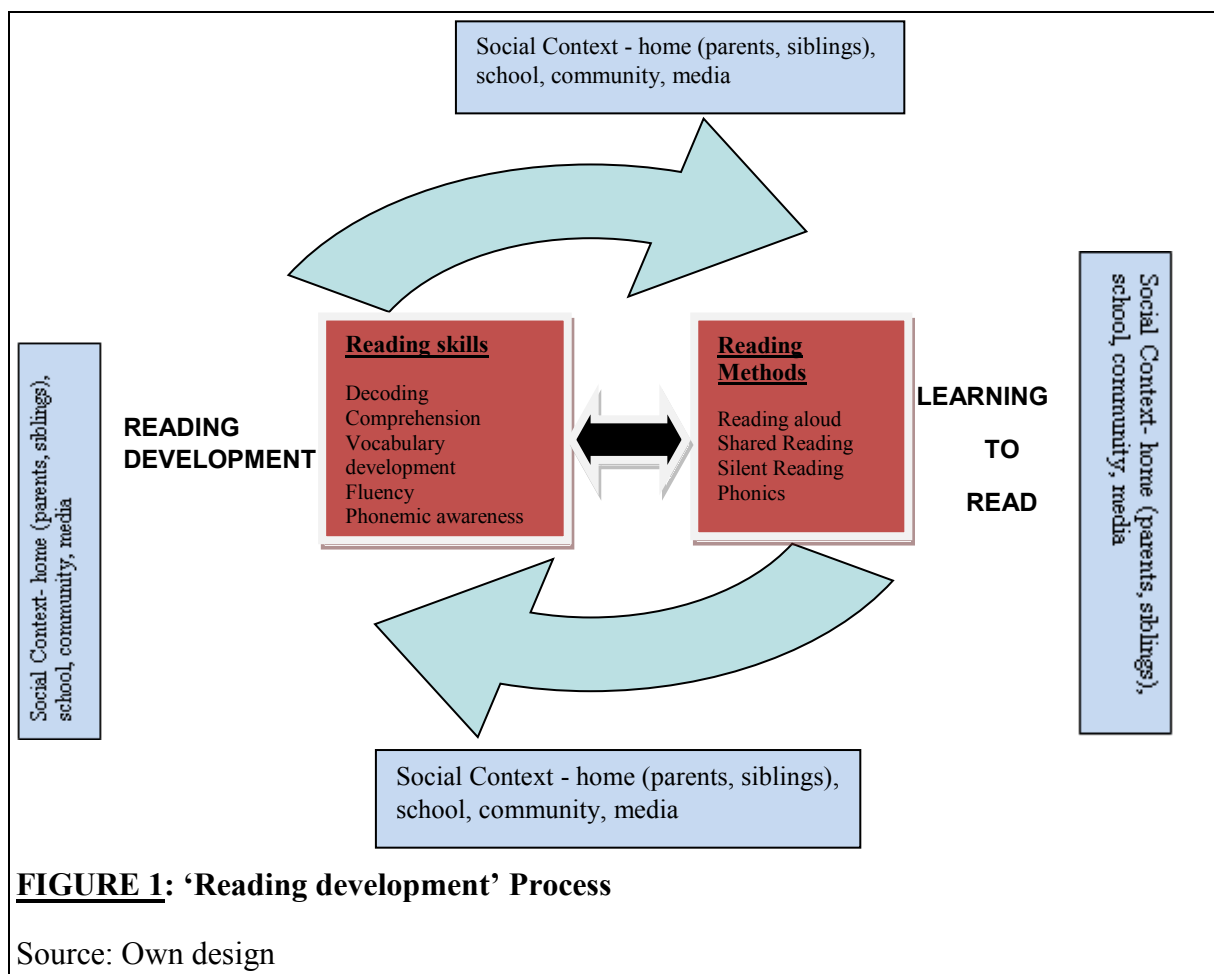
- How involved are parents in their children's reading development?
- What are the spatial and temporal dimensions of parental involvement in children's reading development?

- How do parents develop the child's reading ability?
- How do cultural factors affect parental involvement in children's reading development?
- What resources or tools do parents use to encourage and develop reading among their children?

1.5. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The concept of reading development which informs this study is of reading as a progressive process in which a child learns to read. This process can occur in a formal setting such as at school or crèche and/or in an informal setting such as at home during television time or during interactions between parent and child. This process of reading development is discussed in detail, in later chapters of the thesis. However, a brief overview of the main theories and concepts that this study discusses is brought to light below.

This ethnographic case study focusses on reading development. Figure 1, below, highlights some of the concepts and theories that will be discussed in greater detail in the thesis.



Reading development and learning to read is a cyclical process in which each individual should engage in during their years of development. In Figure 1, we are able to see this process occurring. The diagram highlights some of the methods and skills used during the reading develop process. It is important that appropriate reading methods are used to develop reading as this will ensure the fundamentals for emergent literacy are also being developed. Furthermore, children will understand and interpret reading as a fun task.

Also, in order to understand the involvement of parents in their child's reading development it is important to understand the contextual and environmental factors that may affect the development of a child's early reading. An important constituent that will assist in

understanding the above mentioned factors is Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory of development (1979). This theory assists in situating a range of factors that may have an impact on the development of a child's reading development process (Figure 2). Figure 2, below, highlights the various factors that form part of this theory and will be discussed later in greater detail.

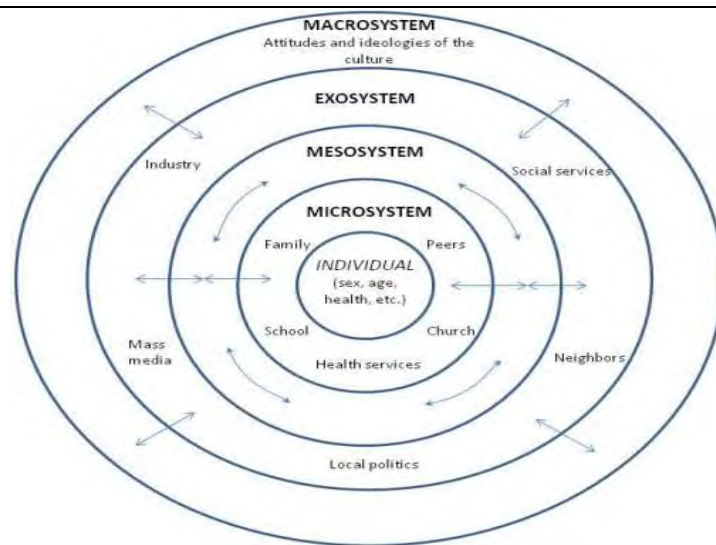


FIGURE 2: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979)

In addition, Feuerstein's (1979) Mediated learning experience is used to understand the relationship that the adults and children in this study, share in their reading development. Mediated learning experience can be understood as the, "human interactions that generate the capacity of individuals to change and/or modify themselves in the direction of greater adaptability and towards the use of higher mental processes" (Feuerstein, 1979, p.110). Thus, mediated learning is adopted as an analytical lens through which to explore parents' involvement in their children's reading development. The features and specifications of the mediated learning experience will be elaborated on later in the thesis.

1.6. Research Design and Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research design framed within an interpretivist paradigm. Qualitative research design allows for an in-depth analysis of the research questions. In addition, it allows us to ask the ‘why’ questions and to find ways of improving the results (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). In relation to the qualitative tradition, the interpretivist orientation is also appropriate in the study, as it allows the researcher to gain insight and an understanding of the parents’ experiences and reasons for choosing to encourage and develop their child’s reading in the manner in which they do; and the impact their choices have on their child’s reading development because it is the parent that defines the meaning of the situation in their home.

In designing this study the interest lay in, “observing and asking questions in real-world settings” (Patton, 1987, p. 21) and in “understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world, and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 1998, p.6). As a result it appeared most suitable to draw upon a qualitative research tradition. Also, this tradition allowed for a detailed exploration of the research questions. Litchman (2006, p.8) suggests that, “the main purpose of qualitative research is to provide an in-depth description and understanding of human experiences”.

This study is an ethnographic case study. Ethnographic case studies require the researcher to create a close bond with their participants through an extended period of interaction, “as it takes considerable time to be acquainted with the participants and how they relate to the physical and material environment” (Schensul & LeCompte, 1999, p.85). Also, building a relationship based on trust is crucial when conducting an ethnographic study. Taking these factors into consideration, this research was conducted as an ethnographic case study for a

number of reasons. Firstly, it afforded the researcher the opportunity to gain insight into and an understanding of the way in which the parents in the Indian community are developing reading at home with their children which created a rich and thick description of the case (Rule & John, 2011, p.7). Secondly, ethnographic case studies are a ‘step to action’: they can initiate the action and add to it (Bassey, 1999, p.23). This was important as there are possibilities that this study can be conducted on a larger scale at a later stage, with the probability of taking actions. Lastly, case studies as products, are easier for diverse audiences to comprehend and may therefore have greater impact on a wide range of stakeholders than some other types of research (Bassey, 1999).

The case (unit of analysis) in this study is the ‘family reading network’ which consists of participants, context, method and texts. The participants in this family reading network comprises of the child, parents, grandparents, siblings and other individuals who may have a direct impact on the child’s daily life. The context in which reading is developed could be grandparents’ visits, story time at bedtime and play time. Texts can comprise of story books, pictures, calendars, electronic games and media. The methods in which reading can be developed are through reading aloud, storytelling, imaginative play, drawing and/or writing.

The researcher intended to study the case in great depth and had easy access to the homes of these families. However, there is a limitation in this kind of study in that, “the findings of the study cannot necessarily be generalised to other cases” (Rule & John, 2011, p.21). The focus within the case was the development of reading. In addition the study consists of an embedded unit of analysis (Rule & John, 2011, p.18) which was the parents’ knowledge about reading development, the parents’ beliefs about reading development and the parents’

practices of reading development. In order to clarify and simplify the understanding of the ‘reading family network’, a visual representation of the case is provided in the methodology chapter.

The sample was a purposive sample consisting of four South African Indian families with young children in Grade R. These families were introduced to the researcher by a friend who had friends that fitted the criteria for participation in this study: being Indian, having a child in Grade R, having affiliation to one or more of the main Indian religious groups, and residing in a particular Indian community in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. All the participants formed part of the middle class with their children attending different schooling systems, these being Waldorf, Cambridge, Montessori, and the normal South African government system of schooling.

The study used a range of data collection tools. These tools comprised of: interviews with parents, questionnaires answered by the parents, and observations of parents’ involvement of reading with their children. Also, materials used at home in the reading development process were analysed. The methodology chapter, Chapter Four, includes a detailed account of the sampling technique used as well as the design of the questionnaire, interview and observation schedules and the way in which the data were analysed using codes and themes. In addition, the chapter discusses the ethical procedures and trustworthiness of the study.

1.7. Outline of Chapters in the Thesis

Chapters Two and Three review the relevant literature for this thesis. Chapter Two considers the literature relating to reading development as well as to the history of, and influences upon, South African Indians' culture of reading closely linked with empirical findings, while Chapter Three focuses on policy-related literature pertaining to reading, learning to read and parental involvement in developing reading. Also, the theories discussed in this chapter will be used to understand the phenomena in this study.

Chapter Two provides a background analysis of Indians in South Africa and their generational shift and it highlights the literacy improvements of Indians living in South Africa. This chapter engages in the empirical findings of play in the Grade R classroom and the importance of parental involvement in early reading development.

Details of the research design and implementation are presented in Chapter Four. This study can be described as an interpretative, qualitative ethnographic case study. The chapter begins with the purpose of the study highlighting the research questions. It is important that the researcher's positionality is acknowledged in the study and the impact it might have on this research process. This is crucial when conducting an ethnographic case study as the aim is to provide a thick description of the participant's culture. In addition, as an ethnographer one is classified as a, "storyteller and scientist; the closer the reader of an ethnography comes to understanding the native's point of view, the better the story and the better the science" (Fetterman, 1998, p.2). The data collection tools used in the study are explained, followed by a discussion of data analysis and then the issues of trustworthiness and the ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter Five takes the reader through the journey which was encountered by the researcher. The journey provides implicit details of the researcher's thoughts, feelings and first impressions of the family. This is done so the readers can situate themselves within this ethnographic case study. Also, it allows the reader to understand the participants in this study.

The research findings are presented in Chapter Six with the analysis of the findings discussed in Chapter Seven. The findings in Chapter Six are presented by family: The Naidoo and Ismail family; the Rai family; the Solomon family; and the Majid family. Holistic descriptions are provided in the form of vignettes that transpired during data collection, providing useful insight. The analysis of these finding is related to the theories discussed in Chapter Two and presented in Chapter Seven. In addition, this analysis highlights the link to the research questions. The dissertation draws to an end with Chapter Eight by summing up the study with possible recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews some of the literature that has enlightened the researcher's thinking about parental involvement in the development of reading to Grade R children in the South African Indian community. The purpose of a literature review is, according to Boote and Beile (2005, p.3), "to advance our collective understanding." This means that a researcher or scholar needs to understand what has been done before, the strengths and weaknesses of existing studies, and what it all means in relation to the current study. A researcher cannot perform significant research without initially understanding the literature in the field and if a researcher does not clearly understand the research it will certainly disadvantage the researcher. It is through the literature review that we are able to identify what is known about the subject, and how it is known, so that we can applicably design questions around what is yet to be found around the subject by reviewing and analysing previous research and relating it to the study at hand (Kelly, 2011). Thus, it is important that a literature review is presented in a thesis.

The following themes will be discussed in the literature review section: the diaspora of Indians in South Africa, more especially in the province of KwaZulu-Natal where the study was conducted; skills used in reading development; the parental factors that impact on the development of reading together with the importance of family literacy; and lastly strategies to encourage and develop reading in young children. These themes form the basis of this research and are discussed in detail.

The chapter begins with a review of literature on Indians in South Africa more especially in KwaZulu-Natal, and in particular the cultural and educational aspects of this community that are relevant to my study. Notably, there are many studies that have been conducted around the Indian diaspora. However, very little focus has been on the transformation of Indians over the years with regard to their literacy improvements. Secondly, the researcher presents the different skills that are linked to reading. Thirdly, a discussion of the importance and impact of parental involvement on the teaching of reading to young children is provided; and lastly strategies used to develop a child's reading.

2.2. The Indian Diaspora in South Africa and its Transition over the Years

2.2.1. Arrival of Indians in Natal

The first consignment of immigrant Indians were indentured labourers who reached the colony of Natal on 16 November 1860 in the ship, SS Truro. A total of 342 indentured labourers were on board. Thereafter, over the years 1860–1861, five more ships transported a total of 1 360 men and women (Sulliman, 1997). These were said to be the first of the 152,184 “human cargo” to be shipped to the coast of Durban over 51 years, consisting of 62 percent adult males, 25 percent adult females and 13 percent children (Ministry of External Affairs, 2000).

These Indians were indentured to work in the sugar cane plantations that were owned by the British colonists. They were exposed to a contract that offered them free transportation from India, an agreement to work for 10 shillings a month for three years which was later extended to five years, free food, accommodation, and medical attention (Burrows, 1952). In terms of

their ethnic and religious composition, the population consisted of two-thirds Tamil – and Telugu-speaking Hindus coming from Mysore and surrounding areas in southern India. The remainder came from the regions known as Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar in northern India. Only twelve percent of the total population of this group of immigrants were Muslims, while about two percent were Christians. This consignment of people was illiterate on the whole as they had no formal education; for example, 30-year old Davarum, named as “Coolie No. 1” by the recruiting agent, signed by thumb print a contract in English that he could not read (Desai & Vahed, 2010). However, they managed to sustain strong memories of their customs, traditions and rituals which they preserved diligently (Ministry of External Affairs, 2000). These indentured labourers were dispersed along the North and South coasts of Natal.

The second consignment of Indians, which consisted of a small number of Gujarati-speaking Hindus with a larger percentage being Muslims from the Gujrat district in north-western India, were known as the passenger Indians (Randeree, 1997). They began entering the colony from about 1870 with the intention of searching for economic opportunities. Thus, they became the traders (Ministry of External Affairs, 2000). This consignment were given the privilege of moving into different cities; as a result many set up their trading posts in remote towns in Natal and in the Transvaal. They set up family businesses and engaged the services of their more educated extended family members resulting in their success (Khan, 2012). Once the trading-class Indians’ economic prosperity became known, they were later joined by a professional-class due to the fluctuating social, political and economic needs in South Africa. These professionals consisted of lawyers, accountants, priests and teachers. Among them was Mahatma Gandhi, a young lawyer who came to represent Muslim traders threatened with disenfranchisement in a court case in 1893. Thus, it is evident that over the years Indians found the need to educate themselves in order to achieve economic prosperity.

2.2.2. Family Structure

During the period from 1860 to 1911 there was a large difference between the number of male and female Indians living in South Africa which influenced the Indian family structure. Within the time frame mentioned above, there seemed to be more males than females living in South Africa. This was mainly a result of the colonialists' selfish perception that family life and accompanying family members would be an interference in delivering undivided commitment to their colonial owner's quest for financial gains. Consequently, they preferred single men who would stay unencumbered for an extended period of time to sell their labour (Khan, 2012). As a result, during indenture many males were forced to return to India in order to begin a family. However, those that chose to remain in South Africa, found it extremely difficult to find a suitable partner within their religious and ethnic groups thus resulting in mixed religion marriages. As stated by Khan (2012), these mixed religion marriages posed many problems for the next generation as it was difficult to preserve the cultural and religious sense of identity. Hence, over the years mixed religion marriages became taboo (Desai & Vahed, 2007).

According to Burrows (1952), it was only after the completion of indenture that signs of family life began to arise as they were given a choice of re-indenture, a free passage to India, or a small plot of freehold land, with many settling for the last option which was not in all cases honoured. Those that were privileged to acquire ownership of land (mostly in the rural areas) were able to set down family roots with a degree of permanency and used their land to earn a living through agriculture. Other migrants who were landless chose to use the skills learned during their indenture to seek formal wage paying jobs in urban areas mostly in the manufacturing industry. This assisted the economic boom just after World War I (Khan, 2012). During this time the Indian family structure was always the extended family. Much

research has been done around the constituents of an extended family. Kuper (1956) best describes the understanding and knowledge of an extended family which he refers to as the *kutumban*, including a patriarchal head with his wife and unmarried children, his married sons with their wives and children, his unmarried brothers and sisters, his married brothers with their wives and children, and his brothers' married sons and their wives and children.

Although it was the responsibility of the men to provide the income for sustainable living in the household, with each man contributing a portion, the women also tried to assist through domestic farming. They would sell produce at the local markets, do cleaning work at factories or domestic work in more influential Indian homes. The women that remained at home had child rearing responsibilities, domestic household responsibilities, they ensured the promotion of their religious values, culture and practices among the young and were actively involved in their children's education. Thus, it is evident that women played an important part within the extended family structure and were the 'pillars' of children's academic growth. Khan (2012) states that an extended family served as an economic, psychological and social safety net upon which strong family values were established. It was also the foundation for the emergence of nuclear families.

In 1950 the South African government introduced the Groups Area Act (Horrell, 1966). This resulted in Indian families being forcibly removed from their homes and relocated into other areas. This created much turmoil and trauma as Indian family forms were emerging.

According to Gordon (1979), the magnitude of disruptions of family life can best be measured through the extent of forced removals and relocation of Indians in the city, which totalled about 140 000 Indians in Durban alone by the year 1978. Therefore, "it may be asserted that this premature disruption in the maturing phases of the extended family form

was a catalyst that gave rise to the nuclear family form” (Khan, 2012, p.139). Studies and surveys conducted by Meer (1984) and Butler-Adam and Venter (1987), highlight similarities in that almost 80 percent of Indian families were now living within a nuclear family structure with only 20 percent still living in an extended form.

The nuclear family structure brought much economic strain to the family because there was now only one income (that of the father-breadwinner) which was used for the well-being and sustainability of the family, to pay rent, to buy furniture for the new home as well as to cover increased transport costs to and from work, as work for many was now further away from their new location. This resulted in many females being forced to find unskilled or semi-skilled jobs in factories close to the newly developing towns (Chetty, 1980). In addition, traditional and religious cultures, values and practices became absent in many nuclear families as they were now being acculturated through the infusion of Western influences. Schoombee and Mantzaris (1987) conducted a study of the Western cultural influence on Indians in Durban and questions were asked about the acceptability or not for arranged and inter-religious marriages, as well as about attitudes around the use of contraception. The responses highlighted a significant change in the thoughts and values of the younger and more educated Indians as compared to the less educated and older Indians. This highlights a change in the traditional values and norms of Indians as the young and more educated found no problem in inter-religious marriages and leaned away from arranged marriages. Also, they were in favour of the use of contraception in order to keep families small, thus moving away from the traditional large extended families towards the Western smaller nuclear families. In a more recent study, Singh and Harisunker (2010) discovered that Hindu females in Durban chose to wear Western clothes instead of their traditional Indian clothing on a daily basis. However, they did wear their traditional garments on special religious occasions and

functions. This also highlights a breakaway from the past and its traditions, customs and culture where traditional Indian clothing was worn daily.

2.2.3. The 21st Century South African Indians

Over the last few decades Indians have found the need to become more skilled and educated in order to improve their economic status in South Africa. This has resulted in a large amount of provincial migration, especially from KwaZulu-Natal to the economic hub of Gauteng, among young unmarried males and females as well as married professional couples in the hope of better economic prospects as well as better family life and stability (Naidoo, 2011). In addition, many of these young Indians have chosen to settle down within a nuclear family structure away from their parental homes. An interesting finding in Puttundeen's (2007) study was that there seems to be a growing trend of young Indian females moving abroad to work as compared to the past expectations of young Indian female adults getting married and settling down. In addition, the role of the former subservient Indian wife, submissive daughter and sister has now transformed due to better levels of education as well as economic pressures to work. Also, Vahed and Desai (2010) found that emerging class and changing identities had an impact on the current Indian families. Their findings highlighted that the change which occurred within a family was dependent on the economic status of the family. For example, families moved out of the township into more elite suburbs depending on their class. Also wealthier parents sent their children to private schools. However, Vahed and Desai (2010), in their analysis of identity and belonging in post-apartheid South Africa found, poor Indians from township schools compete with rich Indian children with unlimited resources for limited space at schools, universities and on the job market. In essence, such an analysis attests to the changing social structure of the Indian family classified by class characteristics more than

ethnic and religious as in the past (cited in Khan, 2012, p.147).

This highlights the increased desire and the need to be educated among Indians so that they can find good suitable jobs. Indian parents have interest in, and take responsibility for, their children's education by sending them to good schools, colleges and universities. In addition, they are now also being exposed to, and have become more accepting not only of cross-religious marriages but also cross-racial marriages which are becoming popular amongst Indian families (Naidoo, 2007). Thus, highlighting the changing trends of South African Indians.

Although the desire of South African Indians to be educated, which was driven by the indentured who believed it was the only ticket for their descendants to overcome poverty (Bhana & Buccus, 2016) is clear, there is very little information that discusses their current reading practices and their reading culture. In addition, there is no scholarship around the literacy of Indian indentured labourers in South Africa, besides the fact that they had been classified as illiterate as explained earlier. Despite their illiteracy, their tradition and religion, which have richly literate histories, were crucial and they passed down these teachings orally and practised their religion diligently. Furthermore, this indentured community began to build religious schools to pass the knowledge of religion to the newer generation. As a result of this review, I have identified gaps in literature on the literacy of Indian indentured labourers in South Africa as well as their current reading practices and culture. My study is relevant to the second of these gaps.

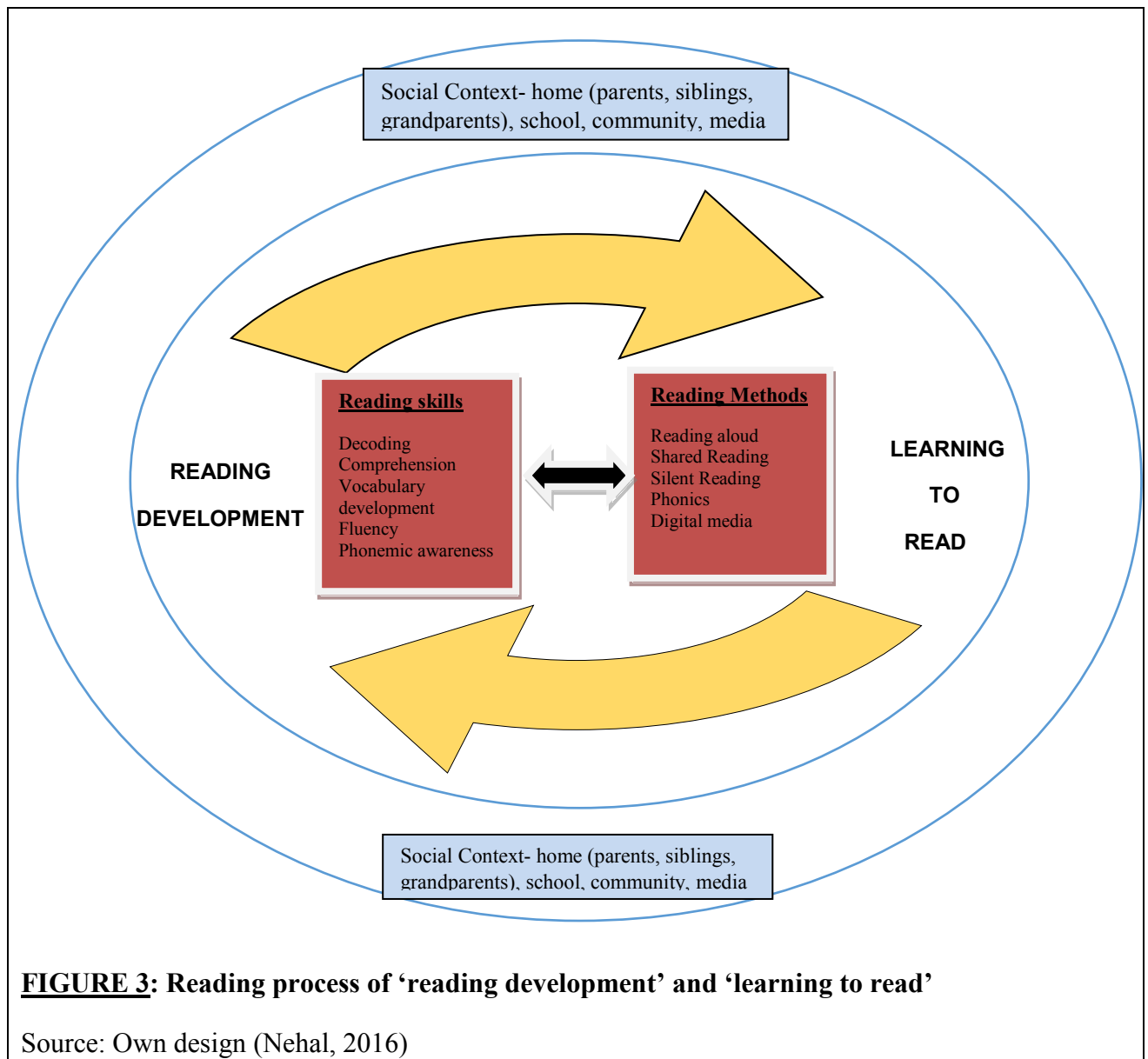
2.3. Components (skills) Emphasised in the Development of Reading

Reading is a process and, “by this we mean the way we make sense of print, translating the black marks on the page into meaning” (Bielby, 1999, p.1). In other words, the term ‘process’ refers to the application of integrated components and the relationships between these components. This process is dependent on the way the individual is taught to read and their own drive to make meaning of the world. According to Goodman (1970), the process of reading consists of the decoding of print as well as the construction of meaning of the print (cited in Harrison & Coles, 1992, p.5). However, decoding and the construction of meaning are not the only processes in reading development. Therefore, Figure 3 highlights the socio-psycholinguistic process and relationship that reading development and learning to read share, as I understand reading and the early development of reading. The diagram emphasizes that reading is developed through the use of various methods which assist in developing the different reading skills at an early age. This process of reading development is strengthened through a child’s social context consisting of parents, siblings, grandparents, teachers, the community and the media. The reading methods used to develop and encourage reading in young children also develop reading skills which are required for the ‘learning to read’ process. Children use the skills to ‘learn to read’; these skills are mastered over the years and are later used by children to ‘read to learn’ (Pretorius, 2000). Therefore it is important that the methods used to develop and encourage children’s early reading development also focus on the development of early reading skills as this will enhance the child’s learning to read process and will be instrumental in developing lifelong readers.

Several studies have been conducted in recent years into the development of reading in different countries, such as the USA (Report of the National Reading Panel, 2000), England (J. Rose, 2006), Australia (Australian Government, 2005), and South Africa (Teaching Reading in the Early Grades, 2008). These provide an outline of the critical fundamentals of reading which should be developed. They emphasise the following five components of developing reading: phonemic awareness, word recognition (decoding), comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. On a terminological note, although the term ‘components’ may be open to contestation as it may not be entirely correct and debates may arise for the use of this term, I decided to proceed with using it as it is used in the CAPS (DoE, 2011) document as well as by the National Reading Panel (2000). However, a few theorists (Shanahan, 2003; Pressley, 2001; Cunningham, 2001; Weaver, 2002; Allington, 2004; Dickinson, Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2010) have had varying ideas on these five components. They believe that these five components are not the only components that should be used in the development of reading as there are many more components that are equally important such as oral language, spelling, syntax, and written expression.

Despite the opposing views of theorists I continued to focus on and use these interlinked and interacting components in this study because South African teachers are required to follow the CAPS (DoE, 2011) policy document that encourages the development and teaching of phonemic awareness, decoding or word recognition, comprehension, vocabulary and fluency across the Foundation Phase starting from Grade R (DoE, 2011). Also, these components can be indirectly developed at home by parents and care-givers. In addition, if children are exposed to these components from an early age it will allow them to be at an advanced level at school. Furthermore, these are the basics that are required when developing a child’s reading ability, hence the repetition of these components at home and at school will result in

learners familiarising themselves with the components which will benefit them later in reading advancements.



Reading can be understood as a cyclical process. Because at a young age children’s reading begins to gradually develop, thereafter the knowledge, understanding and skills ascertained within each child during their early reading development process is later used as the

foundation for learning to read. These processes of reading development and learning to read are prerequisites for every child as each individual requires the skill of reading for the success of their everyday lives. Hence, Figure 3 demonstrates the cyclical and mutually reinforcing occurrence of the process. In addition, the diagram highlights the reading skills used in reading development as well as the reading methods or strategies.

The reading skills that are portrayed in Figure 3 are exemplified in the emergent literacy theory, discussed later in the chapter.

a. Decoding and Comprehension

The main skills that are linked to the development and teaching of reading are the components that allow an individual to read which are: decoding, comprehension, phonemic awareness and fluency. Flippo (1999, p.99) states, “teaching children to comprehend what they are reading as they read is a vital aspect of making them lifelong readers” as it will afford them the opportunity to be empowered with regard to their education and to be confident citizens in society. In order for children to read they must be able to decode.

Decoding involves the oculomotor, perceptual and parsing aspects of reading activity whereby written symbols are translated into language, while comprehension refers to the overall understanding process whereby meaning is constructed within sentence units, between adjacent sentences, and across larger units of text to the meaning of the text as a whole (Pretorius, 2002, p.80).

Decoding is also known as word recognition which is the ability to decode words. In other words, it involves the process of the reader being able to recognize words rapidly and automatically and this is done by ‘breaking through’ the alphabetical code by means of

sounding out words (Teaching Reading in the Early Grades, 2008). Comprehension, on the other hand, is the understanding of words and being able to understand the meaning of the word in the context of the story. Vacca et al. (2006) believe that readers who are able to comprehend a text are able to make connections as they read through visualizing, inferring and synthesizing information, and they ask questions as they read. These two skills are of great importance. Pretorius (2002) states that it is through decoding that children ‘learn to read’ and comprehension allows them to ‘read to learn’. Decoding and comprehension are the core skills that children need to master all that would assist them to become competent readers.

However, comprehension seems to be ‘side-lined’ in many homes and schools because society believes it should be taught in the later part of a child’s life as it is stereotypically understood that young children should be taught to read (to learn to read only). Many parents and schools at foundation level (Grade 1–3) focus on decoding skills only and ignore comprehension. This understanding has been revealed in a USA study, where comprehension tests were regularly given; yet, the teaching of comprehension strategies was seldom conducted by teachers for learners (Allington & Cummingham, 2003). Similarly, research conducted by Macdonald (1990) and Strauss (1995) at disadvantaged South African schools found that students developed fluent decoding skills but that their comprehension skills were poor and underdeveloped. While, this is a problem, it is important that we acknowledge the underpinning causes for these poor and undeveloped comprehension skills. In the most recent scholarship we are made aware of several factors that have an influence on poor comprehension skills in South Africa namely, “poverty, low parental literacy levels, poor governance in many schools, poorly resourced schools and poorly qualified teachers, there are also factors associated more closely with language and reading literacy that relate to poor

reading comprehension... These include the role of home language (HL) and the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in reading” (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016, p.2). Duke and Pearson (2002) believe that this problem of comprehension difficulty can be resolved if teachers and parents use various strategies to teach and develop comprehension, despite the factors cited above (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016).

Several analyses of research on the development of improved comprehension skills (Block & Pressley, 2001; Dole, Brown, & Trathen, 1996; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Pearson, Roehler, Dole, & Duffy, 1992) concur that:

- Reading comprehension can be improved by effective teaching and that comprehension involves active thinking which is improved when comprehension strategies are made clear to the child through explicit demonstrations.
- Teachers need to stop relying on “comprehension questions” which assess the recall of information and neither improve proficiency nor promote independent and effective thinking skills while reading. Again, teacher demonstration of useful strategies which go beyond simple recall is important.
- It takes time and repeated practice to learn comprehension strategies (cited in Verbeek, 2011).

The above understandings can be used by parents as a guide to improve their teaching of comprehension skills to their young children since parents are the child’s first teacher. In addition, Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016, p.17) strongly assert,

Unless our current and future teachers become knowledgeable about literacy, about reading and writing, about how to teach it effectively and meaningfully,

and are themselves skilled and well-informed readers who read beyond narrow functional demands, the comprehension levels of South African learners are unlikely to change significantly as we move deeper into the 21st century.

The above assertion can be applicable to parents and care-givers as well. If parents become knowledgeable about literacy and are skilled and well-informed readers who read with a deeper purpose and with greater meaning, they will have the knowledge and skill to develop their children's early reading skills.

b. Vocabulary

People across the world may have their own understandings of what the term 'vocabulary' means. "To many, the word vocabulary may suggest a reductionist perspective in which words are learned by memorizing short definitions and sentences" (Nagy & Scott, 2004, p.574). I share the same understanding of vocabulary as they do, as I comprehend vocabulary as an ability to learn words as well as remember and understand the meanings of the words learned. As a result, vocabulary and comprehension are closely linked. Nagy and Scott (2004) further argued that, when a reader knows a word, they should be able to do a number of things with it; for example, they should be able to recognize the word in connected speech or in print, to access its meaning, to pronounce the word and, importantly, to be able to do it in a fraction of a second. Children with a limited vocabulary may encounter difficulties understanding a text. Graves and Watts-Taffe (2002, p.141) state researchers for over a century researched vocabulary and found that:

- Vocabulary knowledge is a crucial indicator of verbal ability.
- Difficulties in vocabulary influence reading ability.
- Teaching vocabulary can improve children's comprehension.
- Disadvantaged children often have limited vocabulary.

- Lack of vocabulary can be a crucial factor for children underachieving at school.

Therefore, it is important that parents develop their child's vocabulary at home from a young age so that their vocabulary skills will not be limited but rather their knowledge will be vast, resulting in competent lifelong readers as well as learners that with the potential and required skills to excel at school.

c. **Phonemic Awareness**

Phonemic awareness is the ability to manipulate sounds in spoken words. In other words, spoken words are made up of a number of individual sounds, which are called “phonemes”. Phonemes are the smallest sounds in speech; for example *so* consists of two phonemes, /s/ and /o/. Ehri and Roberts (2006) believe that phonemic awareness refers to the ability to use these small sounds in speech (phonemes), in spoken words. Vacca et al. (2003, p.37) share the same understanding as Ehri and Roberts in that, “phonemic awareness refers to an insight about oral language and the ability to segment and manipulate the sounds of speech and is one of the five essential components of reading according to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's National Reading Panel (2000)”. Significantly, phonemic awareness plays a spontaneous role in learning to read. By way of explanation, when a child is learning to read they need to know the phonemes (sounds) within each word so that reading becomes a natural process. Coupled with phonemic awareness is the knowledge of the sounds that make up the sound system of a language and the ability (skill) to use these sounds appropriately; for example, in the words ‘phone’ and ‘fat’, the phonemes of *ph* is (/f/), and ‘f’ is (/f/) which both need to be used in the correct context.

Yopp (1992), believes that young children lack phonemic awareness, the understanding that words that they utter involve collecting of various single sounds or phonemes. For example, they could simply understand *dog* as a vicious animal that barks, rather than acknowledging the spoken utterance of *dog* is made up of a series of sounds or phonemes, /d/, /o/, /g/. Yopp (1992), further states that the lack of phonemic awareness is a factor which could lead to children's inability to identify unknown words. Also, Griffith & Olson (1992) believe that the lack of phonemic awareness in a child could have detrimental effects on a child's learning to read process as a child may be able to learn letter-sound relationships through rote learning; however, they may not be able to understand how to use and coordinate letter-sound knowledge to read or spell new words. When a child has developed phonemic awareness, they are able to recognise rhyming words and they are able to begin or end words with the same or different sounds. Many theorists (Cunningham et al., 1998; Adams, 1990; Yopp, 1998) believe that phonemic awareness is easily grasped in the early years of a child's life thus it is important that parents and teachers in early grades reinforce the teaching of phonemics in young children. This is a key issue in learning an additional language because the phonemes differ according to language and their transfer from one language to another can create confusions of meaning.

d. Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read effectively, accurately and smoothly. Rasinski (2003, p.26), defines fluency as, "the ability of readers to read quickly, effortlessly, and efficiently with good, meaningful expression". Fluency is closely linked to other components, and all the components are interlinked and mutually dependent in a competent reader, as will be elaborated below. Samuels (2002), believes that fluency and comprehension are closely tied,

“fluency is important because it exerts an important influence on comprehension; that is, to experience good comprehension, the reader must identify words quickly and easily” (Samuels, 2002, p.167). Although, this might not necessarily be of great importance in the teaching of early reading at home, it can be done as it does become crucial once the child enters school. Samuels (2002) is of the understanding that fluency can be developed by using a repeated reading technique. This technique encourages children to read and reread a text many times to improve reading fluency as it develops word recognition, accuracy and increased speed. This technique also received positive feedback from the National Reading Panel (2000) as they conducted research in many classrooms using this technique. However, it is important to recognize that there is no necessary link between fluency and comprehension. Parents and /or teachers might emphasize fluency without linking it to understanding, resulting in fluent ‘barking at print’ as we see among some South African students.

2.4. Reading and Play in Grade R

Play is the widespread lingo of childhood. It is through play that children identify with each other and make sense of the world around them. Hence theorists (Montessori, 1952; Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978; and Cambourne, 1995) have argued that play is critical for a child’s learning development. Consequently play has been integrated into many early childhood learning programmes used at day-care facilities, crèches and governmental education institutions.

