



**TEACHING ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION SKILLS TO
FOUNDATION PHASE LEARNERS FROM DIVERSE LANGUAGE BACKGROUNDS**

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2021



UNIVERSITY OF TM
KWAZULU-NATAL
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INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

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FOUNDATION PHASE LEARNERS FROM DIVERSE LANGUAGE BACKGROUNDS**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the academic requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Supervisor: Professor J. N. Mashiya

July 2021

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

The work contained in this thesis was completed by the author at the University of KwaZulu-Natal between January 2017 and January 2021. It is original work except where the due reference is made to other writing. The work will not, and has not been, submitted for any award to any other university for any diploma or any degree, except to the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

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Date: 14 July 2021

DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this thesis entitled:
*Teaching English Home Language Comprehension Skills to Foundation Phase Learners from
Diverse Language Backgrounds.*

Signature:

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Date: 14 July 2021

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my dearest husband, Magalela, Hlabangani Elimhlophe, Mantshinga, Khondlo, I couldn't thank you enough for your constant support and my three angels, Nhlanhla, Phumelela, and Anele, for their unselfish offering of this opportunity. Girls, now you know that all things can be done by Christ, who strengthens us!

This work is also dedicated to my parents, Sara Tholwaphi and Jafta Sikhosana, and both of whom are no longer with us, who have never gone to school to get this education, but who have been able to give me a gift for life, and that is education. Their determination and struggle for my life to ensure that I grow up and receive what I need from many. Could your soul rest in harmony, lovely Linda Mkhonto! Not forgetting my God-given parents, Sibongile Agrineth and Fana Hugh Nzimande, who have contributed to my life's love of education, and who are no longer with us.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I give glory to God for sustaining me on this path, I would not have done it on my own, Ebenezer!

Special thanks and sincere gratitude go to my supervisor, Professor J. N. Mashiya, who has been holding my hand since the beginning of this idea and kindly guiding me along the path of your patience and guidance. My humble appreciation to you.

The following is also my sincere appreciation; the head and teachers of the one school where this research was performed, the teachers who were main study participants; this study would not have been possible without their involvement. Teachers, I will be forever grateful to you for the tremendous contribution you have made to this report, may God meet you at your point of need.

Thank you, Dr L.J.K. Khathi for your greatest support, Dr Oluwatoyin Ajani for allowing me bothering you during your busy schedule, Professor Sitwala Imenda, for your assistance in editing my work.

To my friends and special niece, Thulile Shabalala whom we struggle with while studying, and Zanele Zama for listening all my worries and for moral support throughout this journey.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

HL	Home Language
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
ANA	Annual National Assessments
LD	Learning Disabilities
ESL	English Second Language
NEEDU	National Education Evaluation and Development Unit
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Quality
LiEP	Language in Education Policy
MT	Mother Tongue
LoLT	Learning of Learning and Teaching
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)
ELL	English Language Learner
LD	Learner Disabilities
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
TPR	Total Physical Response
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
QAR	Question-Answer Relationship
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
PA	Participants
EMC2	Establish, Maintain and Consolidate Recurring Strategy
CPTD	Continuing Professional Teacher Development

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English as a Home Language (HL) could be a complicated process in a country like South Africa, where there are eleven official languages operating in a multicultural society. This study examined the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to Foundation phase learners from diverse language backgrounds. Rumelhart's schema theory was used as the theoretical framework and lens to view teachers' strategies in teaching Grade One comprehension skills in English HL to learners from diverse language backgrounds in classes. The schema theory was supported by Vygotsky's theory of learning. The study locale was one urban primary school in the King Cetshwayo District, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa – conducted within the aegis of the qualitative research paradigm, undergirded by interpretivism. Four teachers from the selected school were purposively selected to participate in the study and several data collection instruments and approaches were used. The findings showed that the teaching of English HL comprehensions skills to learners from a diverse language backgrounds lacked the appropriate strategies and also that the challenges the teachers faced in teaching the subject at the school included (a) the lack of policy clarity, (b) the paucity of strategies in phonological awareness, (c) the lack of appropriate reflection images to which the learners could be exposed in order to improve their skills, (d) the lack of effective strategies to guide Foundation Phase learners respond to questions in class, and (e) the lack of parental involvement and support for learners at home. The study also developed and proposed a model based on Vygotsky's theory of learning, to enhance the teaching and learning of English Home Language comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds. The study ends with several recommendations arising from the findings of the study.

Key words: English Home Language, comprehension skills, Foundation Phase, diverse language backgrounds, Grade One learners.

INGQIKITHI

UKUFUNDISWA KWAMAKHONO OKUFUNDISA ISINGISI EMABANGENI APHANSI IKAKHULU EZINHLAKENI EZIXUBILE

Lolu cwaningo luhlose ukubuka ukufundiswa kolimi lwesiNgesi namakhono asetshenziswayo emzansi Afrika, njengoba kunezilimi ezahlukene ezikoleni. Zibuka esiNgisini ulimi lokuqala ezikoleni zekhethelo esiYingini saseKing Cetshwayo, esiFundazweni saKwaZulu-Natali, eNingizimu-Afrika. Izikole zekhethelo ezicwaningiwe zifundisa isiNgesi ulimi lokuqala kubafundi abaxube izinhlanga abaqhamuka ezindaweni ezahlukene ngaphakathi nangaphandle kwaseNingizimu-Afrika. Ucwangingo lugxile kothisha abafundisa isiNgesi ulimi lokuqala eBangeni eliphansi; lugxile eBangeni lokuqala. Lolu cwaningo lusebenzise injulalwazi uRumelhart yokutholakala kolimi lokuqala neziHlawumbiselo zayo; esokufunda nokuthola ulimi, nesomthamo wolimi, kanye nesiqaphelisi. Izindlela zocwaningo zikhethwe ngokuqhathaniswa nepharadayimu yomhumusho. Ucwangingo lusebenzise lezi zindlela zokuqoqa imininingo; inhlololwazi esakuhleleka, ukubukela izifunjwana, kanye nokuhlaziywa kwamadokhumenti. Abahlanganyeli abangothisha besiNgesi ulimi lwasekhaya abacwaningiwe bebe bane; bonke babehlukanisiwe kwinhlololwazi baphinde babukelwa befundisa.

Imiphumela yocwaningo iveze ukuthi othisha banawo umqondo namasu wokuthi isiNgesi ulimi lwasekhaya sifundiswa kanjani kodwa kuvelile ukuthi kusenokuxegayo ekufundiseni amakhono olimi. Okunye futhi okuvezwe ucwaningo ukuthi kunenkiyankiya exake othisha yokuthi abafundi besiNgesi ulimi lwasekhaya abaxubene eklasini ngalinye basemaqophelweni obungoti bolimi angalingani. Bese-ke okokugcina okuvelile kube ukuthi othisha abanalo ulwazi olwanele lokuthi kufundiswa kanjani isiNgesi ulimi lwasekhaya, bese lokho kwenza kwabo kwedlulele nakubafundi kubenze nabo bangabi nosiko oluphelele olusetshenziswa uma kufundwa bese bezakhela amsu ababewasebenzisa nabo besafunda. Lolu cwaningo-ke luphakamisa ukuthi uHulumeni noMNYango WezeMfundo bazinikele ukuqinisekisa ukuthi uhlelo mayelana nezilimi olubhalwe phansi kumthethosisekelo luyafezekiswa. Lokhu kungenzeka ngokuthatha igxathu eliya phambili lokuqinisekisa ukuthi izingane ezivela e-Afrika nezwe nezaseNingizimu-Afrika ziyathuthukiswa futhi zifundiswa amasu angazisiza, ikakhulukazi kwezemfundo, ngokulinganayo nezinye izifundo ikakhulu kumabanga aphansi.

Ucwaningo luphinde lwaphakamisa ukuthi izikole ezinezihlaka zomphakathi ezixubile nazo zinawo umsebenzi wokuqinisekisa ukuthi isiNgisi ulimi lwasekhaya njengezinye siyahlonishwa ezikoleni. Bese-ke kuthi abacwaningi bezilimi zama-Afrika nemfundo bangacini ngokushicilela phansi abakutholile, kodwa benze imizamo yokuthi imiphumela yezingcwaningo zabo ziyaziwa yizihlaka ezinjengoMnyango WezemFundo bese futhi beqhubeka nokulandelela ukuthi uMnyango wenzani ngemiphumela yezingcwaningo zabo. Luphinde lwaveza ukuthi uhlelo lokufundisa ukufunda olwasetshenziswa uVygotsky's lungasiza ekuphuculeni usiko namasu okufunda ezinhlangothini ezixubile.

Amaphuzu anqala: Ukufundiswa kwamakhono, isiNgisi ulimi lwasekhaya; emabangothini aphansi, ezinhlangothini ezixubile, iBanga Lokuqala.

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CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This chapter explains the orientation and overview of the study.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

National and international literacy surveys suggest that the literacy rate of primary school learners in South Africa is appallingly low (Govender & Hugo, 2020; Rule & Land, 2017). In concurrence, the Annual National Assessment (ANA) of 2014 also reported very low performance by South African learners in literacy skills (DBE, 2014). Indeed, there is a general understanding among teachers, parents, employers, and professionals in South African society that there is a crisis about the continuing inability of learners, especially in the Foundation Phase, to read and understand what they read. In South Africa, this unfavourable performance of learners in text comprehension is compounded by the fact that more and more teachers are faced with learners who come from increasingly diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Diallo & Maizonniaux, 2016). Research also suggests that, amid this diversity of cultures and languages, inclusive education for the benefit of learners of different backgrounds is promoted and recommended.

Today, learners in South Africa, as in other countries such as the United States, are culturally, linguistically, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse from one another as well as from their teachers (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997). In view of this situation, it is crucial that we understand what messages our current comprehension instruction methods convey to learners from a variety of backgrounds and how these methods work in classrooms to promote literacy learning for all learners. The challenges faced by teachers in teaching comprehension to a diverse class, is the use of English Home Language (HL) which is unfamiliar among many learners. In a study conducted in Zimbabwe, for example, Ngwaru (2017) pointed out that using an unfamiliar language as a means of instruction is a major obstacle to learning. For instance, there are some comprehension passages that use images that learners cannot relate to. The attainment of comprehension skills is a prevalent goal in primary school education for all learners and provides the basis for a significant amount of learning in secondary school education (Alvermann & Earle, 2003; Kirsch et al., 2002).

Reading Panel (Almutairi, 2018) states that, over the last 20 years, an important objective of understanding research has been to identify effective reading strategies that increase children's understanding. Govender & Hugo (2020) and Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) endorse the importance of teachers paying more attention to the teaching of comprehension skills by arguing that classroom reading instruction should be a top priority and considered a vital factor in the prevention of reading problems.

Studies have shown that learners' understanding of text can be improved by specific teaching of comprehension techniques and skills that are widely used by experienced learners, in particular by the use of self-regulatory strategies to elicit questions about text (Cantor, Osher, Berg, Steyer, & Rose, 2018 & Kani and Shahrill, 2015). In addition, Parker and Hurry argue that classical empirical study of reading instruction in American elementary schools by Durkin (1979) found that teachers spent almost all their teaching time asking learners questions. Very little time is dedicated to defining strategies that could be used to address questions to educate learners. In line with the above view, Govender and Hugo (2020); Javed, Eng, Mohamed and Ismail (2016) strongly argue that literacy skills are a prerequisite for success in contemporary society. Reading skills include the interpretation of a wide variety of text styles at a high level. Such skills can pose a specific challenge to a large number of learners with learning disabilities (LD) and learners with English as a Second Language (ESL). However, there is evidence that clear instruction of reading strategies increases children's reading comprehension.

Numerous responses and attempts have been made by the Department of Basic Education to respond to the crisis of inadequate grasp of the text by both teachers and learners in order to develop the skills of teaching and learning HL comprehension skills, (Zimmerman & Howie, 2016). For example, the Basic Education Department launched a Foundations for Learning programme in 2008 aimed at increasing the standard of literacy (and numeracy) for learners in grades one to six, detailing how literacy should be taught and determining how much time should be allocated to it. The goal of these literacy initiatives was primarily to improve literacy practices in classrooms and to improve the literacy of teachers so that the level of literacy of learners could improve. The results were largely inconclusive and failed to provide reliable information about literacy levels in the country, owing to vast discrepancies in assessment scores in the absence of large-scale literacy assessments for Foundation Phase (Grades 1–3) learners (Govender & Hugo, 2020).

The current study is therefore, intended to explore the teachers' experiences and challenges they encounter in teaching English HL Comprehension skills for Foundation Learners from a range of language backgrounds.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Today, learners in South African classrooms are culturally, linguistically, ethically and socio-economically different from one another and from a teaching point of view. In view of this situation, it is important to understand what messages our current comprehension instruction methods convey to learners who come from a variety of backgrounds and how these methods work in classrooms to facilitate literacy learning for all learners (The Hammerberg, 2004; Joubert, Bester, Meyer, Evans & Phatudi, 2019). Research surveys show that the reading and understanding skills of South African learners at both national and international levels are consistently low (Spaull, 2011; Cekiso, 2012; Pretorius, 2013; Mudzielwana, 2013; Zimmerman & Smit, Zimmer, & Makalela & Fakude, 2014; Naidoo, Reddy & Dorasamy, 2014; & 2015; Noor, 2016; Rule & Land, 2017; Dlamini, 2018; Govender & Hugo, 2020). In South Africa, this unfavourable performance of learners in the comprehension of text is compounded by the fact that more and more teachers are teaching learners from increasingly diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. However, countries around the world are facing similar difficulties in classrooms with different language backgrounds, which pose problems when it comes to teaching comprehension skills. For example, in the United States, Canada, Australia and most countries of the European Union, the scope of diversity poses extraordinary challenges for language teachers, because learners of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds need to interact with traditional curricula in a new language that is dominant in schools (Diallo & Maizonniaux, 2016 p. 3).

The growing number of learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds attending South African schools is an event that would seem impossible to overlook. Of course, a diverse classroom or school may be said to be culturally and linguistically diverse if students reflect a range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Addy, 2015, p. 205). He, Vetter, and Fairbanks (2014, p. 327) point out that classroom diversity is an inherent fact in many educational settings that need to be tackled in an effective and systemic manner in order to achieve

improved educational results, social justice and cross-cultural benefits.

On the other hand, despite the certainty that comprehension is a vital component of reading instruction, research has shown a lack of consensus concerning the appropriate teaching strategies in the classroom (Mohammed & Amponsah, 2018 and Rule & Land, 2017). Nevertheless, there is a view that with specific instruction on decoding strategies, educators will improve the capacity of struggling learners and help them to understand text (Parrish, 2020). However, the difficulty comes from the fact that these learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds must then engage in the learning of a popular modern language in schools on the basis of a traditional curriculum (Diallo & Maizonniaux, 2016).