Similarly the South African Department of Education has also included play as part of the Grade R school syllabus. According to CAPS (DoE, 2011), a daily programme (Figure 3) has

been designed for Grade R teachers to follow. In accordance with CAPS (DoE, 2011, p.20), “in the Grade R year the time table is called the daily programme and it comprises of three main components, namely teacher-guided activities, routine activities, and child-initiated activities or free play”. However, although child-initiated activities or free play is mentioned in the document and ideas of activities are provided in the programme, it fails to explain what free-play is and the importance of free-play in the child’s development. In addition, CAPS English Home Language (DoE, 2011, p.20) states,

The Grade R organisation of language learning is based on principles of **integration and play-based learning**. The teacher should be pro-active, a mediator rather than a facilitator. A mediator makes the most of incidental learning opportunities that arise spontaneously through a range of child-centred activities, such as free-play in the fantasy corner or block construction site, and teacher-directed activities such as a story ‘ring’ or other ‘rings’.

Once again, there is no explanation of what play-based learning is and how teachers should encourage and initiate play-based learning.

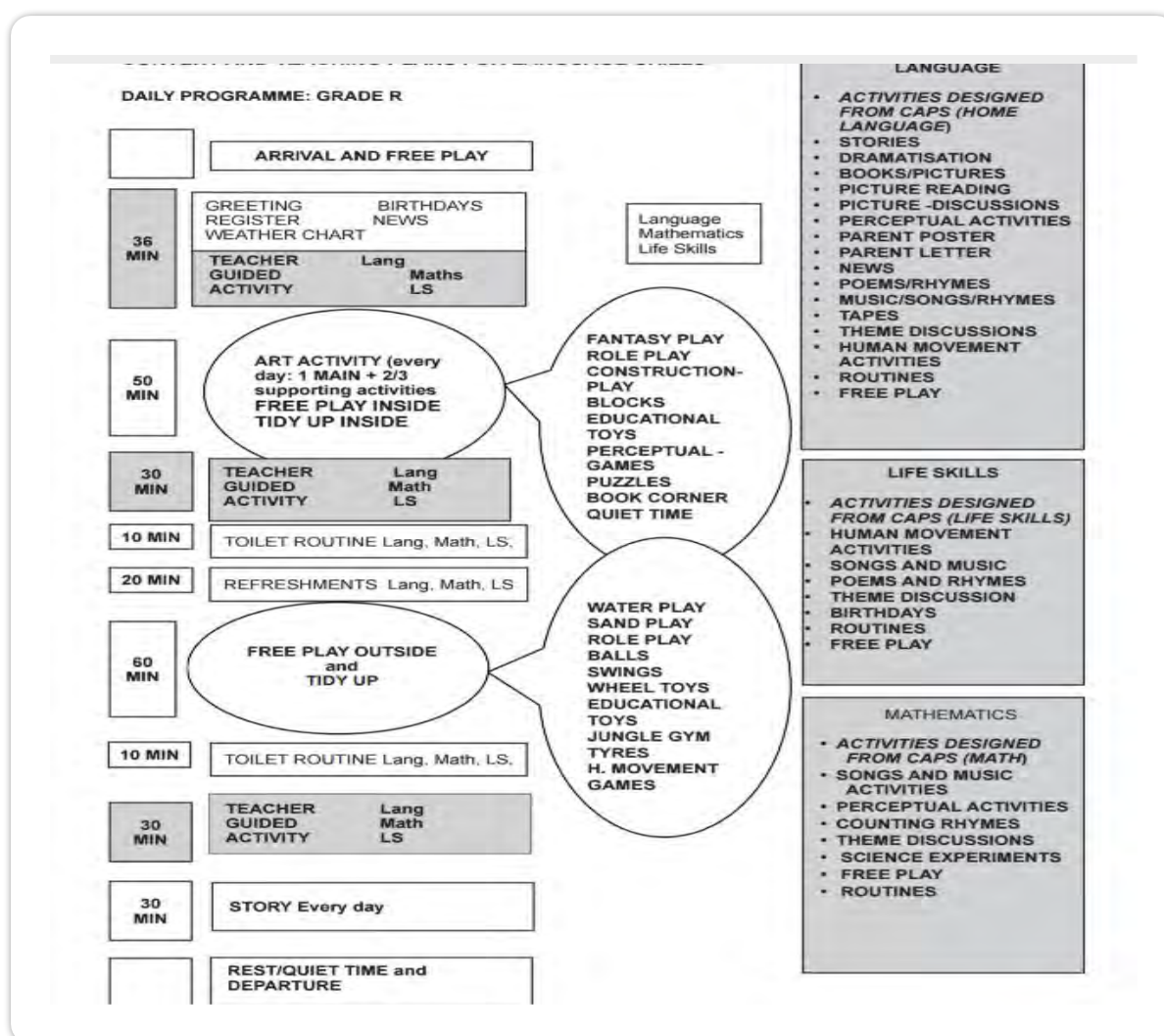


FIGURE 4: Daily Programme - Grade R (Adapted from: DoE, 2011, p.15)

For many teachers, resources at schools are limited (PIRLS, 2011) so a fantasy corner or construction site may not be available but if play-based learning or free-play were explained in detail together with the importance of using such methods to develop a child's cognitive, linguistic, social, physical, and emotional skills then teachers would be able to use resources available to them to integrate and use play-based learning. In addition, a recent study on play in Grade R classrooms conducted by Aronstam and Braund (2015), which targeted 41 schools and 104 Grade R teachers in the Western Cape, found that teachers did not have the experience or comprehension of play. Hence the benefits of these children learning through

play is futile unless the teachers understand it. Other interesting findings that arose from this study were:

- Teachers at some schools (20%), particularly those in previously disadvantaged environments, seemed to be less accustomed with the pedagogy of play;
- Eighty percent of the teachers regarded informal play as free play where children choose their own endeavours and make their own decisions regarding the activities – they believe informal play is for fun, and formal play is for learning;
- All teachers stated that they integrate play with activities such as story-telling, art, movement, music and the fantasy corner. In all these activities, it appears that the teachers provided the resources and used them to incorporate play into the daily programme;
- Fifty percent of the teachers said they incorporated play as part of their weekly theme but only twelve percent of the teachers specified outdoor play activities as planned and detailed play. Forty percent voiced their concern about not having enough space for children to play as well as a shortage of equipment and resources (Aronstam & Braund 2015, p. 6-10).

Through these findings it is evident that play is not optimally used at our South African schools to produce the desired and positive results that the literature (Chapter 3) emphasises. In addition, Wood (2009) believes there is a significant amount of scholarship on learning through play but very little on teaching through play. In other words, understanding the importance and impact of learning through play is a well-researched topic however, very little focus has been placed on the importance and the impact of teaching children through play.

2.5. Culture of reading

Since this study focuses on the ways that children encounter reading within the South African Indian community, which has its own distinctive and complex cultural milieu, a lens on reading as a cultural practice is useful.

Anthropologists believe culture is a broad term. Many of them believe that culture can be defined either within a materialist or an ideational view depending on the context in which ‘culture’ is being used. A materialist understanding of culture focuses on behaviour, “in this view, culture is the sum of a social group’s observable patterns of behaviour, customs and way of life” (Harris, 1968, p.16). In contrast, the ideational view of culture is based on a cognitive definition, in which culture consists of ideas, beliefs and knowledge that depict a certain group of people (Fetterman, 1998). However, other theorists such as Schensul and LeCompte (1999, p.21) believe that, “culture consists of beliefs, behaviours, norms, attitudes, social arrangements and forms of expression that form a describable pattern in the lives of members of a community or institution”. I share the same view as Schensul and LeCompte (1999), in that culture is made up of beliefs, behaviours, norms and attitudes which form a pattern in the lives of people within a specific community which in the case of this study, is the South African Indian community.

During the study reference is often made to a ‘reading culture’ and by this it refers the family’s beliefs, behaviour, attitude and norms towards reading in their home, within their reading network, as well as the society’s understanding, beliefs, norms and attitudes of reading. Theorists (Landry, Smith & Swank, 2006; Sènèchal, Ouellette & Rodney, 2006; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998; Crain-Thoreson & Dale, 1992; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Faver et. al., 2013), have advocated the importance of parents creating rich reading environments and

the importance of shared reading making parents' aware of its benefits to young children. However, each family may have its own beliefs, norms and attitude regarding parents' roles in developing reading at home. Therefore, each family could have their own reading culture that they may have created with each parent's use of prior and current understanding, knowledge, religious views and attitudes towards reading. However, these 'family cultures' would hold a complex relationship to the complexity of cultural influences within the wider community of which they are a part.

2.6. Studies on Parental Involvement in Reading Development

For years, many researchers, educators, and parents operated under the hypothesis that learning to read and write were processes that began with formal school-based instruction in kindergarten or first grade (Neuman & Dickinson, 2011; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Currently, however, there is broad consensus among researchers that the developmental signs of formal reading and writing (i.e. emergent literacy) begin during the preschool years. Regrettably, millions of children grow up in home environments that fail to provide the support needed to foster children's early literacy development (Barnett, 2001). Children who do not receive sufficient support from parents and other adults in the home environment depend on outside sources such as early childhood programmes to fill the gap.

In view of the socio-psycholinguistic approach to reading (Chapter Three), it is evident that reading is both an interaction between the reader's mind and the text, and it is a social occurrence. This suggests that parents, as key figures in their child's social universe, can play a significant role in introducing and developing reading in their children from a young age and that these skills and experiences from home are likely to be carried through to their years at school. "The early literacy knowledge and skills children bring to kindergarten and first

grade from their previous experiences in their homes and preschools form the foundation for learning to read in elementary school” (Farver et al., 2013, p.775). Thus, the early learning that occurs in a household among caregivers and parents, needs to be appropriate and constructive, as these interactions lead to the development of growing literacy skills. In a study conducted by Duursma et al. (2007), it was found that children’s vocabulary was linked to parental involvement in literacy-related activities such as shared book reading (cited in Kalia & Reese, 2009). In addition, the involvement of parents with reading tasks at home has a meaningful, positive impact not only on their child’s reading attainment, language comprehension and expressive language skills (Gest, Freeman, Domitrovich & Welsh, 2004), but also on the child’s interest in reading, attitude concerning reading and attentiveness in the classroom (Rowe, 1991). Also, Machet and Tiemensna (2009) state that developing a reading habit is not the sole concern of teachers and the school, but that parents, caregivers and the community as a whole should be involved in encouraging and supporting children’s early reading. They further state that the responsibility of all stakeholders will jointly enhance reading development among children and will increase their motivation to read and view reading as a pleasurable activity.

Farver et al. (2013) believe that parents can support their children’s early literacy skills development by engaging in shared reading, by teaching and encouraging literacy-related skills and by providing books and other print materials, educational games; and, most importantly, by always having a print rich environment in their homes. According to Ngwaru (2014, p.72),

early behaviours such as reading from pictures and writing scribbles are an important part of children’s literacy development. Social interactions with caring adults, including shared storytelling with consistent exposure

to literacy materials, where they are available, will nourish literacy development. Literacy-rich environments offer daily, extended conversations with adults about topics that are meaningful and of interest to children.

Similarly, a number of research studies conducted by various theorists (Landry & Smith, 2006; Sènèchal, Ouellette & Rodney, 2006; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998; Crain-Thoreson & Dale, 1992; Purcell-Gates, 1996) over the years have shared the same views as Farver et al. (2013) and Ngwaru (2014) in that shared reading, print awareness and a print rich environment at home have a significant impact on a child's early language and literacy development.

In addition, Lightfoot and Martin (1988) state that in a number of studies that focused on child language development over 25 years it was found that the most powerful language learning takes place at home. Furthermore, studies (Allen & Daly, 2002; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003) show that children whose parents are involved, show greater social and emotional development including more resilience to stress, greater life satisfaction, greater self-direction and self-control, greater social adjustment, greater mental health, more supportive relationships, greater social competence, more positive peer relations, more tolerance, more successful marriages, and fewer delinquent behaviours.

However, it is important that schools and teachers are rightfully equipped with all the knowledge and expertise to embrace the knowledge that young children bring to school. As Motshekga (2016) stated at a conference held in Cape Town, the race against illiteracy starts in early childhood development, "but we continue to have a problem of under-qualified teachers with poor conditions of employment. This is a major problem in this sector" (cited in Petersen, 2016, p.1).

The importance of fostering early reading is crucial and has now become the responsibility of the parent. This has been highlighted in Rose (2004) research that was conducted with indigenous Australian children; it was found that parents who were highly literate scaffold their children's literacy development before they begin school, while children who did not receive this support were instantaneously disadvantaged and were unable to cope in terms of their success in reading development. Similarly, Kalia and Reese (2009) study revealed that Indian middle-class bilingual children who attended English medium schools in India, were exposed to book reading practices and teaching practices at home. In addition to Rose's research, other theorists (Sonnenenschein & Munsterman, 2002; Thompson, Mixon & Serpell, 1996), have also stated that, although public schooling is considered to be fair for all children, some socio-cultural groups have performed better in the system than others. They believe that there are many factors that contribute to these differences in achievement, one being children's poor literacy-related home experiences. Therefore, parents need to encourage and support their child's reading development at an early age from home.

Furthermore, Hickman and O'Carroll (2013) have argued that reading development does not need to be confined to specific activities; it can occur in different settings. For example, it can take place as the child gets dressed in the morning, during meal times, as they play at home in the yard, during visits to the shop, clinic or places of worship, or even during family walks or rides in a taxi. However, they do contend that reading development work by parents will be easier if parents understand the importance of contextual development of children's skills and knowledge, so that they will be more responsive to moments conducive to developmental and instinctive opportunities to expand their child's comprehension. Hence, I advocate that as long as learning is meaningful and based on the child's experiences within their everyday

world, the skills encouraged and developed by their parents are more likely to be adopted by the child and to be efficiently used in other settings.

A critical addition to this debate is the contention that certain social groups, such as the middle class, are advantaged because the schooling system deliberately affirms and builds upon the literacy that is fostered in the middle class home. The literacy practices of other groups, such as indigenous groups and working class, are not recognized or fostered in the school, creating a disjuncture between the home and the school. This has been affirmed by Rose (2004) in his study which showed that parents who were highly literate from the higher and middle class backgrounds were able to scaffold their child's literacy development before they began school by providing them with a rich reading environment, variety of texts as well as basic reading skill, while children from the lower income class who did not receive this support were instantly disadvantaged and were unable to cope in terms of their success in reading development. Similarly, many learners in South Africa first begin to learn to read at school and are often exposed to print for the first time at school. This has a negative impact on their reading performance, as many students do not have support at home or materials that can positively influence their reading performance. This was one of the factors identified by PIRLS (2002, 2006 and 2011). Often the differences in reading among learners creates what has been called a Matthew effect (Stanovich, 1986), where the learners with reading support become richer and better readers while those that lack reading support and guidance become poorer, or develop more slowly, exacerbating the reading crisis.

Children who do not have the early experiences that we (Western countries) take for granted as prerequisites for formal school are disadvantaged children. They grow up in families who don't understand the importance of talking and reading to

preschool children. Their parents think that learning starts when they enter school. Because they lack these critical early childhood experiences, the chances of them being successful in school are remote. The cycle of poverty continues (Wright et al., 2000, p.99).

In contrast to Rose (2004) and PIRLS (2002, 2006, 2011) studies, Chansa-Kabali, Serpell and Lyytinen's (2014) more recent study conducted with Zambian families, showed that some parents in lower-income families made a considerable effort to support literacy development at home through appropriate activities that encouraged literacy development among their children, despite the scarcity of books among many of these families. Parents in the study indicated that many of their reading of conventional print consisted of, "religious texts and with only 22% reporting to own between one and four children's books" (Chansa-Kabali, et al., 2014, p.416). In addition, the study highlighted that parents who did not have a competent reading coach in their home, requested help from competent others within the neighbourhood. Hence, the study highlighted that literacy experiences at home among the low-income Zambian families were part of the children's daily lives.

It can therefore be seen that, it is important that parents despite their socio-economic status choose a variety of methods and techniques to enhance their child's early reading skills as well as create a rich print environment in order for them to become successful readers.

2.7. Strategies for Reading Development

There are various methods of developing early reading but I have chosen to focus on five methods that can be used in the development and encouragement of early reading at home. These are: phonics awareness, shared reading, reading aloud, silent reading and digital media. The first four methods, in the above list, are encouraged in the CAPS (DoE, 2011) document,

for teachers to practice in the foundation phase. Therefore, the repetition of these methods at school and at home would certainly assist learners in gaining greater exposure to reading development. Also, the use of and exposure to digital media has become widespread, referring to our current era as the ‘digital era’. Hence, the use of digital media in the development of reading does seem apt as parents and more especially young children have become ‘digitally smart’.

a. Phonics

According to CAPS (DoE, 2011), phonics refers to the sounds in words and the symbols (letters of the alphabet) used to characterize them. I believe that this acquisition is a critical element of the early reading development process as it involves learning the alphabetic system, that is, letter-sound associations and spelling patterns, and learning how to apply this knowledge in their later development reading. According to Harris and Hodges (1995), systematic phonics instruction is a method of developing reading that places emphasis on the acquisition of letter-sound relations and its use in reading and spelling words. According to the National Reading Panel (2000, p.89), there are a number of instructional approaches that can be exercised in the development of phonics, namely: synthetic phonics, analytic phonics, embedded phonics, analogy phonics, onset-rime phonics, and phonics through spelling. Although these approaches all aim to develop a child’s ability to systematically recognize familiar words and decode new words independently, each procedural approach varies. Along with the National Reading Panel’s (2000, p.89) explanation of each approach, I tabulated a summary which highlights the procedural differences of each approach (Table 2).

Table: 2 Summary of Instructional Phonics approach

<u>APPROACH</u>	<u>MEANING</u>
Synthetic phonics	the conversion of letters into sounds or phonemes and then the blending of the sounds to form familiar words
Analytic phonics	the analysis of letter sound relations after the word is recognised
Embedded phonics	the use of sound-letter correspondences along with contextual cues to identify new words they come across in a text
Analogy phonics	the use of fragments of written words they already identify to recognise new words
Onset-rime phonics	the ability to identify the sound of the letter before the first vowel (onset) in one syllable words and to then sound of the remaining word (rime)
Phonics through-spelling	the transformation of sounds into letters to write out words

In a study conducted by the California Reading Program Advisory (1993, p.6), it was established that the most effective phonics instruction is explicit (synthetic) in that it is systematic and it steadily constructs from basic elements to more subtle and complex patterns. In addition to this review, the use of the synthetic approach to developing early reading is ideal as it focuses on the basic skills of converting letters into sounds and then using the sounds to make new words.

Similarly, Whitehead (2002) states that over the years it has become increasingly clear that later reading success is partially due to a child's early knowledge of nursery rhymes and their ability to recognize repetitive sounds in their language. It is crucial that phonics instruction is used to develop children's early reading skills. Browne (1998) believes that there are various ways in which phonics instruction can be implemented during early reading development:

- Nursery rhymes, riddles, poetry and jokes;
- Playing games with children to help them become familiar with the sounds;
- Using clapping rhythms to help children become conscious of sounds;

- Allowing children simultaneously to listen to and read taped stories so that they can see and hear the words together; and
- Reading and using alphabet books with children.

These suggested methods all relate to the synthetic approach of phonics instruction as they are based on letters and sounds. In addition, these tasks can be done at home by parents and/or caregivers.

b. Reading Aloud

According to Trelease (2001), reading aloud is an activity in which the parent or teacher reads to the child. He, together with Hall and Moat (1999), believes that reading aloud has several benefits. During the reading aloud process the parent is conditioning the child's brain to link reading with pleasure, to create background information and knowledge, to build the child's vocabulary, to familiarize the child with language patterns and the structure of stories. The parent is also a reading model to the child. Theorists (Vacca et al. 2006; Hall & Moats 1999; McKeown & Beck 2006) have found that the best way to develop a child's love for books is through reading aloud. This task of reading aloud can be conducted at home and at any time. By parents reading to children, children learn to read. Cramer (1975, p. 461) explains five guidelines that a parent can use to for reading to children:

1. Plan the day's reading selection in advance. Try to allocate one day a week for different genre reading (poetry, surprise reading and plays).
2. Select material that will be best suited for the child that is being read to, so that the child will be interested and the level will be appropriate.
3. Understand the tone, mood and action of the passage being read. Include dramatic gestures to enhance the reading.

4. The time allocated for reading to the child should not be included in other time slots such as television time. Reading to child should be a separate activity.
5. If a narrative is to be read over two days always stop at a point that is likely to create anticipation for the rest of the story.

Reading aloud should be a daily occurrence in which the parent and child participate. This will certainly develop a child's interest in reading as well as enabling the child to learn to read, which is crucial in developing lifelong confident readers. In addition, Duursma, Augustyn and Zuckerman (2008, p.556), state that reading aloud to children in a participatory manner stimulates emergent literacy and language development, and encourages positive parent-child relationships.

c. Shared Reading

Shared reading is a teaching strategy that unites the intimate effects of sharing books with children, and the reading task, gradually allowing the child to take over the reading task (Holdaway, 1979). This process can occur between parent and child, or teacher and child or children in class. Anderson, Heibert, Scott and Wilkerson (1985), are of the belief that shared book reading is the best way that parents can prepare their children to learn to read. "The bedtime story and the intimacy that surrounds it, is one of the most important ways that parents can share the joy of reading with their children" (Vacca et al., 2006, p.82).

Furthermore, Butler (1988) and Taberski (2000) suggest shared reading is one way of creating opportunities for children to understand: what a book is, what reading is, what readers do with books as they are read and what makes a story a story. In addition, when parents share books with their children they can boost the child's knowledge and

understanding of the world as well as the child's social skills (Duursma, Augustyn & Zuckerman, 2008).

Shared reading has always been regarded as a good approach and is encouraged in the classroom for the teaching of reading by many theorists and organisations, one being the South African Department of Education. However, research evidence (Jordan, Snow & Porche, 2000; Sènèchal & LeFevre, 2002) has shown that shared reading does not improve a child's reading skills; instead it enhances their language skills. However, it is difficult to separate reading skills from language skills. Intervention studies have clearly identified that young children can learn new words from shared reading (Hargrave & Sènèchal, 2000; Jordan et al., 2000; Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998). Thus, we can accept that because shared reading will assist in building a child's vocabulary it is a good approach to use in developing young children's reading. In addition, shared reading can be viewed as an example of not only 'learning to read' but also 'reading to learn' reading. It is from shared reading that children develop the essentials needed for reading such as understanding what a book is, how to handle a book (the right way up), and the components of books (words, pictures, covers and pages). Holdaway (1979) designed a set of practices that could be used when using shared reading as a reading development method:

- Introduce, talk about and read a new story (start by showing a child the cover of the book, always tell the child the title of the book, read the story dramatically, encourage the child to retell the story in their own words and reread the story encouraging the child to participate);
- Reread familiar stories (teach book conventions, and make the child aware of written language conventions);

- Develop reading skills and strategies (once a child is familiar with favourite stories teach the child literacy skills for example: recognizing letter-sound relationships in words, building vocabulary, and developing oral reading); and
- Encourage independent reading (develop a library of books at home that have been shared and reread a number of times, encourage the child to read on his own).

(Adapted: Based on Foundations of Literacy)

Shared reading can also occur in an informal setting while watching a programme on television that is telling a story or the use of other electronic media such as computer games.

d. Silent Reading and Picture Books

Silent reading is also known as independent reading where a child is given the chance to choose a book of their choice and is expected to read on their own. However, this process is successful when a child is older and is able to read and understand what is being read. In an adapted form, this process is also recommended in the early years as it gives the child a chance to browse through a book on his/her own, to concentrate on a book and it teaches them that reading is valued and that it is a pleasurable activity. In younger children this silent reading will not be an entirely quiet process as they would like to show words and pictures that interest them to their parents or caregivers (Godwin & Perkins, 1998).

Also, books containing pictures are significant in the silent reading process, as learning to read visual symbols other than letters and words is an important part of becoming a reader (Jennings, 2003). In addition, visuals in books assist children in developing vocabulary as they are able to make connections with written words and visuals. Moreover, “when a child

first begins reading books on their own, most are not reading the words, they are reading the pictures and making up the story as they go along” (Beaty, 2009, p.123). Thus, during the early years of reading, visuals in books play a significant role in helping children to show interest in a book and to enjoy reading. As a result, visuals in books are an advantage during the development of reading in early years as they can be used to attract a child’s attention and keep the child interested and focused.

e. Digital Media

Television was formerly the most modern technology in many homes followed by videos and computers but today children are growing up in a fast moving digital age that is extremely different from that of their parents and grandparents. They are growing up at ease with digital devices that are rapidly becoming the tools of the culture at home, at school, at work, and in the community (Kerawalla & Crook, 2002; Calvert et al., 2005; National Institute for Literacy, 2008; Buckleitner, 2009; Lisenbee, 2009; Berson & Berson, 2010; Chiong & Shuler, 2010; Couse & Chen, 2010; Rideout, Lauricella & Wartella, 2011). Thus, many children are now learning to read through the use of digital technology, be it in the form of television, interactive toys, computers and tablets, or some combination of these and with more traditional textual forms (multimedia). Many researchers have suggested that when television shows and electronic resources are carefully selected, incorporating what is known about effective reading instruction, they serve as positive and powerful tools for teaching and learning (Pasnik et al. 2007; Neuman, Newman & Dwyer, 2010; Corporation for Public Broadcasting, 2011). Similarly, Wainwright and Linebarger (2006) established that while critics have issued many cautions against television and computers and their destruction of children’s learning, the most positive statement to be drawn from the existing scholarly

literature is that it is the educational content that matters and not the format in which it is presented. Thus, it can be established that the use of digital print and media is acceptable in the promotion of reading development at home.

2.8. Conclusion

This chapter has focused on reading and learning to read in the South African context. First, the Indian diaspora into South Africa was considered and its transition over the years with emphasis on the importance of being literate and educated. Second, the empirical findings were provided highlighting the ‘reading problem’ in our country. Third, an overview of the reading culture was presented and fourth, the involvement of parents in their child’s reading development. Last, strategies for reading development was discussed. This highlights that there is very little research in this crucial field within the Indian community.

Together with the next chapter (Chapter Three), providing an insight into the complex theoretical and conceptual field, we are able to understand how parents in South Africa should develop their children’s reading at home, more especially the Indian parents presented in this ethnographic case study.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Introduction

The conceptual or theoretical framework within a research study forms the soul of every study as it governs how the researcher formulates the research problem, how this problem would be investigated, and what meaning is ascribed to the data accruing from such an investigation. Hence, it is opportune to provide a brief analysis to distinguish between the two notions of theoretical and conceptual framework.

According to Imenda (2014), a theoretical framework highlights the theory that is used to guide a research. Hence, a theoretical framework can be understood as the application of a theory, or a set of concepts drawn from the same theory, to provide information on a particular occurrence or research problem. Some researchers may find the need to fuse both empirical findings and theoretical literature in order to understand the existing views on a particular situation because they believe their research problem cannot be significantly researched with the use of only one theory, or concepts which reside within one theory. This synthesis or fusion may be called a model or conceptual framework, which fundamentally embodies an ‘integrated’ way of viewing the research problem (Liehr & Smith, 1999). Thus, a conceptual framework can be outlined as a bringing together of a number of related concepts to better understand the research problem.

This research seeks to illuminate how parents in this ethnographic case study develop their young children's reading. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical context for the case study by considering the field of literature concerning reading, reading development and parents' involvement of reading. The parents' perspectives and practices can be understood in the context of theories about the reading process, which focus on developing reading at an early age as a central part of the study, considering aspects of understanding reading and the approaches to reading, the development of reading, the importance of learning to read and lastly, parental involvement in encouraging and facilitating reading at home.

3.2. Theoretical Perspectives on Reading

3.2.1. Understanding Reading

There are several definitions and understandings of reading which differ from one theorist to another. Initially it was preferred to use and adjust the definition of reading as, "a receptive language process. It is a psycholinguistic process in that it starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer and ends with meaning which the reader constructs" (Carrell, Devine & Eskey, 1988, p.12). Reading in the eye of the researcher can be recognised as a process in which the writer encodes meaning in the form of written language and the reader decodes the written language to establish an understanding. Additionally, reading is a sociocultural process in that "reading takes place and is learnt within a broader social context. Schools and teachers constitute an important component of this social context" (Pretorius & Machet, 2003, p.47). Moreover, parents play an important role in developing and encouraging reading so that children become lifelong readers. In this study, the broader

context of culture was of interest, in particular the role of culture in the Indian community regarding reading. Thus, reading can be understood as a socio-psycholinguistic process as it requires, and entails the interaction between, both psycholinguistic processes and a sociocultural context. Reading is a powerful tool which is crucial in the development of children as it is vital for their success, in that reading allows them to think, assimilate and understand various texts and to develop their own knowledge. In addition, Browne (1998, p.3) states that the engagement “with print promotes the ability to think about issues and ideas and develops understanding and agility with language in all its forms”. These ideas of reading will be further interrogated and elaborated in the thesis.

It can be argued that the view of reading development which informs this study is that of a progressive process in which a child’s reading is developed and later they learn to read. In other words, progressive process can be understood as reading is a gradual and on-going practice, in that children are first exposed to books and are encouraged to engage with books at a young age and as the development of reading matures children start to learn to read. This process of reading development can occur in a formal setting such as at school or crèche or in an informal setting such as at home during television time or during interactions between parent/other family members and child, and often it occurs in both the formal and informal settings.

3.2.2. Approaches to Reading

Over the years there have been varied discussions on the approaches to reading. These discussions have been based on the issues around which approach is most ‘appropriate’ in the

learning and teaching of reading, the phonics approach versus the psycholinguistic approach. Lyster (2003, p.39) specifies that, “the key differences between them indicate contrasting conceptions of how learning occurs as well as competing philosophical orientations”. The phonics approach is often known as a bottom-up approach; in simple terms reading is perceived as the attainment of a set of sub-skills in an encoded sequence. These sub-skills then unify to form the whole skill which refers to whole language. The whole language approach is referred as a top-down approach, and it sees learning as a holistic process. Teachers who retain a bottom-up approach or belief system believes that their learners must decode words before they are able to construct meaning from sentences, paragraphs and the entire text. Thus, the bottom-up approach is also known as the phonics approach since the mastering of word identification skills and letter-sound relationships are important. In contrast the top-down approach or belief system places emphasis on reading for meaning. Teachers that may follow this approach also encourage learners to choose their own reading material as they believe this is important for pleasure reading (Vacca et al., 2006). The table below summarises the beliefs that define the bottom-up and top-down approaches to reading.

Table 3: Defining bottom-up and top-down approaches to reading (Adapted from Vacca et al., 2006)	
Bottom-up Approach	Top-down Approach
Believes learners must recognize each word in order to comprehend the word or sentence.	Believes learners are able to comprehend a text even if they are not able to recognize each word.
Learners should use word and letter-sound cues to assist in identifying unrecognized words.	Learners should use meaning and grammatical cues together with letter-sound cues to identify unrecognized words.
Reading requires the mastering of word identification skills.	Learners learn to read through meaningful and authentic activities.
Emphasis is placed on letters, letter-sound relationships and words.	Emphasis is placed on sentences, paragraphs and text selections.
Accuracy is important in identifying words.	Reading for meaning is important.

In discussing a holistic approach to reading, or the top-down approach, Verbeek (2011) understands reading to be a cyclical rather than a linear process as it involves the use of visual, perceptual, syntactic and semantic approaches which all contribute to comprehension. Thus, this approach to reading can be seen as a socially constructivist one: what is learned cannot be separated from the context in which it is learned; the purposes or goals that the learner brings to the situation are central to what is learned; and knowledge and meaning are socially constructed through the processes of negotiation, evaluation, and transformation (Cambourne, 2002, p.26-29). I, like Weaver (1994), understand reading as a transaction between the mind of the reader and the language of the text, in a particular situational and social context. In other words we situate reading within both a psycholinguistic and a sociocultural approach. These two approaches are further discussed below.

a. Psycholinguistic Approach

The psycholinguistic approach to reading was developed in the 1960s by influential theorists Frank Smith and Yetta and Kenneth Goodman. This view “is simply that reading is better understood when it is viewed in terms of linguistic processes and that language processes are important in the processing of print” (Dechant, 1991, p.15). Goodman (1965) has studied what he refers to as children’s “miscues” (as opposed to their errors) while reading orally, and he uses these miscues to show how readers can actively construct meaning. “This work has had a huge impact on the way the reader’s efforts are valued in that errors became seen as generative rather than negative” (Verbeek, 2011, p.21). In addition, the Goodmans’ (1965/2003) phrase ‘psycholinguistic guessing game’ became very popular as they used it to explain how readers constructed the meaning in a text. This psycholinguistic guessing game consists of using syntactic, semantic and graphic information to guess what the text will be about (Samuels & Kamil, 1984, p.187). Dechant (1991, p.16) states that:

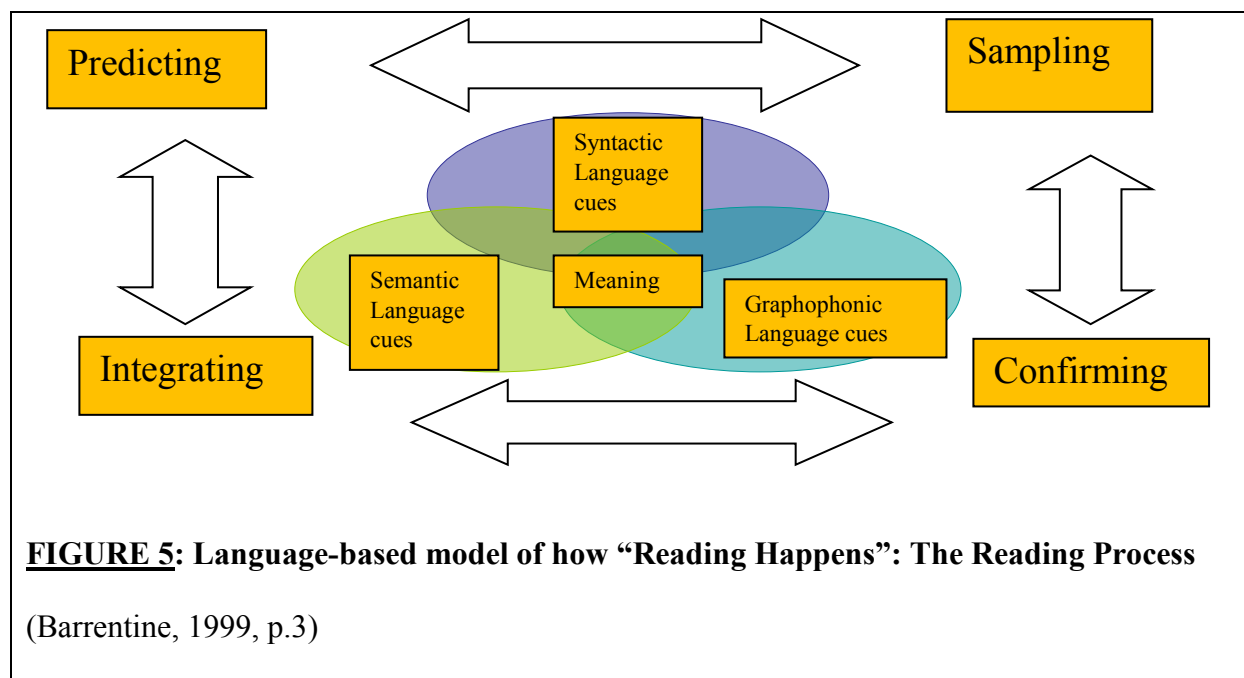
for Goodman, reading begins with a graphic display as input and ends with meaning as output. Goodman suggests that the eyes of readers move across a line of print picking up minimal visual cues.

These cues together with knowledge of language, their world knowledge, and the meaning of the previous text, allow readers to make guesses as to what will follow and what the words are.

This process creates an interaction between the reader’s thoughts and language. According to this process and Goodmans’ (1965/2003) view of reading, the graphic cues chosen by the reader are briefly stored in the short-term memory. The reader then makes tentative decisions about what the word could likely be and stores it in the medium-term memory. The reader then verifies this with what he/she knows and, if it is correct, it is stored in the long-term

memory. However, if it is incorrect the reader goes back to the text for more clues and thus the cycle continues (cited in Harrison & Coles, 1992, p.7-8).

Barrentine (1999, p.3) illustrates a “language-based model of how reading happens”, using Goodman’s (1965) representation of a psycholinguistic approach to reading.



This model (Figure 5) focuses on Barrentine’s understanding of the reading process.

Barrentine (1996) believes that in order for a reader to make meaning of the text, they sample the language information that is presented in the text. This language information consists of sounds and symbols which she refers to as graphophonic language, grammar (syntactic cues) and semantic cues which are in the text and the reader’s background knowledge. As the reader reads the text, they acquire and process these language cues by making and confirming predictions. These predications are then checked for sense as they are incorporated into the text by the reader for meaningful interpretation. This reading process is one that is recurring; there is no starting or ending point, thus it can move in any direction depending on the reader.

Frank Smith (1978/1994) also made a considerable contribution in the development of the psycholinguistic approach. He argued that individuals learn to read by reading and that the teacher's role is not to teach reading but to help them read, "by making reading easy, not by making it difficult" (Smith, 1978, p.139). Smith (1994, p.54), also believes that when readers read they use four sources of information:

1. visual information (information that was last seen e.g. the last word seen on the previous page);
2. orthographic information (spelling of words);
3. syntactic information (grammatical information); and
4. semantic information (background knowledge/information).

In addition, Smith (1994) argues that the more skilled reader uses fewer visual cues; they can construct meanings by making informed decisions based on what they already know or by using the other three sources of information. Lastly, Smith (1994) states that there are no methodical exercises or no kit of materials for teaching children how the world uses written language. Basically, children learn without anyone knowing that they are learning, simply by involving themselves in literate activities with individuals who use written language. He also believes that it is in what he calls 'literacy clubs' that children learn more about reading and writing. In addition, "children in the literacy club have opportunities to see what written language can do, they are encouraged and helped to do those things themselves. They learn to be like other members of the club" (Smith, 1994, p.217-218). However, this 'literacy club' suggests that reading happens through interaction between readers, adding in a sociocultural element.

To briefly recapitulate a complex process, psycholinguistic theorists believe reading is a process that is comprised of the interaction between the mind of the reader and the linguistics of the text.

b. Sociocultural Approach

In contrast to Smith's (1994) belief about the psycholinguistic approach in which reading is an interactive process between the readers mind and the linguistics of the text, other theorists such as Halliday (1975), Heath (1983), Wells (1986), Street (2001), Purcell-Gates (2004) and Cook-Gumperz (2006), share the belief that reading is developed and learned within a social context and, as a result, is a social and linguistic process. In other words reading should be developed and learned using a sociocultural approach. The term 'social context' refers to the individual's home, community, school, media and instructional interactions. This approach developed partly as a response to the perceived inadequacies within a purely psycholinguistic approach to reading.

Sociocultural theorists also believe that reading is not an individual process, but a process that involves social groups in different contexts which in most cases have a positive effect on the reader. Verbeek (2011, p.30) states that,

the social meanings and uses of literacy in different contexts (not only in the school) are of key interest, as is an awareness of power and the nature of knowledge, social class differences in the meanings and uses of literacy in these contexts and the intergenerational maintenance of such differences. The influence of social identity (class, race and gender) both on what the reader brings to the text and on how he or she interacts with the text is of interest.

Hence, confirming their understanding of reading as a sociocultural process. Also they (sociocultural theorists) affirm that reading occurs socially. Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic (2000, p.8) have identified five theoretical assumptions that they believe to be key in the understanding of literacy as a social process.

1. Literacy is best understood as a social practice.
2. Different literacy practices are connected to different domains of life.
3. Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relations and some literacies are more powerful than others.
4. Literacy is historically situated.
5. Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making.