The reasons for low literacy rates in South Africa have been reported with unclear explanations and, in particular, with regard to teaching methods and the difficulties that teachers face in teaching comprehension skills (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). The teaching of English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from a variety of languages has been an ongoing debate in both national and international contexts. South African schools, above all, are becoming highly linguistically and culturally diverse. Most of these mixed children have little to no English skills at all. From the teaching and learning point of view, the researcher believes that teachers need to re-engineer methods to accommodate modern languages in classrooms. Lesufi (2017), a member of the Gauteng Provincial Executive Council, posits that South African culture is a mosaic: cultures, beliefs, colour of the skin, race and style of contact vary and call for the need to teach diversity in both public and private schools. Therefore, teachers need to demonstrate a high level of knowledge of teaching strategies that represent and meet the needs of learners from a variety of cultural, racial, political, religious and socio-economic backgrounds and to demonstrate knowledge of teaching strategies (Moloney & Saltmarsh. 2016).

In the context of South Africa, the literacy programme lacks the capacity to encourage the skill of all Foundation Phase learners to be at the same level, locally and internationally (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). This is why so many higher-level South African learners cannot read and understand what they have been taught. In addition, if learners do not read, they cannot acquire the vocabulary needed for understanding what is presented in print in their subjects – thereby adversely affecting their academic performance. The Progress in

International Reading Literacy Research (PIRLS) (2011, 2016, and 2017) conducted a study on well-informed approaches to teaching comprehension skills in classes consisting of learners with a good command of English and those from other backgrounds and indicated poor performance of South African learners. Seemingly, South African learners are poor in reading relative to other nations. In their study, PIRLS ranked South Africa 49 out of 50 countries participating in the survey (Manala, 2018; PIRLS 2017; ANA Systemic Tests, 2014; NEEDU, 2012; and SACMEQ III, 2011).

Hence, the teaching of comprehension skills reveals that important elements are probably being taught as reading techniques, but English comprehension skills are not taught. In this regard, it is possible that teachers are not clearly guided by the correct approaches to teach comprehension skills to learners from different language backgrounds in the Foundation Phase (Zimmerman & Smit, 2014). This is a concern for Grade One learners from other language backgrounds who are taught in the same way as those with an experience of English or those whose English is their home language.

The teaching of English HL is considered to be of a high standard in nations that are more successful and superior in giving work opportunities to children (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). Learners may be enrolled in schools in South Africa where the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is English because parents want better quality education, as it is assumed that they can unlock more possibilities in their future lives. Alternatively, learners can find themselves in these schools due to 'unregulated circumstances' (Swanepoel & Beyers, 2019).

Many different researchers suggest that by using English as the fundamental mechanism of instruction and by learners failing English, South Africa's other official languages are ignored, and learners tend to neglect their primary languages. They often believe that the rich and world class are merely made open to English. The Language in Education Policy (LiEP) states that learners in Grades 1 to 3 be taught in their mother tongue (in MT) and then from Grade 4 upwards, in English (Education Department, 1997). Furthermore, the Curriculum Evaluation Policy Statement for Languages (CAPS) states that Grade One learners be taught only communicative English (Department of Education, 2011).

According to the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (2017), Russia is

among the top nations in the world where learners read most. Russians read books 'every day,' or 'at least once a week,' and take part in a 'regular reading' strategy to promote constructive reading methods that are conducive to a motivated reading community. In addition, though teachers track teaching and provide instruction and teaching support to learners, they do so often in traditional ways, checking for thorough drilling and practice.

Conversely, teachers are asked to go beyond a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching English HL Comprehension skills from a range of backgrounds to Grade One learner who are not familiar with the language. The prerequisite is for teachers to switch from the top-down to the bottom-up approach that suits the English HL. With Grade One, the use of English as a LoLT among learners has decreased significantly, whereas the use of the MT as a LoLT has increased Klapwijk, (2015). The LiEP encourages schools to promote the use of home language as a LoLT language, especially during early school years. Irvine-Niakaris and Kiely (2015) in their empirical research on pedagogical awareness of ESL language teachers affirm the high knowledge of language, text and evaluation materials of these teachers. Therefore, to be teachers of authentic literacy, they need to learn more about literacy and how to teach it. Furthermore, teachers also need to be good readers themselves, who are familiar with different categories of language. This view is strengthened in light of a related study on the organization of classroom content which reported that teachers in the Foundation Phase lacked knowledge of language teaching materials and also had very little knowledge of phonics in literacy (Jansen, 2009). It is therefore clear that teachers face countless difficulties based on the essence of their teacher training and experience (Malda, Nel & van der Vijier, 2014). This is more so, also considering that, in the past, when new curricula were introduced, Foundation Phase teachers had received little or no guidance on how to teach comprehension skills (Jansen, 2009; Klapwijk, 2016; Manyike & Lemmer, 2014; Ajani, 2020).

1.3 CHALLENGES OF TEACHING ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

1.3.1 South Africa

The complexities and difficulties associated with the teaching of English HL comprehension skills have been a topic of concern worldwide (Boakye & Linden, 2018). Most learners lack the skills, techniques and ability needed to effectively communicate in English, and their

reading comprehension levels are low. Strategies and techniques to improve learners' English comprehension and reading skills have been tried out in many classrooms around the world, with limited success. Studies in the South African primary schools on the teaching of English comprehension skills show some low exposure to text and weak reading abilities (Spencer & Wagner, 2018).

In some cases, learners are introduced to English comprehension skills too late at school, with little time being spent on reading instruction (Van Staden & Bosker, 2014). Most of the reports emphasize that most teachers in Grade Four spend less than two hours on comprehension skills (Klapwijk, 2016). Research has also revealed that the teaching of Grade Four comprehension skills at some South African schools was weak and that the quality of literacy teaching in the Foundation Phase was low (Zimmerman, 2016). This means that by the time learners reach Grade Four, they have accumulated a backlog of communication skills from the previous years of schooling. This leads to teaching at a slower pace and lower cognitive level from Grade Four onwards. Significantly, the research carried out by Zimmerman (2016) found that some teachers lacked the facilities necessary for teaching English comprehension skills, particularly literacy skills.

This situation makes most of the teachers to struggle to adapt adequately to the increased linguistic diversity found in their classrooms as they are, themselves, unfamiliar with the different language backgrounds. Reading is of great importance in education as a communication tool, generally, and for academic success in particular. Failure to develop primary level reading skills tends to strongly affect learners' academic success all the way to tertiary-level education. Boakye (2017) acknowledges that, in South Africa, comprehension skills in English HL are clear tertiary-level challenges, especially for learners who do not learn in their home languages and for those who have been disadvantaged by adverse socio-economic circumstances. In addition, the challenges of English comprehension skills hamper the success of these learners, as reflected in their academic performance, particularly in disciplines such as English. As part of their coursework, learners are required to do large volumes of reading, but most of them struggle with understanding what they read.

Boakye (2017) advocates the point that attention should be given to some affective factors to enhance learners' desire to read – such as getting them motivated to form personal connections

with the texts and other reading materials through techniques like the EMC. The cognitive outcome of the development of effective and appropriate reading techniques and strategies leads to well-organized comprehension skills (Boakye, 2017). In turn, it is envisaged that this will promote non-native English speakers and learners from low socio-economic backgrounds to attain the desired levels of competence in the target language through exposure to the relevant reading materials. However, where teachers experience challenges in their own levels of attainment of English comprehension skills and exhibit poor reading or failure to read texts properly, inevitably, their learners will also experience reading difficulties (Boakye, 2017). Pretorius and Klapwijk (2017: 6) also note that schools' current vocabulary teaching is one in which understanding of written work is largely poor and learning is mainly oral; that in the classroom, quality conversations that could lead to learners learning new vocabulary was low. In the words of Pretorius and Klapwijk (2017: 6), “the biggest challenge in South Africa is creating knowledgeable teachers.” In addition, the NCS is not always adequately clear about the development of learners’ vocabulary. This suggests that teachers do not focus enough on vocabulary teaching, and also lack effective vocabulary education methods as well as strategies for developing learners’ much-needed vocabulary and comprehension skills (Klapwijk, 2017).