In the above assumptions much importance is placed on literacy ‘practices’ and on ‘literacies’ rather than literacy. Practices refer to the unobservable beliefs, values, attitudes, and power structures of individuals in relation to the text. Perry (2009) illustrates (Figure 6) the knowledge needed in order for a reader to engage in literacy practices which consists of written genre knowledge, cultural knowledge and lexico-syntactic and graphophonic knowledge.

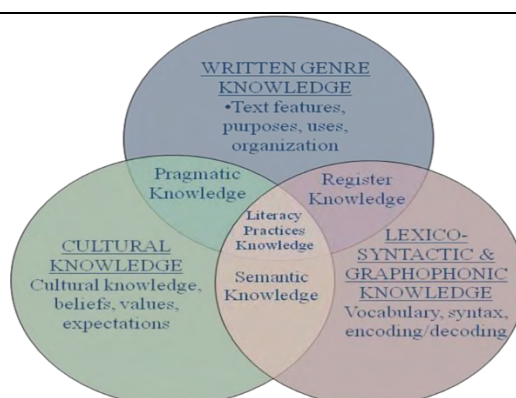


FIGURE 6: Aspects of knowledge needed in order to engage in literacy practices (Perry, 2009, p.260).

According to Perry (2006), lexico-syntactic and graphophonic knowledge are made up of the reader's knowledge of vocabulary, syntax, and the encoding and decoding of print, while cultural knowledge consists of beliefs, values, and expectations that the reader may have, and lastly genre knowledge contains knowledge of the textual features, uses, purposes for use, and organisation of given genres. This model demonstrates the effectiveness of viewing literacy as a set of social practices, because it highlights that cognitive skills (the ability to decode and encode) only makes up one part of what it takes to be literate. In addition, individuals must have a great deal of context-dependent knowledge in order to engage in a literacy practice.

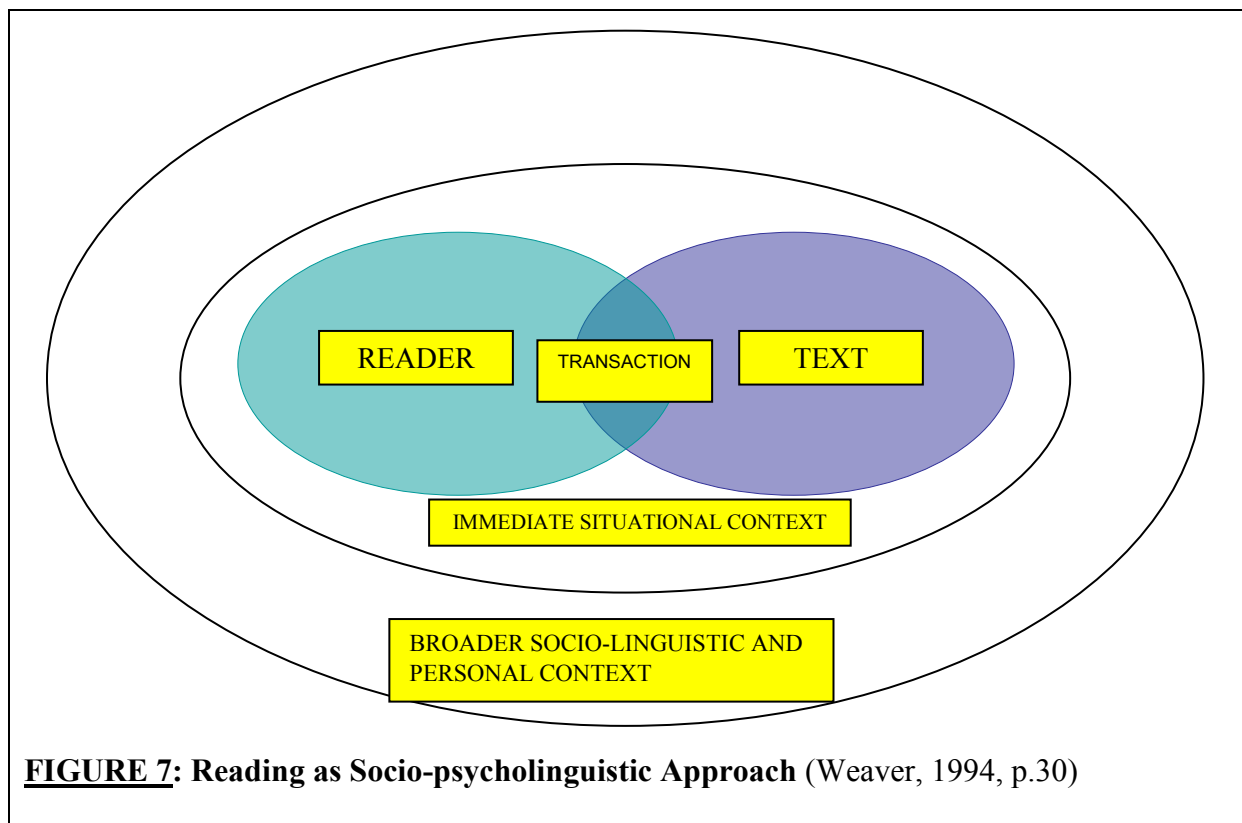
Within this view, it is distinct that literacy is wider than print based reading and writing. Thus, it can be said that the sociocultural approach to reading combines the written language in the text with the reader's values, beliefs, attitudes, feelings and social relationships, together with their knowledge of texts and genres that have been instilled in the reader from various contexts such as home, community, school and the media (Purcell-Gates, Jacobson & Degener, 2004). As a result, the theorists mentioned above suggest that reading development should not only focus on the language of the written text which is important but also should allow the reader to use their social and cultural backgrounds to develop and understand reading.

Rose (2004) subscribes to a sociocultural approach to reading. He believes that initial reading should occur at home and that children that come from literate backgrounds and cultures have a greater advantage over those who do not receive support from their families and communities. Thus, the constant debates over which approach is most appropriate in

developing a child's reading should be set aside and focus should be placed on merging the two approaches, which is discussed below.

c. Socio-psycholinguistic Approach

While the psycholinguistic approach emphasizes that reading is a process which interacts with the reader's mind and the linguistics in the text, and the sociocultural approach emphasizes that reading is developed in a social context, and that the interaction is between the social context and the linguistics of the text, some theorists have attempted to synthesize these processes. Weaver (1994) understands reading to be a socio-psycholinguistic process. Her perception of reading links the sociocultural approach to reading development with the psycholinguistic approach to reading development. In other words, this approach builds on and integrates the ideas of the previous approaches (psycholinguistic and sociocultural approaches) discussed in the thesis. In doing so she developed a model that explains the process of reading using a socio-psycholinguistic approach.



This model (Figure 7) shows a transaction which occurs between the text and the reader within a social and situational context. The term ‘transaction’ that Weaver (1994) refers to in her model is the process of reading which occurs when the reader begins to read a text. Weaver (1994) describes the social context as the reader’s background and the situational context as the testing situation where a reader brings their repertoire of strategies to orchestrate skills in the search for meaning. Thus, “reading is not merely a psycholinguistic process, involving a transaction between the mind and reader and the language of the text. Rather reading is a socio-psycholinguistic process” (Weaver, 1994, p.29). To sum up Weaver’s understanding of reading, it is a process which requires both the reader’s background knowledge as well as the skills required to be able to read and construct meaning in order for reading to be meaningful.

Similarly, Kucer and Silva (2006) designed a model which highlights the interrelation of the psycholinguistic (cognitive and linguistics) and sociolinguistic (background knowledge) approaches to reading. This model is identified as the ‘dimensions to literacy’. Many theorists define literacy in many different ways but I understand literacy as the ability to read and write either in print, braille or any other technological aid. Literacy provides people with the skills and knowledge required in their daily lives. Thus, literacy is a combination of reading and writing within a socio-cultural context. However, I also believe in the existence of multi-literacies. I share the same belief and thoughts as Cope and Kalantzis (2000, p.4) in that we live in a changing world where there are, “new demands which are being placed upon people as makers of meaning in changing workplaces, as citizens in changing public spaces and in the changing dimensions of our community lives – our life worlds”. I believe the multi-literacies understanding emphasizes the real world contexts in which people practice literacy. In other words, multi-literacies do not solely focus on print or written texts but instead involve multiple modes such as visual, gestural, spatial, and other forms of representation (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Also, multi-literacies are dependent on the users and the context in which they are being used.

According to Kucer and Silva (2006), literacy is a multidimensional process in which the reader or writer is a code breaker or code maker; a meaning maker; a text user and text critic; and a scientist and construction worker.

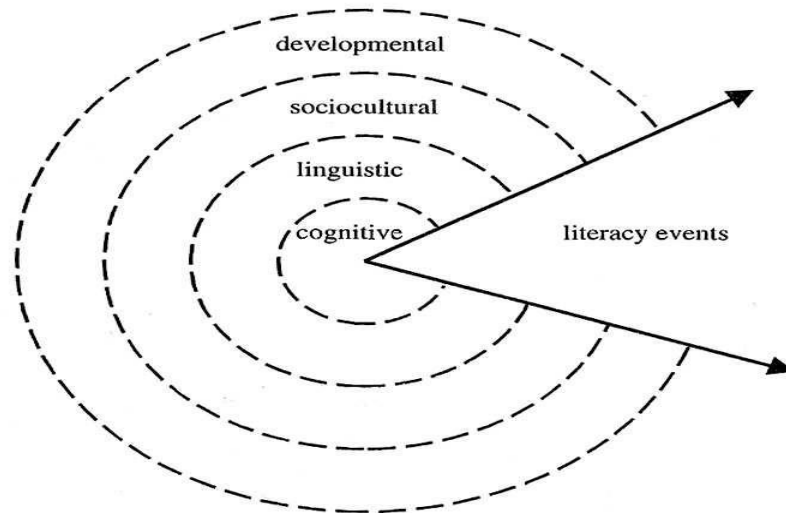


FIGURE 8: Dimensions of Literacy (Kucer and Silva, 2006, p.4)

According to Kucer and Silva's model (2006, p.3), Figure 8 illustrates the dimension at the epicenter as the cognitive dimension. This dimension is comprised of the various mental processes required in literacy, such as predicting, monitoring and revising. This then develops into the linguistic dimension, which consists of all the language components such as graphophonic, syntactic and semantic aspects that assists in determining meaning. As code-breakers, which forms part of the cognitive dimension in Kucer and Silva's (2006) model, children are expected to use systematic and comprehensive phonics, grammar, spelling and vocabulary-building skills based on basic concepts for thinking.

The next dimension in the model is the sociocultural dimension which embodies factors such as background and cultural experiences. This dimension supports meaning-making as well as the use of different texts. A child's personal experience and knowledge, cultural background and knowledge, aesthetic experiences ('reader-response') as well as their emotional engagement in the text, all contribute to meaning-making. In addition, the choice of texts assists in learning to compose and interpret genres of text for specific social and academic purposes by learning their conventions and registers. These all form part of the sociocultural

dimension of literacy. Lastly, the model reveals the developmental dimension in which the reader or writer becomes fluent in literacy as they possess all roles of a reader, namely meaning maker, text user and critic (Luke & Freebody, 1999). A reader that is able to critically analyse a text shows metacognitive awareness and is able to identify points of view, power, ethics and social justice in texts.

Kucer and Silva maintain that we use knowledge of these dimensions in a, “transactive, symbiotic manner....The challenge faced by the individual is to juggle and integrate both the constraints and possibilities offered by each dimension” (Kucer & Silva, 2006, p. 4). Thus this model suggests that all these dimensions apply simultaneously both to reading and writing.

This model by Kucer and Silva (2006) together with Weaver’s (1994) model, considering the uniqueness of each model, both highlight that reading is a socio-psycholinguistic process. Similarly, as will be seen this study advocates reading as a socio-psycholinguistic approach.

3.3. Models of Reading

Over the years researchers and language practitioners have developed, explored and produced a number of reading models to understand and describe the process of reading. In the past, reading was illustrated as a linear process, a one-way flow of ideas and knowledge carried by a writer to a reader (Gough, 1972). However, this has been altered over the years and more recently, researchers have begun to consider that the construction of meaning is an active process on the part of the reader as it involves the readers’ linguistic knowledge as well as their background knowledge which is stored in their memory (Rumelhart, 1990). In other words, the view of reading has shifted from a passive process of assimilating information to a

more active process of meaning construction. Besides, there are many different models of reading with different foci. Some focus on skills, some on stages and some on the different levels of text (e.g. word recognition (Pretorius, 2002), syntactic parsing (Goodman & Smith, 1965), discourse (Gee, 1996) etc.). Also, many theorists have argued that there are various methods of developing early reading skills among young children. However, the skills that are developed and later taught at early years are constant. In other words, although researchers may have their varying criticisms of the models and approaches to reading, the skills and components that are believed to be important in the early development of reading appear consistently across various models. These are phonemic awareness, decoding, comprehension, development of vocabulary and reading fluency. CAPS (DoE, 2011) has also included these skills and components in the teaching of reading at foundational level.

This section focuses on reading and the development of reading to young children. The diagrams below highlight some of the concepts and theories that are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two and Chapter Three.

3.3.1. Emergent Literacy

Emergent literacy became well known in the mid-1980s as a theory for explaining the origin of children's reading skills (Manson & Allen, 1986; Teale & Sulzby, 1987). According to Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998), emergent literacy consists of skills, knowledge and attitudes that are developmental creators of orthodox forms of reading and writing. Research suggests that learning to read and write is a process that takes years, starting at an early age. From birth, children start to make meaning of, and communicate with, their surroundings (Goodman, 1984). Britto et al. (2006) have argued that emergent literacy is based on the view that children

obtain literacy skills not only from direct instruction but also from a stimulating and responsive environment, in which they are exposed to print, observe the functions and uses of print and are motivated and encouraged to use the print. These environments in which the foundation of emergent literacy is developed, surround the child from birth to the preschool (Justice & Ezell, 2004).

Emergent literacy includes the child's development around words, language, books and stories and embraces the basis upon which children's conventional reading and writing abilities are constructed (Byrne, Deerr, & Kropp, 2003; Christie & Enz, 1992; Einarsdottir, 1996; Hanline, 2001; Justice & Ezell, 2004; Roskos, Christie & Richgels, 2003). According to Einarsdottir (1996), the term emergent literacy is used to describe the behaviours, skills, concepts and experiences children have with reading and writing that begin to shape their understanding of print. It has been argued that in the emergent literacy period (between birth and preschool), children develop important beginning of literacy skills, such as listening, speaking, print and word concepts and alphabet knowledge (Justice & Ezell, 2004). Together with this, children begin to understand the relationship between print and speech and the functions and forms of the written language. As young children start to familiarize themselves with print, they begin to make associations and begin to form an early understanding that print is a tool for making meaning and a way to communicate. Hence, emergent literacy combines both oral and written language (Roskos, Christie & Richgels, 2003).

Two models have been identified in research literature that theorise the collective skills related to early views of emergent literacy preceding the conventional literacy and their

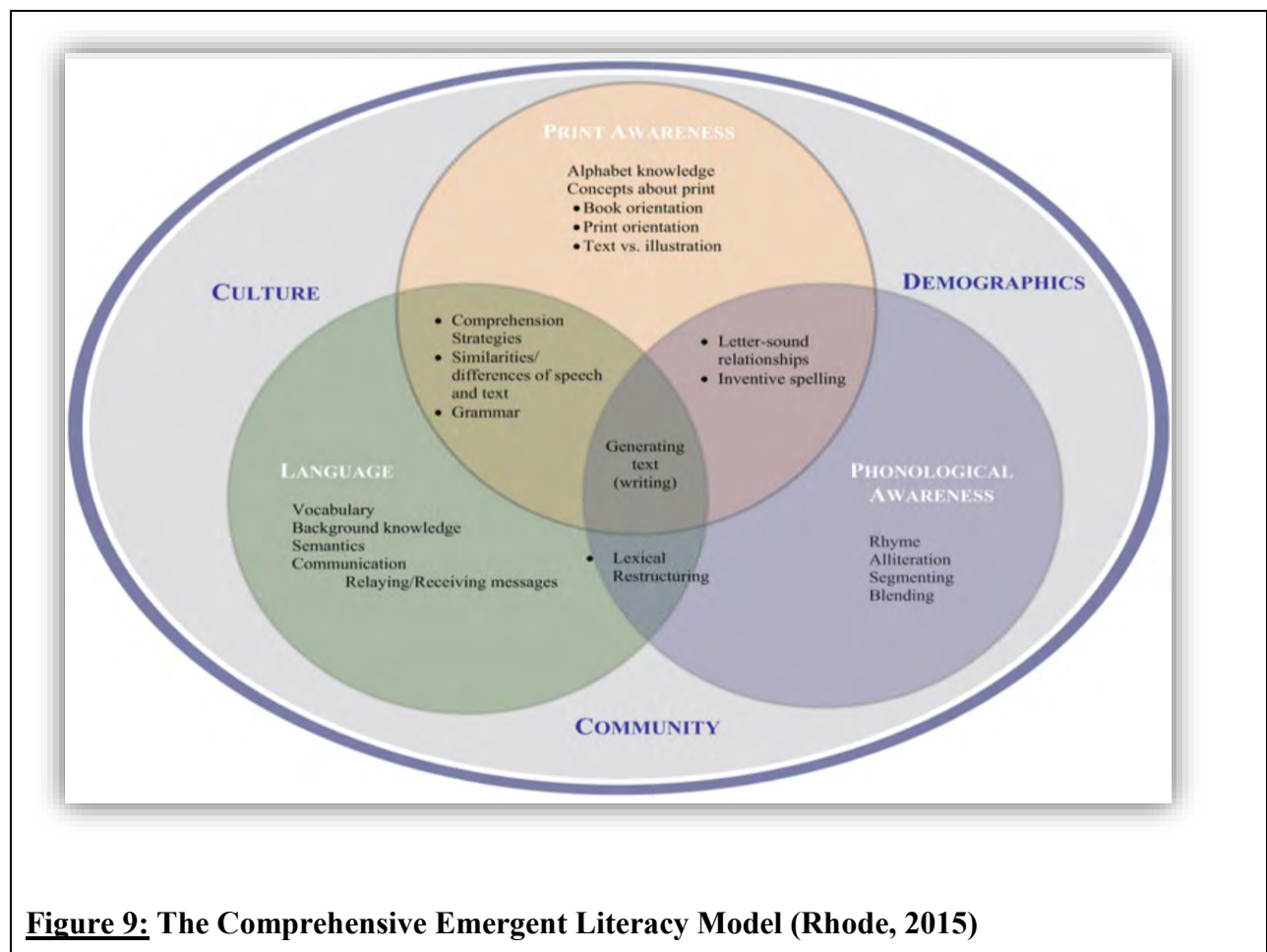
relationship to one another (Sénéchal, LeFevre, Smith-Chant & Colton, 2001). Mason and Stewart (1990) viewed emergent literacy as a developmental model, referred to as a four-component model. This model consists of the concepts and functions of literacy; writing and composing; knowledge about letters and words; listening comprehension; and word understanding. Each component is identified as independent, that is, each component is not reliant on another for a child to develop literacy skills. In contrast, Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) developed a model which classifies emergent literacy as two interdependent areas of concepts and skills, outside-in and inside-out. The outside-in process is made up of a child's conceptual knowledge, such as the purpose of print, mostly in the context of narratives. Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998, p.854) believe, "children's processing of the whole text, is where the understanding of the context in which they are trying to read (or write) occurs." The inside-out process is the procedural knowledge linked to the skills of literacy. This process involves understanding how to match the smallest components of literacy, sounds, and print units (e.g., letters) together and moving toward larger units of words (Sénéchal et al., 2001).

While both models share similar components they are presented in different orientations. They both include conceptual knowledge about the function of reading and writing, beginning procedural knowledge of how literacy works, oral language skills, including vocabulary, and metalinguistic skills such as phonological awareness (Sénéchal et al., 2001). However, Sénéchal et al. (2001) regard emergent literacy as detached from oral language and metalinguistic skills. This view suggests that emergent literacy is made up of two components, a child's conceptual knowledge as well as their early procedural knowledge of reading and writing. They explain that conceptual knowledge is comprised of a child's

knowledge of the acts of reading and writing and their view of themselves as readers and writers while procedural knowledge is made up of letter name, letter sound knowledge and some word reading. The development of oral language which includes listening comprehension and vocabulary, and metalinguistic skills which include phonological awareness are considered as separate constructs. As the interrelations and patterns across each of these elements change over time, the review by Sénéchal et al. (2001), suggests that recognising the associations between these components can lead to a better understanding of the development of reading.

Researchers have long acknowledged and documented that all skills in emergent literacy follow some kind of sequence. Oral language skills in young children are developed using consistent patterns and sequences (von Tetzchner, Merete Brekke, Sjøthun, & Grindheim, 2005). Phonological awareness also follows a sequence, with rhyming and alliteration as the beginning of this phase and segmenting and blending phonemes occurring later on (Goswami, 2001). Children's emergent writing likewise develops through a series of stages from scribbling to pseudo-letters to inventive spelling (Sulzby, 1989). However, emergent literacy development does not encompass one stringent method but rather a succession of related and parallel practices that culminates in the development of knowledge and skills related to the literacy process. Yet, the identification of the stages of development within each component of emergent literacy is crucial as it will allow parents and care-givers to provide children with appropriate learning opportunities and support.

Rhode (2015) has argued that the models of emergent literacy discussed above do not address the complexities of emergent literacy. In addition, she believes that emergent literacy is lagging behind, due to teachers' lack of knowledge of emergent literacy and, "a lack of educators' understanding of how these factors can work in harmony. Early literacy learning opportunities are more likely to happen when teachers have a solid knowledge base of emergent literacy and child development" (Rhode, 2015, p.2). Hence, she developed a comprehensive emergent literacy model (Figure 9) to help teachers and parents identify the dimensions of emergent literacy, the skills which need to be developed and the context in which this should occur.



Rhode (2015) states that this comprehensive emergent literacy model is an integration of the older models which she believed only identified emergent literacy skills; however, this model goes beyond the identification of skills by implementing the following considerations to the model:

- Each emergent literacy component has its own developmental sequence;
- Each component supports the development of other components as part of a holistic appreciation, rather than in a linear way as found in early models;
- The importance of recognizing the environment in which children and their families live; and
- This model connects emergent literacy components to the recommendations of three national authorities on early childhood education and emergent literacy learning (Rhode, 2015, p. 4).

The model highlights the four components of emergent literacy. These are language development, print awareness, phonological awareness, and emergent writing. In addition, the overlap of language and phonological awareness is called lexical restructuring. This, “is based on the premise that in the normal course of development, children’s phonological representations become increasingly segmental and distinctly specified in terms of phonetic features with age” (Goswami, 2001, p. 113). The overlap between oral language and print awareness is called comprehension strategies. They are the, “comprehension strategies of predicting, inferring, and reasoning are used both when listening and reading” (Rhode, 2015, p.6). Lastly, the overlap between phonological awareness and print awareness is called code-based knowledge. “...decoding requires knowledge of the alphabet and the sounds of language” (Rhode, 2015, p.6). Moreover, these emergent literacy components are developed and influenced within a context (culture, demographics and community). Rhode (2015) has

argued that the earlier models (Mason & Stewart, 1990; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998) presented emergent literacy as an amalgamation of conceptual knowledge and procedural knowledge without a clear indication of the role of the context or the environment in which emergent literacy is developed. Rhode (2015, p. 7) claims, “there is a strong body of evidence describing the correlations between social and cultural experiences and success in school and learning to read and write (McLachlan, 2007; von Tetzchner, Brekke, Sjøthun & Grindheim, 2005)”. This emphasis on cultural context is of particular interest in my study regarding South African Indian family reading networks.

The comprehensive emergent literacy model (Rhode, 2015) portrays the components needed for developing emergent literacy in a simplified manner as it classifies the possible skills required for the development of each early literacy component. In addition, it highlights the context and environment in which these components can be developed, which resonates well with the socio-psycholinguistic approach to reading which has been adopted within this theoretical framework (see Section 3.2.2). Hence, it is a more practical and holistic model that teachers and parents can use when developing children’s early reading and writing skills. These can be encouraged through the playing of games, nursery rhymes, daily conversations and book-reading activities so parents can play with language, recite nursery rhymes, sing songs, and engage children in daily conversations and book reading. Bennett-Armistead, Duke and Moses (2005) believe that it is best to weave in literacy throughout the day because children learn best through repeated exposure to materials and experiences.

It can be viewed that it is parents that assist their children in being successful and lifelong readers and this can be done by simply creating a rich literacy environment at home that encourages their children to develop an interest in reading from a young age. Unintentional, simple informal daily tasks encourage the development of reading.

3.4. Factors that Influence Reading

There are several factors which influence early reading development in children. However, the main focus is on play and the role of parents as these two factors seem to have a direct influence on children that are in Grade R. Children within this age group are constantly involved in play and are dependent on their parents in many areas of their development. Hence, reading can be developed by these factors.

3.4.1. Play

The focus of this study was to understand the involvement of parents in their preschool child's reading development. Pre-schoolers normally fit within the age bracket of five to six years old. Consequently, it is assumed and taken for granted that childhood is based on play and that play is crucial to children's learning. In other words, children are constantly involved in play from a young age and as they continue to grow, a lot of their time becomes consumed by play as they learn about the world and their relation to it. Thus, an important concept that assisted in answering the main research questions: What is the nature of parental involvement in the development of children's reading? How do we account for the levels and nature of parents' engagement in children's reading development; is to unpack the concept of play. In addition, it is crucial to understand the types of play that children within this age group are involved in, to understand the link, if any, between play and reading development.

Over centuries theorists such as Piaget, Vygotsky, Rosseau, Dewey, Montessori, Froebel and many others have been renowned for their influence and work around the importance of play for a child's learning development. Over the years play has been encouraged more and more both at home and at schools by researchers, policy-makers and practitioners. However, it is important to understand what play is. Many theorists have argued differently with regard to this term and defined it according to their understanding:

“Play is voluntary, enjoyable activity undertaken for its own sake, essential to every child, through which satisfactory development in all aspects of growth should take place” (McKeown, 1974, p. 18).

“Play is the arena in which young children make the connections between their immediate personal world and activities that are important in the larger social world of family and community” (McLane & McNamee, 1990, p.14).

“Play is activities that are freely chosen and directed by children and arise from intrinsic motivation” (Miller & Almon, 2009, p.15).

“Play is undoubtedly a means by which humans and animals explore a variety of experiences in different situations for diverse purposes” (Moyle, 1989, p.x).

Since there are varying definitions of ‘play’, I have decided to adapt the statements above to create a definition which best suits this study and my understanding; thus, for me, play is activities that children engage in freely, connecting and exploring their personal knowledge or world to the larger ‘social world’ that they understand, in a pleasurable way. In addition, I believe children play in order to stimulate and to ensure an active mind and body. Also, it

allows them to master what is familiar to them and explore the unfamiliar through gaining information, knowledge, skills and understanding.

In addition, play is comprised of many different kinds and forms, one being imaginative play which, “allows children to meaningfully integrate and master their experiences” (Casper & Theilheimer, 2010, p.96). Therefore, in this study we understand imaginative play as an action or movement in which children creatively engage, using their own personal knowledge of the world and transforming it to relate to their understanding of the larger social world of society in a fun way.

Play assists children significantly in their learning development as claimed by many theorists such as Montessori (1952), Piaget (1962), Vygotsky (1978), Cambourne (1995) and many more. These theorists have all proposed that when children relate to the world around them, they are likely to recall direct or first-hand experiences instead of second-hand experiences that are revealed to them by other people. In addition, these theorists have stated that children learn the most through performance and not by prompt. Montessori (1952) believed, “children learn best by doing, and through repetition” and by this she meant that teachers or care-givers need to give children sufficient amounts of free time to allow children to structure their own work and play (cited in Mooney, 2000, p.29). Similarly, Piaget (1962) theorised children’s cognitive development through labelling of age based stages and the theory suggests that children construct meaning by interacting with their surroundings. The way children interact within an environment is what creates learning (Mooney, 2000, p.61). Piaget further believed that children come to appreciate concepts by engaging in play, as play allows

children to express their ideas in a natural way. Children learn by watching and imitating situations around them and it is learning through trial and error that enhances a child's cognitive abilities (Mooney, 2000, p.63). In other words, children observe and watch the behaviours of individuals, animals and things within their environment and then enact those behaviours as they play. Such an example could be while a child watched his neighbour fix a car, the child, playing with his cars, calls himself a mechanic and begins to fix his cars using imaginative or play tools. In addition, Tsao (2008, p.518) states that children recall their past play experiences and create new meanings each time they play, thus highlighting the importance of play in a child's learning development process.

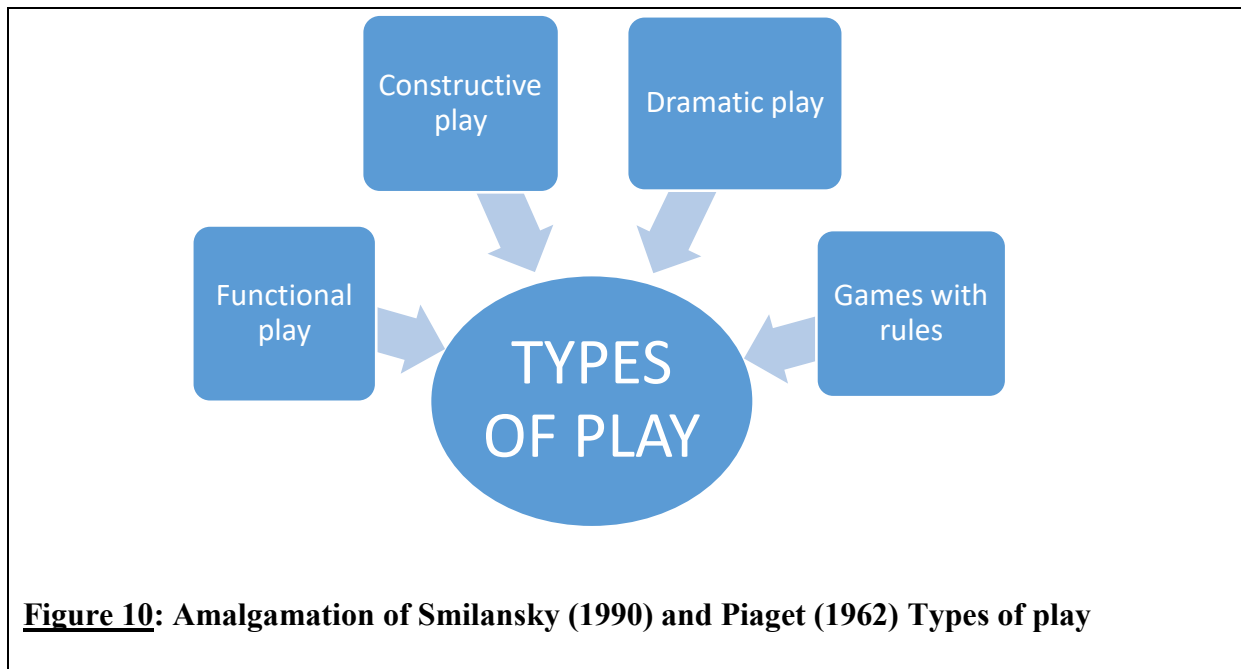
Theorist Lev Vygotsky (1978), also shared his ideas and theories that play develops a child's ability to learn. He explained how children learn when they play:

Language and development build on each other. When children play, they constantly use language. They determine the conditions of make believe. They discuss roles and objects and directions. They correct each other. They learn about situations and ideas not yet tried (Mooney, 2000, p.83).

Accordingly, play helps children to build their knowledge and skills around language and literacy. Cambourne (1995), shares a similar view with Vygotsky in that play allows children to practice and engage in oral language and transfer it to literacy learning. When children are engaged in play, they use language in order to communicate and negotiate meaning. Hence, allowing children to creatively explore, affords children the ability to optimally develop.

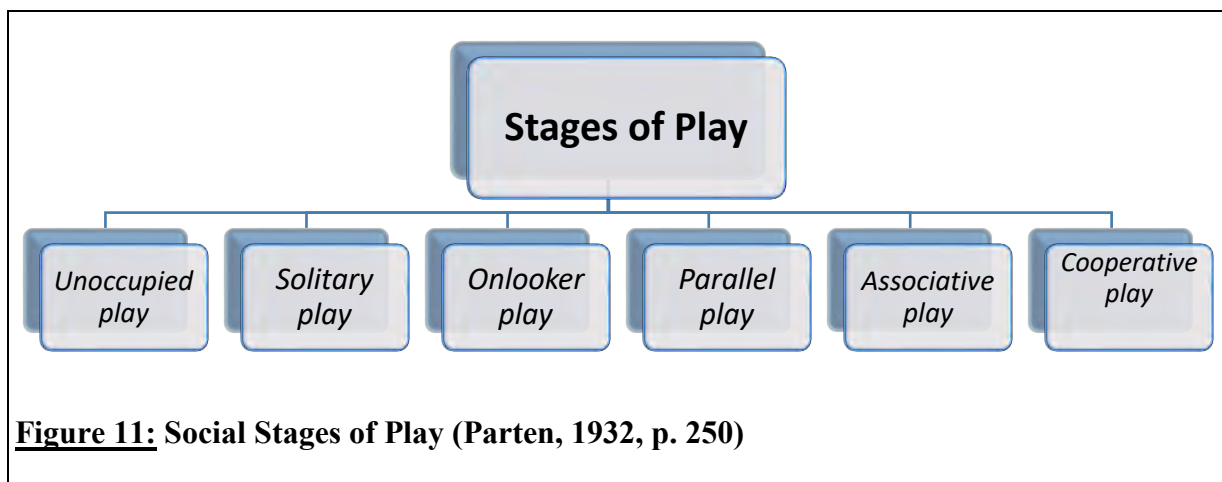
Over the years researchers have argued that there are different stages of play and have tried to define the characteristics or qualities of the different stages of play to create a better understanding of play and its benefits on children. Piaget (1962), identified categories of play and the stages in which it occurs in children. Namely; practice play (occurs between the ages of six months to two years), symbolic play (between the ages two to six years) and games with rules (six years and upwards). However, Smilansky (1990) has argued that Piaget (1962) has excluded a category which is crucial and that needs to be added to his categories of play. She stated this is constructive play.

Likewise, Piaget's stages of play have been criticised by researchers (Meadows, 1993; Smilansky, 1990) as they believed play might not always occur within the age categories exemplified by Piaget. For example, "sensori-motor and exploratory play may be the dominant forms of play in infancy but continue throughout childhood. Infants and toddlers also engage in symbolic and imaginative play" (Wood & Attfield, 2005 p.40). Similarly, Smilansky (1990) questioned Piaget's categories of play because she believed that socio-dramatic play developed collaterally with other categories of play which continues past the age of 10 years. Hence, Smilansky (1990), refined and extended Piaget's (1962) categories and stages of play by expanding, clarifying and renaming the four types of play. These are namely functional play, constructive play, dramatic play and games with rules.



The figure above represents an amalgamation of both theorists' understanding of the types of play. They both share a similar opinion of the types of play although there were slight variations in the classification of the types of play and their view of the types of play. Piaget's (1962) practice play was referred to as functional play by Smilansky (1990). However, they both understood this type of play as a sensori-motor and explanatory play which is based on physical activities which give the child sensory feedback. The next type of play that they both refer to, is constructive play. This play occurs when the child manipulates objects to build or create something meaningful. In addition, as the child grows, constructive play becomes more complicated and intricate. A further type of play, Piaget (1962) recognises as symbolic play and Smilansky (1990) refers to as dramatic play. This is an interactive and flexible process in which children formulate symbols for ideas, feelings and issues which they use to create play scenarios. This kind of play encompasses pretend, fantasy and socio-dramatic play. In addition, it allows them to express and explore the material their play generates in a creative and imaginative way. Lastly, games with rules involve play that is rule-based such as board games, sports and card games.

Mildred B. Parten (1932), a psychologist and one of the early researchers of children at play, developed a system for categorising the social stages of play that children engage in. Her categories of play are not hierarchical and depending on the environment, children may participate in any of the different types of play. In addition, these social stages of play are still deemed one of the best portrayals of how play develops in children and how children engage in play (Gander & Gardiner, 1981).



Parten (1932) described what she believed were the six stages of social play (Figure 11):

- *Unoccupied play* is when the child is not doing anything;
- *Solitary play* occurs when the child plays alone; mainly
- *Onlooker play* is when the child observes other children play and does not actively participate;
- *Parallel play* is when the child plays next to, but not with another child or children;
- *Associative play* occurs when children move in and out of play together but without a common focus; and

- *Cooperative play* is when children play together in an organized way or with their common design according to their shared purpose (Casper & Theilheimer, 2010, p.104).

Children from a young age, who learn to share, alternate, and engage with others, show a greater degree of achievement later in life. Parten (1932) found that as children became older and had more opportunities for peer interaction, the non-social types (solitary and parallel) of play became less popular with the social types of play that being associative and cooperative play taking precedence (Lorton & Walley, 1979). However, it has been contested by Hughes (2009), whether solitary play in older children is actually less common or is a sign of immaturity. In addition, he believes there are alternative explanations which suggest that the types of play may also be influenced by other circumstances (such as how well the children know one another).

Although there has been much debate around the stages and types of play (Brenner & Mueller, 1982; Johnson, Christie & Wardle, 2005; Hughes, 1999), I must acknowledge, from my personal observations of my young growing children, that I certainly relate to Smilansky's (1990) types of play (functional play, constructive play, dramatic play and games with rules), as well as Parten's (1932) stages of play. I have found that my children have undergone and still engage in these stages and types of play. For example, I have seen both my children enjoying unoccupied play and solitary play. My daughter who is almost two years old, still engages in solitary play and often my son becomes an onlooker in new environments. I have also begun to notice both my children playing together but it is merely associative play. During these various stages of play they engaged in functional and constructive play and currently my son (three and a half years old), is enjoying imaginative

play in that he pretends to be something like an animal, a monster, or a policeman, as well as imitating actions and behaviours that he admires. Thus, the stages and types of play are fundamental but Hughes (2009) believe that the context in which play occurs also impacts on the stage of play is best understood in this study.

There has been much research conducted around the importance of dramatic/pretend play to improve children's cognitive skills. Moyles (1989), believes that pretend play is often an underrated context through which language development, communication skills, as well as competence flourishes together with complex language interactions. Also, Meek (1985, p.50) states, "the play inaugurates, discusses, elaborates and promotes the imaginary and the metaphorical". Pretend play also involves a child's social and emotional processes through imitating, make-believe, symbolic changes, communication, interpreting social and cultural rules as well as involvement and emotional engagement. Wood and Attfield (2005, p.42) believe there are six elements in dramatic play namely:

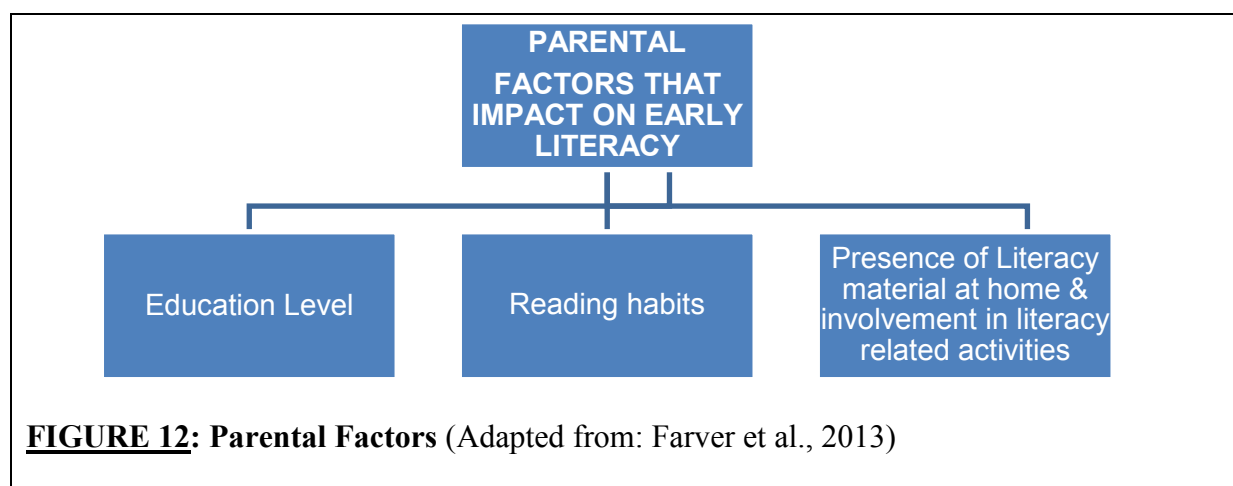
- Role-play by imitation;
- Make-believe with objects;
- Make-believe with actions and situations;
- Persistence in the role-play;
- Interaction; and
- Verbal communication.