1.3.2 Nigeria

English is an official language and *lingua franca* that plays an important role in the co-existing of the Nigerian nation (Araromi & Olakunle, 2018; Ogunmodimu, 2015). The language of instruction in Nigeria has always been a matter of concern to teachers and education planners. The country’s official policy stated that every learner would learn in the language of the direct environment of the school in the first three years, while the English language is taught as a school subject at a later stage (Ibrahim & Gwandu, 2016). However, in the interest of national unity among various ethnic groups in Nigeria, every child is required to learn one of the three national languages – the medium of instruction in primary school being the language of the environment for the first three years (Araromi & Olakunle, 2018; Ogunmodimu, 2015). During that period, English is taught as a subject. Therefore, in the fourth year, English is introduced as the medium of instruction, as if it were the learners’ HL. Ibrahim and Gwandu (2016) report that the policy makes it clear that from the fourth year of basic education, English must be the LoLT, while other foreign languages like French are taught as subjects. At the

secondary school level, English continues to be the LoLT, in the place of the language of the immediate environment, and French continues to be taught as a school subject (Olagbaju, 2014). The Nigerian education system is made up of:

- Early childhood (pre-primary).
- Basic education (9 years) – comprising Primary and Junior Secondary education.
- Senior Secondary education (3 years).
- Tertiary Education.

However, the key challenge contributing to the poor implementation of English HL teaching in Nigeria is the paucity of adequately trained and competent English language teachers, in general, and specialist-teachers, in particular (Ibrahim & Gwandu, 2016). In addition, there is a lack of adequate material and financial resources in most schools. Olagbaju (2014) enumerates the various challenges confronting the teaching English HL in Nigeria as including:

- Challenge of multi-lingualism.
- Learners' negative attitudes to learning.
- Shortage of curriculum materials.
- Ambiguities in the policy.
- Lack of parental involvement.
- Low teacher expertise in the subject.

1.4 FOCUS AND PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers teach English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learners from diverse language backgrounds.

1.5 RATIONALE AND MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

My experience as a teacher at Foundation Phase for 7 years and presently as Lecturer at one of the South African universities, teaching literacy to second- to fourth-year students prompted this study. My concern about teaching English HL comprehension skills emanated from teaching basic step learners at an ex-model C school, where I had to teach learners from diverse backgrounds in the English language. For me as a teacher, it was a challenge as I don't

speaking English as my home language. My journey has continued up to my present position as teacher instructor. Faced with the task of training pre-service teachers to teach English as First Additional Language, I feel concerned about the need to understand how well to teach English as HL to learners with diverse backgrounds of language. I have had the opportunity to observe my students during teaching practice sessions and some were, subsequently, fortunate enough to get their teaching positions in English language schools.

Various studies from South Africa indicate that the development of reading skills by learners is poor, and this starts from primary and continues on up to tertiary level education (Zimmer & Smith, 2014). Reports on the education system by various bodies highlight that many young learners have a reading issue and that there has been uncertainty for a long time about the teacher's strategies (PIRLS, 2017; NEEDU, 2015; ANA, 2014; SACMEQ III, HSRC, 2011). The biggest point of contention is about the appropriateness of lecturing versus teaching comprehension skills by using 'facilitative' teaching strategies (Klapwijk, 2015). Overall, it appears that the extant strategies to teaching comprehension skills are not successful (Hugo, et al., 2016).

The study conducted by Boakye and Linden (2018) on the teaching of comprehension strategies has revealed that comprehension is still an issue. The learners have not learned decoding skills yet, leading to difficulties in applying and integrating comprehension skills with pre-existing knowledge during reading (Boakye & Linden, 2018). Klapwijk (2015, 2016) indicates that research on the instructional strategies related to comprehension skills is lacking in the field. In this respect, Rimensberger (2014) states that Foundation Phase teacher trainees' reading attitudes and behaviours are against reading and their understanding of the value of reading. In concurrence, Nel (2011, p. 52) reports that teacher trainees "have insufficient knowledge and skills in comprehension assessment relevant fundamental concepts."

For certain nations, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, reading technique teaching has for many years been an educational priority. Several findings suggest that the teaching of comprehension strategies is successful in improving individual comprehension.

1.6 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Learners in the Foundation Phase tend to struggle with comprehension skills and appreciate what they have read. On the other hand, some teachers keep on applying oratorical reading. This method is not based on knowing the passage but on fluency and word pronunciation. The learners, therefore, don't understand what is being said. This approach is not a successful way for learners not trained in English to help them understand what they have learned in a language they do not understand (Gove & Cvelich, 2010).

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

For a variety of reasons, the study was important. First, for Foundation Phase learners from various language backgrounds, particularly in South African schools, it contributes to current knowledge of teaching English HL comprehension skills. Second, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) provides recommendations for action to various stakeholders. This research recognizes the difficulties faced by teachers in the teaching of comprehension skills in English HL to Grade One learner from diverse backgrounds. The findings could inform policy makers and officials at DBE on how to tackle problems facing the challenge of reading skills and expertise in teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse backgrounds in the language. It is felt that teachers need more information and professional development to acquire best practices in teaching English HL comprehension skills for understanding. Such best practices should also filter through to institutions of teacher education. In addition, this study offers great value to the Foundation Phase learners and teachers in shedding light on the limitations of current classroom practice and in developing knowledge and skills to improve the reading habits of English HL teachers teaching in the various language contexts.

1.8 THE GAP

Research in literacy has shown that there are very few studies on the teaching of English Home language comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners who come from diverse language backgrounds. Few studies have been carried out on reading and specifically on various types of approaches to improve the understanding of reading skills of learners. For instance, Chang and Ku (2015) and Mazon, Little and Velez (2012) have all researched literacy approaches

needed to improve learners' comprehension of reading. In their research Liu, Wu, and Ko (2014) discuss all forms of material read and a child's ability to understand and reported that there was no connection between the forms of a text read and the way a learner understood an important role play. On the other hand, there has been no empirical research on teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from different language backgrounds.

Meanwhile, there is a great outcry that many South African Foundation Phase teachers lack the ability to teach English HL comprehension skills to diverse learners (Cekiso, 2017; Madikiza, Tshotsho, Cekiso & Landa, 2018; Cofu, 2013; Fleisch, 2008; Zimmerman, Howie & Smit 2013; Makeleni & Sethusha, 2014). Therefore, the aim of my research is to explore how teachers teach English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds in the Foundation Phase. Kotze and Van der Westhuizen (2017) advocate comprehension skills as a strategic mechanism in which readers use the context of the text as a guide in accordance with their current information. Cekiso and Madikiza (2014) affirm this view and point out that the awareness of teachers and their application of reading strategies instruction is necessary to developing learners' reading skills.

In the United States of America, Mvududu and Burgess (2012) reported on constructivism in English language learning, using a qualitative approach. For an English Language Learner (ELL) teacher, a classroom of thirty learners from different linguistic backgrounds could be a tough challenge. This suggests that teachers need to develop awareness and encourage learners to exercise their awareness. Similarly, teachers are also faced with linguistic diversity in the classroom and have come to understand the importance of relying on some strategies – which include representing learners' language knowledge in the classroom as well as holding linguistic diversity as a learning resource for all generations (Calvo, 2017). This way, the teacher can produce meaningful results with regard to reading instruction. Cassata (2016) endorses the notion that learners who are weak in comprehension skills may eventually lack the necessary command and skills in the English Language to successfully pursue their higher education and other careers.