They further state that each element incorporates play skills and play knowledge. In addition, within each element, children have the opportunity to pretend and create something that has meaning for them. Isenberg and Jacob (1983) state, “symbolic play, the process of transforming an object or oneself into another object, person, situation, or event through the use of motor and verbal actions in a make-believe activity, provides an important source of literacy development” (as cited in Hall, 1991, p.9). Thus, we can deduce that make-believe or imaginative play encourages literacy development by facilitating children’s knowledge of how sounds and symbols work as they communicate in the play setting.

3.4.2. Modelling Parental Involvement in Reading Development

Parental involvement in developing reading skills in young children has now become crucial in every home. Hall and Moats (1999) believe that teaching a child to read is the responsibility of the parent and the teacher. They further state that what parents do at home to encourage and support their child’s reading development is very important as it prepares their child for reading instruction at school. Importantly, according to my ‘family reading network’ (Chapter 4, Figure 15) reading development can be done through other members of the family such as siblings, grandparents, neighbours and friends, not only the parents. Serpell, Sonnenschein, and Baker (2005) have simplified parental activities that promote reading development and encouragement at home into the following eight themes: engage in shared book reading, provide frequent and varied oral language experiences, encourage self-initiated interactions with print, visit the library regularly, demonstrate the value of literacy in everyday life, promote children’s motivation for reading, foster a sense of pride and perceptions of competence in literacy, and communicate with teachers and be involved with school. Although these activities seem simple to conduct within a household, it is important

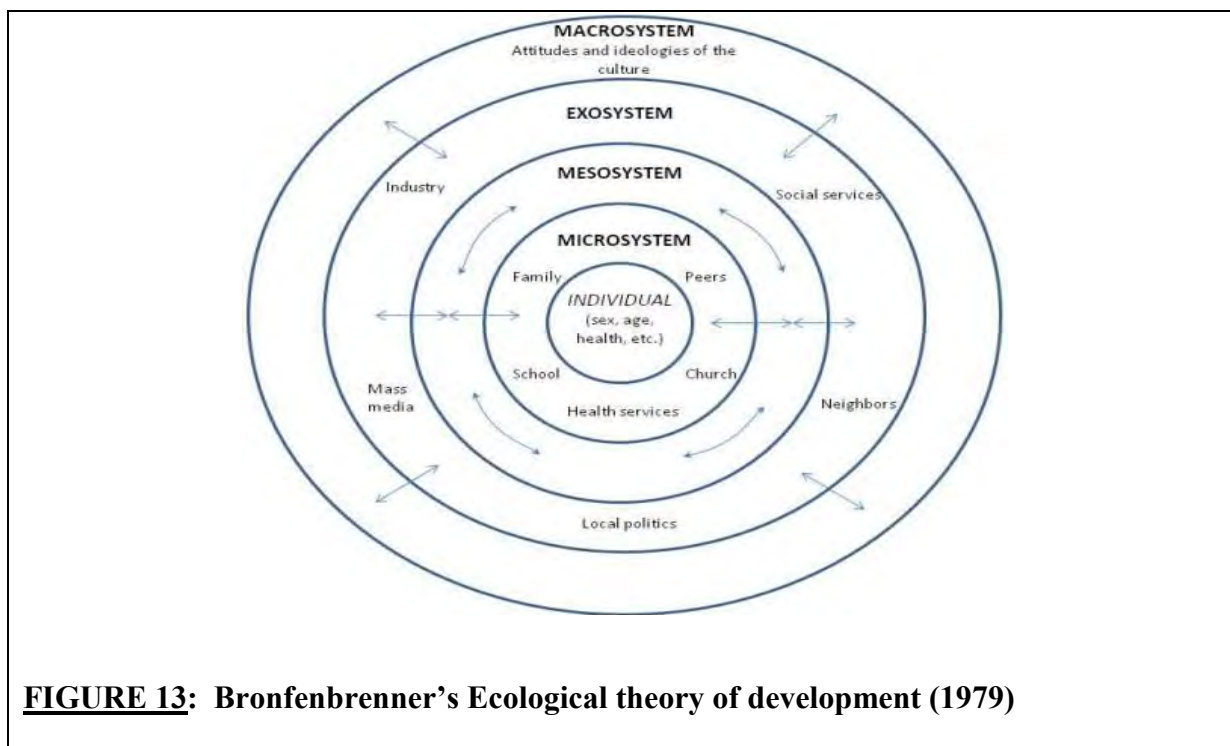
to note that there are parental factors that may positively or negatively impact on a child's early reading process. Figure 12, below highlights some of these factors, which will assist in understanding parental involvement of reading among their children.



Hammack et al. (2012), also believe that the above mentioned parental factors contribute to the development of early reading. Rose (2004) found that parents from low socio-economic backgrounds had a lower educational level, poorer reading habits and their households lacked literacy materials and thus children were disadvantaged because parents did not teach early reading. On the other hand, parents from middle socio-economic backgrounds had the resources to teach early reading skills. This resulted in some children 'falling behind' in the classroom due to their poor background knowledge. According to theorists (Landry & Smith, 2006; Hall & Moat, 1999; Vacca et al., 2006) children model parents' reading habits and become more intrigued in reading if they notice their parents reading and if the environment they occupy is rich with reading materials and resources. Thus, we can affirm that there are parental factors which impact on the teaching of early reading to children. As stated earlier, these factors can either positively or negatively affect a child's early learning to read process.

3.4.3. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory

Children may initially learn to read from their 'family reading network' and as acknowledged earlier, parental factors contribute to a child's learning to read process. However, there are other factors which may also influence a 'family reading network' which could have a direct impact on a child's learning to read process. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological theory of development highlights the different factors that could impact on a child's learning to reading. The theory comprises of four systems, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and the macrosystem (Figure 13).



a. Microsystem

Within the microsystem, Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggests two proposals about the conditions in which reading must occur in order for a child's development to take place. The first proposal centres on the primary context in which the child can observe and participate in activities under direct guidance of people who possess knowledge and skill that has not yet been obtained by the child. In this context an individual that shares a positive emotional bond

with the child monitors the child. The second proposal focuses on a secondary developmental context, where the child is presented with resources and opportunity to participate in activities that the child engaged in during the primary context. However, the child does not receive direct support from another person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The primary context supports the dyadic activities of the parent and child. For example, the parent can read out a letter and say the sound, the parent can then move to the secondary context by giving the child the opportunity to show the early reading skill that was taught in the primary context.

Within this microsystem, the child has direct contact with people such as parents, grandparents, siblings, teachers and friends who have a direct impact on the child's learning and involvements. In this research we focus mainly on the microsystem, the relationship that the parent and child share in developing the child's early reading within a family reading network.

b. Mesosystem

In the mesosystem, the relationship between the child's parents and other members of the community that have a direct relationship with the child is highlighted. For example, the interaction that the parent has with child's teacher may have an effect on the learning development of the child. Within this interaction they can communicate their expectations, the progress and shortfalls of the child and how to better equip the child.

c. Exosystem

Within the exosystem, the psychological development of a child is affected not only by what happens in the other environments in which the child spends their time but also by what occurs in the other settings in which their parents live their lives. These settings consist of the parents' work environment. Furthermore, media has an impact on the psychological development of the child. Another domain to which children tend to have limited access is the parents' social network. Such environments are referred to as the exosystem, all of which have an impact on a child's learning development.

d. Macrosystem

The macrosystem is comprised of the relationship that societal attitudes and cultural beliefs may have on the child's development of learning. An example of this relationship could be in society where the teaching of reading by parents is seen as a norm; thus this has an impact on the child's learning development as the parents will teach the child to read. The macrosystem could also include the media to read through which reading is made available to parents and children, including paper-based print, electronic and other audio-visual media.

These four systems all interact with each other and have an impact on the child's learning development as they are interconnected. For example, the media which is characterized in the exosystem and macrosystem may have an impact on the child's reading to learn process. The mesosystem and exosystem in the ecological theory is linked to the parental involvement factors discussed earlier. As mentioned earlier, parents' external factors play a role in the development of learning in their child. These external factors are also evident in the parental

factors which were discussed earlier. For example if a parent's social circle of friends (exosystem) are avid readers, the parent would also be a reader (parental factors) and they might form part of a reading club. Thus these reading habits and environment will be passed down to the child.

Therefore, we can testify that Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1979) shares a close relationship with the parental factors which have been discussed.

3.5. Mediated Learning

There are various ways and methods that one could use to understand the relationships within the 'family reading network'. However, Feuerstein's mediated learning experience seems to be an ideal interactional process between the adult (the parent or caregiver) and the child. The mediated experience is used to develop cognitive skills. According to Feuerstein (1980) and Vygotsky (1935), learning is a mental development as it stimulates the process of change, while mediation is understood as a process in which cognitive skills are developed through the interactions between an adult and a child.

Mediated learning experience refers to those "human interactions that generate the capacity of individuals to change and/or modify themselves in the direction of greater adaptability and towards the use of higher mental processes" (Feuerstein, 1979, p.110). In other words, the approach positions the parent or caregiver to intervene between a set of stimuli and the child, in which the adult modifies the stimuli for the developing child. In addition, not only do the parents/caregivers make the stimuli meaningful but they also stimulate in the child regarding how the learning or thinking is pertinent to other areas of life, hence allowing transfer (Seabi,

2012). According to Feuerstein (1980, p.16), “the more and the earlier an organism is subjected to mediated learning experience, the greater his/her capacity to efficiently use and be affected by direct exposure to sources of stimuli”. Thus, it is during the childhood developmental stage that the advantages of mediated learning experience have the greatest impact on a child’s cognitive development.

Feuerstein (1980) classifies three ‘partners’ in the interaction of the mediated learning experience, namely: mediator, mediatee and material. The mediator plays a significant role in the interaction. It is the mediator who applies pressure towards change. Also, the mediator positions the environment or individual’s interaction, therefore the social interaction plays a very significant role in the human development (Hadji, 2000). The mediatee, “is just not a mere consumer of information or data. If the mediation is effective, he becomes a self-evolving actor” (Hadji, 2000, p.28). Lastly, Feuerstein (1980) believes that material is not of great importance, as there is no compulsory material. The content matter can be varied and the language could be different or even absent. In a home learning context with the three partners, the mediator would be the parent, the mediatee would be the child and the material would be the stimuli. It is evident from Feuerstein’s term ‘partner’ that the mediator, mediatee and material work together as the mediator raises the mediatee’s need for meaning and provides the mediatee with the opportunity to explore and create his own meaning.

However, not every interaction between a parent and child can be classified as a mediated learning experience. Feuerstein (1980) therefore developed criteria to assist in understanding if interactions are actually a mediated learning experience. These criteria are:

Intentionality/Reciprocity, Transcendence and Meaning. Feuerstein (1980), explains the criteria as follows: Intentionality is a turn in an interactive situation between the parent and child away from incidental to intentional. In a learning situation there are often two foci in intentionality, one being the object and the other being the child, and in such a situation the child needs to realize that the real object is not the task at hand but rather the child's own thinking. This advocates reciprocity, in that the child, "transforms the intention into an explicit, voluntary and conscious act" (Feuerstein, Feuerstein & Falik, 2010, p.43). An example of intentionality could be when the parent, while reading to the child, intentionally focuses the child's attention on a certain picture and the child responds explicitly to the parent's behaviour. The parent then highlights a specific feature in the picture and perceptively awaits or even encourages the child's response. The child's response to the picture is reciprocity.

Transcendence is the inclusion of identification of the fundamental principles, rules, values and their transmission to a wide range of other situations and tasks. An example of transcendence would be when the parent is reading a bedtime story to the child that includes a prayer. The parent would then relate the values and importance of prayer that they have been teaching their child to other situations and individuals such as in the story. Lastly, meaning within the mediated learning approach becomes possible only when stimuli, events or information are gathered together with meaning derived by the mediator. Mediation of meaning could occur when the parent is reading to the child a cheerful incident, and this could be read using a cheerful tone of voice (stimuli). This form of stimuli could then be explained to the child who may have seen it as neutral occurrence. Hence, the mediated

learning approach seems to be an ideal way for understanding the interactions between the parent/caregiver and the child.

As stated earlier, mediated learning experience should begin at an early age, so it is the responsibility of the parent/caregiver to engage with their child. “Mediated learning occurs when the environment is interpreted for the child by the other person who understands the child’s needs, interests and capacities, and who takes an active role in making components of that environment, as well as of the past and future experiences, compatible with the child” (Klein, 2000, p.240). In addition, it is important for the parent/caregiver to engage in mediated learning as mediation affects a child’s present learning which may improve the child’s chances to learn from future encounters.

In addition to the Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory, mediated learning also seems to be linked to the parental factors that influence reading. As explained above, mediated learning arises when the surroundings are interpreted for the child by an individual who recognises the child’s needs and interests and who plays an active part in making previous and forthcoming experiences harmonious with the child. The individual who plays this crucial role in the child’s life is usually the parent/caregiver. If the interactions between the parent/caregiver and child are poor this then has a negative effect on the way in which the child approaches new experiences as they have no interest in searching for meaning or exploring a new environment with the use of their senses. An example of this could be a parent/caregiver who is not a passionate reader and does not read regularly. They will not make the effort to read to the child using different tones that express emotions such as joy or sadness and may not use

facial expressions that enhance these emotions. This could disadvantage the child who might not be able to make meaningful links to reality nor know how to react in future situations where other individuals make an effort to encourage mediated learning. As a result, it is evident that parental factors potentially have an impact on the way in which reading is mediated to their child.

3.6. Summary of the Theoretical Framework

This ethnographic case study used several theories and concepts to understand the phenomena within the study, this being parental involvement in the development of young children's reading. Therefore, this section will concisely summarise the theories used in the study and the relationship between the theories and the phenomena by explaining the illustration below.

Figure 14 highlights the theories discussed earlier in the chapter: the socio-psycholinguistic approach to reading development, mediated learning, emergent literacy, play and the ecological theory. In the illustration, parents and children form the outer circle as they are the participants in the study. Their circle is then surrounded by the context in which reading development occurs. This context is linked to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory, which highlights the context and factors that impact on the child's developmental process.

The inner circle consists of the theories by which we understand the reading development process. In other words, reading is understood as a socio-psycholinguistic approach, in that

reading development occurs within a social context with focuses on the cognitive, linguistic and psychological aspects of developing a child's reading. Also, the social context in which reading development occurs is usually between the child and parent/caregiver. During this interaction, the parent/caregiver mediates the child's learning by developing his/her cognitive skills. This is done through parent and child interactions. However, not every interaction between the child and parent/caregiver is mediated learning. So, it is important that Feuerstein's classification of mediation is used to understand if the interaction was an act of mediated learning.

During the reading development process, the child's emergent literacy is also being developed. This emergent literacy includes the fundamental conventions of reading and writing such as print awareness, exposure to books, drawings, colouring and so on, which is crucial for reading development. Also, since these children are young, their day would normally comprise of, mostly play. Therefore it is important to acknowledge that reading development may occur during a child's play session as research highlighted that children learn through play. Subsequently, the reading development process is followed by the learning to read process which usually occurs at school. However, the child's reading to learn process is based on the foundation of the knowledge and skills acquired during the reading development process. As a result, the theories used in this study relate to each other and are foundational in understanding parental involvement in their child's reading development.

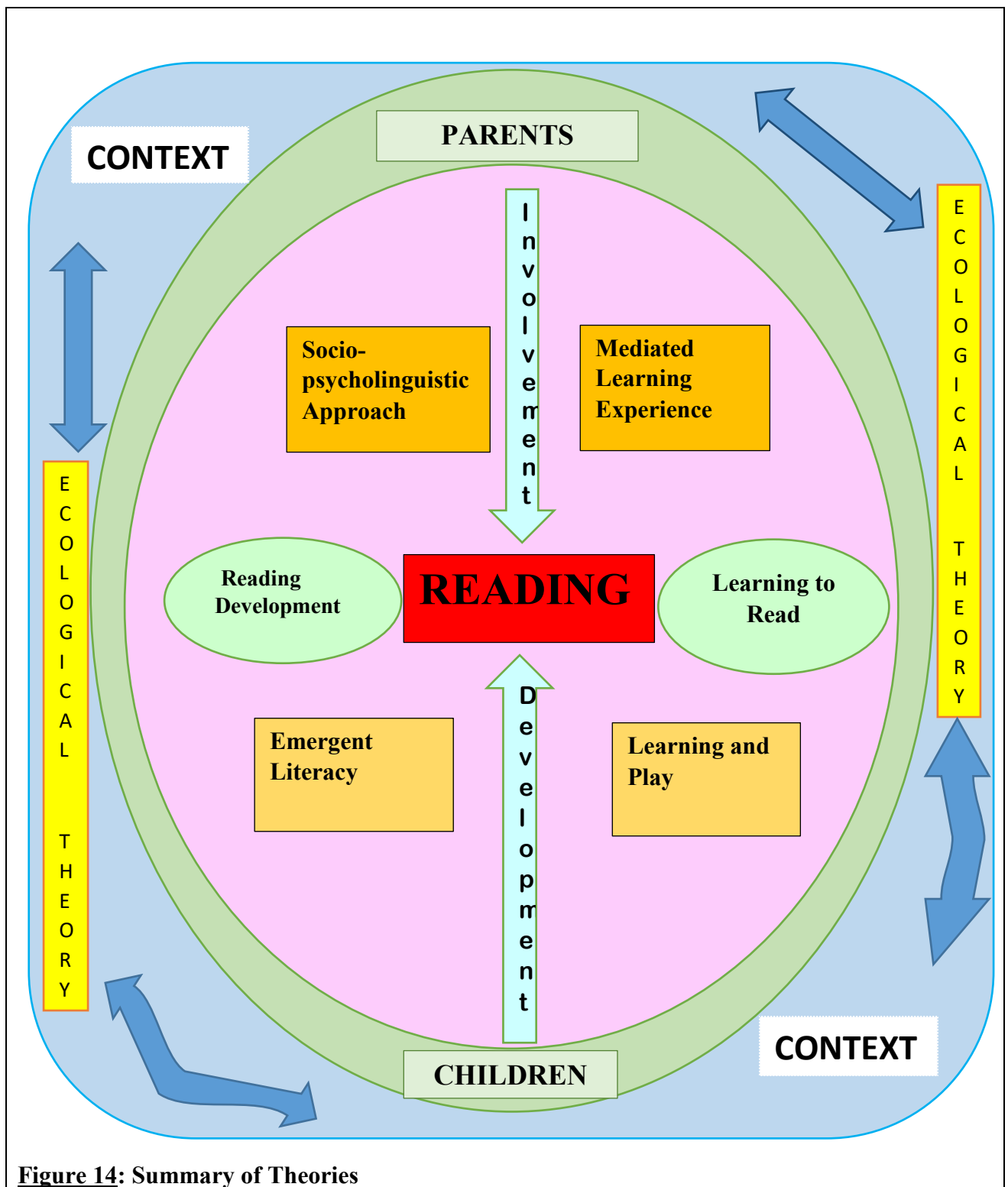


Figure 14: Summary of Theories

3.7. Conclusion

To sum up, in this chapter five different concepts and theories were discussed: understanding reading, reading approaches, reading skills, mediated learning and parental models, which all influence the reading development process of young Grade R children at home. As stated in the chapter, the key skills that young children need to develop fully in order to be learners of reading and later proficient readers, are decoding, comprehension, vocabulary, phonemics and fluency. Although the developing of these skills only, may be contested by other theorists, CAPS (2011), reiterates the importance of teaching these skills at schools in the foundation level. However, these can be developed at home by the ‘family reading network’. In addition, there are several factors that contribute either positively and/or negatively to a child’s reading development which have been identified and discussed in the chapter. These theories and concepts that have been discussed in this framework will be used later in the thesis to unpack the findings as they all have an influence on the development of early reading to young children by their parents.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to set out the issues of research design. It includes sampling, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations which are relevant to this study.

Firstly, the chapter will reiterate the purpose of the study which has been key to choices made during the practical design of this research. Secondly, it will discuss the issues of my own positionality within this research. Thirdly, there will be a brief description of the broad orientation of the study, addressing the nature of the research as an ethnographic case study, clarifying how the qualitative components of the research fit together and considering issues relating to trustworthiness and ethics. Lastly, the chapter will focus specifically on the sources and methods of data collection.

The focus of this study was on parents and their involvement in their child's reading development, thus parents were the primary source of data. Data were collected through interviews, a questionnaire, and observation of reading sessions at home. Supplementary data were collected from the researcher's personal observations for which a diary was used. This chapter discusses the process involved in conducting such a research study.

4.2. The Purpose of the Study

Through this research project, the intention was to describe and analyse in detail what happens in selected families, within the Indian community, with parents developing their young child's reading. As highlighted in the previous chapter, there is little published research which explores this in South Africa. The researcher hopes that through the observations and analysis it will contribute to deepening the knowledge base about parental involvement in the development of early literacy practice in South Africa and more especially the Indian community.

This research study attempts to answer the following main research questions:

- What is the nature of parental involvement in the development of children's reading?
- How do we account for the levels and nature of parents' engagement in children's reading development?

The following are sub-questions to assist in building a strong study in response to the main research questions:

- How involved are parents in their children's reading development?
- What are the spatial and temporal dimensions of parental involvement in children's reading development?
- How do parents develop the child's reading ability?
- How do cultural factors affect parental involvement in children's reading development?
- What resources or tools do parents use to encourage and develop reading among their children?

The manner in which reading skills are developed and encouraged by parents, as well as the tools and time that is spent on the reading development process in our young children, are crucial for our understanding of how involved parents are in the development of their child/children's reading. In order to provide an in-depth study, the methodology used needs to provide an accurate and detailed reflection on their involvement in the development of their child's early reading skills.

4.3. Researcher Positionality

It is essential and appropriate that the researcher acknowledges his/her own positionality at an early stage in the study and the impact it might have on the research process (Harvey, 1996; Greenbank, 2003). No research is unbiased, therefore I do not believe that it is either possible or desirable to entirely ignore the effects of my positionality in this research. Thus, my age, gender, race, class, cultural, religious and political views, education, home language, personal experiences, professional experiences, power and social status are among the influences on my principles and practices; and hence have the potential to influence this research.

In many ways I am different from the participants in this research but at the same time I am also very similar. Firstly, I am a young, English-speaking, South African Indian female, from a middle class background, following the faith of Hinduism. As a result, I am aware of most of the cultures, beliefs and thoughts that many South African Indians value and engage in, such as the importance of schooling, education and success; the beliefs, thoughts and feelings about inter-cultural and inter-racial relationships that our elders expressed; the importance of family and religion and so forth. Hence, I was able to relate to many Indian beliefs and values that the families expressed which have been passed down from generation to generation, also the "Indian-ness" of the home, such as photo displays on the walls which many Indian homes have,

and many more. Moreover, I grew up in a middle class home, with my father employed at the local municipality and my mother a housewife. Together they ran a small home industry. Hence, I grew up in an economically and socially stable and highly literate context in a democratic South Africa with very little or no experience of hardships or disruptions. Furthermore, I am currently employed at an educational institute which has contributed to my constant reading as I have to update my knowledge of the happenings around South Africa and the world so that I can relate this knowledge to the young minds I am involved with on a daily basis.

While it was not possible for me to rule out these subjectivities, I have been continually aware of them while conducting this research, and I constantly asked myself how my own positionality was affecting how I behaved and how the participants responded, particularly during observations at home and during interviews. I decided to create an equal and non-authoritative setting that would consequently have a positive impact on the findings by encouraging participants to challenge and question my perspectives. Also, I kept reinforcing the point that that they are the experts as they are older and have more experience with regard to children as I am a new mom with very little or no experience in parenting and in developing reading among young children. I believe this was likely to have reduced the extent to which children and parents “performed” in my presence and in this way increased the trustworthiness of the study.

4.4. Research Methodology

4.4.1. Paradigm

Chalmers (1982, p.90) defines a paradigm as “made up of the general theoretical assumptions and laws, and techniques for their application that the members of a particular scientific community adopt”. Hence a paradigm can be understood as a comprehensive belief-system, world view or framework that channels research and practice in a field (Willis, 2007, p.8).

Paradigms are usually defined as systems of interrelated assumptions about ontology, which is the form and nature of reality; epistemology, which is referred to as the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known; and lastly the methodology, which is how the inquirer goes about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 36). The term “paradigm” is variously used, dependent on conceptions of the interrelationship and relative importance of ontology, epistemology and methodology (Morgan, 2007, p. 50-54). The concept “paradigm” can be used in the sense of models or methods of research. Morgan (2007), emphasises that the different versions of the concept paradigm are not mutually exclusive but nested within one another. He argues that none of these versions is “right” or “wrong”: “The question is which version is most appropriate for any given purpose?” (Morgan, 2007, p. 54). In other words, Morgan suggests a pragmatic view of the term paradigm. This is the approach I adopted in this research.

Traditionally, Guba and Lincoln (1994) have been most influential in comparing research paradigms in the social sciences. Their early work delineated two paradigms, namely positivism and “naturalistic inquiry”, later termed constructivism. Subsequently, they expanded their list of paradigms to include post-positivism, critical theory, and the participatory paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). However, their work has been criticized by

theorists such as Morgan (2007) that their approach to paradigms is “top-down” and “metaphysical” because they honour ontological issues over epistemological and methodological issues, which “impose limits on every aspect of the system” (Morgan, 2007, pp. 57-58). Guba and Lincoln’s categorisation of research paradigms can be seen as inflexible. Therefore, a more pragmatic approach was used in this research.

The study is conducted within an interpretivist paradigm. This paradigm differs from the positivist view that the world exists ‘out there’ and that relationships between things can be easily measured. Researchers who adopt a positivist approach often use quantitative methods of research such as experiments and surveys that yield measurable results. By contrast, interpretivists believe that not everything can be easily measured even though the world is changeable. In addition, interpretivists focus on understanding and observing people’s behaviour, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions. Furthermore, they are aware that,

humans behave the way they do in part because of their environment. However, that influence is not direct. Humans are also influenced by their subjective perception of their environment - their subjective realities (Willis, 2007, p.6).

As a result, an interpretivist tries to understand how people make sense of the contexts in which they live and work.

The interpretivist paradigm was most appropriate in the study as it allowed the researcher to gain insight and an understanding of the involvement of parents’, and their experiences and reasons for choosing and using certain methods, processes and tools in developing reading in their young children. Gathering this information was important because it was the parents that were central in defining the meaning of the situation in their household and in the life of their child.

Interpretivists believe that it is through asking questions and by observing that they are able to understand the situation that they are studying. As a result they see themselves as probable variables in the study (Bassey, 1999, p.43). Also, the data collected by interpretive researchers are usually verbal: interviews, reflections and observations which are discussed in greater detail later in the chapter. These data collection methods create a rich language sense and “perhaps because of this quality, the methodology of the interpretive researcher is described as qualitative” (Bassey, 1999, p.43). However, other kinds of ‘texts’ such as visuals or artefacts are also used.

4.4.2. Qualitative Research

In designing this study the researcher has been interested in, “observing and asking questions in real-world settings” (Patton, 1987, p. 21) and in “understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world, and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 1998, p.6). As a result it is most appropriate to use a qualitative research tradition. Also, this tradition allows for an in-depth analysis of the research data. Litchman (2006, p.8), suggest that, “the main purpose of qualitative research is to provide an in-depth description and understanding of human experiences”.

Qualitative research differs from that of quantitative research which requires statistical data. Qualitative research is conducted in fixed controlled surroundings. Instead, qualitative researchers try to understand areas such as human behaviour, thoughts and feelings. Terre Blanche, Durheim and Painter (2006) state that qualitative researchers want to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations, or phenomena as they take place in the real world, and therefore want to study them in their natural settings. Also, qualitative research tends to be

associated with words as the unit of analysis rather than numbers and descriptions. Furthermore, it is associated with small-scale research, researcher involvement and a developing research design (Denscombe, 2003, p.232-235).

This study was associated largely with words which were collected from observations of parents' involvement in the developing reading; interviews with parents; questionnaires; and personal reflections. It was a small-scale study, which focused on specific factors and variables which could not be controlled or isolated. Moreover, it occurred in its natural setting which was the home of the child and parent.

In order to assess how involved parents were in the development of reading skills among their young children, the study needed to be conducted within a qualitative tradition as it involved the use of qualitative research methods to describe the parents understanding and methods of developing reading. In addition, I used a number of research techniques and instruments to do this, such as interviews, home visit observations and personal reflections in the form of diary entries.

4.4.3. Ethnographic Case Study Methodology

Ethnography arises from cultural anthropology. According to Spradley (1979, p.3)

ethnography is the work of describing culture. The essential core of this activity aims to understand another way of life from the native point of view... Fieldwork, then involves the disciplined study of what the world is like to people who have learned to see, hear, speak, think and act in ways that are different to the researcher's world.

Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people. Thus, an, "ethnographer is both a storyteller and scientist; the closer the reader of an ethnography

comes to understanding the native's point of view, the better the story and the better the science" (Fetterman, 1998, p.2). Also, an ethnographer tries to provide a detailed description about a culture or a social group. However, "no study can capture an entire culture or group, as a result each scene exists within a multi-layered and interrelated context" (Fetterman, 1998, p.19).

As mentioned earlier, ethnography is culturally informed. Hence, it is important that ethnographers are aware of their power and positionality within the study. According to Schensul and LeCompte (1999, p.30), "people tend to position themselves so as to maximise the amount of power they can exercise over others". This was a very common act of ethnographers in the past and they have been criticized for originating interpretations of marginalised people. The criticism arose as the colonised and inferior marginal groups became aware of the way they were being described in research studies, more especially in ethnographies, when members of the groups began to enter the field as researchers. This portrayal was an act of Eurocentrism, in which, "North American and European researchers interpreted primitive or exotic peoples' non-Western cultures in terms of Western European concepts" (Schensul & LeCompte, 1999, p.32). Hence, this later gave rise to an influential analysis of traditional labels, power relationships, and ways of thinking, knowing and interacting by marginalised and inferior groups through their scholars (Schensul & LeCompte, 1999). Thus, it is important that ethnographers acknowledge their positionality both inside and outside the research community. Therefore, the researcher's positionality as an ethnographer of this study has been discussed earlier in this chapter (section 4.3). This study does have potential for Eurocentrism although the researcher was an 'insider' in this community. In other words, even though the researcher embraced, and was familiar with many of the cultural and religious practices of this community and walked into the study with no racial bias or cultural superiority because he/she was a component of the dominant

community, however, the researcher did possess power as he/she was a researcher and did have a higher academic qualification as compared to the participants used in the study.

According to Schensul and LeCompte (1999), there are seven characteristics that assist in identifying a study as ethnographic namely:

- Ethnographic studies are carried out in a natural setting. In other words, the researcher conducts the research in settings which participants are familiar with and where they interact comfortably with one another. For example, in their homes.
- Ethnographic studies consist of intimate, face-to-face interactions with participants. The researcher builds a trusting relationship with the participants' which often leads to a friendship. Also, the participants and researcher interact in person with each other.
- Ethnographic studies show a true reflection of participants' viewpoints and actions. "Ethnographic stories are told in the words, views, explanations and interpretations of the participants in the study" (Schensul & LeCompte, 1999, p.12). Thus, it is important for the researcher to build a relationship based on trust so that the environment that is created by the researcher allows the participants to openly share views and opinions as well as allow for conducive events, incidents and /or behaviours to occur in an authentic way.
- Ethnographic studies make use of inductive, interactive, and recursive processes during data collection. These processes are used to build cultural theories to explain the behaviour, beliefs and values that may arise in the study.

- Several types of data sources are used in ethnographical studies. In other words, researchers use different types of data that can assist in gathering information in order to answer the research question/s.
- Ethnographic studies acknowledge all human behaviour and beliefs within a context. Schensul and LeCompte (1999) used the term “context” to refer to the different elements that affect the behaviour and beliefs of individuals.
- Ethnographic studies use the concept of culture as a tool through which findings are understood. In other words, what people say, do and believe is channelled by the concept of culture.

According to theorists (Schensul & LeCompte, 1999; Spradley, 1979; Fetterman, 1998), context and culture are important concepts when conducting an ethnographic research. Thus, in this study context played a crucial role in my ethnographic stories. By the term context, the researcher refers to the family’s reading network; their environment and the settings within their environment; their social and cultural ties; as well as their particular histories. These aspects assisted in building ethnographic stories about each family that were rich and depicted their culture of reading. Thus, the term ‘reading culture’ timeously arises in my study and by this it can be understood as the family’s beliefs, values, attitude and norms towards reading in their home and within their family reading network. This also, assisted in building descriptive ethnographic stories.

Ethnographic case studies require the researcher to create a close bond with their participants through an extended period of interaction with the participants, “as it takes considerable time to be acquainted with the participants and how they relate to the physical and material environment” (Schensul & LeCompte, 1999, p.85). Also, building a relationship based on trust is crucial when conducting an ethnographic study. Taking these factors into

consideration, this research was conducted as an ethnographic case study for a number of reasons. Firstly, it afforded researcher the opportunity to gain insight and an understanding into the way in which these parents in the Indian community were developing reading at home with their children, which created a rich and thick description of the case (Rule & John, 2011, p.7). Secondly, ethnographic case studies are a ‘step to action’: they can initiate the action and add to it (Bassey, 1999, p.23). This is important as there are possibilities that this study can be taken further at a later stage. Lastly, case studies as products are easier for diverse audiences to comprehend and may therefore have greater impact with a wide range of stakeholders than some other types of research (Bassey, 1999).

Ethnographic case studies are understood and defined in different ways by different theorists (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When researchers refer to a case study they could be referring to the process of the investigation, the unit of study, and/or the product of the investigation (Merriam, 1998). In addition to the process, unit of study and product, Rule and John (2011), believe that case studies can also be understood as a particular type of genre. Bassey (1999) and Rule and John (2011), provide various theorists’ definitions of case studies; however, Bassey’s (1999) definition of educational case studies was most relevant to this study as it influenced the researcher’s thinking in the research:

An educational case study is an empirical enquiry which is: conducted within a localized boundary of space and time (i.e. a singularity); into interesting aspects of an educational activity, or programme, or institution, or system; mainly in its natural context and within an ethic of respect for persons; in order to inform the judgments and decisions of practitioners or policy makers; or of theoreticians who are working to these ends; in such a way that sufficient data are collected (Bassey, 1999, p.58).

As stated in this definition, the current ethnographic case study is a study of a singularity that is the investigation into the parental involvement in developing reading among their children who are in Grade R within the Indian community, in a particular suburb in KwaZulu-Natal and within a particular time frame (2014/2015).

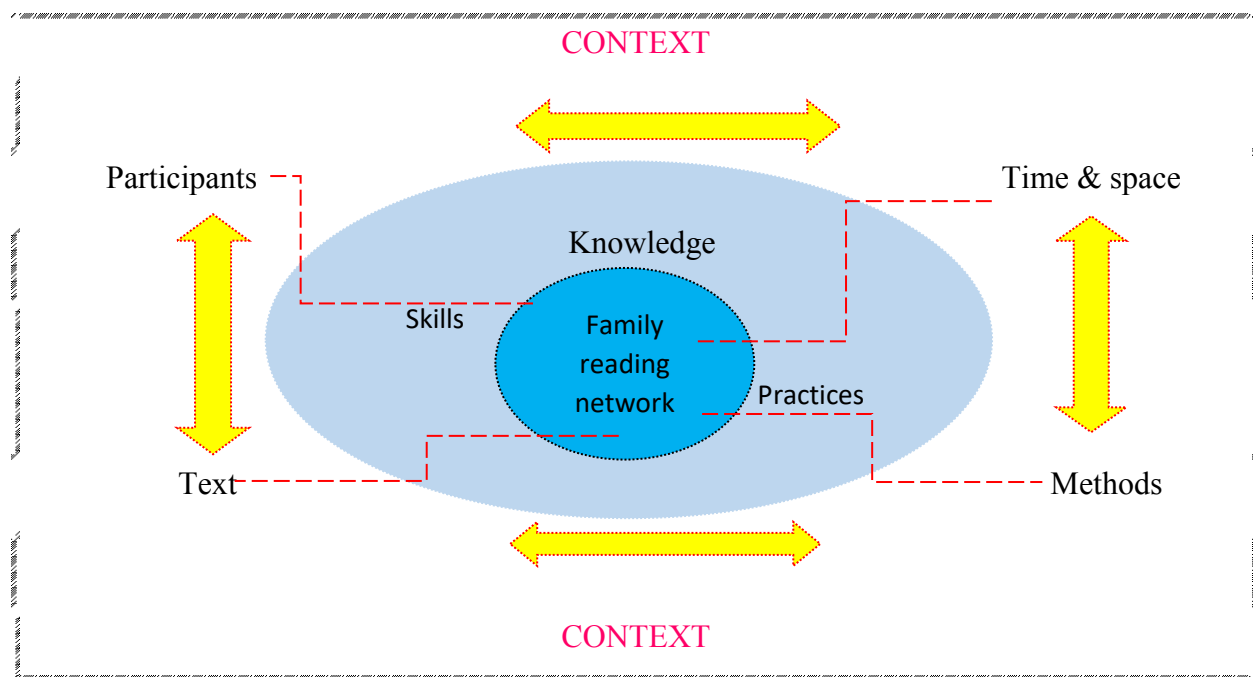


FIGURE: 15 Family Reading Network

As indicated in Figure 15, the components that make-up the ‘family reading network’ are all inter-related and dependent on each other. The participants that are involved in the reading development process could be the parents and the child, as well as others such as grandparents, siblings and friends; the process would occur in a specific time and space such as an in the evening in the bedroom; the texts used could be oral, written, visual or some combination of media and would be linked to the time that the story is being read, such as bedtime stories, bedtime prayer, or fairy-tale stories; and the method which the parent/caregiver would use could be reading-aloud, showing pictures, explaining, and acting

out. This entire process occurs within a context as all the factors within the diagram form part of the context. From this example we can see that all these components of the family reading network work hand-in-hand. However, it is also important that the embedded unit of analysis which was discussed earlier is evident in the parental involvement in the development of reading. In other words, a parent that has sound knowledge of and belief in the importance of reading development in their young child will make an increased effort to practice and encourage reading in their home.

Hence, it is clear that this is a case of parental involvement in the development of reading in their children who are in Grade R in a South African Indian context. The intention of this study is to understand and explore parental involvement in the development of reading in their children in South Africa.

4.5. Research Design

4.5.1. Sampling

The sample used in this study was selected purposively. “In purposive sampling researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality” (Cohen et al., 2000, p.103). The purpose of the study was to understand the parental involvement in developing their Grade R child’s reading in an Indian community. As a result, the sample used in the study had to include parents from the Indian community with a child in Grade R. The researcher was able to make contact with such parents via a friend who had friends that fitted my requirements. All the participants formed part of the middle class with their children attending schools in different schooling systems, those being Waldorf,

Cambridge, Montessori, and the normal South African government system of schooling. Initially the study aimed at sourcing nine families; however the researcher was unsuccessful, as many families declined to participate in the study. The reasons that arose from families that declined to participate was that they were unable to accommodate the researcher due to their busy schedules, their children would shy away from the process and in some instances spouses were unhappy with a researcher in their ‘space’ and home. Consequently, the sample consisted of four families: one family belonged to the Christian faith, the other to the Muslim faith, one from the Hindu faith and the last one belonged to a mixed faith (a combination of Muslim and Hindu as well as an interracial relationship). These families (as reflected in the table below) were from the different cultural backgrounds that dominate a specific suburban community. The table below provides a summary of the families used in the study, their religious background and a reference as to where details of this family is presented within the thesis.

<u>Table 3: A table showing the parents and children</u>		
<u>Parents</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Chapter Reference</u>
<u>FAMILY 1</u> Mr Ismail and Mrs Naidoo Mr Ismail is a Muslim while Mrs Naidoo is a Hindu.	Shafeek Shafeek follows both the teachings of Islam and Hinduism. His parents encourage him to learn more about other religions as well.	An introduction of the family is presented in Chapter Five, section 5.4. In Chapter Six, part a, a detailed description of the data collected from this family is presented.
<u>FAMILY 2</u> Mr and Mrs Rai The Rai family are Hindus and they live as an extended	Ashwariya attends a Montessori school and is fortunate to have the support of her parents and maternal grandparents that encourage	Section 5.5 in Chapter Five provides a description of the Rai Family and Chapter Six, section b, presents that data gathered during the study.

family. That is Mrs Rai's parents reside in the same house.	and promote her learning development.	
<u>FAMILY 3</u> Mr and Mrs Solomon This family follows the faith of Christianity.	Elizabeth is a scholar at an institution that follows the Cambridge syllabus. She attends church and Sunday School.	In Chapter Five, section 5.6, a detailed description of the Solomon family is provided. Chapter 6, part c, we are made aware of the processes and methods used in reading development in this home.
<u>FAMILY 4</u> Mr and Mrs Majid They are a Muslim family that teach their children to read and write in English and Arabic.	Abdulla attends preschool and then goes to Madressa. Madressa follows the same format of school in that they have 30 minute lessons and receive daily homework. The only difference between school and Madressa is that Abdulla learns about his religion and is taught to read and write in Arabic.	In Chapter Five, 5.7 describes the Majid family and in Chapter Six we are able to see and understand how reading development is conducted at home.

The rationale for choosing parents from different cultural backgrounds within the Indian community was to find out if cultural religious factors affect the development of reading in a household as this is one of my research questions. In addition, the assumption was that the texts that some parents may use to develop their child's reading could be religiously related and the researcher wished to investigate the truth of this assumption and if so, its effect on reading.

Despite the sample size being small, Rule and John (2011) state that in a case study research the size of the sample is influenced by the purpose of the study and the resources available for the study. This study of parental involvement in children's reading development attempted to achieve a depth of analysis rather than a breadth of coverage.

This sample is classified as biased in that it does not represent the wider population. However, in a case study, researchers are not focused on the representation of the sample but on its ability to gain data which allows for a full, in-depth and trustworthy account of the case (Rule & John, 2011, p.64). The in-depth account of the case allows the study to be more reliable and for the researcher to get a better understanding of the involvement of parents in the development of reading.

Also, the sample used in this study that being middle class Indian families also brought about several noteworthy challenges such as time constraints, parent-child routine, cultural factors as well as parents' work expectations. Due to parents' professional careers, time was a crucial factor in their lives and bound them, for example, home visits could only be conducted at certain times as they worked and had to fulfil their responsibilities as home owners as well parents. This was clear in the Solomon family as well as the Naidoo and Ismail family, where home visits were restricted to only afternoons and certain weekends. Also, parents often did not want to interrupt their child's routine, for example meal times and sleep time, so times of visiting these families were explicit. In addition, families were involved in cultural obligations such as times for prayer and other cultural activities. This was evident in the Majid home, where prayers were conducted five times a day and this could not be interrupted or avoided. Also, the

Solomon family attended church on Sunday and Elizabeth thereafter went to Sunday school, which was seldom missed. Hence, these are important aspects that need to be taken into consideration when research is being conducted among middle class families from the different cultural groups.

4.6. Research Methods and Tools for Data Collection

The process for the collection of the data for this research began in 2015. A series of conversations were held with parents who were involved in the study, to assess their understanding of the importance of parental involvement in reading development among their children. In order to understand how involved parents were in their child's reading development and how they developed their child's reading the researcher used four methods to ensure crystallisation. This also meets the requirements of ethnographic case studies regarding face-to-face interactions with participants. The tools and techniques consisted of questionnaires, semi-structured open-ended interviews with the parents, semi-structured observations of reading sessions, personal reflections written in a diary, and the analysis of materials used in the reading development process. By using a variety of research methods the researcher was able to develop a more adequate representation (Gillham, 2002, p.81). Also, a multi-method approach has the potential of enriching and cross-validating the research findings (Gillham, 2002, p.84).

The first step that the researcher embarked on during data collection was to establish the parents' background in reading and their understanding of the importance of being involved in reading development. This was achieved by using a questionnaire. The parents were asked to

fill out the questionnaire to give me an idea of their knowledge, practices and beliefs of reading as readers. The second step in my data collection was the observations of reading development. Some observations lead to conversations which added to the information that was gathered. Ten home visits per family were observed in which observations of parental involvement in reading development with their child were conducted with the overall home visits adding to 40 in total. During the third step, parents were interviewed and questions were asked and conversations transpired which related directly to their involvement in the development of their child's reading.

4.6.1. Questionnaire

Questionnaires are usually used to gather data from a large number of participants (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000, p.108). It gives the respondents time to think and assimilate their thoughts and ideas before answering the questions. However, they do not allow probing, prompting and clarification of questions (Sarantakos, 2005, p.263). There are many different types of questionnaires, ranging from structured, in which respondents cannot freely express answers in the manner they would like to, to unstructured or open-ended questionnaires which give the respondent freedom while answering questions and semi-structured questionnaires. In addition, questionnaires which make use of rating scales such as Likert scales or semantic differential scales are undoubtedly useful, but as Cohen et al. (2007, p.327) state, they have their limitations too, including the tendency of respondents to avoid extreme positions. The wording of questionnaires is crucial and piloting is vital (Cohen et al., 2007, p.341).

A closed-ended structured questionnaire was designed as one of my research techniques because there is a certain amount of information that the researcher wanted to collect quickly

and easily. The questions focused on finding out more about the parents' knowledge, beliefs and practices of reading because the researcher believed this information might have an impact on their involvement in their child's reading development process. In addition, a questionnaire was used to give the parents a feel for, and understanding of, the research focus. Before distributing the questionnaire to the participants it was piloted with families that were familiar to me (chosen for convenience), with the parent(s) completing the questionnaire so that feedback could be provided on the clarity and workability of the questionnaire (Gillham, 2002, p.19). Six parents were given the opportunity to fill out this pilot questionnaire; however, before doing this the researcher explained to the families who piloted this questionnaire the reason their assistance was required, and that being the need to test the workability of this questionnaire. Thereafter, those parents who were willing to co-operate provided their consent and were then given a questionnaire.

The questionnaire (Appendix C) was short with three sections: participant's background information (reading knowledge), personal reading habits (practice) and views on reading (belief). The questionnaire provided the researcher with some background information which informed the interviews that followed. Furthermore, it was user friendly and quick in that the participants needed to only tick boxes.

4.6.2. Interviews

The interview continues to be the most popular method in qualitative research and is frequently used in case studies. Interviews permit one-on-one discussions between the researcher and the participants, in the form of a guided conversation (Rule & John, 2011). Cohen et al. (2007) categorise interviews as structured, unstructured, non-directive and focused. While data analysis of structured interviews is easier, they are somewhat inflexible and may limit the kinds of responses a participant makes. I decided to use semi-structured interviews, which are a more open ended interview technique and allowed the researcher to gain personalised, unique and nuanced information. In the semi-structured interviews, questions were prepared in advance, but were used as a guide only, as decided by the researcher during the interviews which words to use as well as the order of the questions.

The interview schedule was designed with the parent in mind. It consisted of 14 pre-set questions (Appendix A) that guided the interviewee in answering the research questions. The questions targeted parents' reading experiences, their understanding of reading and their ideas about reading development. Since these were semi-structured and less formal interviews, the researcher was able to ask the participants to elaborate on certain responses so that clarity could be achieved when the need arose. For example, when the researcher asked the interviewee *'Tell me about how you learnt to read and your reading experiences as a young child (of about five or six years old)'* he/she was able to guide the interviewee. For example, *did you learn to read at home or at school? Was it a fun task or was it a tedious task? And so on.* Also, the researcher was able to re-phrase questions and explain the questions to the participants if they did not fully understand the questions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p.268). Furthermore, the semi-

structured interview technique, allowed flexibility in the conversation and it guided the conversation that materialized during the interviews.

These interviews were conducted in the comfort of the participants' homes during their available time, that being their natural setting. The participants were given a copy of my informed consent letter and signed a declaration that they had read the letter and agreed to be a part of the study. Preceding the interview, the researcher explained to the participants that all information that was gathered would be dealt with in utmost confidentiality and that the interview would be recorded and analysed but no names would be disclosed.

The interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed. The transcripts were typed and electronically saved and a hard copy was printed. The transcripts were analysed using codes, which will be discussed below in section 4.7.

4.6.3. Observations

Observation is one of the fundamental *modus operandi* of social research, and particularly of ethnography. Cohen et al. (2007) argue that the degree of the observer's participation in the setting and the extent to which observation is structured are important distinctions between the types of observations. In addition, observations gather a lot of first-hand information which can be particularly effective in gathering data when respondents are either unwilling or unable to give information. In view of this, observations allowed me to see what was actually happening at the participants' homes and how they developed their child's reading. In order to gain more insight into the participants' actual involvement in reading development, semi-

structured observations were conducted. The reason for choosing to conduct semi-structured observations was so that additional information could be gathered during these observations. These observations of reading development taking place at home were conducted in the different households with participants from different cultural backgrounds.

An observation schedule was used which comprised of questions, ideas and themes that functioned as a guideline during the observations and assisted with collecting the required data. The themes that were focused on in the observation schedule were: the process of reading development; methods that are used to develop reading; the involvement of parents in reading development; materials used to develop reading; and spatial and temporal arrangements when dealing with reading development. These themes provided the researcher with in-depth data. Also, since the observations were semi-structured it provided the space to record observations which may have fallen outside of the themes that had been set out in the schedule, such as cultural aspects that may have crept in from the reading session. In light of this, these observations helped to monitor the parents' involvement in the development of reading in their child. This allowed the researcher to make additional comments on the findings in Chapter Six.

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), one of the advantages of participant observation is that researchers are able to identify constant behaviours as they occur; the researcher is thereafter able to make suitable notes about the significant features observed. However, the challenge with collecting observational data is ensuring that the presence of the researcher does not change the behaviour of the individuals in the setting (this is known as the 'Hawthorne Effect') (Anderson, 1999). Fortunately, the researcher was able to avoid this by

being around the participants for long enough that they were able to forget about the researcher's presence in that they recognised the researcher as part of their family rather than an outsider or researcher; secondly, through the researcher's 'informal' behaviour (talking to children, playing with them, being friendly) and interactions with the family (building a strong friendship) and thirdly, sometimes putting the researcher's jotter away while observing.

As a researcher one has to hold a balance between their status of being an insider and an outsider. In doing so, the researcher had to identify with the families in the study and build a relationship with them yet at the same time keep a professional distance which would allow for ample observations and data collection (Brewer, 2000). Brewer (2000) argues that an appropriate balance allows the researcher the chance to be inside and outside the setting; to be concurrently a member and a non-member and to partake in, while also reflecting critically on, what is observed and gathered while doing so. The researcher was an insider by virtue of her existence within the Indian community as well as her religious belief. The researcher's cultural understanding and experiences of being an Indian came with its advantages and disadvantages. As a participant observer it was less challenging as the researcher was familiar with the Indian culture, the Indian values and beliefs that she holistically understands and engages in. This made it easy for the researcher to locate herself as a researcher as she did not have to familiarise herself with the Indian culture and the religious practices of the families. For this reason the amount of time spent in the field was shortened. As Brewer (2000) states, the length of time spent in the field can be shortened depending on the nature of the role adopted and the diversity of the activities and social meanings in the field. However, the disadvantage of being an insider researcher was my preconceived ideas about reading development at home. For example, the researcher assumed that parents read to their children every day and it was done routinely. It

was challenging sometimes to maintain a proper balance in a dual role as an insider and an outsider but the researcher had to constantly remind herself of the critical questions for the study to avoid being easily side-tracked from my responsibility in the study.

4.6.4. Personal Reflections (diary)

The use of diaries in social studies has become more widespread over the years as researchers find it easier to transcribe their personal observations, thoughts and feelings in an unformatted method. Furthermore, “like all data, a diary constitutes a record. Diaries are usually private and contain intimate accounts and reflections” (Altrichter & Holly, 2005, p.27). The researcher decided at the start of the study to keep a reflective journal (diary) in which all personal experiences and feelings that were encountered during the study were written in. The researcher made note of all the incidences and occurrences which could not be included in the interview and observation schedules. According to Altrichter and Holly (2005), research diaries or reflective journals allow the researcher to make note of any detours or side-roads that may be taken during the research study. The diary also gave the researcher the opportunity to keep track of the journey from the start to the end which is presented in this thesis. Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1996, p.49) write that as the research journal (or diary) develops, “it will serve as a physical reminder of just how far you have progressed”. Furthermore, a diary allows the reader to share and feel the emotions that the researcher encountered during the research as it is personal reflections that are written. The journal provided an outlet for my observations that were not recorded elsewhere and it encouraged my critical analysis and critical thinking, both key research skills in qualitative research (Patton, 2004).

However, the practicalities of recording thoughts during interviews and observations suffered some time lag as it was not always possible to immediately make notes in my journal, which led to the researcher being primarily dependent on her memory. This was one of the limitations of using this method to record my experiences, as time and space was needed to record observations, thoughts and feelings. On the other hand, the journal entries allowed the researcher to reflect on hidden data, concerning the feelings, attitudes and emotions that research participants were expressing during interviews and observations. The diary did not follow any specific format as the researcher attempted to freely write down her experiences and feelings on a regular basis.

4.7. Data Analysis

Data analysis in ethnography encompasses studying the families observed and attempting to understand the patterns of behaviour, customs and ways of life. The data analysis journey began by listening to the tapes of the interviews and observations as they were all tape-recorded. The researcher listened to these recordings a number of times before starting the transcription process, at the same time making reference to the field notes. A huge volume of field notes was gathered from the observations, therefore using content analysis seemed to be most appropriate. Cohen et al. (2007, p.476) states that content analysis “takes texts and analyses, reduces and interrogates them into summary form through the use of both pre-existing categories and emergent themes in order to generate or test a theory”. Similarly theorists (Weber, 1990; Burnard, 1996) specify that the key feature of all content analysis is that the many words of the text are classified into much smaller content categories. This method of analysis was appropriate as it helped me to refine my data into smaller categories and themes. In addition, the researcher decided to transcribe the data on her own as she wanted to be immersed in the data as well as be familiar with the themes that were identified

during the process (Burnard, 1991, Polit & Beck, 2004). Also, the researcher chose to sort and code the data manually rather than electronically as she wanted to be physically involved in the data analysis process.

The next step of this analytical process was to code the themes and patterns that were identified in the transcription process. “Codes are labels that highlight different themes or foci within the data. Coding is a process of choosing labels and assigning them to different parts of data” (Rule & John, 2011, p.77). Although this was a time-consuming method, it allowed the researcher to translate the data into a manageable and comprehensible form. It also had a significant impact on my findings, recommendations and conclusions as it allowed me to get close to the data (Rule & John, 2011, p.77). In addition, the aim of coding data is to decrease the number of categories by minimising those that are similar or dissimilar into broader higher order categories (Burnard, 1991, Downe-Wamboldt 1992, Dey, 1993). The following themes or higher order categories emerged from the coding process:

- Methods of reading development;
- Materials used in reading development;
- Cultural attributes during reading development;
- Times at which reading development occurs; and
- Parental involvement in the process.

From these themes the researcher was able to elaborate on the findings, make recommendations and draw the conclusions.

4.8. Ethical Considerations of the Research

The complex situation of researching families with their young children requires the apt most precision in terms of its ethical approach. Cohen et al. (2000) and Rule and John (2011)

believe that ethical relationships and practice are vital aspects that enhance the quality of the research. They also believe that ethically sound research contributes to the trustworthiness of the research. As a result, during the research the researcher ensured that all ethical procedures were followed to ensure trustworthiness of the study and the protection of the participants. Also, Rule and John (2011, p.112) state that, “research ethical requirements flow from three standard principles, namely: autonomy, non-maleficence (do no harm) and beneficence”. The researcher ensured that she complied with the three standard ethical principles in this study.

Due to the fact that the participants and the researcher shared no prior relationship and that their knowledge of each other was thus minimal, building a trusting and ethical relationship with them was central. The process of building a relationship with the participants began through initial telephonic calls in which the researcher introduced herself and basic information was shared about themselves and their families. This led to them exchanging numbers and they began chatting and becoming more friendly over social media. The next step was home visits to each family, with the intention of familiarising the researcher with the family and the family getting to know the researcher better and accepting her into their home. This led to a trusting and growing friendship between each family and the researcher. As a result the families freely accepted the researcher into their homes, allowing her to visit them at any given time without feeling as if their privacy was being invaded.

The participants involved in the study were all given letters that explained the study and their role in the study and they were all required to sign a declaration that stated their voluntary agreement to participate in the study. In addition, the purpose and aim of the study was clearly explained to the participants to ensure that they were familiar with the study. Moreover, the participants were assured at all times that all information supplied by them to the researcher and all the data that would be collected and recorded would be strictly

confidential and would only be used for research purposes. Also, they were assured that the identities of the participants would be protected in that they would remain anonymous and be given pseudonyms in the presentation of the study.

Furthermore, the participants were guaranteed that throughout the research process they and their families would not be harmed in any way. Ethical procedures of the University of KwaZulu-Natal were followed to ensure that the research was completely ethical in its nature.

Although the parents in the study had have given consent for their child to be part of the study, the researcher did feel it was important to receive the assent of each child participating in the study as children are ‘persons in their own right’ (Prout 2000, p. 308), experts on their own lives (Clark & Moss, 2001; Lansdown 2005) and competent to share their views and opinions (James & Prout 1997), even though they maybe young in age (6 years old). In achieving this goal of receiving each child’s assent, the researcher used an ongoing process of asking them questions about books, favourite stories and to draw pictures of books and characters to get a feel and understanding of the topic and their presence in the study. Thus, the researcher was always attentive to the reactions and responses of every child in the study because this meant that I had to recognise the significance of both non-verbal, as well as verbal actions of each child as children tend to use a variety of ways to show the choices they wish to make. Through the actions and responses of each child she was able to recognise and acknowledge their assent.

4.9. Trustworthiness

In order to obtain a thorough and justifiable study, researchers need to ensure the quality of their study. This can be achieved through trustworthiness of the study. Guba (1981) advocates that trustworthiness of qualitative studies can be attained when focus is placed on

the study's transferability (external validity), credibility (internal validity), dependability (reliability) and confirmability (biasness of study). The researcher has tried to ensure that this study was trustworthy, firstly through creating a thick description, secondly by using critical peer checks and lastly by using crystallisation in this study.

In this thick description the researcher was able to obtain credibility of the ethnographic case study by representing the richness of the case study. Also, to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, during the interview process a tape recorder was used to make certain that all information had been captured and that all the data captured in the study is accurate. In addition, the researcher attained assistance from a peer in transcribing and coding the data to guarantee the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. Furthermore, the study used crystallisation which "points to the multi-faceted nature of reality, where additional sources and methods show up additional facets" (Rule & John, 2011, p.109). Crystallisation as mentioned earlier was made up of interviews, observations, questionnaires and personal reflections, which helped in answering the research questions and providing a trustworthy study.

4.10. Limitations

A study of this nature is bound to encounter limitations during the process as it involved families with children within their natural environment. This initially was challenging as parents were reluctant to share and divulge information because they feared being 'labelled'. Also, because families emanated from different cultural backgrounds, this interfered with participants' responses and behaviours during home visits. In the Majid household the times of visiting had to be arranged to avoid missing Abdulla as at certain times in the day he went to mosque.

In most case studies, including this study, the findings cannot be generalised to other cases. Also, the sample in this study was small, due to lack of support from families wanting to participate in the study. Lastly, the study is biased, but there is potential for bias to exist in all research. However, the researcher has tried to control her own bias by using multiple methods and sources of data collection and by discussing the data analysis and interpretation with a group of peers and the supervisor.

4.11. Conclusion

In this chapter, the research methodology and research design that has been used in this study has been explained and justified. Within the research methodology section, the researcher discussed in detail the qualitative tradition that was used in the study, the interpretivist paradigm and the use of the case study method.

In addition, the data collection techniques were discussed, these being interviews, observations, questionnaires and my personal reflections. Also, the data analysis process was discussed, together with the limitations and ethical conditions of the study. The next chapter outlines the findings of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

A JOURNEY INTO THE HOMES AND LIVES OF INDIAN FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

5.1. Introduction

This chapter aims at providing detailed descriptions of the reading experiences and the development of four pre-school children in the context of their families. In doing so, the researcher adopt the anthropological method of providing a “thick description” to provide a sense of the “lived reality” of the children. The descriptions are guided by my key research questions: What is the nature of parental involvement in the development of children’s reading? How do we account for the levels and nature of parents’ engagement in children’s reading development? This chapter introduces each of the families: The Naidoo and Ismail family; The Rai family; The Solomon family; and The Majid family.

The chapter begins with a presentation of a thick description of the researcher’s experiences of reading as a child when she was growing up. The purpose of doing this is to provide an account of where she is “coming from” as a researcher and what her experiences and assumptions are regarding reading. According to Rosen (1998, p.30),

A person’s knowledge can only exist by virtue of a vast range of past

experiences which have been lived through, often with the most intense

feelings. These experiences, including textual experiences (books, lectures,

lessons, conversation, etc.), we have been taught to disguise so that our utterances are made to seem as though they emerge from no particular place or time or person but from the fount of knowledge itself.

It is therefore necessary for the researcher to discuss her own personal experience. In addition, this also highlights her desire to explore reading development in other Indian households to identify its existence and transformation (if any) over the generational gap. Thereafter, she shares her initial feelings, experiences and encounters at the start of the exciting journey of home visits. These descriptions have been extracted from the personal journal that the researcher kept throughout the research study. Subsequently, a detailed descriptions of my participatory families is presented.

5.2. Reminiscing: My Early Reading Experiences

According to stories I have heard from my grandparents and parents and from the literature I have read, growing up in the late 80's and early 90's as a South African Indian was certainly not as idyllic as one would think. The difficulties experienced were mainly due to the political disputes that South Africa was engaged in at the time. The country was fighting Apartheid and hoping and praying for the release of Mr Nelson Mandela and to welcome a new government and new country that would provide equal rights for all. However, I have no vivid memory of all this upheaval. All I recall is the enjoyment of my childhood, with lots of learning and exciting experiences.

I was brought up in a simple middle-class, religious, Hindu home, which consisted of my father, mother and their two children, of which I was the youngest. The neighbours on the left of our house were my paternal grandparents who lived with my father's youngest brother, his wife and two sons. The neighbours on the right were my father's eldest brother, his wife and two sons. Although we did not live together in one house, we still had a traditional Indian family structure, in that my grandparents and their three sons together with their families lived next door to each other.

The norm in our home was that my father, a traffic policeman, went out to work and my mother stayed at home to take care of my brother and me. In her spare time my mother engaged herself in some small jobs from home that brought in extra income to help sustain our 'standard of living', that being one which included a few luxuries. In our home, we all (our immediate family) spoke only in English, which is our mother-tongue. However, my parents and grandparents conversed with each other in their mother tongue, which is Hindi. As a child, I was very attentive to this language while the older people in our family spoke. I picked up a few words; however, at that young age it certainly was not enough to start speaking the language. As I got older, from about 10 years old, I attended Hindi classes where I started to learn this indigenous Indian language, which I continued until I was about 22 years old.

My mother and father both played an active role in our learning to read as they always wanted us to give of our best. They lived by the motto that "education is the key to success". Reading was certainly a daily task in our home. Reading was done at any time and in any place. Mother and father both sat and read to us. We read fairy tales, nursery rhymes, newspaper articles as

well as religious prayer books. During our sessions of reading I recall mother and father reading aloud to us, while we listened or looked at the pictures in the book. I even recall being ‘tested’ to see if we were paying any attention and if we understood the book, by my parents asking us questions about the book.

My father used to bring us reading material on a weekly basis which he used to pick up from the library. If father was unable to get us books, mother used to take us to the library so we could choose our own books. Those library visits were always fun as we were free to make “big decisions” in selecting our books. I recall the library being a busy place with parents helping children to select resource books for assignments, and looking for pictures in books relating to their assignment topic which they photocopied at the library to stick into their written assignments. Some children looked for their favourite novels and storybooks to take on loan to read while many of the older children worked in groups studying for tests and exams or sitting chatting about school-related topics. There was always a buzz in the library and I think for many children in our community it was the only place to find resources. Other forms of technology (internet and social media) were not very common. Also, while growing up, most of our gifts were books. My brother and I share the same birthday month and our birthdays are a week apart. It was my 8th birthday and his 10th birthday and I have a fond memory of our gifts that year from our parents. I received a practical language book (to build my language skills and general knowledge), my brother got a children’s encyclopaedia. We loved and treasured those books and still have them. This highlights the importance of reading in our home. I must emphasise that reading at home was always fun as it was time that we bonded as a family and we explored different books and pictures together.

In our household, from the time I first remember to this day, the newspaper, now known as the *Witness*, was delivered to our home daily, as my parents believed it was important that they and their children were aware of happenings around us. I have vivid memories of my brother (six years old) and me (four years old), having turns to flip through the paper. During breakfast time my father used to show us the date and teach us how to spell the months of the year from the newspaper. They read to us the cartoons displayed in the paper; we were also familiar with adverts, colours and letters that were displayed in the newspaper. As my brother and I grew older, our family had ‘morning sessions’ with the paper. It started with my mother skimming through the paper while she prepared morning breakfast, followed by my father while he had his breakfast, followed by me and then my brother.

Every Tuesday evening we used to sit around as a family in our *Prayer Room* and pray. Our prayer room was incorporated into a larger room. The designated prayer area had displays of a calendar, and pictures of God and deities. We also had verses from our holy books decorating the area and our prayer books were stored in a cupboard in that room. My father had made a number of photocopies of the universal prayers originally all Hindi words, which he had transcribed into English spelling to make it easy for us to read. We used to sing these in chorus during our Tuesday prayer. Despite not being able to read, I used to take a copy, sit next to either my mother or father and pretend to be reading out the words. I remember they used to point out the words for me so I became familiar with the words. Therefore, due to the repetition of this universal prayer I memorised it easily.

In my upbringing, stories were not only associated with books and newspapers. I also experienced oral storytelling. I have the most beautiful memories of going next door to my grandfather's house and sitting with him and a few of my cousins. We were all between three and eight years old, as we listened to stories he used to tell us. Many of the stories were folklore and some were even made up to teach us life lessons. All these stories were told in English. I recall a story he once told us:

A lady had prepared a scrumptious meal for a very special visitor who was coming over to her home. That visitor was God. She sat in her kitchen waiting, with the table laid out with the special meal she had prepared, and glasses of water standing next to the plates that sat on the table. She kept looking at the clock, getting more anxious that her visitor was not arriving. Suddenly, she heard a knock on the door. She ran to the door to open it but, to her disappointment, it was an old man dressed in rags who was asking for a glass of water. She was so upset that she refused him water and chased him away, saying that she had prepared for a special visitor and she couldn't offer him anything because her visitor hadn't eaten yet. Sadly, the man walked away. The entire afternoon passed and her visitor did not arrive. Later that night as she lay in bed upset that God hadn't arrived as promised, she realised that God had tested her and had come in the form of an old man begging and that she had chased away. Moral of the story: NEVER CHASE ANYONE AWAY AS IT MAY BE A TEST FROM GOD. My grandfather has now died but I still carry this story and many more in my heart.

I believe that my early experiences of reading activities helped to develop my love for reading which I continue to cherish and enjoy to date. However, throughout my growing up, reading for me has always been a personal choice and hobby and I never consciously related it to school. In other words, reading at home was a separate activity to reading at school, although I do

believe my early childhood reading did in fact make learning to read at school an easier and a more enjoyable task.

My reading experiences were certainly a *family affair*, with both my parents as well as my grandparents being involved in my reading development. Also, reading comprised of cultural books such as the Bhagavad Gita, prayer books, religious song books, and books about Hinduism; as well as the traditional books that young children read which included fairy tales, picture books and nursery rhymes; along with the newspaper. I strongly believe that these reading experiences have helped to develop my reading. Looking back, I see that reading in my family was strongly intergenerational, and drew on different cultural influences, including those from Hindi and Hinduism, as well as English and Western traditions.

5.3. Unfolding my Initial Journey

As a young mother of two children, both under the age of three, its nerve-racking and heart-wrenching saying goodbye, knowing I will not see them for the entire day. Luckily for me they are in the best care of their adoring grandparents.

I jump into my car and a few thoughts cross my mind, “I have only begun a friendship with these 4 families, they trust me enough and have complete faith in me and in this journey that we will be embarking on as a team. The expectations are great and will I be able to live up to this?” With these thoughts I take-off.

I have only begun reading to my son Vihaan (22 months old), in which he shows very little interest or no interest as he is more eager to explore, although he does enjoy flipping through and tearing pages from the book. I guess that's all part of exploring. As for my daughter Vibha (three months old), well sleeping seems to be most pleasurable at this point. As I drive, my eagerness to see and learn how other families and parents interact with their child's reading excites me. My expectations are high as all the families that are part of this study have a good educational background and are middle class. From all my readings I am aware that middle class parents have a tendency to be more influential in their child's education compared to the parents from a lower socio-economic backgrounds. Thus, I make assumptions:

- Reading is a daily activity in each household;
- Children are able to read;
- Reading is routine and times are allocated for reading; and
- Parents encourage reading in their household so that children can be ahead of their peers in school.

My thoughts are all suddenly erased as I pull over in front of a beautiful mansion that the Naidoo and Ismail family live in and it is here that the true journey begins unfolding.

5.4. The Naidoo and Ismail Family

As I make my way to the front door I am welcomed by a warm pleasant gentleman, about 35 years in age, who invites me into their home. The strong smell of burning incense sticks signals a typical Indian home that leaves the home smelling fresh. The gentleman offers me something to drink (a typical gesture in most Indian homes: as soon as guests arrive, they must be offered

something to drink even if it is just a glass of water), but I turn this polite offering down. As I sit in the dining area waiting for the lady of the house to meet me, I steal peaks around me. There are attractive photos of the family arranged in beautiful albums. This answers one of my many burning questions, *how many members are there in this family?* The answer was simple as in one enlarged family portrait, it was just four of them. Suddenly, I am disturbed as a respectful little boy around six years of age approaches me with a smile and a pleasant “hello” and introduces himself as *Shafeek. I could not stop admiring this little boy and his pleasant gesture. A few minutes later I am joined by Mrs Naidoo, adorned with a beautiful red dot on her forehead (which signifies a married woman in the Hindu culture), who welcomes me with a lovely warm smile and is extremely apologetic for making me wait. “I am so sorry you had to wait, I was just trying to make baby sleep but ...”, before she could complete her sentence I hear the scrambling of baby coming down the stairs and Mrs Naidoo laughs.

After a heart-warming general chat I get a few more important details. Mrs Naidoo is Hindu and Mr Ismail is Muslim. Their children are exposed to all the different religions but presently follow both Hinduism as well as Islam. With that we get straight into the interview process which takes us about 20 minutes. Mr Naidoo is busy with the baby, while Shafeek sits around the table with us, flipping through his school books. Subsequently, I am taken on a tour of a very child-friendly home. Shafeek is so excited to show-off all his prized possessions. Shafeek’s room seems to be a typical boy’s room, with a few things out of place which he tries to tidy up as I enter the room. On the wall he has his name displayed in brightly coloured wooden letters. He has a coat stand in one corner of his room draped with various dress-up garments such as hats, scarves, capes and fairy wings, to name a few of the many delicate items. He also has a large study table that stands against the one wall, which he uses when doing homework and other tasks. I am mesmerized by his beautiful, well organized and neat

bookshelf above his study table. He has all his books placed in it. Books range from the basic picture books, to folklore and even fairy tales. Shafeek eagerly states, “When we read, we dress-up. It’s lots of fun.” He runs out of his room to show me the religious bookshelf in the passage way. The book shelf is filled with religious books from the 5 main faiths in South Africa: Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism and Judaism. As I glimpse through the bookshelf, I notice books ranging from children’s versions to adult versions. However, Mrs Naidoo quickly mentions that some books do not have simplified versions but they read to Shafeek if the need arises, to help answer questions he may have about the religion.

I am further amazed when I learn during my interview with Mrs Naidoo, that Shafeek attends a Waldorf school, where reading is taught differently. It is more story-telling than actual reading, although reading aloud is done at home. Dress-up is used to enhance this process of story-telling which explains the coat hanger and closet with dress-up garments. Shafeek’s parents have thus deliberately created a continuity of reading style between home and school: reading as story-telling and acting out. Mrs Naidoo explains that reading is not a daily activity as the story-telling process is “time consuming. However, when we do have time we sit down and read to Shafeek.” This home is an English speaking home, thus books are all in English.

The reading experiences of story-telling will be elaborated on in Chapter Six.

5.5. The Rai family

After driving up and down the road in search of a white house, I finally see it! Mrs Rai, a petite, glamorous lady, smartly dressed in casual clothing bejewelled with a glittering mugalsutra chain around her neck. This is an adornment of black and gold beads, on a chain given by a

husband to his wife on their wedding day which signifies the woman is a married lady – this is part of the Hindu culture. She is maybe in her mid-30, and awaits my arrival at the automated gate of her home. She welcomes me to her residence and emphasises her delight that we finally meet after all our telephonic chats. There is certainly young blood in this home as there are toys scattered outside on the grass, a metal swing structure and a few pairs of shoes thrown outside.

We walk into a large spacious lounge that is neat. In one corner of the lounge I notice a toy area with different types of toys stacked up, a plastic table and chair with pieces of paper and a few colouring pencils on top of the table. On the wall above the toy area is a bookshelf which immediately gets my attention. The bookshelf is filled to capacity; however, from a distance I try straining my eyes to see the types of books on shelf but with no luck. As I turn my head I notice on the opposite wall a marvellous piece of art, which embodies a tree with branches representing a family tree with photos attached to the branches. I immediately assume that this home is being shared with grandparents. I also notice pictures of the different Hindu Gods around the room, some hanging on the wall in frames while others are on the chest of drawers and on the television cabinet. As I am about to take my seat I notice there may have been somebody occupying this space in the lounge before my arrival as there are folded newspapers left on the coffee table as well as on the ‘lazy boy’ couch, together with a pair of reading glasses. Mrs Rai gathers them and exclaims, “Oops, sorry! My dad forgot to move his newspaper.”

Suddenly we are interrupted by a sweet voice, and a bubbly little girl *Ashwariya (about five years old) makes a joyful appearance into the room singing a nursery rhyme which I couldn’t quite get. Ashwariya is certainly a friendly and confident young girl who shared her day at school with me with very little prompting from me, even stating “school is sometimes boring but I enjoy story time.” We begin our interview process with Ashwariya sitting next to her

mother listening attentively to us talk. At the end of the process she says, “Mom, that took rather long, I will ask Nani (maternal grandmother) to bring us tea.” Within a few minutes Ashwariya’s grandmother arrives with the tea neatly set out on a tray with Ashwariya trotting along with a plate of her favourite biscuits which she insists we all have. Her grandparents join us for tea and they enlighten me about traditions, beliefs and thoughts about culture as well their reading experiences while growing up. During this conversation it becomes clear to me that this is a reading household and that reading development begins at home; thus they all participate in developing Ashwariya’s reading at home, be it in a formal or informal setting. However, they do not emphasise the need for reading relating to her religion as part of Ashwariya’s reading development. This is due to Mrs Rai’s belief that Ashwariya is still young but when she gets older reading about our religious beliefs will definitely be part of her reading. Also, English is the main language at home but her grandparents sometimes converse in Hindi among themselves.

During our conversations, I notice magazines, newspapers, as well as books, lying around in this area, which further highlights that this is a reading household. Ashwariya eagerly shows off her books to me, which mainly comprise of ‘girly books’, such as fairy tales and princesses. She also mentions, “my mom reads to me every day and we sometimes read inside and sometimes outside, and sometimes we read when I play.”

These exciting findings and experiences will be explored in the next chapter.

5.6. The Solomon family

A beautiful house surrounded by large lush trees, is situated in an idyllically residential area (during Apartheid it was a Whites-only area) overseeing the beauties of nature. This is the home of a small, four member reserved Christian family. As my car comes to a halt in the well

maintained yard of the Solomon family, I am welcomed by a well-spoken five years old lass Elizabeth, her sister Jen (aged two), and their caregiver Thembi (I estimate about 50 years old), who had been watching over the children as they played in the front yard. Delighted to see me Elizabeth tells Thembi, “We have a visitor, let’s take her inside.” Thembi smiles, (I interpret the smile as “we were expecting your arrival”), while Elizabeth and Jen lead the way with Thembi and I following. As we approach the back door Elizabeth says, “This is our kitchen, come inside. I have a cat, do you like cats? Her name is Princess.” Before I can answer and explain my fear of cats, an attractive, well-dressed Mrs Solomon appears. She introduces herself to me and leads us straight into their ‘relaxation area’, which is furnished with exquisite furniture that caters for the need to relax. A large cross with Jesus is positioned at the entrance of this room which catches my attention immediately and signifies their religion. As I take a seat and make myself comfortable I notice a magazine rack with a few men’s health magazines as well as women’s health magazines placed into it. Also, I notice a bible which is placed on the drawer.

We get straight into our interview as Mrs Solomon is a lady of few words. During our interview process Elizabeth does not fail to give her opinion. “We read books that teach me how to be good, I learn to be good at school and at church too.” From this I immediately perceive a cultural link to reading in this household and that there does seem to be some relation between readings at school, at home and at church. Mrs Solomon does not fail to mention that the reading style used at school is not related to how they read to Elizabeth at home and she further says that they do not have the time to read to Elizabeth every day but they try to make it a regular process and usually her husband does reading aloud to her while she is in bed. Elizabeth shouts, “Mom can we please go to my bookshelf so I can get a book.”

As we walk along a long passage passing beautifully decorated rooms, we finally arrive at Elizabeth's room. It is painted and decorated in pink. Her bed is dressed with a pink bedcover, covered with matching cushions, and scattered with dolls. On her bedside she has a photo of Jesus, together with a quote extracted from the Bible. Elizabeth immediately disturbs my thoughts by pointing out her bookshelf. She points to all her books which are meticulously placed on the shelf. There are fairy tale books, a children's version of the Bible, Biblical lullabies as well as a few books on etiquette. From this I immediately surmise that Elizabeth's reading development is linked to their religious belief, Christianity.