Klapwijk (2016) and Calvo (2017) have proposed some reading approaches and teacher development for teachers as well as for teaching English HL comprehension skills to

Foundation Phase learners from different backgrounds. The teaching approaches entailed the incorporation of English language comprehension skills into teachers' initial education as part of their thorough training for becoming professionals in the current global climate. In this regard, it has become clear that pre-service and in-service teachers need help with strategies that will engage their learners to cope with classroom diversity. However, Klapwijk (2016) believes that if teachers approach their job with a bit more resourcefulness, this could imply more successful practice in providing learners with information. I agree with Anyiendah (2017) who suggested that diverse background language learners do not have ample opportunity to practise English HL comprehension skills in the classroom. On his part, Cekiso (2017) opines that most teachers only pay attention to oral reading and are thus keen to observe punctuation marks and pronunciation without attending to understanding the reading. General agreement should be reached to enable new ways of teaching English language comprehension skills in a variety of classrooms which should be made compulsory to improve learners' readability. Hence, teaching fluency reading as a strategy could increase comprehension skills of Foundation Phase learners from diverse backgrounds.

A study conducted by Dhillon and Wanjiru (2013) on challenges and strategies associated with teachers and learners of English as a Second Language in Kenya's primary schools, revealed that the efforts made by teachers and learners to address the challenges of learning English in the context of unclear national language policies were notable. Similarly, the question of policies in the South African School Act (1997) has increased concern for LiEP, as a result of which South African learners were taught in English only when they got to Grade 4. The policy stated that in the Foundation Phase they had to be taught in their Home Languages. According to PIRLS, this policy explains poor results of learners in English comprehension at Grade 4 (PIRLS, 2017). Owing to the widespread use of the English language around the world, reading in English is important for many reasons – including the English language (a) being a universal language, (b) the language of science and technology, and (c) the language of modern inventions and discoveries (Alqarni, 2015).

In literature, teaching approaches are highlighted as one of the barriers that can affect the achievement of Foundation Phase learners in teaching English HL comprehension skills, particularly as most of them come from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, in order to accommodate them, it is important that Foundation Phase teachers explore strategies of

teaching English HL in a diverse context, with a view to making effective use of appropriate strategies in the setting of a culture and social curriculum for early reading education in South African classrooms. In the same spirit, cognisance should also be made of the significant need for the development of pre-service teachers who will inform their preparation and instructional approaches to suit teaching in diverse linguistic settings (Ngwaru, 2017). As an educator, it is important to recognize that learners have a clear understanding of what good reading is, as well as the benefits behind teaching reading.

1.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For the purpose of this study, the researcher adopted the schema theory as described and promulgated by Rumelhart (1980). The schema theory illustrates how readers use existing experience to understand and learn new information from the text. The theory also suggests that written text holds little meaning of its own but, before starting school, has a lot to do with learners' previous language skills, to encourage interactions with new ideas. This theory allows readers to derive meaning from their previous knowledge systems. Al-Jarrah (2018) clarifies this point by stating that linguistic schema is like letter information and sound correspondence. Readers do, however, indulge in reading to obtain knowledge (Almutairi, 2018). The above notions are generally linked to the interpretation of text, making schema theory a cognitive activity that processes signals, perceptions, and skills – as Liu (2015) explains, schema represents an academic operation which organizes the learner's knowledge. In basic terms, schema theory is a proposition within the cognitive framework and can be designed to apply to conceptual development.

The schema theory is important to the process of reading and easily helps in explaining how readers with correct schema will do significantly better than those whose schemata lack understanding of word and object relations. Thus, the schema theory provides the reader with textual direction on how to recover meaning from knowledge previously acquired (Pour-Mohammadi, 2016; Al-Jarrah, 2018). Furthermore, a comprehension ability requires applying what the reader has already learned to a new message (Alqarni, 2015; Pour-Mohammadi, 2016;).

The reading models consisting of the bottom-up and top-down approaches, and the schema's important role in understanding reading. Furthermore, the schema theory deals with the method

of reading, in which readers are required to integrate their previous experience with the text they read. Reading with the activation of the schema will allow the learner to disseminate new information in a concrete manner into the prior knowledge system (Lekota, 2014; Liu, 2015; Ahmadi & Gilakjani, 2011; An, 2011 & 2013). Thus, this study examines the teaching of English HL comprehension skills – which involves reading and understanding of the text, the perspective and the related skills to be applied while reading for comprehension.

1.10 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study involved one primary school in Empangeni, Umhlathuze Municipality, King Cetshwayo District, KwaZulu-Natal Province. Empangeni is a small urban centre on the KwaZulu-Natal North Coast. As a result, the findings of this study can only be done at the sole discretion of the reader, as the researcher does not plan to generalize them to any other schools or other educational environments. The researcher is particularly interested in finding out how and why teachers teach English in the home language in the sampled school. The school is a former Model C school in which English HL is used as LoLT. At home, most learners do not speak English. Grade One teachers are not home language speakers of the English language yet, teach English as HL. The school selected for this study is close to the town of Empangeni; the parents are generally economically well-to-do.

Most families stay and rent in the city, while some of the learners come from the surrounding areas. There are also some learners who come from foreign countries, some of whom are refugees and asylum-seekers from other African countries with different languages. They are all learn through English as the LoLT. Thus, as a result of the cosmopolitan nature of the research location, the school consists of learners from diverse cultures and linguistic backgrounds.

1.11 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study will be guided by the following main research question:

1.11.1 The Main Research Question

How do teachers in the Foundation Phase teach English Home Language comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds? The main research question is further broken

into the following sub-questions to adequately guide the study:

- What are the strategies used to enhance teaching of English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse background in the Foundation Phase?
- What is the understanding of teachers in teaching English Home Language comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds at the Foundation Phase?
- How do teachers' beliefs about their teaching strategies assist Foundation Phase learners from diverse home language backgrounds to learn English Home Language comprehension skills, including reading with understanding?
- What are the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds?

1.11.2 The Objectives of the Study were:

- To explore the strategies employed by Foundation Phase teachers to teach English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds.
- To assess how Foundation Phase teachers, ensure that all learners can read with understanding while teaching English Home Language comprehension skills.
- To establish how teachers' beliefs and applied teaching strategies assist Foundation Phase learners from diverse home language backgrounds to learn English Home Language comprehension skills, including reading with understanding.
- To find out the challenges Foundation Phase teachers encounter in the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds.

1.12 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.12.1 Research Paradigm

The research adopted the interpretive research paradigm to explore participants' experiences in teaching English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds. Research in the interpretive paradigm reflects the reality of the phenomenon which is individually raised (Creswell, 2014; Kuhn, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). It therefore follows that only those who are in the context can grasp the social environment of the system in which

they are embedded (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interpretive researcher retains the truth in social pedagogy that remains central in ontological and etiological analyses requiring an interpretation of human life – in the context of being with others, and being in the universe (Scotland, 2012; Law, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The interpretation of the learners' epistemology of learning within a specific cultural and socio-economic context should yield vivid analyses that emphasize the roots and interpretive nature of the social phenomenon (Scotland, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Within the same context, axiology will accept the philosophical method of making value decisions or correct decisions that are taking place for research purposes (Kuyini & Kivunja, 2017; Scotland, 2012).

1.12.2 Research Design

For this study, a qualitative case study design was found to be appropriate because it is more descriptive, comprehensive, explorative, and contextual in its nature and aims to provide a rich picture of a phenomenon being studied (Robert Yin & Creswell, 2014). Another view is that a qualitative case study allows teachers teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from a diverse language context to create a deeper meaning.

In line with the objectives of qualitative research designs, this study generates in-depth textual data that explored teachers' experiences, how they taught English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds. This entailed an interpretative, naturalistic approach to their subject matter (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). This is because qualitative researchers study events in their natural environments, seeking to make sense of or explain phenomena in terms of the interpretations that the people living in those environments bring to the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2014). Overall, qualitative research aims at gaining an understanding the lives of people from their point of view and recognizing the concepts that people carry and use, as well as how people construct what they construe as the truth. This research approach relates generally to qualitative analysis, carried out from the points of view of Foundation Phase teachers and learners, vis-à-vis their responsibilities and aspirations in teaching and learning English HL comprehension skills.

1.12.3 Research Method

To understand the typical experiences of teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from different language backgrounds, this study adopted a case study approach of one primary school located in Empangeni, King Cetshwayo District. A case study is an in-depth analysis of a particular case, while the case could be a person or group of people exhibiting some behaviours or characteristics of interest (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Bertram & Christiansen, 2020). The use of case study in research demonstrates and authentically deepens the researcher's understanding (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). In a case study, the researcher aims to assess and observe the participants regarding a particular situation (Cohen, et al., 2018; Maree, 2016), thus helping to facilitate a full understanding of the process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, it was envisaged that focusing on the challenges faced by Foundation Phase learners from different language backgrounds, would help English HL teachers gain deeper perspectives and capture the degree and importance of their communication skills.

1.12.4 The Sample of the Population

Grade One teachers were purposively selected for this study for possessing information which the researcher hoped would address the research questions of the study (Creswell, 2014). Teachers were chosen based on the criteria that are required to teach English as a LoLT to Grade 1 learners. The study emphasizes Grade One teachers' perspectives about teaching English HL, from recently graduated, those who have taught for five to ten years or more. The behavioural patterns of participants clarified their experiences and perceptions of the phenomena observed. The mother tongue for the majority of the teachers is, in fact, IsiZulu.

1.12.5 The Sampling Strategy Used in this Study

In qualitative research, the emphasis is placed on the distinct characteristics of the population and phenomenon under investigation (Cohen, et al., 2018). This research, therefore, adopted Purposive Sampling. In this type of sampling, participants are chosen based on being well-informed, having the experiences and knowledge on the phenomenon (Cohen, et al., 2018). The unique characteristics in this context included teachers who taught Grade One and who

were also not English speakers but, nonetheless, teach English as a Home Language to learners from diverse language background, sitting in the same classroom. In this form of sampling, experience and expertise is equally necessary for selecting participants who are willing to participate and share their experiences in the teaching of Grade One learners from diverse language backgrounds (Creswell, 2014).

1.12.6 Data Collection and Data Analysis Techniques

For data collection, the study employed a multi-method approach which included the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews, field observations and document analysis. Both deductive and inductive reasoning methods were used in the collection of data. The researcher started by analysing the raw data and searching for patterns that emerged (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Thus, in preparation for data analysis, carried out transcriptions of tape-recorded data after arranging it according to themes that emerged from data collection. The semi-structured interviews were conducted and allowed for open-ended responses which provided individual teachers an opportunity to narrate their perspectives and demonstrate their understanding of teaching English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learner from different language backgrounds. In Creswell's view (2014), semi-structured interviews are perfect for analysing questions and recognizing the views and clauses of the respondents' clarifications about issues being probed.

In addition, the observation method is used to back up the other data by observing the participants, mostly in a natural setting (Adler & Clark, 2008). In this case, observations of learners and their English teachers were conducted during school hours. In addition, the aim was to improve the researcher's awareness of the instructional methods used by the teachers and the reading habits of the learners, as well as the principles attached to their respective tasks of reading and teaching English HL comprehension in Grade One. For each teacher, the entire exercise took place over a period of four weeks and three days, except for the learners' evaluation days.

In this study, data review included closely tracking the pattern of teaching English HL language comprehension skills to Grade One learner from diverse language backgrounds and evaluating how realistic tools are used (Rule & Land, 2011). The documents often come from

"non-active" sources of data, as they can be read and checked several times and the analysis process remains unchanged.

1.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Bertram and Christiansen (2020) emphasize the point that ethics is the standard for judging proper and improper behaviour. In qualitative methods, three ethical concepts apply: liberty, non-maleficence, and beneficence. Autonomy means the researcher protects the privacy of all the study participants (Creswell, 2014). Participation in this research was voluntary and the participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw at any time; the names of the participants were kept confidential. Non-maleficence also means the work would not be harmful. Through this statement, participants are shielded from harm of any sort. Benefit is understood to be a necessity to get the most out of research and minimize damage. Thus, the researcher must protect the participants from harm during questions and probing (Creswell, 2014; Creswell, & Poth, 2018).

The researcher received permission from the University of KwaZulu-Natal to conduct this research in the form of ethical clearance number **HSS/0430/019D**, for the researcher to continue with the selected schools and use pseudonyms.

1.14 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Successful research is grounded in trustworthiness (Hayes, 2011). Therefore, the principles of credibility, conformability, transferability, reliability and authenticity must be adhered to. Transferability means the researcher presents the findings that can be applied to situations similar to the one being investigated (Polite and Beck, 2012), and it also indicates that a qualitative analysis has reached the norm if the results are relevant to the readers and can be related to the experience. In this study, the researcher explained and clarified the various aspects of the study to allow other researchers and potential research beneficiaries to understand the circumstances and characteristics of this research. Confirmability refers to the capacity of the researcher to reveal the reality of the data because it reflects the responses of the participants and not the bias of the researcher (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Cohen, et al., 2018).

Thus, it is important that the data produced conform strictly to the standards of precision, confirmability, and integrity as these are meant to help and ensure the dependability and accuracy of the results (Maree, Creswell, Ebersohn, Eloff, Ferreira, Ivankova, Jansen, Nieuwenhuis, Pietersen and Plato, 2020). In this study, dependability refers to the consistency “of the research findings and the degree to which research procedures are documented, allowing someone outside the research to follow, audit, and critique the research process” (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams & Blackman, 2016, p 2). Study results, explanations and suggestions are considered accurate if repeated (Koch, 2006, in Cope, 2014). Authenticity refers to the ability of a researcher and the appropriateness of the techniques he or she uses to convey the research approach, feelings and experiences of the participants in his or her study (Whitaker & Atkinson, 2019).

1.15 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Owing to the restricted scope of this research, schools which do not use English as the LoLT were excluded from this analysis as the emphasis was on using English as LoLT only. Furthermore, due to financial and time limitations, this study was restricted to only one primary school. Therefore, this research was carried out in a school that offered English HL to Grade One to learners from diverse home languages and local culture. The last limitation of this study is one which is linked to qualitative studies of this type, namely, subjectivity of respondents’ opinions, most of which represent impressions of people. In qualitative studies, the question of validity is often raised. Accordingly, the credibility of the collected data, and attendant results, is often questioned. However, this kind of thinking pertains to positivist thing because in qualitative research, validation of authenticity is done and achieved differently.

1.16 DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS

Teaching is an activity aimed at bringing meaningful learning through a method that is ethically and pedagogically acceptable. Kung (2017) sees teaching as a set of events that are designed to support the internal process of learning. It involves a teacher, a learner, content in the form of knowledge information and skills to be informed. For this study, teaching is a set of events, outside the learner’s mind that needs to be employed for supporting internal

development with the learning of English HL comprehension skills.