Elizabeth again disturbs my thoughts as she blurts out, "Dad allows me to choose a book when he reads to me."

These reading interactions will be unpacked in the next chapter.

5.7. The Majid family

After travelling a distance to get to the Majid family, I finally arrive at my destination. I am welcomed by an elegant young lady (about 32 years of age), traditionally dressed in a beautiful black cloak with silver and red stone work, and her head draped perfectly with a scarf (a cloak and scarf is the traditional clothing that a Muslim woman wears).

At the entrance of their home is a large frame with Arabic writing. I assume it is a prayer that is put up to protect the home and the family. We make our way to the dining area, where Abdulla (six years old), is sitting and waiting for us. As I glance around I notice a number of Islamic books. I ask Mrs Majid if I can look at one which she agrees to. I flip through the pages of the book; it has Arabic writing which is then translated into English. Before I can ask Mrs Majid any questions, she begins to explain, "This book that you are looking at is a book with all the prayers, which we call *dua'hs* that every Muslim should know. We read it in Arabic,

and we learn the alphabet in Arabic so we read the Quran and prayers. But at home we only speak in English.” She also points out that on one side of the house the ladies use the area to pray as they do not go to mosque. Only men go to mosque, and prayers are said five times a day.

I facilitate an interactive interview process with well-disciplined Abdulla sitting near us playing with some of his toys. (He shows no interest in our conversation. I even wonder if he hears anything his mom and I speak about as all his attention is on his dainty toys, transforming them from robots to cars and vice versa). I am introduced to a small collection of books that are placed on the bookshelf. Mrs Majid explains that in their home, because they do reading daily, she finds using a tablet and the application on the tablet an easier option as reading can be done anywhere and at any time, hence the few books of the shelf. In the Majid home digital technology is very popular; Abdulla knows how to use a tablet and which application to go to for reading sessions. However, they do read the Quran daily and this is done manually, no technological equipment is used during this process.

From our initial meeting and interview I am made aware that the Majid’s live in a religiously and technologically rich home, where reading development is done to uplift the child’s knowledge of his religion, culture, traditions and beliefs. This is compulsory in Islam, as well as to build his literary skills to enhance his reading ability.

5.8. Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher shared her personal reading experiences to highlight her positionality as a researcher and to provide the reader with some background knowledge of her own reading experiences. Also, vignettes from the researcher’s personal journal was provided

to make a thick and rich description of the participants within this ethnographic case study. This was also done with the purpose of enabling the reader to visualise and contextualise each family.

Table 4 below provides a summary of the home environments of each family. This summary highlights the differences and similarities of each family. In this instance, the Rai family live in an extended family, while the other three families were nuclear families. Also, each immediate family was very small with parents not having more than two children. In addition, every home had reading materials visible in some part of their home, acknowledging the reading culture in their home. The table also provides a review of each family's cultural-religious background.

<u>Table 5: Summary of home environments</u>			
Family name	Family members	Cultural-religious background	Reading material initially evident
Naidoo & Ismail Family	Dad, Mom, Shafeek and a little brother	Islam and Hinduism	Photographs Schoolbooks Religious books
Rai Family	Grandfather, Grandmother, Dad, Mom and Ashwariya	Hinduism	Newspapers Religious symbols and pictures
Solomon Family	Dad, Mom, Thembi, Elizabeth and a little sister	Christianity	Bible and magazines
Majid family	Dad, Mom, Abdulla, younger sister	Islam	Religious Islamic books and prayers Tablet

In the next chapter the findings that emerged from this ethnographic case study are discussed.

CHAPTER SIX

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter reports on and provides an analysis of the research findings of this study. As discussed in Chapter Three, this study used four different sources to collect data, namely: personal reflections from my diary, questionnaires (which were completed by Naidoo & Ismail Family, Rai Family, Solomon Family, and Majid Family), interviews (with Naidoo & Ismail Family, Rai Family, Solomon Family, and Majid Family), and observations of all the families' reading interaction with their child.

The chapter presents the findings based on the following themes, which arose from the process of thematic content analysis:

- Parents exposure to reading when they were young;
- Methods of reading development;
- Materials used in reading development;
- Cultural aspects of reading development;
- Spatial and temporal dimensions of reading development; and
- Parental involvement in the process.

These findings will assist in answering the core questions of this study which are: What is the nature of parental involvement in the development of children's reading? How do we account for the levels and nature of parents' engagement in children's reading development? In

addition many themes emerged from these perspectives which overlap with each other. In order to provide a thick ethnographic account of the findings from the questionnaires, interviews and observations, the findings of each family is individually presented.

6.2. Discussion of the findings

a. Naidoo and Ismail Family:

Mrs Naidoo's love for reading emanated from her childhood. She learned to read when she was young although she has no memory of exactly where she learned to read, whether it was at home or at school. However, she has vivid memories of reading taking place during her childhood, as her parents encouraged reading in their home. During an interview with Mrs Naidoo, she eagerly stated that, "on our birthdays our parents told all family members that books should be the only gift given as presents, no toys!" She further beamed with pride as she explained that their home was always filled with reading material. Her father was a teacher by profession so he always brought home different types of books that she enjoyed flipping through, even if they were too difficult to read. In addition, from the questionnaire I gathered that Mrs Naidoo still loves to read, but she now reads more for work purposes than for pleasure and pleasurable reading is no longer a daily activity for her. When Mr Ismail was asked the very same question about his reading experiences, he was very honest,

reading was not common in our home or in our community. We grew up with difficult times, parents worked long hours so I have no memory of reading at home. But I remember I loved cars when I was a little boy so I used to look for pictures of cars in magazines, pamphlets and newspapers that my parents

used to bring home or from neighbours houses and I used to stick them on my wall.

He also explained that from the time he was little he always wanted to be successful and when he started school, he focused on doing well and he recalled,

my Grade 2 teacher used to take us to the library every week to pick books for

reading and she used to tell us **reading equals success**. I have always remembered

that statement and I have lived up to it and I believe it is a fact.

He further acknowledged that this belief was one of the reasons why reading is so important in their home.

During the interview with Mrs Naidoo it was found that in their home reading was conducted through storytelling. Mrs Naidoo explained,

Because Shafeek attends a Waldorf School, reading aloud is only learned later but story-telling is encouraged during early childhood from baby to seven years or so. As a result, we do a lot more story-telling but we sometimes even do reading aloud with actual storybooks.

Mrs Naidoo also stated that the reason they used this method of story-telling was because it correlated well with how reading was developed at school; thus this method worked well for them. In addition she stated, “Story-telling is good for soul development, which assists in growth development.”

The researcher’s curiosity about story-telling got the better of her and she found the need to question Mrs Naidoo further about how she understands the difference between reading aloud

and story-telling. Without any hesitation she explained: “Reading aloud is reading the exact words from a book while story-telling is building your child’s imagination by letting him develop his very own story with the help of us.” She added that:

We want to build our child’s vocabulary and because of the school he attends we encourage story-telling. It also builds his confidence in being able to express himself and his thoughts freely. Also, when we read to him, we read with expression and our tone of voice changes to create an understanding of what is being read.

In addition to the methods that this family uses to develop Shafeek’s reading, Mrs Naidoo stated that listening and comprehension were important skills in reading development. She further stated that “when you listen and look at words you are able to put phonics and sound concepts together”. This discovery of story-telling was astounding, as story-telling as a form of reading development was least expected, and the world of story-telling using the Waldorf way in the Naidoo and Ismail home was extremely interesting.

Usually, Mr Ismail and Mrs Naidoo sat with Shafeek while they introduced a topic that he was interested in. They began guiding each other’s ideas until they had jointly built a remarkable story. During one encounter with the Naidoo and Ismail family, they (father, mother and Shafeek) sat on the floor of their lounge browsing through a few pictures with different types of fairies and Shafeek began to talk about a picture which he found interesting, a fairy that sat on a flower. Shafeek began a conversation with his parents, and his mother continued with the conversation by asking him questions. (*Shafeek began with his interpretation of the picture followed by his mom prompting him*)

Shafeek: The fairy is a good fairy, the fairy is a boy and he loves the beautiful smell of flowers and when he is sad he will come to the flower and the flower makes him happy. The flower always tells the fairy stories that make him smile and laugh. (...*smiling...*) Mom, flowers are good because we give flowers to people that we love, it makes them happy.

Mrs Naidoo: So when the fairy is happy what happens to him?

Shafeek: (...*After a few seconds Shafeek sprang up, ran into his room and in a few minutes came out wearing fairy wings and carrying a sunflower...*) When the fairy is happy he goes around to all the children while they are sleeping and he tells them sweet stories that make them smile in their sleep and this makes the children very happy. (...*Shafeek danced around in the lounge with his fairy wings on and with a big yellow sunflower in his hand...*) I would love to be like this fairy and make all the children that are sad happy.

Mrs Naidoo: (...*cheerfully...*) Wow! That is a really good fairy my son and that is a wonderful story. You are just like the good fairy, you make us happy and smile when we are sad.

Shafeek: (...*Shafeek was ecstatic to hear what his mom had to say and he went to his mom and handed over the flower to her...*) I love you mom.

They hugged each other and the son quickly took off his wings and put them back into his 'dress closet' (a cupboard that has all different dress up garments).

During another noteworthy observation on a different day, Shafeek pulled out a book called *The elves and the shoemaker*. As usual, they sat on the floor. Shafeek, together with his

mother, discussed the cover of the book and the following story transpired from this when Mrs Naidoo asked Shafeek to describe what he could see on the cover of the book:

Shafeek: (*...with delight...*) Mom, there are two elves with nails and a hammer in their hands, they are fixing a shoe.

Mrs Naidoo: (*...excitedly...*) Yes son, you are absolutely right. What do you think a shoemaker does?

Shafeek: (*...shouts out...*) Mom, that is so easy. He makes shoes.

(*... Mrs Naidoo, with a broad smile, nods and tells Shafeek to look at the pictures in the book and tell her a story. So, he flips through the book, looking at the pictures. After looking at the pictures he goes into his room, comes out wearing big ears, holding a shoe in his hand and some old clothes. He then begins his story...*) Looooooooong ago, a man lived in a small house. He used to make shoes. His name was (*...uhu*) Mr Shoemaker. Mr Shoemaker was very old (*goes quiet...*) so he had two elves that helped him to make shoes. They were very small and fast. They used to come late in the night when Mr Shoemaker was sleeping and start making the shoes (*the boy began acting like an elf, pretending to make shoes, covering his shoes with the old clothes he had. After a long pause he continued*). Mr Shoemaker was so happy that he had their help, he asked his wife to make them some clothes as a present to say thank you.

Mrs Naidoo: (*...Mrs Naidoo was so pleased with her son's story, she clapped and praised him.*) That was a very interesting story, son. Well done! I'm so proud of you.

Shafeek: (...*laughed*...) Mom the elves are so helpful, we should get some to help us clean up.

The researcher was fortunate to be an audience to a few of these story-telling encounters which were always breath-taking as Shafeek transformed a visual stimulus from a book into a magnificent story through the use of his imagination. Every story that he told always had a happy ending and he always tried to dress-up for the story, which made it more exciting and less predictable. Each session was always different and unusual.

One day while Mrs Naidoo was busy in the kitchen preparing lunch, Shafeek, out of nowhere, asked his mother, “Mommy what is the holy book for a Buddhist?” Mrs Naidoo, shocked by the question which arose from nowhere, took him to their religious bookshelf and pulled out a simple book on Buddhism. She looked through the contents page, sat her son down on his bed and began reading about the holy book, the *Tripitaka*. During the reading session she explained to him that it was written in an Indian language known as *Pali* and pointed out to him the three main sections within the holy book. Shafeek was in complete awe and he was very interested, “Mom, Buddhism is a very interesting religion, it’s also an Indian religion and started in India.” Mrs Naidoo nodded and said, “When we have a little more time we will read more,” and Shafeek ran off to continue playing.

During the researcher’s observations at the Naidoo and Ismail home she noticed they were never short of reading materials. Shafeek was privileged to have his own bookshelf in his room which was filled with books, but their home had two other bookshelves; one consisting of adult books, and the other the religious bookshelf comprising a variety of books from all

the different religions. Shafeek's bookshelf consisted of a collection of books from the time he was little. He happily showed me a range of books which he 'loves to read'. These materials consisted of picture books, and simple folklore such as fairies, elves, gnomes and dwarfs. In addition, he also showed off his coat stand and closet that had many different types of dress-up garments from hats to swords and capes. He excitedly mentioned, "When mom, dad and I read we even dress-up. It's lots of fun." It is interesting that Shafeek strongly associates 'reading' and storytelling with dressing up and imaginative acting out of stories. For him, reading is about giving free reign to his imagination, which he really enjoys. So 'reading' in this broad sense is looking at pictures and books with his parents, creating stories and acting them out, all of which are pleasurable activities.

During the researcher's exploration through the house she was made aware of a table which had two holders with *'thought of the day'* cards. The little boy blurted out even before he could be asked what it was, "this pile is mine and this is mom and dad's pile", pointing to the different holders. "Before we leave every morning I pick up a card and try to read the saying out". He picks a card and looks at the picture of a boy giving another boy an apple, he cannot read the words so he makes up a saying, "Don't take from strangers! Mom is that right?" Mrs Naidoo quickly corrects him, "No son, it says sharing is caring! But you are right, do not take things from people you don't know." The boy nods and gives his mom a card from her pile to read and she reads, "Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about. Be kind!" She asks her son, "Do you know what that means?" and he responds, "Mom, we must always be kind to everyone". And the mom continues, "Yes, my son, because we don't know how they are feeling." I was amazed to see Shafeek's ability to 'decode' the pictures, in other words he saw them as signs which he could interpret, which signals the beginning of reading.

During the interview with Mrs Naidoo she was asked, *Who plays the greatest role in your child's reading?* Mrs Naidoo said,

My husband and I both take an interest in our child's reading development.

So, on weekends and nights that we both are available, we do reading together

as a family, but because of my chores, I must admit there are times that my

husband takes complete responsibility of reading.

However, during the observations it was mainly Mrs Naidoo who played a more active role in Shafeek's reading development process although Mr Naidoo was present. In addition, she (Mrs Naidoo) was asked what her reasons were for encouraging and developing reading at home and she said:

it keeps my child away from the television and it also allows him to be part

of a different world. Each book takes you to a different world and as parents

it is our lawful duty to take our child through different journeys.

In this home the researcher also noticed that some kind of reading was done daily but it was rushed as both Mr Ismail and Mrs Naidoo worked and had busy schedules. However, they did do story-telling more on weekends and holidays as they had more time to engage in and enjoy their story-telling experience. They did read in the mornings using their *thought of the day cards*, but according to Mrs Naidoo, "it is a very quick act as we are rushing off to school and work, so I wouldn't call it reading". In my eyes it was reading development. Mrs Naidoo sometimes also did bedtime reading, where her son would lie in bed and he would be read to, but this was only done on days when they had time to do so.

Interestingly, due to the diversity of cultures in the culturally mixed Ismail and Naidoo home, with a combination of Hinduism and Islam, and the combination of racial backgrounds (Coloured and Indian), Shafeek is exposed to the five major religions in South Africa: Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Judaism. In this household a different bookshelf is allocated to religious books and scriptures, simplified children's versions as well as adult-type books. Shafeek often has a choice of what book he would like to read and, because he has an interest in the different cultures, he often chooses books from the cultural bookshelf. According to Mr Ismail, "our child, when at the right age, needs to make the choice of which religion he would like to follow and that's why we find it important that we expose him to the different cultures by reading books to him about these cultures. For now he follows both religions". Mr Ismail and Mrs Naidoo also believe that as a South African he needs to be familiar with the different cultures, their scriptures and beliefs. Therefore they include the reading of cultural books in their home. This is a very interesting and unusual home. In a way, the parents are giving Shafeek the resources to 'read' his own complex cultural heritage and to make sense of it as he grows up.

b. Rai Family:

Mrs Rai grew up in a home where both her parents worked. Despite her parent's commitments and responsibilities as working parents they never failed in their duty to read to her daily. "My parents read me stories every day and they always told me that it was through reading that I would be able to excel in English and in my overall performance at school," stated Mrs Rai. She further indicated that it was through her parent's motivation and encouragement that she inculcated the love for books and reading, and she recalled their home being rich with reading materials in the forms of books, newspapers and magazines. Her parents took her every Saturday to the library where she would get the chance to choose

books that she could read and she recalled these visitations as “an outing”. However, she sadly states that “reading is now a luxury although I do try and read newspapers regularly to keep myself up to date with the happenings around the world”.

In the Rai household reading was reading aloud and Mrs Rai explained that reading aloud together with the repetition of alphabets and colours assisted with Ashwariya’s development. She reiterated that their method of reading development through reading aloud was suitable as it encouraged repetition which was good for their child’s development. In addition, during the home visits the researcher noticed that this idea of repetition was reflected when Ashwariya was playing ‘school’ with her dolls: she repeated the words that she was familiar with, which showed that she was learning from her parents’ methods of reading development. Moreover, Mrs Rai believed that word recognition and comprehension skills are crucial for reading development.

My visits to the Rai family varied with regard to time. However, the researcher was always mesmerised to see that reading was certainly not a chore in this household and that there was an abundance of reading material, which consisted of magazines, cookbooks and newspapers, which lay around in the lounge and dining area. On the very first visit to the Rai home, the researcher noticed a bookshelf in the lounge of the home. It was situated on the wall in a corner above Ashwariya’s toy area. The bookshelf was filled with a lot of books, adult and children’s literature. Ashwariya’s section of the bookshelf comprised of fairy-tale books such as *Cinderella*, *Rapunzel*, *Three little Princesses*, *Piglet’s Big Movie* as well a collection of fairy-tales and nursery rhymes. It seemed she enjoyed these ‘girly’ happy ending, princess

kind of stories. In addition, she also had books that enhanced her writing skills; these were books that had dotted lines in which Ashwariya was expected to follow to complete the form of the letters of the alphabet, numbers, and pictures.

During another home visit, the researcher arrived while Ashwariya was playing in the garden with her dolls which sat on chairs around a table. She was the teacher and her dolls were the children. She had a picture book with her in one hand and a stick in the other hand. She was pointing at the pictures in the book through imaginative play and she was asking her dolls:

So tell me, children, what can you see in this picture? ... Yes, Princess, what can you see? (...*uhm*...) That's very good, it is a blue ball. Tinkerbell, what is in this picture? NO NO Tinkerbell! That is a dog and he is playing with the blue ball.

Ashwariya continued to flip through pictures and acted like a real teacher getting upset with the dolls that did not give her the 'correct answer'. Ashwariya repeated each picture in the book (reading in the sense that she is decoding signs – in this case pictures – which is appropriate for her age). She could not read, so she did not read the text to her dolls but she made up stories as she went along,

The dog is playing with a blue ball in the garden. The dog jumped on the boy and took the ball. The boy fell down and hurt his leg. His mom took him to the doctor with the car.

Every time Ashwariya didn't know something in the book she ran to her mom to ask her what was in the picture. In one incident there was a picture of a hamster in the book. She first told her dolls that it was a mouse but she still looked confused, so she told them to wait, she

would be back, and she went into the house and came back a minute later, shouting, “It’s a hamster”. At the end of her so-called ‘end of lesson’ she told her dolls, “It’s now story time!” and she called for her mom to read a story to her dolls and herself. Mrs Rai happily read the story while Ashwariya sat on a chair next to her dolls and listened to story of *Ben and his naughty pets*. During this time Mrs Rai simply read the story using different voice tones when needed, to make the story exciting, while Ashwariya listened attentively to the story. There was no discussion at the end of the story.

During another encounter, Mrs Rai noticed Ashwariya holding a book in her hand and she asked Ashwariya if she was keen to read a story. The enthusiastic Ashwariya eagerly joined her mom on the comfortable lounge seat. Mrs Rai held the book between them and asked Ashwariya a few questions.

Mrs Rai: What can you see on the cover page?

Ashwariya: (...*quickly*...) It’s a pretty girl with long hair sitting on a chair in the salon. The aunty has a scissors in her hand. Mummy, is the girl going to cut her long hair?

Mrs Rai: Well... We will have to read the book to find out!

Mrs Rai began reading. She read the title of the book *Laura’s first visit to the salon*. As she read she pointed to each word so Ashwariya could easily follow the words. Before Mrs Rai began to read each page, she asked Ashwariya what she could see in each picture and Ashwariya responded with what she thought was going to happen. Mrs Rai never told her if she was right or wrong; she simply said, “Good, let’s read on”. After they had read the page, Mrs Rai provided positive feedback to Ashwariya. “You are so good, my angel, what you said is exactly what happened”. At other times she said, “Baby, you were almost right, very

good". At the end of the story Ashwariya quickly blurted out, "Mom, Laura was very brave to cut her hair and she didn't even cry. She was a very good girl", and Mrs Rai agreed with a nod and a smile. After the reading session, Ashwariya ran to her writing table, picked up a pen and paper which she brought to her mom and told her mom that she wanted to open a salon. She asked her mom, "Could you please write a list with prices for me so if I did everyone's hair, they would know how much to pay me?" Ashwariya began reciting her services and their cost to her mother, "wash and cut R10, wash, cut and set R50, hair dye R20, up styles R100." When she was done with providing her services and Mrs Rai was done with writing out the list, Ashwariya took the page, decorated it and kept it next to her salon set. She asked her mom what she could do for her today at her salon and mom said, "an up style, please", and she began playing with her mom's hair using her toy salon set.

On another occasion Ashwariya fetched a local paper that was left at their gate and there was a poster with a circus advertisement in it which immediately caught her eye. Usually her granddad read the paper first so she took it to him and showed him the advert. They began discussing the advert with her granddad telling her the name of the circus, when it would be in town, where it would be situated, the times and cost of the show, and also what animals would be at the show. She was also able to quickly identify the images on the poster such as the animals, the tent, the lights as well as the shades of colour on the poster. After her reading encounter with her granddad, she took the poster to her mom and asked her if she and her dad would be able to take her to the circus and she provided all the details, such as the venue, time and date of the shows. From this interaction I quickly gathered that, although Mrs Rai took full responsibility for developing Ashwariya's reading, she was fortunate to have the

support of her parents (Ashwariya's maternal grandparents), in their home who also read to Ashwariya and interacted in the reading development process.

During the interview with Mrs Rai, it was gathered that her reason for encouraging and developing reading at home was because she believed it was their right and responsibility as parents to support their child through reading development, just like she had had the support of her parents in terms of reading education. Also, she stated,

Reading development is important because children seem to be more involved with technology since their parents are pre-occupied. Children need to know that the reading of books is important and books exist.

Thus, Mrs Rai has made it her responsibility to engage Ashwariya in daily reading which is not governed by time specification or routine. Reading was sometimes an informal task but often a fun activity and occurred when Ashwariya showed interest in reading. As mentioned earlier, Mrs Rai is home-based and therefore she had a little more time to read to Ashwariya and encourage her to read, as they were more relaxed compared to families with both parents working outside the home. Mrs Rai integrated reading within Ashwariya's playtime. Usually, she would read a book that Ashwariya picked up while she was playing outside with her dolls. Again, after reading a book about the hairdresser, she decided to take out her salon set to play with and recited the pricelist which her mom had written for her almost as if she was actually reading the pricelist out on her own,

So Mom, what can I do for you today? A wash and cut is only R10, or I can also do a wash, cut and set for R50. Mom, Mom, but I think I should put some

hair-dye for you, maybe pink, it's R20?

From this we can see that Ashwariya was able to relate her story to her playtime equipment and to her life, which was all fun. Reading was not a tedious or boring task in this household. On a separate occasion, as described above, reading occurred coincidentally: while delivering the newspaper to her granddad she saw an advert which caught her eye and her granddad had to read the advert to her. In all the observations of reading development in this home, it was Ashwariya who initiated the reading process, which was supported by Mrs Rai.

Although Mrs Rai and her family are very religiously inclined, reading is not linked to a specific South African Indian religious culture. Mrs Rai believed that Ashwariya was aware of her religious traditions and culture and knows about her scriptures but when she is a little older they will integrate more religious books into her reading and she will then attend (after school hours) a Hindi school that will offer her classes that teach her more about her religion and scriptures. Until then reading would be fun. Interestingly, it is distinct that the Rai family initiates Ashwariya into a literate culture as the family themselves is engaged in reading at different levels.

During my informal chat with Ashwariya's grandparents, the researcher found out that both of their parents were indentured labourers who came from India to South Africa for a better life. They were illiterate so Ashwariya's grandmother and grandfather were brought up with no reading being done at home. Ashwariya's granddad said, "My parents had no formal education and they could not read or write, but they wanted their children to go to school, learn and become professionals". Ashwariya's grandmother reinforced her husband's

sentiments and further explained that when she started to read, which she learnt at school, she used to come home and read the newspaper to her parents and young siblings as she was the oldest child. She continued,

I always helped my siblings and encouraged them to read and I was fortunate to have gotten up to Grade 12 but because my parents could not afford tertiary fees and as the eldest child I needed to help my parents financially, I started to work as an admin clerk and progressed up the corporate ladder through studying.

Ashwariya's granddad had a similar experience but he only got to Grade 10 and began working at a factory to help his family financially. In search of a better life, he also kept looking for better job prospects and eventually obtained a good job in the public sector.

c. Solomon Family:

Mr and Mrs Solomon were brought up in 'reading homes'. Mrs Solomon smilingly stated that she was unable to recollect exactly where she learned to read, although she mentioned, "My parents initiated the love for books in us and they were successful. I still love to read and that's what I want to do with my children." She further stated that books were always given to them as gifts when they were growing up,

When I was a kid my parents took me to the library weekly but as I got older I started to visit the library on my own and I recall the library being a busy place with lots of children reading, doing homework and even socialising.

However, Mrs Solomon now has difficulties fitting pleasurable reading into her daily schedule but she admits to online reading of news-related information and she even stated

that she hardly ever visits the library. While Mr Solomon recalled his parents encouraging reading at home, as both his parents loved reading, he did not find it to be an exciting task, and he preferred being outside playing with toys and exploring. His parents used to read to him daily despite his lack of interest. Mr Solomon honestly admitted,

When I was growing I often felt that reading was for girls and not for boys, but my perception soon changed when I got to high school and we were forced to read books for oral marks as well as for literature exams. Since then I realised the importance of reading and now I continue to read. I am grateful to my parents as their reading to me built my vocabulary, my understanding and general knowledge. This always kept me ahead of many children in my class.

Mr Solomon enjoys reading books about entrepreneurship, finance, health and medical books.

In the Solomon household reading was always reading aloud. Mrs Solomon explained that reading aloud was most appropriate in their home because “Elizabeth cannot read on her own yet and it helps to build her knowledge regarding her teachings at home as well as teachings about our religion”. Mrs Solomon also believed reading aloud was a simple method which did not clash with the way in which Elizabeth would learn to read at school (which followed the Cambridge way of teaching). In addition, Mrs Solomon admitted that they used reading aloud and interactive questioning and answering, “Firstly, to create links between what we teach Elizabeth at home to what is being written in books and secondly, this method is used to calm and relax her before she goes to bed.” During my visits to this loving family, reading

was done mainly by either Mr or Mrs Solomon with Elizabeth following and asking questions or providing her input. The skills which Mr and Mrs Solomon found important in reading development were word recognition and comprehension. For example when Mr Solomon asked Elizabeth, “What is good manners?” Although she did not define the term, she was able to provide examples, “saying please and thank you”. This suggested she understood what good manners is about. At this point, although Mr and Mrs Solomon believed word recognition was important, they began focusing on alphabet recognition as the first step to being able to independently recognise words.

Elizabeth usually picked a book of her interest from her bookshelf situated in her bedroom, which was read to her by her parents while she lay in bed. The books on her bookshelf consisted of a variety of fairy tale books, picture books as well as Christian storybooks, lullabies, the children’s version of the bible, as well as books that highlight social norms such as etiquette, rights and wrongs, and safety. During their reading process, Elizabeth looked at pictures and provided some kind of feedback as her parents read. Also, she was often asked to identify the letters of the alphabet.

During one reading encounter, *Good manners* was the book that was being read and she was quick to say even before reading began:

Elizabeth: At school, at church and at home I learn good manners. Daddy that makes me a good girl because I have good manners.

Mr Solomon: (*agreed with his daughter’s statement and nodded...*) What are good manners?

Elizabeth: *(confidently)* I always say please and thank you and I call people I don't know aunty and uncle. Daddy, I don't talk with food in my mouth.

Her father responded saying he was very proud of her, and they began reading. She was also very quick at identifying what was happening in each picture. At the end of the book Mr Solomon said, "I am very proud of all your good manners and you must always show off your good manners". Elizabeth was so proud of herself, she beamed with pride and excitement.

In another reading episode Elizabeth pulled out the book of *Cinderella*. She very politely asked her father if they could read that book which she handed to him. He agreed. Following the same routine, she jumped into bed with her father sitting close to her; he began reading. As they read, Elizabeth kept interrupting the session with her quirky comments: "Dad, the stepmom looks so angry"; "The stepsisters don't look helpful"; "Cinderella is very pretty"; "Dad, they are not very nice to Cinderella, maybe because she is so pretty and helpful"; "I want a gown just like Cinderella; that gown will make me look like a princess". At the end of the story, Elizabeth said, "Dad I am happy Cinderella found a handsome prince and she won't be treated badly anymore. At church and at home mom always tells me to be good to everyone. I must not be bad and fight with other children and I must share."

All other reading observations displayed the same format, just with different books, and reference was always made to her, her religion, her teachings at home and at school. Mr and Mrs Solomon believed that connecting the teachings of what she knew to what was being read was important as it showed her the good and the bad that they were teaching her. Also,

as mentioned earlier, Mrs Solomon used books that helped teach Elizabeth writing skills, books that had dotted lines which she followed to form letters of the alphabet, numbers and pictures. Mrs Solomon said that, when Elizabeth was bored, they usually brought these books out and she traced over dotted lines. Although it was a tool for entertainment and for keeping her being busy, she was also learning to write out the correct form of alphabetic letters.

Mr Solomon played an active role in Elizabeth's reading development. During my interview with Mrs Solomon, she said, "due to my responsibilities as a working mom, it is difficult for me to read to her regularly but my husband takes on that responsibility when he is available and not committed. I guess as a working female, you get home and begin household chores, so it is a little difficult but when I do have time I try to read to her." She also highlighted the reasons for them encouraging and developing reading at home,

as parents we want to develop the child's knowledge and expose them to different scenarios and this can easily be done through reading. I learned a lot from reading when I was young and growing up. We would like the same for our child.

She further stated that,

Reading development is important. In this day and age with technology and television, it is important that we as parents introduce and encourage reading at home with our children. My husband and I both love reading and we would love to pass down this love for reading to our children.

Despite the Solomon's finding reading important, it was not a daily activity in their home due to Mr and Mrs Solomon's commitments both at work and at home. However, when they did read to Elizabeth, it was done at bedtime, "as a tool to relax and settle her to bed."

The choices of books read in the Solomon house are often related to the family's Christian culture. A number of stories, hymns and lullabies read in this home were directly related to Christianity. Mr and Mrs Solomon often read biblical bedtime stories to Elizabeth. In addition, Elizabeth attended church regularly and had her own children's version of the bible. Also, she sometimes attended Sunday school which influenced the stories that her parents read to her as she had found an interest in Biblical stories. In addition, if the story was not a biblical story, Elizabeth tried to make a connection to what she learned at church. For example, when she read the book on *Good manners*, she made the connection that they also learned to have good manners at church. Therefore, it is evident that Christian beliefs have a direct influence on reading in this household.

d. Majid Family:

Mrs Majid was introduced to books at a very young age but is unable to remember clearly how she learned to read. However, she proudly stated with a sly smile, "I remember when I was a child I loved books and I recall stealing my mom's magazines and flipping through them and as I got older I loved reading them". She also stated that she had pleasurable visits to the library and that her parents made sure that the books brought home from the library were read. Mrs Majid joyfully emphasised, "Reading in our home was a very important activity, and we all read in our home. Our house was rich with reading materials and because my parents read we were also expected to read". She further stated that she tries to read daily

but her focus is now on teaching her children to read and to develop the love for reading in them. When I asked Mrs Majid if her husband shared any of his childhood reading experiences with her, she laughed, “he was never a reader, he comes from a business family so from a baby he grew up in the business and to this day he is still involved in his own business. He doesn’t find time to read books other than the Quran”.

Interestingly, in the Majid household reading was mostly done through the use of modern technology with very few ‘old-fashioned’ methods. Mrs Majid and her husband invested in an educational tablet for Abdulla which had different reading applications that they used to develop their child’s reading. However, they also make use of and read actual books from time to time. Thus, Mohammed had a small bookshelf with few books, mainly ‘boy-type’ books such as *The boy that cried wolf*, *Ben Ten*, *Robin Hood*, *Diggers and Dumpers* and *The Big Storm*, but they predominately use the technological application. Although they used the tablet, Mrs Majid still sat with her son while these applications were being used. Because she was a housewife it was her responsibility to take on the fundamental role in her child’s reading development. While digital technology was being used to teach reading, it was done through reading aloud and Mrs Majid stated, “It is convenient, easily accessible and can be done anywhere and at any time”. When I asked Mrs Majid what skills she thought were important when developing her child’s reading at home, without any hesitation she stated, “Picture analysis is important because I believe when my son looks at the pictures he will be able to create his own story using his imagination”.

During one observation Mrs Majid downloaded the story and she played it to Abdulla. In other words the application read out the story, highlighting each word as it was being said. There were pictures which made Abdulla more attentive. Also, Mrs Majid stopped the application from time to time so she and Abdulla could discuss the story, what was happening and what he thought would happen next. During this session they were reading about dinosaurs, *The last dinosaur*, as the boy had been interested in this topic, so Mrs Majid stopped in the middle of the story and the following conversation transpired:

Mrs Majid: How do you think the story will end?

Abdulla: (*...imaginatively responded...*) Mom, although they say he is the last dinosaur I think he will travel to different towns in search of his cousins and he will come to a very deserted town and in a very quiet place he will find his cousins there hiding from people who are trying to catch him. They will team up and fight all these people to save himself and his cousins.

Mrs Majid, mesmerized by her son's story, continued to play the application which did not end the way in which her son described the ending. So she responded, "Maybe the next dinosaur book that we will read will have an ending like you described".

After listening to one story on the application, Mrs Majid asked Abdulla to put the tablet away and bring his Quran (this is the Islamic scripture in the form of an actual book with Arabic writing). With this she began teaching him the letters of the alphabet. After repeating the letters of the alphabet in a word a few times, she read the word out from the Quran while Abdulla followed and listened as his mom read. She then began to explain in English the chapter which she read to him so that he understood what she read, its importance and the

significance of the chapter. Here she seemed to be teaching him a number of different things at the same time: Arabic as a language; the written form of Arabic; as well as the religious messages/lessons from the Quran.

During a different reading interaction, Mrs Majid and Abdulla sat while a story was being played on the application, *Our picnic at the beach with friends*. After the title was read, Mrs Majid stopped the application because Abdulla started talking.

Mom, do you remember when we went with Dadi (grandmother) and them to the beach? It was so much fun, Daddy and I played in the tidal pool and the waves got bigger. We had so much fun. I wish we could go to the beach today.

Mrs Majid quickly explained to him that his dad was at work and they could not go without him. He understood and they continued with the application reading the story to them.

Abdulla smiled when he saw the pictures of the waves and the children playing with their beach ball and building sandcastles. At the end he told his mom that the story was just like when they go to the beach, the children in the story did the same things they do. He ran-off to fetch his beach ball, bucket and spade.

On a separate day they read from a book, *The Big Storm*. This time they sat around the dining room table. Abdulla seemed fidgety and uninterested as he fiddled with the toy in his hand, but Mrs Majid continued to read, ignoring his behaviour. Mrs Majid did most of the reading with Abdulla following and analysing the pictures only as his mom continued to read. After

she was done with reading the book, she asked him to draw on the page with the pencil in front of him what he understood and remembered from the book. Amazingly, the boy was able to draw a number of important occurrences from the story such as the brother and sister, a tree with leaves on the ground, dark clouds, rain drops, the window where the brother and sister peeped through, lightning and hail. This highlighted that Abdulla understood what happened in the story despite him showing little apparent interest in the story.

Although the researcher observed Mrs Majid and Abdulla using technology during most of their reading interactions which all followed the same procedure, ‘old-fashioned’ methods were used to teach Abdulla that the reading of actual books was also important. In addition, Mrs Majid stated that she encouraged and developed reading because, “If I teach him to read from a young age he will be ahead of other children in his class”. Hence, Mrs Majid initiated and read to Abdulla daily. She initiated reading in her household by interrupting Abdulla’s playtime, “its reading time, what can we read today?” These reading interactions were still fun as they read stories based on his current interests. On one day Mrs Majid told him, “Guess what story I found for us to read today? Yes Dinosaurs”. The little boy was so excited, “Mom, the Tyrannosaurus is my favourite, I can’t wait to watch Jurassic Park”. This story was played on the tablet. Abdulla enjoyed giving his own inputs and comments, he enjoyed looking at the pictures, and he was even able to give an ending to the story on the request of his mom. On a separate occasion they read a simplified short story about the Avengers. At the end of the story he said, “Mom, I want to be like Tony and build my own robots, which will be fun!” All the stories that were read to him were of interest to him thus he related to them, commented on and enjoyed the stories, making reading fun.

In addition, Abdulla attended Madressa (a compulsory Islamic school that teaches the child more about his religion and scriptures) every day after school. At Madressa, just as at school, he was taught to read, but this time in Arabic. He also received homework which included, at his age, learning to read and write the Arabic letters of the alphabet, and he was expected learn to read the Quran which was all in Arabic, at home. Thus, in this household Islamic culture enhances the child's reading development.

6.3. Key points that emanated from the observations regarding Reading Practices

A number of findings stemmed from the home visits which the researcher has chosen to highlight. Firstly, reading aloud was a very popular method used by parents in the households to develop their child's reading. Story-telling was also used in one household which created a love for reading as it built excitement and suspense. Unfortunately, parents who were not familiar with other ways of developing their child's reading stuck to what they knew, which was reading aloud.

Secondly, imaginative play and the child's imagination were often used when developing their child's reading. Children either chose to relate and link their knowledge of what they read to games that they played alone, for example 'teacher-teacher', or, while reading, their imaginations grew and travelled to a different world, for example providing an ending for a story or looking at a picture and making a story up.

Thirdly, reading development comprised of the development of auditory and visual skills. For example, many parents pointed to the words that they read out to create word recognition for their child and also for their child to be able to follow exactly which words were being

sounded out. Another example of visual skills was when they were analysing pictures in the book as well as following text from left to right by either following the cursor on the tablet or the reader's finger. The auditory skills that were developed were listening to their parent read to them, and distinguishing the different voice tones that were used during the session to highlight the different emotions that might have arisen in the book. In addition there were also physical skills such as holding a book and turning the pages.

Fourthly, comprehension was important when parents' read to their child. Comprehension was informally tested in the form of questions and answers which comprised of either asking questions about the story or analysing the picture. Comprehension was also reflected in children's responses to the text, for example in drawings, play, actions (asking parent to take child to the circus) and spontaneous comments.

Fifthly, reading materials comprised of both written hard-copy texts such as books, newspapers and posters as well as electronic devices such as applications played on the tablet. The texts also comprised fiction and non-fiction as well as religious materials in some cases.

Lastly, to some degree religious belief impacted on reading development but this was not the case in every household.

6.4. Summary of Findings

Interestingly, all moms in this small sample, from the time they were young, were introduced to books and encouraged to read by their parents. Thus they developed the love for books and read daily. They enjoyed getting new books to read and were regular members of the library.

Their parents were all readers and no matter what kind of text they read, be it newspapers or

books, they read daily. There was thus a strong intergenerational dimension to their reading practices with their children. In contrast, now as adults and parents, they no longer visit the library and they do no personal reading daily. For them reading is now a luxury. There seems to have been a transition from ‘public’, loaning of books, to ‘private’, books are available at home on their own bookshelves. The main reason that arose in this study for parents not reading daily either to children or for themselves was mostly due to their busy lifestyles.

In contrast, the dads did not share the same reading experiences as the moms. Although Mr Solomon had the support of his parents with regard to reading development, he did not have the interest until much later in his life. However, his parents used to read to him by force, so he did learn lots from his reading at home which allowed him to be ahead of some children in his class. In comparison to Mr Solomon, Mr Ismail did not have any reading support at home. He used to flip through magazines, newspapers and pamphlets on his own and only received support at school in Grade 2 by his teacher. It was his teacher that encouraged and developed his reading. On the other, Mr Majid was more involved in religious reading as he learnt to read the Quran and this was done in Arabic.

Interestingly, Ashwariya’s grandparents came from an illiterate background. In other words, their parents (Ashwariya’s great grandparents) could not read or write but they encouraged and supported their children’s schooling achievements. Ashwariya’s grandmother’s learning to read at school had a positive effect in her household as she created a reading environment at home. She did this by reading news related articles to her parents and encouraged and read to her siblings. In doing this, she passed her reading skills to her siblings and began developing their reading at home.

When reading was done at home, it was done through reading aloud in the simplest and most basic way where the parent read and child followed. However, there was interaction between the child and parent as questions were asked and the child commented with his/her viewpoint, thus informally testing the child's understanding of the text. Parents did not want to interfere with the natural way in which their child learned to read at school, hence they had no intentions of teaching the child to read. Only in the Ismail and Naidoo home, parents used a school-method when developing their child's reading and that was through story-telling. In addition, parents did not make any connection to alphabets (except identification of some letters of the alphabets) or phonics or word recognition, reading was basically the parent reading and child following.

Also, reading and play seemed to be very popular during the reading development process. All parents tried to build their child's reading development through imaginative play and their imagination. In addition, the use of audio and visuals were used during the reading development process.

The materials that were used in each household varied, there were books that were used in all four households but in the Majid household digital technology was predominantly used to develop reading. Interestingly, with the technology application, stories were read to the mother and child and the mother found this to be a convenient and easy form of developing her child's reading. Furthermore, the Naidoo and Ismail's, the Solomon's and the Rai's used reading development at home as a tool to develop their children's knowledge and to create a love for reading and books while Mrs Majid stated she developed her child's reading to

advance him in school. In addition, all parents seemed involved and interested in their child's reading development; however it was mainly the moms' that did most of the reading. In the Rai household where they lived together with their grandparents, the grandparents also played a role in developing the child's reading.

Parents either read books that enhanced their religious beliefs and culture or read books in the language of their religion. These parents believed it was important to instil in their children the knowledge of their religion, its traditions, beliefs and culture from a young age and to make them aware of their scriptures. Also, the children showed interest in their religion thus parents read books to fulfil these interests.

6.5. Conclusion

In attempting to understand the parental involvement in developing their child's reading at home, and the methods and texts used to develop the child's reading, an analysis of interviews and observations suggests that parents tried to read to their child daily. However, it was obviously not always possible. Also, they found that reading aloud seems to be the best method in developing their child's reading. In addition, their focus is mainly on comprehension and building their child's vocabulary and background knowledge. Furthermore, texts chosen in reading development were very seldom related to their religion.

In the next chapter we will focus on the relation between the theoretical framework and the findings.

CHAPTER SEVEN

READING: IMAGINATIVE PLAY, MEDIATION AND CULTURAL PRACTICE

7.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the findings are discussed in relation to the theoretical frames discussed in Chapter Three. In particular, the researcher focuses on the themes of imagination, mediation and cultural practice. In doing so, an attempt to enrich the findings by re-viewing them through theoretical lenses and to indicate their contribution to the appropriate bodies of scholarship.

7.2. A Socio-Psycholinguistic Approach to Reading

Given the social, psychological and linguistic aspects of reading development highlighted in the study, it can be argued that reading development in these households is illuminated by the socio-psycholinguistic approach. A socio-psycholinguistic approach to reading is conceptualised as both a linguistic and cognitive process as well as a social process (Weaver, 1994). As discussed in Chapter Three, reading cannot be classified solely according to either a psycholinguistic approach or a sociocultural approach but rather is most usefully understood through a combination of both approaches – a socio-psycholinguistic approach. Although the use of this approach may be debatable among theorists, it was evident within the study that a socio-psycholinguistic approach helped to illuminate all four of the children's (Shafeek, Ashwariya, Elizabeth and Abdulla) reading development processes. In other words, each child's reading development confirmed Weaver's (1994) model of reading as a socio-psycholinguistic approach, in that reading development occurs between the reader and the

text, within a social and situational context. Through the study, we were able to establish that each child's social context, which was their 'family reading network', encouraged them to read. In addition, resources were freely available to the children such as books, magazines and religious materials, which were all placed on their bookshelves and in one case, electronic media was available to the child. It was in this context that the children's reading was developed and that they were encouraged to read (linguistic and cognitive process) within their reading network.

Furthermore, each child was exposed to rich reading environments, with a surplus of resources that had been readily available in their homes where parents and/or caregivers tried to read to their child regularly. This highlighted a socio-psycholinguistic approach to reading as a rich reading environment at home promotes a greater influence on child-book interactions which results in a positive attitude and interest towards reading. Hence this stimulates linguistic development such as vocabulary and syntax because children familiarise themselves with the books and other reading materials present in their home. This was evident in Ashwariya's reading, when she didn't know something in the book she ran to her mom to ask her what was in the picture. In one incident there was a picture of a hamster in the book. She first told her dolls that it was a mouse but she was still unsure so she went to clarify with her mom and came back a minute later, shouting, "It's a hamster". Children also develop their emotions and minds through their regular interactions with their reading materials. Consequently, this develops the child's ability to relate their experiences and understanding of the world to the books that they read. This was evident when Elizabeth identified Cinderella's sisters and stepmom's behaviour as being unbecoming and cruel. Also,

Shafeek recognized that giving flowers is a way of showing one's feelings of affection to another.

Moreover, the intention of the parents reading to their child was to develop their child into a lifelong reader, who acquires the love for reading as they had. Notably, parents did not focus on teaching their child to read, as they did not want to interfere with the 'learning to read' process at school; instead they wanted to encourage their child to read and to identify reading as a fun activity. Thus, parents did not focus on all the components used to teach reading which are stipulated in the CAPS (DoE, 2011) document but focused more on expanding the child's vocabulary, ensuring comprehension of stories and the building of their child's imagination. Flippo (1999, p.99) states, "teaching children to comprehend what they are reading as they read is a vital aspect of making them lifelong readers". Parents achieved their focus of reading development through question/answer interactions and imaginative play. For example, "*What is good manners?*", which tested the child's understanding; "*What do you call someone who makes shoes?*", which tested understanding as well as built vocabulary; *being a hairdresser to her mom* highlighted imaginative play, comprehension and vocabulary development.

In contrast to South African studies that highlight the development and teaching of mainly decoding skills during early reading development (Pretorius, 2000; 2002; Macdonald, 1990; Strauss, 1995), this study showed no explicit practices. Instead there was focus on the development of cognitive skills which was highlighted in the question and answer process between the child and parent, as well as linguistic development in which children developed their vocabulary, and psychological development which was achieved through imaginative

story-telling and recalling past experiences (Abdulla reminisced about his experiences at the beach).

7.3. Imaginative Play

In this section it is argued that dramatic play, which is one form of imaginative play, is a crucial and positive method of reading development in a home. In addition, it builds on emergent literacy which results in reading development. In order to understand this study, it is important to understand the terms ‘imaginative’ and ‘play’. Many theorists understand and define these terms differently which has been discussed in Chapter Three; however to reiterate my understanding in relation to this study, play consists of meaning-making activities that children engage in freely, which connect, in an enjoyable way, their personal knowledge or world to the larger ‘social world’ that they understand. In addition, there are different kinds of play that children engage in, with one being imaginative play. According to Casper and Theilheimer (2010, p.96), imaginative play “allows children to meaningfully integrate and master their experiences”. Thus, the term ‘imaginative play’ in this study can be understood as an action or movement in which children creatively engage in using their own personal knowledge or world and transforming it to relate to their understanding of the larger social world in an enjoyable way. In addition, imaginative play gives rise to other forms of play such as dramatic play which can be understood as an act of dramatising an incident or object.

I have found through this study that dramatic play was extremely popular amongst the pre-schoolers that I observed. Some examples of this were: Ashwariya engaging in ‘teacher play’

when she took on the role of a teacher and used her dolls as the students in class. She began teaching them with a picture book as her resource. She took on the role of a teacher with much charisma in that she was serious about teaching, using questions to ensure participation as well as positive reinforcement and yelling when the need arose. Another, example of dramatic play was Shafeek's story-telling of the "shoemaker and elf". He displayed his understanding of the story through dramatic play, he put on elf ears, covered a pair of shoes to show they had been repaired and engaged with his mom while acting and playing.

Smilansky (1990) acknowledges that this kind of play often has high cognitive and socio-affective demands on children in that children derive satisfaction not only from the ability to imitate but also to form make-believe play, which provides unlimited access to the exciting world of adults. Through imaginative play, the children were able to make sense of what they had read, transfer it to other contexts and explore its implications in a child-centred way. During imaginative play, reading was taken from the realm of print into that of movement, dressing-up, role-playing, visual and aural stimulation, which highlighted a holistic and integrative way of 'comprehending' the text. This idea of imaginative play seemed to work well in the homes of all participants.

Theorists highlight their view that play should be encouraged. "...pretence play plays a vital role in young children's lives and that the period of its salience extends through the primary school years as well" (Bergen, 2002, p.3). However, very little information around the importance of play and the benefits play has on children is given in our education policy documents that could provide support for teachers and parents for the early development of

reading. Furthermore, Bergen (2002) states that pretend play gives children the ability to transform objects and actions symbolically and it is stimulated by interactive social dialogue and negotiation as it encompasses role taking, script knowledge, and improvisation. These were all evident in each household.

In addition, Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998), believe there are a number of methods that can be used in a home to facilitate literacy in children at a young age namely: play, routine-based literacy, responsive literacy environments, shared storybook reading (especially dialogic reading, storybook preview, and storybook sounds) and story-telling, which includes decontextualized language and dialogue/conversation. Most of the above-mentioned strategies were evident in each household. All the households encouraged and created rich responsive literacy environments. Also, every home was rich in dialogue and conversation; children were allowed to creatively and openly express their thoughts through play and parents stimulated their responses and actions with positive feedback and cues.

Story-telling was used by the Naidoo and Ismail family as well as the Majid family. However, in the Naidoo and Ismail family storytelling was not merely telling a story but rather a transformation of images which encompassed dramatized actions and movement, with the use of symbols in the form of props to create the character and act the story. These all contributed to Shafeek's imaginative play. This manifestation that took place in this household can be closely linked to the understanding of Isenberg and Jacob (1983) regarding symbolic play, in that it is a process in which a transformation occurs from an object or oneself into another object, person, situation, or event through the use of motor and verbal

actions in a make believe activity. This provides an important source of literacy development. This was further evident when Shafeek went into his room and transformed into an elf by putting on big ears, carrying a pair of shoes and some old clothes and beginning to act as an elf while building on a story from merely looking at the pictures in the book. Also, Ashwariya displayed transformation when she was playing with her dolls: she became a teacher asking questions, prompting responses and correcting answers.

In addition, Shafeek's story-telling, Ashwariya's pretend play and Abdulla's drawings are linked to Smilansky's (1986) definition of dramatic play. Smilansky (1986) believes it is an interactive and flexible process in which children formulate symbols for ideas, feelings and issues that they use to create play scenarios. These allow them to express and explore the material their play produces in a resourceful and imaginative way. In other words, Shafeek 'decoded' the pictures and made sense of them in a very interesting way by linking the pictures to his knowledge and creativity, all within the process of dramatic play. This was clear in all his story-telling incidents but just to highlight one of the occurrences: when he was looking through the pictures that his parents placed on the floor where they all sat, he picked up a picture of a fairy carrying a flower and he began to speak about it, with his mom prompting the conversation when the need arose,

The fairy is a good fairy, the fairy is a boy and he loves the beautiful
smell of flowers and when he is sad he will come to the flower and
the flower makes him happy. The flower always tells the fairy stories
that make him smile and laugh. (...*smiling*...) Mom, flowers are good
because we give flowers to people that we love, it makes them happy.

Shafeek was able to use his knowledge and understanding to create imaginative descriptions of the characters as well as links or connections within his characters in his story. For example, he connected flowers to happiness and linked them as tokens that are used to express love. This incident reinforces my definition of play in that Shafeek connected his personal knowledge to the larger ‘social world’ in an enjoyable and fun way. Similarly, Ashwariya transformed from a child to a hairdresser, creating a price-list for her salon, “wash and cut R10, wash, cut and set R50, hair dye R20, up styles R100”. She also reiterated my understanding of play in that she used her knowledge and understanding of a salon and connected it to the larger ‘social world’ in that she offered to do a hairstyle for her mom and drew up a pricelist for the services she would offer to her customers. Furthermore, this act highlight Feuerstein’s concepts of transcendence and meaning. Ashwariya’s transcendence and meaning reflected in her elaboration of prices in that she identified the principles and values of money and was aware that businesses charge for the skills they offer to clients.

Furthermore, Shafeek expressed the need to share love and positivity in his story, by stating that the flower tells the fairy stories which make him laugh and smile and in return the fairy passes this positivity down to children at night where he tells them stories which make them smile and be happy in their dreams. Similarly, Ashwariya was able to identify positive qualities that the character in her story displayed such as bravery. “Mom Laura was very brave to cut her hair and she didn’t even cry. She was a very good girl”. Likewise, Elizabeth linked qualities depicted in the story she read, to attributes that she possessed, “At school, at church and at home I learn good manners. Daddy, that makes me a good girl because I have good manners”. Also, Shafeek enacted out his story in a playful manner by becoming the fairy dressed with fairy wings dancing around the room with a yellow sunflower in his hand,

full of energy, excitement and happiness. He expressed his need to be like the ‘good fairy’ and make everyone around him happy. Similarly, Ashwariya transformed into a new role, a hairdresser, and began playing with her mom’s hair. This highlighted Shafeek’s and Ashwariya’s engagement in dramatic and symbolic play. It has the six elements that Wood and Attfield (2005) believe dramatic play encompasses (role-play by imitation, make-believe with objects, make-believe with actions and situations, persistence in the role play, interaction and verbal communication). Thus, it is evident that Shafeek and Ashwariya’s acts of reading were ‘multi-modal’ as they included oral, written, visual and somatic (physical) aspects. In addition, all these aspects assisted them in their exciting reading journey which was fun, enjoyable, creative and playful.

A relationship between reading, playing and understanding was identified in Shafeek’s story-telling which all happened simultaneously. These processes were all linked, in that Shafeek began to make a story in which he firstly created characters: fairy and flower, then described the fairy and the role of the flower. Thereafter, he immediately began to show an understanding of the description of their characters which links to Feuerstein’s concept of meaning. Shafeek highlighted his understanding of the fairy and flower by explaining to his mother, “Flowers are good because we give flowers to people that we love, it makes them happy” and he very swiftly and intelligently shifted from the story to the ‘real world’, which highlighted his understanding. Subsequently, Shafeek went into his room and dressed up like a fairy and then started the next phase of the story through acting as the fairy:

When the fairy is happy, he goes around to all the children

while they sleeping and he tells them sweet stories that make

them smile in their sleep and this makes the children very happy.

(...Shafeek danced around in the lounge with his fairy wings on

and with a big yellow sunflower in his hand...).

Again, he was able to quickly revert back to his 'real world' by expressing his need to be like the good fairy and make sad children happy. Thus, he highlighted his understanding of doing good and being good. I found it interesting that at school, we as educators believe the concept of understanding or comprehension is related to cognitive development within a learning environment, whilst in play, understanding is a performance, it is holistic and physical. In addition, at school we never use play to develop reading skills or any other skills that can enhance a child's literacy development because even I, as a teacher used to understand play as an informal and insignificant activity, and never found a link to reading development.

On the other hand, Abdulla used his imagination and creativity to build possible stories from just listening to the title of a story. His method was more of a 'listening comprehension' but with the use of his knowledge and social understanding he was able to build an imaginative story that was filled with playful and fun elements. Abdulla's method of reading was found to be extremely interesting because his reading was done using the help of digital technology. During one observation, Mrs. Majid played a story *Our picnic at the beach with friends* using their reading application on the tablet. After the application had read the title out pronouncing each word loudly and clearly, Mrs Majid was forced to stop the application because Abdulla began reminiscing and talking about a trip to the beach with his family, recalling the event and the fun he had on that specific trip,

Mom, do you remember when we went with Dadi (grandmother) and them

to the beach? It was so much fun, Daddy and I played in the tidal pool and the waves got bigger. We had so much fun. I wish we could go to the beach today.

As they listened to the story on the application, pictures kept popping-up as the story continued. Abdulla was filled with excitement as they were pictures that he related to, such as waves, sand-castles and beach balls. Abdulla's reminiscing and excitement about familiar pictures highlights symbolic play, in that he made mental representations which Piaget (1962) considers an intellectual activity. At the end of the story Abdulla was, through an act of transcendence, able to relate the story he listened to, to his own experiences at the beach which were very similar and he was so excited to go to the beach or play 'pretend beach' that he ran off to fetch his beach accessories. This reaction and behaviour can be staged as dramatic play because his play created a story that went beyond the topic chosen and had lots of meaning for him (Smilansky, 1968). Interestingly, Abdulla's reading was also 'multi-modal' as it included oral, written, visual and kinetic aspects and integrated imaginative play is a part of his story-telling and reading development. Also, his use of digital media prompted Abdullah to 're-read' his own experience of going to the beach by remembering and reflecting on how he felt. He then drew on this experience to 'read' and understand the story, highlighting a two-way process. Later, he enacted the story through re-enacting his beach experience thus, bringing the two together (the story he read and his own experience).

Although Ashwariya's reading experiences were for different purposes, imaginative play played a vital role in her reading development. During one observation of Ashwariya, she

was playing in the garden with her dolls in which she was the teacher and her dolls were the children. She had a book and was pointing at the pictures in the book and through imaginative play she asked her dolls questions about the pictures that she pointed to and she pretended to have heard an answer and she responded like a teacher would,

Yes, Princess, what can you see? (...uhm...) That's very good, it is a blue

ball. Tinkerbell, what is in this picture? NO NO Tinkerbell!! That is a dog

and he is playing with the blue ball.

She continued her game, enjoying her role as a teacher and carried out a form of reading in which she decoded signs, which were the pictures in the book. In addition, she used her understanding of the decoded signs to make up her own stories which were linked to real world experiences,

The dog is playing with a blue ball in the garden. The dog jumped on the boy

and took the ball. The boy fell down and hurt his leg. His mom took him to the

doctor with the car.

This type of play can be classified as dramatic play because she created symbols (her dolls were her learners, stick represented her as teacher) to develop her play scenario in which she explored her material in an imaginative and creative way (Smilansky, 1986).

Moreover, Ashwariya enjoyed her game, taking on an authoritative role as the teacher and at the end of her 'session in the classroom' she quickly transformed from teacher to learner as she excitedly and attentively listened to her mom read the book *Ben and his naughty pets* that

she used throughout her playtime. Ashwariya's reading development is closely linked to Freire's (1996) belief that there should be trust and communication between teacher (who also learns) and learner (who also teaches). In other words Freire (1996), believes that teachers should learn from their learners (encourage challenging questions) and learners should be able to share their knowledge that a teacher may have omitted or is unsure of. This was highlighted in Ashwariya where she 'teaches' herself about reading, that is, she learns about reading, by playing the role of teacher of reading and 'teaching' her toys to read. Then she repositions to 'learner' by asking her mom to read to her. Thus, it can be concluded that Ashwariya's imaginative playtime contributed positively to her reading development.

The Solomon family used a more routine-based strategy for reading, in which reading was done as part of their bedtime routine, they also used shared storybook reading in which Elizabeth would summarize a story such as Cinderella to enhance and develop her reading. Many imaginative attributes were integrated into the session. In addition, Elizabeth's interaction during her reading episodes developed her linguistic skills, reinforced her vocabulary and allowed her to imagine... "I want to be a beautiful Princess". Consequently, Elizabeth's visual interpretation highlighted her ability to decode the pictures and she provided her own imaginative explanation and creative responses.

To sum up, the text gave the children the opportunity to open up space to explore their imagination as they projected themselves, and to occupy or own the positions within their play such as the character in the story or the teacher of reading. In addition, the children projected themselves into the different roles in which they either reminisced or they

anticipated an event. For example Abdulla recalled an event at the beach and the excitement around it and hoped he could re-visit those images and he went to gather his beach accessories. Thus, imaginative play developed each child's skills in a pleasurable manner.

7.4. Mediated Learning

In this section it is argued that parents and caregivers play a crucial mediating role in their children's reading development. The researcher shows how Feuerstein's theory of Mediated Learning Experience, with its categories of intentionality/reciprocity, transcendence and meaning, sheds light on mediation in relation to reading development. To reiterate, as stated in Chapter Three, mediated learning experience refers to "human interactions that generate the capacity of individuals to change and/or modify themselves in the direction of greater adaptability and towards the use of higher mental processes" (Feuerstein, 1979, p.110). Mediated learning experience helps us to see and understand the interactional dynamics within each family's reading network. Feuerstein developed criteria that are used to understand mediated learning, namely: Intentionality/Reciprocity, Transcendence and Meaning. I discuss each of these concepts in turn and then relate them to my data.

Intentionality is a turn in an interactive situation between the parent and child from incidental to intentional. In a learning situation there are often two foci in intentionality, one being the object and the other being the child, and in such a situation the child needs to realize that the real object is not the task at hand but rather the child's own thinking. The response of the child to the incident is classified as reciprocity. Transcendence is the inclusion of identification of the fundamental principles, rules, values and their transmission to a wide range of other situations and tasks. Lastly, meaning, within the mediated learning approach,

becomes possible only when stimuli, events or information are gathered together with meaning derived by the mediator. However, in this study it was found to be very difficult to separate transcendence and meaning because the researcher believed if a child is able to relate values, rules and principles instilled in them through their experiences encountered and relate these to current experiences then meaning has been achieved. Thus, it is possible to conceptually differentiate transcendence and meaning but in practice, they are mutually constitutive.

In order to provide a thick ethnographic description showing of how the findings from this study link to the mediated learning experience, the researcher decided to select an event and/or incident from each household and to analyse it using Feuerstein's criteria. These episodes have been referred to above to illuminate other theoretical perspectives, but here she looks at them from a mediated learning experience.

a. Naidoo and Ismail family: *The elves and the shoemaker.*

During one of the observations conducted at the Naidoo and Ismail home, Shafeek chose to read *The elves and the shoemaker*. Mrs Naidoo sat with Shafeek and began talking about the cover of the book.

b. Rai family: *Laura's first visit to the salon*

In the course of home visits to the Rai family home, an exciting event that was observed was when Ashwariya showed interest in a book called *Laura's first visit to the salon* that she came across on her bookshelf and Mrs Rai used this interest to stimulate her reading time.

c. Solomon family: *Good manners*

Every visit to the Solomon home was intriguing, but one visit that was most intriguing, was the evening that Elizabeth chose to pull out a book called *Good manners*. She beamed with excitement when her dad read the title of the book, as she was able to relate to the title.

d. Majid family: *The Last Dinosaur*

In the Majid household most storybooks used for reading development were electronic although they did have a few on their bookshelf. Usually, Mrs Majid downloaded stories that were of interest to Abdulla and these stories were played on his tablet. One of the events that the researcher observed was the story, *The last dinosaur* being played on the tablet.

During the incident in the Naidoo and Ismail home, Mrs Naidoo was the mediator. She initiated the thoughts, imagery and creativity that filled her child's mind. She did this through asking Shafeek a simple question, that being to describe the cover of the book. In addition, she allowed Shafeek to build his own meaning and understanding from what he saw on the cover of the book; she did not 'feed' him with information. Shafeek in this instance was the mediatee. He did not merely take in information but rather he became a "self-evolving actor" (Hadji, 2000, p.28). He took cues from his mom such as, "Yes son, you are absolutely right"; "What do you think a shoemaker does?" and he began to use his imagination, creativity and own understanding to build an amazing story. In addition, he took advantage of the materials that he had at home such as big ears, his shoes, pieces of cloth together with the book that sat on the floor, which enhanced his ability to become an actor and storyteller.

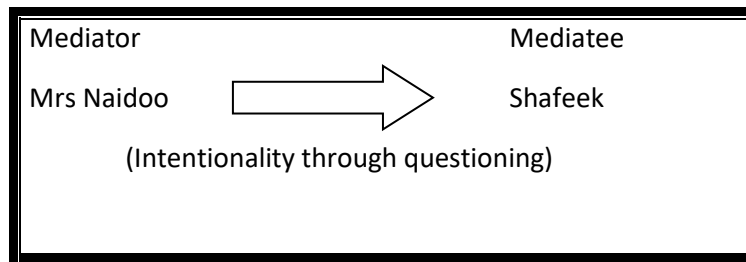


FIGURE 16: Feuerstein's partners and criteria in relation to the Naidoo and Ismail's

Intentionality was evident in this incident when Mrs Naidoo asked Shafeek to describe what he could see on the cover of the book and further asked him what the job of a shoemaker was. While Shafeek analysed the cover picture he transformed it into an intentional act of thinking and he explained what he saw as well as what he knew. "Mom, there are two elves with nails and a hammer in their hands, they are fixing a shoe". Furthermore, Mrs Naidoo gave Shafeek the opportunity to explore and be creative when she asked him to look at the pictures and tell a story based on the picture, which he did in a very imaginative manner. He also used props that made his story seem very real and exciting. Shafeek's response and actions highlight reciprocity in that he showed acknowledgement and understanding of the question his mother asked him. This questioning process, which transpired into a fun activity, is highlighted in Figure 16. The figure shows that intentionality was created through the questioning process between the mediator, Mrs Naidoo and the mediatee, Shafeek.

The manner in which Shafeek enacted this story by merely analysing the pictures highlighted mediated meaning. He took time to think and be creative as he told the story by using props that he had in his room. In addition, his story was systematic in that he looked at the pictures and related a story in the very same sequence.

Shafeek was aware of feelings and values that occurred in his story. He expressed and explained the shoemaker's happiness and the elves helpfulness. In addition, during his story he connected the value of being 'thankful' with 'reward', in that the shoemaker asked his wife to sew clothes for the elves as a way of thanking them for their help. Furthermore, he was able to identify the value of being helpful as well as his responsibilities, "Mom, the elves are so helpful, we should get some to help us clean up". This also links to transcendence where Shafeek was able to apply his knowledge and creativity to a different context. Thus, we can see that in the Naidoo home there are rules and responsibilities, and Shafeek was able to relate the responsibility of 'cleaning-up' with wanting the help of the elf in their home. In addition, the acts of transcendence and the ability to acknowledge the values and rituals of his home and environment highlight his understanding and meaning within his act of play and the text that he engaged in.

Similarly, in the Naidoo and Ismail family, the parent, Mrs Rai was the mediator in the event in the Rai family. She noticed Ashwariya's interest in a book and she began to set the environment in which she asked Ashwariya if she wanted to read the book. When she agreed to this, they sat down and Mrs Rai started the session by asking her a question, such as "What can you see on the cover of the book?" Ashwariya responded easily as the answer was evident on the cover of the book. Throughout the reading session, Mrs Rai continued to ask Ashwariya questions, which made her think and use her knowledge and understanding to build creative responses. Exactly like Shafeek, Ashwariya was the mediatee as she became involved in the book and she later used her understanding of the book and what she learned from the story in her imaginative play. This highlights the transformation of intention (look at the picture and identify what is present) into an explicit and conscious act which shows

Ashwariya's reciprocity. In addition, the materials used during this event consisted of items that were available such as the storybook, pieces of paper, and Ashwariya's play set.

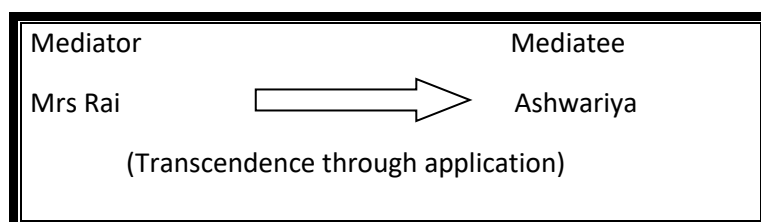


FIGURE 17: Feuerstein's partners and criteria in relation to the Rai's

At the start of this event, the very first response of Mrs Rai highlighted intentionality. Mrs Rai incidentally noticed Ashwariya looking at a book, and she transformed that incidental act into an intentional act of sitting Ashwariya down and reading the story to her. Also, Mrs Rai focused Ashwariya's attention on the pictures and asked her what she was able to see in the pictures as well as what she thought would happen in this story. These were also acts of intentionality because Mrs Rai's intention was to get Ashwariya to think, assimilate and describe what she could see in the visual as well as what she anticipated would occur in the story. Furthermore, Mrs Rai as the mediator never provided Ashwariya with any kind of information about the book, as she wanted Ashwariya to develop her own thoughts and ideas through analysing the pictures and listening to the story. Therefore, she simply prompted Ashwariya's thoughts with questions such as, "What can you see?", "What do you think will happen?" and positive feedback such as, "Well done my baby, that's very good. Let's read on" and so on. Ashwariya's responses to her mother's questions were an act of reciprocity as well as her facial expressions when her mother acknowledged her contribution.

At the end of the story, Ashwariya was able to link her knowledge and understanding of positive behaviour and values to the character Laura: “Mom, Laura was very brave to cut her hair and she didn’t even cry. She was a very good girl”. This was an example of transcendence. Ashwariya was able to identify Laura’s behaviour as bravery because she might have recalled her fear or seen other children crying at a salon as their hair was being cut. In addition, this was *Laura’s first visit to the salon* so perhaps Ashwariya expected the character to be afraid, nervous and intimidated by the process of cutting her hair for the first time. Thus, it is clear to state that transcendence was created through application, which is shown in Figure 17. In other words, Ashwariya was able to identify the values that her parents and caregivers had taught her, in others, highlighting transcendence in this event.

After Ashwariya and her mom completed their feedback about the book, she hurried off to fetch a piece of paper and a pen which she gave to her mom politely requesting that she draw up a pricelist for her as she would be opening her own salon. She dictated the services offered and the cost of each service and offered to do her mom’s hair with all her ‘salon play equipment’. From this interaction, it is evident that mediation of meaning occurred through the transcendence of applying the story to another context, as she was familiar with idea of a salon and the services that are offered. Moreover, Ashwariya was able to apply her prior knowledge together with her newly developed understanding from the book, into her playtime. Again, from this incident we are able to see that meaning and transcendence work closely together because the child was able to recollect, acknowledge and understand the values instilled in her by her parents and care-givers indicating that meaning was achieved as she was also able to apply this to her play.

Likewise, in the Solomon household, in the same parent-child pattern of relationship as in the other two households, Mr Solomon was the mediator of learning and Elizabeth was the mediatee. Interestingly, in this case it was the father rather than the mother who took on the mediator's role. Figure 18 below shows the role of Mr Solomon and Elizabeth during their reading event.

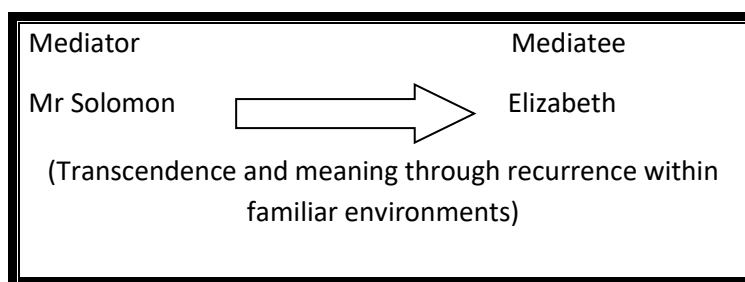


FIGURE 18: Feuerstein's partners and criteria in relation to the Solomon's

Mr Solomon set the scene by getting Elizabeth into her reading environment which was in her room, on her bed. He began by showing her the book and he read the title *Good Manners*. In an act of transcendence, she was immediately able to connect good manners with what she had been taught at home, at school and at church. In addition, when Mr Solomon asked her what she thought good manners were, she was quickly able to give examples of good manners. Hence, she linked her background knowledge and understanding to the title of the book. Although Elizabeth was unable to define or explain good manners in a sentence, her examples highlighted her understanding of the question. Elizabeth was able to link good manners as a positive behaviour, thus saying, "Daddy, that makes me a good girl because I have good manners". Also, it highlights reciprocity in that Elizabeth acknowledged her behaviour as an explicit act. Elizabeth was also able to identify the pictures and, before her dad could read, she explained her understanding of the picture. In addition, Elizabeth was able to associate the title of the book with the environments in which these fundamental

principles, values and behaviours were taught to her and encouraged. This highlighted transcendence. Elizabeth remembered that at school, at home and at church she was taught about the importance of using good manners. She was also aware that good manners had a positive reflection on her, “At school, at church and at home I learn good manners. Daddy, that makes me a good girl because I have good manners”.

Mediation of meaning was evident in this incident when Mr Solomon positively reinforced Elizabeth’s use of good manners. He tried to sum up what was discussed in the book and link it to Elizabeth’s use of manners. This compliment filled her with excitement and pride hence, illustrating that she understood the idea of good manners and its importance.

Lastly, in the Majid household, Mrs Majid was the mediator in this reading event (highlighted in Figure 19) as she steered the conversation that allowed Abdulla to think and be creative. However, unlike the other households, she used the tablet with the application that read the story out, highlighting each word. The digital medium that was being used in this event could also be classified as the mediator due to its interactive nature. Abdulla, like the other children was the mediatee in the event and the material used was the digital application on the tablet.

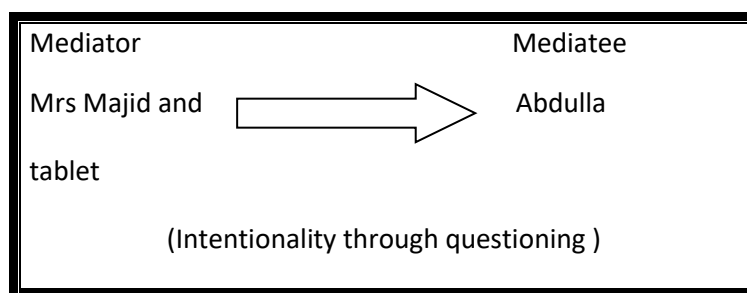


FIGURE 19: Feuerstein’s partners and criteria in relation to the Majid’s

Intentionality was evident in this event as Mrs Majid downloaded a story onto Abdulla's tablet, *The Last Dinosaur*. When Mrs Majid told Abdulla what she downloaded, with much excitement he responded, "Mom, the Tyrannosaurus is my favourite, I can't wait to watch Jurassic Park". From the above statement, we are able to see that Mrs Majid's incidental comment transpired into an intentional event with the result being Abdulla's eagerness to read the story. Also, his eagerness was a conscious act of transformation of the intention which highlights reciprocity by Abdulla. The mother also tried to enhance his creativity, thought and imagination by asking him after the title of the story was read, what he thought would happen in the story. This presented Abdulla with the opportunity to be free and imaginative.

In Abdulla's response about the story, he cleverly used ideas of what happens in society and the values of a Good Samaritan in his description of the story. He classified the *Last Dinosaur* as the Good Samaritan who was going to look for and save his relatives from people that wanted to attack and hurt them. This for me underlined transcendence because Abdulla was able link values and behaviours, which he was made aware of by his parents and caregivers to that of the story. Furthermore, he was able to link the dinosaur story with another story (The Good Samaritan) and to a movie (Jurassic Park) as opposed to simply his own direct previous experience. Thus, meaning also arises inter-textually as he connected and differentiated stories and the kinds of stories. However, in this case it creates dissonance because the stories ended differently, but then in so doing, he created meaning in the form of how stories are similar and different.

Although Abdulla's imaginative story had no obvious connection to the actual story, for him it did. Mrs Majid explained to Abdulla that, although the story he listened to did not end in the way he anticipated, his story was very good and maybe the next dinosaur story would have a similar ending to his. Also, during the session, when he looked at the pictures, he was able to explain and describe it with the help of his mom's cues.

In conclusion, mediation was apparent in each of the four households as parents developed their child's reading. Feuerstein's criteria of intentionality, transcendence and meaning were evident in each of my observations conducted at each home. Just to reiterate, mediated learning is the responsibility of every child's parents or caregivers. As Klein (2000) states that mediated learning happens when the child's environment is understood by someone who understands the child's needs, interests and abilities, and who takes an active role in making components of that environment, as well as of the past and future experiences, well-suited to the child. Thus, it is appropriate to state that Feuerstein's theory of Mediated Learning was significant to understanding the data on parental involvement in children's reading development.

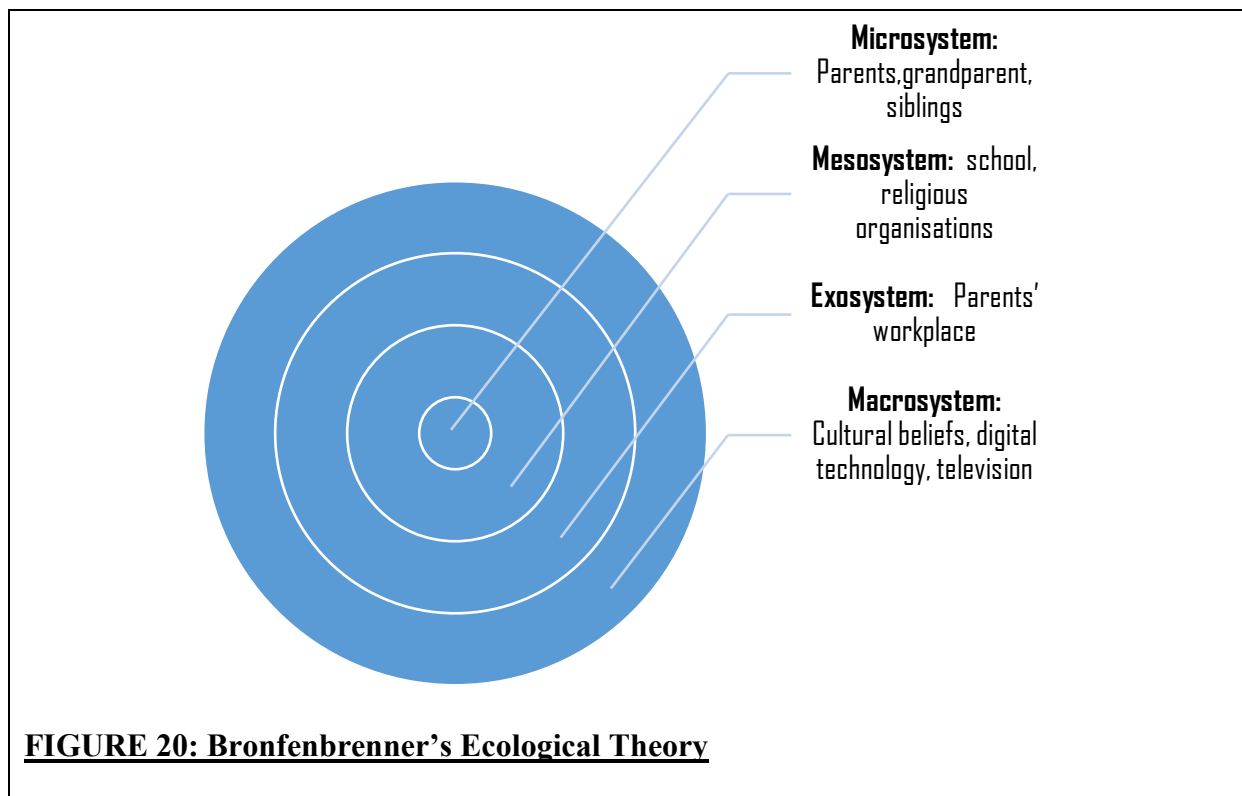
7.5. Reading as a Cultural Practice

In this section the researcher argues that reading is a cultural practice and is informed by different contributing factors. These factors are social, environmental, cultural and psychological factors. She shows how Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory relates to the cultural practice of reading development as well as the involvement of parents in their child's reading development process.