English Home Language is a primary language, first language, or native language. The language, or languages, that are spoken in the learner's home (Essien, 2018) – that is, the language to which learners are exposed in their homes and communities. It is the language that learners use as their primary means to communicate; it identifies them with their community. The spoken language usually from parents, that a person learned at home. The concept of home language applies to the contexts where more than one language is spoken.

Comprehension skill is the ability to process text, understand the meaning of what is said and asked, and to integrate with what the reader already knows (Sanford, 2015). An individual's ability to comprehend text is influenced by their skills and their ability to process information.

Foundation Phase refers to the first phase of schooling, starting from Grade R, (the reception year) and includes Grades 1, 2, and 3 (DBE, 2016:6). It emphasizes the primary basic skills, familiarity, and principles. For this study, Foundation Phase includes learners from age 5 (in schools that have Grade R) to age 9 (Joubert, et al., 2015). The purpose of the Foundation Phase is to provide learners with adequate philosophies to develop their full potential for knowledge.

Grade one learners – are learners, normally, between 6 and 7 years of age. Typically, learners in this stage are in Piaget's *concrete operational stage* of cognitive development. During this stage, learners develop the ability to use images and words to understand the physical world. According to Piaget, children during this period are less egocentric. Babakr, Mohamedamin & Kakamad (2019) aver that child at this stage of cognitive development display the ability to understand performance and can solve multiple problems in learning a new language.

Diverse backgrounds refer to a range of numerous people with various racial, ethnicity, geography, socioeconomic, experiences, and interests. For this study, the diversebackground integrates numerous instructions and perspectives of the learners.

Language is the communication which consists of a set of sounds and written symbols which are used by language communities in different disciplines and settings for a different purpose. In education, language is usually considered as a combination of words and symbols to perform certain curricular and non-curricular tasks apart from regular communication. In this

study, the English language was the LoLT, and it was used in the classroom throughout the school day.

Primary School refers to Grades 1 to 7 in the South African education system.

Model C. In South Africa's historical context, the Model C school system refers to former semi-private schools which were for White learners only in the apartheid era. The term "Model C" is still commonly used to describe these schools because they stand quite distinct from the rest of the schools as they have retained the resourcing privileges of the past. They were introduced in the 1980's and 1990's and received government grants but were governed under their own School Boards. Presently, we have some Black (African, Asian and Coloured) teachers who are employed to teach at these schools which, most of them, were not privileged to attend, as they were non-Whites.

1.17 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The chapters that constitute this thesis are as follows:

Chapter one starts with the general orientation to the study – encompassing an introduction, background to the study, problem statement and research questions, objectives of the study, theoretical framework, research methodology, and design, data analysis, the value of the study, ethical considerations, layout of the study, and the chapter summary.

Chapter two presents a detailed description and elucidation of the theoretical framework, as well as the related literature review.

Chapter three discusses the literature review related to the strategies required in teaching English Home Language comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners who come from diverse language backgrounds.

Chapter four focuses on the research design and methodology, schema theory as an approach, ethical considerations, the profile of the research site, the researcher's background, data generation, and data analysis.

Chapter five presents the results from the analysis, and interpretation of data.

Chapter six presents a discussion of the results of the study.

Chapter seven presents a summary of the study, conclusion and recommendations.

1.18 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented a detailed orientation to the study, encompassing the background and the theoretical basis of the study, the problem statement and purpose of the study. The aims of the study are formulated and presented for the study's rationale and its contribution to the body of knowledge. The researcher has also presented the research questions, which are aligned to the research objectives, and provided the operational definitions of terms for the study. The plan for the whole research study has also been outlined.

Overall, it can be said that this chapter has succeeded in achieving the two principal purposes of an opening chapter, namely (a) to assist the researcher to contextualise, refine and clarify her research focus, as reflected in the various sub-headings outlined above, and (b) to orientate and assist the reader to have a bird's eye view the study as a whole. The next chapter focuses on the theoretical framework that underpins this study, including the review of related literature.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explains the theoretical framework that underpins the study.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter presented an outline and context of the study, the study's problem statement, research questions and objectives, the theoretical framework, research design and methodology, data analysis, rationale of the study, ethical considerations, and study layout. The emphasis in this chapter is on the theoretical context and the literature review used in the research. The theoretical framework provides knowledge and insights which were previously employed but which could also apply to this study. This chapter considered the schema theory to be an appropriate research framework for this study.

Zhang (2018) contends that the schema theory has been explicitly and methodically discussed in literature as a window for bringing about an understanding of language acquisition. The **schema theory** opines that the reader "construct" an understanding of the text in the teaching of English HL comprehension for learners, including Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds. An overview of the literature and other applicable sources of knowledge are presented in this chapter. The knowledge obtained from the literature brings different perspectives and valuable insights to the research, including capturing the core aspect of this study's theoretical framework and the ideas used in the study. The next section deals with the theoretical context.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical context is the "blueprint" for the whole research investigation, through a lens (Imenda (2014). In this regard, a "theoretical structure" refers to the researcher's theory upon which this study is built and supported. The theoretical framework provides the structure for defining a philosophical, epistemological, methodological, and analytical approach to this study as a whole (Grant, & Osanloo, 2014). Further, Grant and Osanloo (2014) argue that one's theoretical framework provides the researcher with a perspective that lets him or her see the issue and interpret the data in a vivid way.

In addition, the theoretical framework directs the researcher to make contributions that control the study, ensuring that it does not deviate from the applicable envisaged path. However, selecting or identifying a theoretical framework involves a detailed understanding of the study' area. Brondizio, Leemans, and Solecki (2014) agree that a theoretical framework must contain characteristics which are both useful and applicable to the various key stages of the research process. Similarly, Imenda (2014) opines that a theoretical or conceptual framework gives life to one's research; that it is able to explain occurrences regarding a particular phenomenon or research question, or a collection of principles derived from the theory. It is with this in mind that Imenda (2014) construes a theoretical framework as the soul of every scientific investigation. For this study, the schema theory was chosen to be a good theoretical framework for this study.

A "framework" is a layered structure that indicates what types of plans can be built and how they will connect. This acts as the basis upon which an investigation is based. However, Nilsen & Ngabut (2015) point out that the frameworks do not include specific elements but define the observed phenomena through an adequate collection of categories. In general, a framework is a real or conceptual structure intended to serve as a support or guide for the creation of something that makes the structure useful. A framework is comprehensive – much like the plans which are used in construction.

Additionally, a theory helps the researcher to describe the nature and assessment of a problem in such a way that the theory can be evaluated and used as a guide for one's research. In this regard, the theory guides the researcher in the selection of a subjects, the creation of research questions, the insight into the literature review, the design approach, and the data analysis plan. To Kitchel and Ball (2014) theories are used to explain, forecast, and assist in addressing the researcher's specific query. For his part, Nilsen (2014) opines that a good theory offers a clear explanation of some important elements to a study and that the choice of the theory by the researcher must be stated and explicitly discussed early in the dissertation's writing.

The reason for this is that the theory chosen for the study offers a conceptual framework for evaluating, understanding, and developing ways to investigate the research problem. Thus, from the perspectives presented by Imenda (2014) and Grant and Osanloo (2014), the

researcher is of the opinion that a theoretical structure refers to the theory chosen to direct one's research project. It serves as the foundation and support of the study's reasoning, the importance of the problem statement, the research questions and data analysis and interpretation.

2.3 AN OVERVIEW OF SCHEMA

This study adopted the Schema Theory to the most appropriate theoretical framework for this study. The schema theory describes how learners deal with previous knowledge to understand and learn from a new manuscript. In psychology, Barlett originally used the word 'schema' as 'an intentional arrangement of past responses or experiences'. Subsequently, Rumelhart (1980) applied the word to education. Al-Jarrah, Ismail, and Segni (2018), defined schema as "a data structure to demonstrate the genetic concepts stored in memory." In this study, 'schema' refers to the fitting of mental structures which indicate the awareness of daily activities by the reader. Gilakjani, Zang and Li (2016) state that a schema not only affects how learners get to understand information, but also how the information is processed in their brain.

Patnaik and Davidson (2018) and Xiao, Jian-ping and Li-sha (2016) opine that the schema theory describes human memory as an ordered and standardized schema which offers insights into cognitive processes including memorizing, recalling, inferring, and interpreting abilities. The term schema was first used in the field of psychology to describe a modified or active behaviour arrangement of previous experiences (Zhang, 2018). In this regard, the Schema theory is a clarification of how readers use previous experience to grasp a new concept (Patnaik & Davidson, 2018; Pourmohammadi, 2016; Ngabut, 2015). The notion of schema is also regarded as the learner's context information that plays a specific role in materials for learning English HL skills. Therefore, this thesis lays an emphasis on applying the schema theory to find out how teachers teach English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds. As a concept, the schema theory is employed in various fields, including psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology, linguistics, and the field of education. In this study, the schema theory is specifically used with a view to unravelling the interplay of many factors affecting how comprehension abilities in English HL are treated.

Barlette's notion has helped the researcher to infer from several decades to date that knowing,

as a phenomenon, implies a positive process. Paul and Christopher (2017) believe that the schema theory helps the learner to associate ideas with the knowledge of the context. Many learners at every stage of the education system from Grade One to the tertiary level are reported to be struggling with English HL comprehension skills (Padang 2014; Al-Jahwari & Al-Humaidi, 2015; Alhaisoni, 2017). This implies that the cycle of comprehension skills builds a certain type of schemata and seeks out continuously to implied knowledge in the text of the minds of learners. On that point, Paul, and Christopher (2017) affirm that learners think about understanding and interpreting new things based on the existing schema. When the schema is in the mind of a learner, and is clear, the learner is able to follow the instruction and a full understanding can be achieved. In the view of Paul and Christopher (2017), the schema theory helps the learner to understand not only events and experiences but the language that represents the events and experiences, within the context of both the written and spoken language forms. Therefore, developing learners' schemata in language acquisition serves as a motivating point in teaching English HL learners to understand the text quickly without having problems. The conventional approach that focuses on combining vocabulary and grammar can lead to a loss of interest in learning English HL comprehension skills. Therefore, it is necessary to find a suitable teaching strategy for Foundation Phase learners. In this regard, the schema theory, known as learners' context knowledge, could play an important role in enabling learners to acquire English HL comprehension skills.

It is understood that strategies based on the schema theory could significantly boost the academic performance of learners in English HL schools, as well as successfully pass on useful strategies to them. The application of the schema theory could help learners to shape a detailed and full information system. According to Rumelhart (1932) the schema theory consists of many variables representing elements of concepts and is a kind of structure of information that can be considered as a system. Based on this definition, this study tries to explain the relationship between the schema theory and the process of understanding language acquisition skills by learners. Furthermore, there is a view that difficulties with comprehension abilities are not just about the failure to comprehend context but are linked to the knowledge of the text's vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, word structure and material (Pourmohammadi, 2016). Accordingly, as a result of its shaping influences on complex context awareness, the teaching of English HL comprehension skills during the Foundation Phase receives special emphasis in this study.

Some authors argue that because many of the material schemata appear in the skills of comprehension, teachers need to apply the schema theory by focusing their learners on reading instruction with a view to triggering context information (Al-Jahwari & Al-Humaidi, 2015; Gilakjani, Li & Zang, 2016; Alhaisoni, 2017). Nwabudike, Adedokun & Attah (2018) stress the view that learners' comprehension skills can be controlled at any time of reading. In this respect, teachers need focus on the development of learners' vocabulary and grammar is the basic units of language acquisition. Learners may fail to interpret the text if they do not have the requisite grammar and vocabulary to help them understand the text. In addition, one's comprehension skills could also limit one's ability to understand text, thereby suggesting that one's experience of punctuation and text structure can also influence one's ability to interpreted what one is reading. Thus, possession of quality of comprehension skills is the basic ability required for adequate understanding of text. In that sense, the quality of comprehension skills is the essential ability as it is a measure of one's level of comprehension skills in English HL. If the learner has adequate knowledge about nature and culture, the substance of the text will be easily understood. Jian-ping and Li-sha (2016) avow that reading is the key, *albeit* problematic, point in teaching English HL comprehension skills – considering that when asked to read, many learners struggle to demonstrate comprehension skills.

The schema theory has traditionally been called upon to resolve learners' difficulties with the acquisition of reading comprehension skills. The attainment of an appropriate schema enables learners to have a comprehension skills strategy to overcome these difficulties. Khanam, Zahid, and Mondol (2014) elaborate that the theory of schemata explains the mechanism in which readers combine their knowledge from their past experience with information to be comprehended in the text.

The comprehension skills problems may be increased if learners do not have any techniques for acquiring English comprehension skills. In reality, a reader uses his or her schema to understand the text. Consequently, English HL teachers should understand how their learners' schemata work because that will help the learners better understand the text. However, some authors aver that the structure requirements for particular fields of study are not sufficiently understood and evaluated by teachers in the classroom (Xiao, et al., 2016; Al Asmari & Javid, 2018). In particular, the various ways in which the schema theory may assist in developing the English

HL comprehension skills in learners from the experiences of diverse learners should be understood by teachers. One way to achieve this would be for teachers to have some knowledge and understanding of the learners' home languages. This could be teased out through interactive learning processes which allow learners to share their own understandings and experiences. In this respect, Paul and Christopher (2017) advance three reasons which may prevent learners from understanding text: (a) the learner's lack of sufficient or correct schema, (b) the text author's inability to offer learners a clue on how to trigger the schema while reading, and (c) a clear understanding of the text by the learners but, still, it deviates from the writer's intention.

Some studies based on the work of Goodman (1967, 1971, 1973) have led to the development of psycholinguistic models of reading (Carrell & Eisterhold, 2012; Enkin, 2014; Coady, 1979). Coady (1979) avers that diverse learners' background knowledge influences their conceptual abilities as well as processing strategies to improve meaning-making and reading comprehension. Therefore, according to Coady (1979), the conceptual abilities which learners need encompass their skill to cognitively recognise and apply the intellectual knowledge needed in reading comprehension. To achieve this, learners need to have higher levels of reasoning capabilities to make the necessary inferences, identify and recognise the story structure (Randi, Newman & Grigorenko, 2010). As explained earlier, these are some of the skills that South Africa's CAPS requires of learners in HL classrooms.

Coady describes processing strategies as various subcomponents of reading ability – encompassing learners' ability to develop and understand grapheme-morphophonemic symbols, syllable-morpheme information (both in deep and in surface), contextual meaning and lexical meaning (Carrell & Eisterhold, 2012). Emphasis is placed on the significant role learners' background knowledge plays in comprehension. In this regard, Coady (1979) avers that learner with Western backgrounds, for instance, would grasp English reading comprehension faster than those with non-Western language backgrounds. Thus, Coady (1979) posits that possession of background knowledge in English would influence learners' use of appropriate syntactic competences, thereby suggesting that learners' ability to read and comprehend reading materials