7.5.1. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory

The researcher's understanding of a 'reading culture' as stated in Chapter Three is the beliefs, behaviour, attitude and norms towards reading amongst family members within their home, and within their reading network, as well as the wider society's understanding, beliefs, norms and attitudes of reading. Thus, each family may have differing understandings of reading, reading development, the ways in which reading development occurs in their home, the methods used in reading development as well as the resources used to develop reading. In addition, there are multiple influences of reading as a cultural practice. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory of development (1979) highlights the different factors that could influence the reading cultural practice within a 'family reading network'.

The theory consists of four systems, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and the macrosystem. The microsystem consists of the 'reading network' (such as parents, siblings, caregivers, grandparents) that have a direct impact on the child's learning development. The Mesosystem consists of the relationship between the child's parents and other members of the community that have a direct relationship with the child, for example school and religious organisations. The Exosystem is the environment in which the parents are involved, such as the parents' workplaces or their social network, as this may also affect the child's learning. Lastly, the Macrosystem includes the societal attitudes and cultural beliefs, which could also affect the child's development of learning. I have decided to create a visual, Figure 20, using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory to unpack the systems and its relations to the findings in this study by broadly looking at Shafeek, Ashwariya, Elizabeth, and Abdulla's reading development.



In each household the child's reading network consisted of their parents, that being their mom and dad. However, Ashwariya's reading network broadened as it also consisted of her grandparents who shared their home and who actively participated in her reading development. In contrast, Elizabeth spent a lot of time with her younger sibling and their caregiver. However, neither of them actively assisted Elizabeth in her reading development.

According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory, the very first system that affects a child's development is the microsystem. The children in this study shared a very similar microsystem consisting of their moms and dads, as they played the greatest role in their reading development at home. They set the reading environment in their home that helped to promote the enjoyment of reading. As stated earlier, Ashwariya was fortunate to have the additional

support of her maternal grandparents who played a crucial role in her reading development through encouraging her reading and through reading to her.

In the context of the wider South African Indian community in which these families were situated, the microsystem generally reflects the shift from the extended families of a generation earlier to nuclear family set-ups. A generation ago, these parents were fortunate to have had daily interactions with older people (grandparents, uncles, aunts and so on) due to the extended family living nearby, whereas their children are now confined to their immediate family members. During these interactions culture, tradition, and literature were shared with children by the older members in their native language (Hindi, Arabic, Telugu). Previously, Indian families had a close relationship with their neighbours because in most instances, their neighbours were actually their family and this meant that the children of these families grew up together in large groups because they were usually around the same age and felt the need to keep the family bond strong. This was reflected in my own upbringing, as described in Chapter Five. However, this intimacy of extended families and neighbours in most Indian homes has now diminished. This highlights a change in the South African Indian microsystem over the generations. In addition, this has resulted in children now being less exposed to oral traditions and experiences, which were shared by older family members instead children now are being exposed to more print and technological advancements which identify and explain the different traditions within religious groups. The fact that one family was 'mixed' in terms of religion and race also reflects a change in the cultural and reading context at the microsystemic level as well as the shift in Indian community in that they have become accepting to racial and religious differences within relationships.

However, although each child had the support of its ‘reading network’, due to circumstances, each child had a particular parent or caregiver that played a greater role in their reading development. For example, although Shafeek usually had the support of both his parents, his mom was more active in his reading development, while Ashwariya and Abdulla both had their moms to encourage and support their reading development as they were home-based and had the time to develop their reading at any given time. In contrast, Elizabeth’s reading development was usually done before bedtime mostly by her dad, as her mom was usually busy with household chores at that time. The role of the mother in the South African Indian home has been passed down from generation to generation. A generation or two ago it was the mother’s responsibility to ensure the promotion of their religious values, culture and practices among the young and to actively participate in their children’s education. To date it is still, in most Indian homes, the mother’s responsibility to promote and educate their children about religious and cultural beliefs and teachings and to be involved in their school education.

The relationship that existed in the mesosystem (which is the second level of Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory), in this study comprised mainly of the child’s teacher and parents. This had a positive influence on the Shafeek’s reading development at home, as his teacher encouraged and supported Mr Ismail and Mrs Naidoo to use story-telling at home as a reading developmental method. In contrast, the other parents used their own methods to develop their child’s reading as they did not want to confuse the child with how reading is developed and taught at school and how it was being done at home. Mrs Rai used the feedback of Ashwariya’s reading development and her strengths and weaknesses in learning development given by her teacher to guide her, when developing Ashwariya’s reading.

Similarly, the Solomon's used the information and guidelines that were provided by Elizabeth's teacher which inculcated reading aloud and shared reading to assist her reading development. Likewise, Abdulla attended madressa (Islamic school) where he learned to read in Arabic and this was supplemented at home. Although Abdulla learned to read in Arabic it was also explained and discussed in English thus, reading development was encouraged and promoted at madressa. In addition, the feedback given to Mrs Majid from Abdulla's madressa and school teachers, assisted her in his ongoing reading development. This highlights the strong but diverse South African Indian religious influences.

The third stage of the system is the exosystem, which in the case of this study was made-up of the parents' work place and the impact it had on the child. Shafeek, Ashwariya and Abdulla have been fortunate to have positive influences from their exosystem. Shafeek's mom, Mrs Naidoo, did a lot of reading for work purposes and works with books. Thus, she was familiar with a variety of reading material and this had a positive impact on Shafeek's reading development. Due to her expertise and knowledge around books, she was able to identify books that were beneficial and helpful to her child in his reading development. This related to Mrs Naidoo's childhood, as her father was also familiar with books and used to bring home different genres of books.

Mrs Rai and Mrs Majid's flexibility as stay at home mothers has been positively affecting their children's reading development as they were able to stimulate Ashwariya's and Abdulla's reading development at any given time with ample attention when reading. In contrast, Elizabeth's exosystem sometimes had a negative impact on her reading development

because there were times when her mother and father, who both worked in the private sector in the financial field, had work commitments. This resulted in her reading for that evening being ignored, due to them being unable to comply with all the responsibilities that were required of them when they get home. Thus, we are able to see that a child's exosystem can either have a positive or negative influence on the child's reading development.

The exosystem also highlights a generational shift within the Indian community in South Africa. The great-grandparents of these children worked as gardeners, traders and more manual work, and were illiterate. This was followed by a generational shift as these children's grandparents progressed with some formal education. They obtained jobs at factories and as basic administrative clerks. Today their parents have progressed into professional and clerical jobs with higher salaries, as many of them have obtained a tertiary education.

Lastly, the macrosystem comprises of other factors that influence the child's reading development and in this study, as highlighted in Figure 19, was comprised of cultural beliefs, and digital technology and television. It was different in each household. Shafeek was brought up in a home that encouraged diversity in religion; hence, his macrosystem was made-up of learning the different religions, their values and beliefs. Much of the information that he gathered from his macrosystem was through his parents' reading and explaining the values and beliefs of the different religions. Ashwariya on the other hand, was aware of her cultural beliefs and societal behaviour, and was able to confidently share her ideas of societal behaviours. For example her comment on *Laura's bravery when she cut her hair and she*

didn't cry. In addition, Ashwariya's parents and caregivers ensure that she is knowledgeable about her religion. She also picks up on societal behaviour from the different television programmes that she watches as television is allowed in her home. In the same way, the Solomon's diligently inform their child about her religious beliefs and values as well as societal cultural behaviour. Thus, these norms and values which are taught at home, school and church are used to enhance her reading development, such as reading the bible, biblical stories and so on. Lastly, Mrs Majid had the societal view that reading development at home is crucial, thus bringing Abdulla up with the same value and belief. In addition, Abdulla's use of digital technology, which has now become a social norm among most young children, enhanced his reading development. In addition, his religious beliefs were being practised daily through the reading of religious scriptures and books.

In conclusion, although each household had their own ecological system which assisted in each child's reading development process, there were many similarities in each child's ecological system. However, each one had different impacts on each of the children's reading development.

7.6. Conclusion

To sum up, we are able to see the connection between the literature discussed in the previous chapters and the findings identified in this ethnographic case study. In addition, the findings in this study have helped to answer the research questions presented in this study:

- What is the nature of parental involvement in the development of children's reading?

- How do we account for the levels and nature of parents' engagement in children's reading development?

Firstly, reading in this study was identified as a socio-psycholinguistic approach in that it assisted in informing all four of the children's (Shafeek, Ashwariya, Elizabeth and Abdulla) reading development processes. The reading development of each child in this study is highlighted in Weaver's (1994) model of reading as a socio-psycholinguistic approach. Reading development occurred between the reader and the text, within a social and situational context.

Secondly, the researcher found that dramatic play was popular amongst the pre-schoolers in this study. Smilansky (1990) acknowledges that this kind of play often has high cognitive and socio-affective demands on children in that children develop fulfilment not only from the ability to imitate but also to form make-believe play, which offers unlimited access to the exciting world of adults. Furthermore, imaginative play provides the children with the opportunity to make sense of what they read and relate it to other contexts and explore its effects in a child-centred way.

Thirdly, every parent in this study played a significant role in mediating his or her child's reading development at home. Parents created rich reading environments for their children by continually expanding their bookshelves (Klein, 2000). They also, bought books that their children showed interest in (Abdulla was interested in dinosaurs so his mom downloaded a story about dinosaurs) and read those kinds of books to them, and related their reading to past and future experiences (Elizabeth referred to her past teachings of having good manners).

Lastly, parents and grandparents formed the microsystem of these children's 'reading-network' and it was within the microsystem that each child's reading was developed. Also, the parent's relationship with the child's teacher (mesosystem), the parent's work

(exosystem) as well as the media, religious and cultural beliefs (reading Quran and Bible, as well as teachings on good manners, bravery, responsibility and being a Good Samaritan) all had an impact on each child's reading development.

Thus, it can be concluded that parents in the Indian community where this study was located, were actively involved in developing their Grade R child's reading.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

8.1. Introduction

In this final chapter, a conclusion to the dissertation is provided by reflecting on the preceding analysis and providing a representation of the key aspects for greater deliberation. This will be done by drawing on the main arguments concerning parental involvement in the development of reading in their Grade R child within an Indian community.

This chapter begins by presenting a synthesis of the study, focusing on the purpose, rationale, development of the conceptual and theoretical frameworks guiding the study, and highlighting the findings. Then the key issues that have emerged from the data are illuminated by using the conceptual and theoretical framework. Also, the researcher reflects on the research process and concludes by identifying the study's key contributions to the field and offering some recommendations for future research.

As this study has reiterated, after a decade of enforcing several reading intervention programmes at schools across South Africa, we are still experiencing a literacy crisis. This challenge has resulted in poor reading results in Grade 4 and 5 (PIRLS, 2006; 2011), poor Annual Assessment Results (DoE, 2013) as well as poor Matric results. As microcosms of the larger context, South African children have been exposed to the world as 'dunces of Africa', as they have been performing dismally in literacy tests as compared to other countries regionally and internationally (SACMEQ, 2002; 2007). However, a number of factors which

have influenced our poor literacy levels were identified during the PIRLS (2011) study, namely: economic factors; social inequality; language barriers; and class sizes. Many learners come from impoverished backgrounds and disadvantaged homes thus resulting in a lack of reading material, resources and parental involvement in their literacy development. In addition, our current Minister of Basic Education has revealed that only 14% of South Africans read books while only 5% of parents read to their children (Peterson, 2016). Hence, the latest governmental intervention called ‘Read to Lead’ was launched in 2015, as part of a countrywide initiative to instill a reading culture in pupils and to improve children’s ability to read, with the hope of achieving the expected literacy levels of performance, or at least improving the current levels..

This research was important especially because parental involvement in a child’s reading development is essential (Farver et. al., 2013; Allen & Daly, 2002; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). The study was premised on the notion that most of the reading challenges that children encounter emanate from the lack of parental involvement in the development of their children’s reading from early childhood. Focusing on four families in the Indian community, the study was guided by two critical questions:

- What is the nature of parental involvement in the development of children’s reading?
- How do we account for the levels and nature of parents’ engagement in children’s reading development?

8.2. Overview of the Research Process

As a teacher of reading I am confronted yearly with learners experiencing difficulties with reading. Many of them struggle with a limited vocabulary, problems pronouncing longer multi-syllable words, and difficulty identifying and comprehending the deeper meaning of texts. Hence, I often ask myself how involved parents are in the development and promotion of reading among their children, and if reading is being encouraged at home or whether parents expect reading to be developed at school only by their teachers. The second reason for my interest in this study has been fostered by the national state of reading in schools, with my concerns relating to the learners' reading background and deficiency of scholarship around parental involvement in reading in the South African context more especially in the Indian community. Lastly, my interest was further captivated by the fact that I am a new mother myself and have a keen personal interest in understanding the reading development of my own children and my role in this process. Hence, I wanted to understand and explore how other parents within the Indian community deal with the development of reading among their young children. These factors all contributed to my decision to investigate parental involvement in the development of reading within an Indian community.

This study was premised on the notion that observations of parent-child reading development and interactions would be significant in understanding if and how reading is developed in Indian homes. Thus, informed by the literature reviewed for this study, I came to the realisation that theorists and policies highlight components that should be taught during reading development. However, these components might not actually be the focus of parents. Also, the methods encouraged to develop these components stated in policies are very limited. For example, a review of the policy governing English Home Language at schools -

CAPS (DoE, 2011), suggests that there are five main components to the teaching of reading: Phonemic awareness, word recognition, comprehension, vocabulary and fluency. This can be done through: Shared reading, independent reading, phonics (including Phonemic Awareness), and group reading and for Grade R these should be based on the principles of integration and play-based learning. Second, the literature review highlighted the importance of parental involvement in reading development and acknowledged factors which could influence parents' involvement in their child's reading development positively or negatively. The literature review made it clear that a lack of parental involvement in their child's early reading development and the absence of a reading culture at home impacts negatively on a child's reading performance at school and later in life.

Therefore, emerging from the literature review, the researcher could identify theoretical frameworks for understanding parental involvement in developing their Grade R child's reading in the Indian community. These frameworks included the model of reading and factors influencing reading. In terms of the model, reading was centred on reading development and learning to read (DoE, 2011). The components used to learn to read consisted of decoding, comprehension, vocabulary, phonemic awareness and fluency while reading development comprised of phonics, reading aloud, shared reading, picture book reading and digital media. In regard to factors influencing reading, this included, play, parental involvement, Emergent Literacy (Sénéchal et al., 2001; von Tetzchner et al., 2005; Rhode, 2015), Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (1979) and mediated learning (Feurstein, 1980; Feuerstein et al., 2010). Informed by these frameworks, I developed three broad propositions which I used to frame the study and data analysis. These broad propositions consisted of play, mediation and cultural practices.

As a researcher the methodology used had to be one that would allow the researcher to look into the multiplicities of South African families within an Indian community. In particular, the study had to take into account the formation of Indians in South Africa, the three major Indian cultures or religions in South Africa, the reading experiences of parents and their understanding of reading and how this informs their child's reading development, the methods used to develop reading in their homes and the impact their religion had on the culture of reading at home.

To understand the participants' culture of reading, an ethnographic research approach was adopted. An ethnographic approach was used because it provided the researcher with the opportunity to gain insight and an understanding of the way in which these parents in the Indian community were developing reading at home with their children. This created a rich and thick description of the case. Despite the fact that the researcher had her own preconceived ideas of parental involvement in reading development in the Indian community and was conscious of her own experiences as an Indian, an educator and a mother, the fact that she built a good friendly relationship with her participants over time allowed her to distance herself from her own perceptions and to understand and value the views, perspectives, opinions, prejudices and beliefs of the participants she was studying (Delamont, 2002). Hence, this process enabled the researcher to draw together the complexities of the participants' practices for the development of reading within their homes and to harness an understanding of the ways in which reading is developed in the children through the involvement of parents within the Indian community.

Using a crystallisation of sources and methods, various reading episodes were observed at each home, semi-structured interviews with parents were conducted, parents completed questionnaires for background information and a personal/reflective journal was kept. Ethnography as a research method allowed the researcher to become deeply involved in and to share the experiences of reading development in each household (Smith, 1998; Henning, 2004). It allowed the researcher to reflect on the reading culture in each home and also to discover and understand the different ways of developing a child's reading and the role of the parents in each process. From these perspectives, the researcher was able to construct what can be considered to be meaningful insights towards our understanding of parental involvement in the development of reading in an Indian community.

8.3. Findings in Relation to Research Questions

The purpose of this section is to summarise and highlight the nature of involvement of parents in their child's reading development, and to identify how, when and why reading was developed in their home and if their religion had any impact on their reading culture at home. This allows for tentative conclusions to be drawn on what these findings mean and how they contribute to a better understanding of parental involvement in reading development of the Grade R child in the Indian community. This section begins with a discussion on the findings as guided by the main research questions of the study. Then the researcher presents her views on how the study will contribute to the pool of knowledge in the field of parental involvement in reading development of young children. To conclude the section, the implications of the findings are addressed by advocating a place-sensitive approach to understanding and addressing parental involvement in reading to young children in the Indian community and elsewhere.

8.3.1. What is the nature of parental involvement in the development of children's reading?

In trying to answer this core question, the findings in this thesis pertain to parents' exposure to reading when they were young, to materials and methods used in developing their child's reading, and to the impact that their culture and religion has on their child's reading development. In this regard, the findings suggest that the mothers in the study were exposed to books from a young age, they were encouraged to read by their parents who believed reading was the key to success. In addition, they enjoyed reading and it became their hobby. In contrast, some of the fathers in the study were exposed to books at an early age but did not take an interest in reading until much later in their schooling years. One father admitted to not having the support of his parents in developing or encouraging his reading as reading was not common in their community and his parents did not know the importance of reading. However, as a young boy his interest in cars lead him to reading materials such as newspapers and magazines, where he began decoding pictures while he looked for cars and only finally received reading support when he was in Grade 2 from his teacher. The literature has revealed that parents who are highly literate scaffold their children's literacy development before they begin school, while children who do not receive this support are instantaneously disadvantaged and experience greater difficulty in coping in terms of their success in reading development (Rose 2004). Also theorists (Sonnenenschein, Broody & Munsterman, 1996; Thompson, Mixon & Serpell, 1996), believe that, although public schooling is considered to be fair for all children, some sociocultural groups have performed better in the system than others with parents' support and higher levels of education.

The overall method of reading conducted in all four households was reading aloud. It was done using the simplest and most basic way, where the parent read and the child followed. However, there was interaction between the child and parent as questions were asked. The children usually commented by sharing their viewpoint either on the story or by answering questions that the parent raised. The parent acknowledged the input and point of view given by the child, through positive reinforcement, thus the parent informally tested the child's understanding of the text. Literature on reading development encourages reading aloud at this tender age. Hall and Moat (1999) believe that reading aloud has several benefits such as the parent conditioning the child's brain to link reading with pleasure, to creating background information and knowledge, to build a child's vocabulary, to familiarize the child with language patterns and the structure of stories as well as to be a reading model to the child. In addition, theorists (Vacca et al., 2006; Hall & Moats, 1999; McKeown & Beck, 2006) have found that the best way to develop a child's love for books is through reading aloud. This was exactly what these parents did. Also, reading and play seemed to be very popular during the reading development process. All parents tried to build their child's reading development through encouraging the imaginative play that children initiated. This mode of reading development has been encouraged by several theorists as they believe play assists children significantly in their learning development (Montessori, 1952; Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978; and Cambourne, 1995). Play incorporates story-telling, imaginative thoughts, pretence play, imitation as well as recollection of events. Through play, children understand reading as a fun activity.

Although the parents in this study shared similar views in that they all wanted to develop and encourage reading so that their children would be lifelong readers and would also acquire the

love for reading like they did, the materials that were used in each household differed. There were books that were used in all four households but in the Majid household digital technology was predominantly used to develop reading. Interestingly, with the computer reading application, stories were read to the mother and child and the mother found this to be a convenient and easy form of developing her child's reading. In addition, parents either read books that enhanced their religious beliefs and culture and/or read books in the language of their religion. These parents believed it was important to instil in their child the knowledge of his or her religion, its traditions, beliefs and culture from a young age and make them aware of their scriptures. Also, the children showed interest in their religion, thus parents read books to fulfil these interests. The literature in this study acknowledges a number of research studies conducted by various theorists (Landry & Smith, 2006; Sènèchal, Ouelette & Rodney, 2006; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998; Crain-Thoreson & Dale, 1992; Purcell-Gates, 1996), which highlight the importance of print awareness and a print rich environment at home which has a significant impact on a child's early language and literacy development.

Also, parents and caregivers were the mediators of each child's reading development in that there was an interaction between the parent and child, which encouraged the use of higher mental processes (Feuerstein, 1979). Mediated learning is believed to occur when the environment is understood for the child by the other person who understands the child's needs, interests and capacities, and who takes an active role in making components of that environment, as well as of the past and future experiences, well-suited to the child (Klein, 2000). This was clearly evident in the findings in all four households. Parents played an active role in ensuring their children were exposed to reading material, and actively responded to their child's interest through the use of reading materials and play. An example

of this was Abdulla's interest in dinosaurs resulting in his mom downloading a story based around dinosaurs which they read. Hence mediated learning may not be known to parents as a theory but they were actively engaged in mediating processes in their children's reading development.

8.3.2. How do we account for the levels and nature of parents' engagement in children's reading development?

The findings for the second core question pertain to the spatial and temporal dimensions of reading development and the involvement of parents in the reading process. Observations conducted in each household indicated that there was some kind of routine in each home when reading was being developed. Shafeek and Elizabeth both had a structured reading slot in that every morning Shafeek read the 'day saying card' with his mom and dad before they left home for work and school and Elizabeth was read a story just before she fell asleep while she lay in bed. Ashwariya was responsible for delivering the local paper from their post-box to her grandfather, and she sometimes peeked at pictures or adverts that seemed interesting, asking him to read what caught her eye. Abdulla usually read either in their lounge or dining room.

Through the findings it was discovered that reading development was not always carried out as a daily activity due to a number of factors that influenced the parents' lifestyles and responsibilities. According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory (1979), within the exosystem, the psychological development of a child is affected not only by what happens in the other environments in which the child spends their time but also by what occurs in the other settings in which their parents live their lives, for example work. The findings

highlighted that these systems can have either a positive or a negative influence on the child's reading development. For example, Elizabeth was negatively affected when her parents had work deadlines and meetings as they were unable to read to her.

The findings revealed that parents of this Indian community were actively involved in their child's reading development as they were aware of the benefits of developing their child's reading. As a result, parents created their own reading culture in their home. Although reading may not have been a daily activity in every household, it was a regular and pleasurable activity. Furthermore, parents used cues from their child such as showing interest, to develop their child's reading process. According to theorists (Landry & Smith, 2006; Hall & Moat, 1999; Vacca et al., 2006) children model parents' reading habits and become more interested in reading if they notice their parents reading and if their environment is rich with reading materials and resources. Also, it is believed that teaching a child to read is both the responsibility of the parent and the teacher and what parents do at home to encourage and support their child's reading development is very important as it prepares their child for reading instruction at school (Hall & Moats, 1999). This was extremely evident in all four households in that parents tried to encourage and support their child's reading development at home.

In accounting for parents' involvement in their children's reading development, it is also important to recognise the values and practices regarding reading that the parents inherited from their own parents. Interviews with parents indicated that education and reading were priorities in their upbringing, indicating the emphasis on education within the wider Indian community. Parents wanted to convey to their children the culture of reading that they grew

up with, with contextual modifications such as new technologies and bringing the ‘library home’ rather than visiting the library, like many of them did, on a weekly basis. They also, tried to create a reading culture at home by showing their children that they also read and love to read. The reading materials comprised of magazines, newspapers, novels and religious books. The materials they read did not matter but to set an example for their children was important. Many of these parents actually followed the steps and teachings of their parents in trying to build a reading culture in their home but only in a more modern manner (that is buying books for their children, developing their children’s bookshelves, and using technology to develop reading).

8.3.3. Summary of Findings

This ethnographic case study found that reading is mediated through various ways such as reading aloud, picture analysis, drawing, story-telling, and importantly through play. I found that dramatic play was prevalent amongst the pre-schoolers in this study. Smilansky (1990) recognises that this kind of play often has high cognitive and socio-affective demands on children in that children gain not only from the ability to imitate but also to form make-believe play, which offers unlimited access to the exciting world of adults. Furthermore, dramatic play provided the children with the opportunity to make sense of what they read and related it to other contexts in a child-centred way. In addition, they recognised reading as a fun-filled task because they were allowed to explore and learn new things. Reading was mediated mainly within the child’s microsystem and exosystem. The parents and grandparents played a significant role in developing their child’s reading; however, the child’s religion was also vital in reading development. For example, reading the Quran and Bible and attending Sunday school and Madressa.

Parents within the South African Indian community in this study, showed much interest in developing their children's reading. Also, every parent in this study played a significant role in mediating his or her child's reading development at home. Parents ensured that their homes were a rich reading environment, and they continually expanded this rich reading environment by purchasing different kind of books for their children, as well reading materials that were of interest to them such as newspapers and magazines. In addition, each home had established their own culture of reading. Hence, it can be concluded that parents within this Indian community (although the sample is small), had taken the notion of reading development from their childhood and were instilling it in their children, in that reading development was important as well as reading being fun and pleasurable.

8.4. Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the role of Indian parents in the development of their Grade R child's reading. In addition, the study aimed at investigating the culture of reading within the Indian community and whether religious practices had an impact on their child's early reading development. As indicated above, the study contributes original insights into the culture of reading in South African Indian families, into the key mediating roles of caregivers in children's reading development within the family reading network, and into the generative role of play as a way in which children make meaning of reading.

8.5. Limitations of the Study

This study was based on the perspectives of Indian parents and their children in one community, from a town in KwaZulu-Natal. As such it was limited as it was a small sample.

Also, in the initial phase of the study, parents were reluctant to share and divulge information because they feared being ‘labelled’. However, over time as our friendships developed parents began to understand the anonymity of this study.

Another challenge emanated due to the different cultural and religious backgrounds of the families which sometimes interfered with participants’ responses and behaviours during home visits.

8.6. Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have several implications for educational policy, practice and further research. First, there is a need for educational policies that resonate with schooling curricula and parents given the challenges that many parents are unaware of how reading is developed in the classroom and how they can incorporate the policy of the classroom into their child’s reading development at home. For example, parents in this study did not want to confuse their children while developing reading hence, they focused mainly on reading aloud.

With the growing worldwide focus on reading as a powerful tool for educational development and overall success, government initiatives must specifically focus on parental involvement in reading development. These Ministry of Education could work collaboratively with parents to address the role of parents in the promotion of the children’s reading development.

The findings in this study suggest that parents in the Indian community are aware of the importance of their role in reading development. However, it needs to be passed down to all communities in South Africa.

8.7. Reflections on my own Learning

This three year journey has been the greatest learning experience for me as a mother, teacher and research. Although I began this journey with the aim of contributing to scholarship, not once during the initial start of the journey did I realise the impact this study would have on me as a person.

Ethnographic Research

I have always been aware of the importance of building a relationship with people, taking for granted people would trust me. However, this study has taught me the importance of not only building a relationship but also building trust in people. This journey was certainly not an easy one. Initially, I thought it would be easier for me to conduct this study in the town I lived in. But as a ‘new’ citizen of this town, people did not know me and did not understand the purpose of the study or maybe they just did not trust me, with several families turning down the offer to participate in this study. This resulted in me going to a town close to my home town, one that I was familiar with. Through a friend I managed to recruit some families to participate in the study.

This initially seemed pretty easy. However, although these families were willing to participate in the study, building a relationship was hard work. After many chats over social

media I began to meet the families, initially just to get to know each other. But this study needed more than just knowing each other, it needed trust in order to get truth. Hence I began to spend more and more time with the families always trying to convince them that the study had nothing to do with them as individuals, and that instead I was trying to understand ‘parental involvement in early reading development’. This was still not enough, after much thought I realised that I needed something more I needed to develop a ‘heart’. These were not just ‘participants’, they were families and I needed to place that at the forefront of my study. After I became more sympathetic and understanding towards these different families and started recognising them as individuals rather than just research participants I began to see some light. After many more visits, and much deliberation on the side of the families, relationships became friendships, and participants finally became warmer, trusting me a little more each day.

Positionality: Teacher –Researcher

During this study I struggled with the fact that I could not separate my role as a teacher from that of a researcher. I often found myself in a situation where I began to analyse a situation as a teacher rather than a researcher. For example, there were days when I struggled to argue a point because as a teacher I state points rather than argue points. Also, I often wanted to give a solution to problems that I may have noticed, which resulted in me having to remind myself of my positionality, that in this study I was not a teacher but rather a researcher.

Play = Learning

As a new mother I am constantly reading about the different stages of a child's development which often refer to play and its importance. Hence I have been aware of the importance of play. But it never occurred to me how much children actually learn through play, more especially in reading development. I was always under the impression that play is good for a child's developmental and social skills, but was not really cognitive, until I began to engage with these children.

Through this study I was amazed to see the impact that play had on a child's reading development and overall cognitive skills. Dramatic play was such an easy and natural form of play among these children, yet its outcome was immense. This experience and journey have given me greater insight into play and the repercussions of play and how I as a parent can encourage and initiate my children's play into a meaningful event.

8.8. Recommendations for Further Research

This study provided only a glimpse into the lives of these Indian families and it illuminated how the Indian culture impacted on their child's reading development. These findings highlight a need for a more comprehensive study which would provide a fuller picture of the lives of Indian families and their regard for reading development. It would be important to engage in a deep exploration of the link between parental involvement in reading development and the development of reading at school to find out whether education could be planned in such a way that it does not disadvantage any South African child.

Also, this study focussed on Indian parents. It would be interesting to involve a wider ethnic, cultural and class spectrum of families in such a study. It would also be insightful to conduct a study around gender and reading in homes to investigate whether the trends found in this study are more or less general.

8.9. A New Beginning

A critical stance needs to be taken to endeavour to begin a project promoting parental involvement in reading development in early childhood across all communities in South Africa as this could be a vehicle for transformation and success in our children's reading levels. As a society, it is important that we apply every effort towards developing a child's reading culture in such a way that they will have a fair share of resources and will not be just dependent on their early schooling for their reading development. Let us not miss out on opportunities of building memorable and rich reading experiences that children will take to school to build on their reading success and overall cognition. I end with this note:

“Children are made readers on the lap of their parents” (Emilie Buchwald) and

“To learn what mediation is, we must go to the mothers who have been mediating to their children since the coming of human existence – to observe them and understand their actions” (Reuven Feuerstein, Refael S. Feuerstein and Louis H. Falk, 2010, p.38).

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Interview Schedule

Interview Questions:

1. Tell me about how you learnt to read and your reading experiences as a young child (about five or six years old).
2. What is your understanding of reading?
3. What are your feelings and thoughts about parents developing their child's reading at home from a young age?
4. When you were growing up did you have support from your parents and/or other relatives when it came to learning how to read? If so, in what ways?
5. What do you remember about reading in your family when you were growing up?
6. What do you believe are the fundamentals/basics when developing your child's reading at home?
7. Do you believe reading should be a task that takes place within a specific time or should reading be a fun-activity that takes place at any given time? Explain in detail.
8. Explain how you believe reading should be developed at home.
9. What skills do you focus on when developing your child's reading?
10. What tools or materials do you use when developing your child's reading?
11. Who plays the greatest role in your child's reading to learn?
12. What are your reasons for developing reading at home?
13. Does your culture/religion have any impact on reading development at home? Please explain.
14. Does what your child learn at pre-school influence what you read to your child at home? Please explain.

Appendix 2: Observation

Observation Schedule

<u>Focus</u>	<u>Key questions</u>	<u>Observations</u>
Who guides the child's reading development?	Who/Which parent / caregiver sits with the child? What does the parent tell the child before sitting the child down to begin the process?	
What are the spatial and temporal dimensions of reading development	What time of the day does reading occur between parents/ caregivers and child? Where does reading occur? How does it occur? How long does it last? Describe the setting when reading occurs?	
Methods of reading development	How do the parents and caregivers develop their child's reading? What methods are used? What are the foci in the session?	
Reading tools/materials	What reading materials are used in the session? Is the child familiar with the text? What visual/written text is available in the home environment? (e.g. posters, newspapers, magazines, flyers, books, computers, TV etc.)	
Cultural Factors	Is reading culturally related ie: is the child reading a cultural book for example a holy book? Are there any links during the session to cultural aspects?	
Child's responses	How does the child react to the session? Is he/she familiar with the procedure or is it something new?	
Reading session	Describe in detail what is happening during this reading process? How are errors dealt with?	
Other observations	Things that you might not have anticipated but which are relevant.	

Appendix 3: Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Parent,

The aim of this questionnaire is to find out information about your reading beliefs and practices. This is part of my PhD study at the University of KwaZulu-Natal titled “A study of parental involvement in the development of reading among young children at Grade R level in a South African Indian community”.

Please answer all questions. There is no right or wrong answer to the questions asked because each individual will have their own beliefs, practices and understanding about reading. All answers will be confidential.

Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire.

Mitasha Nehal

PHD Student from UKZN

SECTION: A – Parent's background information

{Please tick (✓) in the correct box, where stated}

1. Age category (in years)

20 – 29	
30 – 39	
40 – 49	
50 and older	

2. How many children do you have? (Please tick)

1	
2	
3	
4	
5 and more	

3. How many years of parenting do you have? (Please tick)

1– 5 years	
6 – 10 years	
11 – 15 years	
16 – 20 years	
21 or more years	

4. What qualifications do you presently hold?

Qualification(s)	Institution	Year
Did you finish school?		
Matric		
Diploma		
University degree		
Post-graduate degree		
None		
Other (give details)		

5. What is your home language? (Please tick)

Language	
English	
Hindi	

Gujrati	
Telugu	
Other (Specify)	

6. What religion/culture do you follow? (Please tick)

Religion	
Christian	
Muslim	
Tamil	
Hindu	
Other (specify)	

SECTION: B – Your Personal Reading Habits

Below are 10 questions about your reading behavior. Please indicate **how often** you do the following by placing a tick (✓) in the suitable column.

PERSONAL READING HABITS	Every day	One or two times a week	Once a month	Hardly ever	Never
1. I read for pleasure					
2. I read to find background information for my job					
3. I read to find background information to help my children for their homework					
4. I read newspapers					
5. I read magazines					
6. I read stories to my own children					
7. I loan books from the library					
8. I enjoy reading					
9. I read books and other texts in English					
10. I read books and other texts in other languages					

SECTION C – Your feelings about developing your child’s reading at home

Please read each statement and tick the box which best expresses your feelings about each statement.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Strongly disagree	Disagree
Reading can be developed at home					
I have specific times for your child’s reading					
My child’s reading takes place anywhere and at any time in our home					
Reading can be taught using various types of multi-media					
The purpose of developing reading at home is so that my child is ahead of his/her class					
During reading sessions at home my child’s understanding of what he/she is reading is not very important					
If my child doesn’t know a word I tell him/her to ‘sound it out’					
If my child is unsure of a new word I tell him/her to repeat that word a number of times so that they recognize it on sight					
My child reads aloud					
I expose my child to different types of texts					
Cultural books are used when teaching reading					
My religion has an impact on what my child reads					
Reading and writing are linked. They should be used together					

Appendix 4: Consent to participate in study



RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION LETTER/ FOR INTERVIEW, YOUTH LEADERS AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OFFICER {MINISTRY OF GENDER, YOUTH AND RECREATION}

1. Study title and Researcher Details

- Department: Adult Education
- Project title: A study of parental involvement in the development of reading among young children at Grade R level in a South African Indian community.
- Principal investigators: Mitasha Nehal #204518515

2. Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in this educational study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with other members if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is **to investigate, analyse and understand the involvement of parents/caregivers in the development of reading of their Grade R child.**

4. Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen **because you are involved in your child's development.**

5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, I will give you this information sheet to keep and I will ask you to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawal from the study will not have any negative consequences for anyone choosing to do this.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

I will ask you to reply to a number of questions related to the study focus.

The meetings with you will last between half an hour (30 minutes) to one hour. I will tape record the discussions with your permission and will also jot down some notes and in addition I will conduct observations of reading development at your home when you are available.

The study will take place between February 2015 and October 2015

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes, I will not include your name or your address in this study. I will do this so that nobody can recognise you from the information that you will give.

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The final research report will be made available at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The results of this study may also be presented at a conference and published in a journal. I will not write your name or address in any report or book.

9. Who is organising and funding the research?

The University of KwaZulu-Natal.

10. Who has reviewed the study?

The University of KwaZulu Natal – Research Funding Committee and Ethics Committee.

11. Contact(s) for Further Information

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project please contact:

Dr Peter Rule at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Education Building, Pietermaritzburg,
Email: rulep@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you!

Name:

Date:

N.B. Please sign the attached form if you consent to taking part in this study.

I agree to participate in this study by Mrs
Mitasha Nehal a student of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (204518515) titled A study of
parental involvement in the development of reading among young children at Grade R level in a
South African Indian community.

PLEASE NOTE:

1. The information I give will be used as part of the data needed for Mrs Nehal Doctoral thesis;
2. The data will be kept with the highest degree of confidentiality and that the right to remain anonymous in the course of reporting the findings of the study will be observed;
3. My participation in the study is voluntary;
4. I have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime of my choice;
5. I am entitled to question anything that is not clear to me in the course of the interview, discussion or any other form of participation;
6. I will be given time to understand and where necessary consult other people about certain points expressed in this document;
7. I will be given chance to cross-check the resultant information before the final report on findings is written; and
8. I will be provided with feedback from this research, should I request such; and In the event of wanting more clarification concerning my participation in this study, I can refer to the supervisor of the research project, Dr. Peter Rule of the University of KwaZulu-Natal on Tel 033 260 6187.

Appendix 5: Ethical Clearance Certificate



29 January 2015

Mrs Mitasha Nehal 204518515
School of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0012/015D

Project title: A study of parental involvement in the development of reading among young children at Grade R level in a South African Indian Community.

Dear Mrs Nehal

Expedited Approval

In response to your application dated 08 January 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

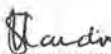
Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

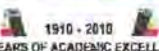

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Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
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cc Supervisor: Dr Peter Rule
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Morojele
cc School Administrator: Mr SN Mthembu, Ms T Khumalo and Ms B Bhengu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
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Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

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Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville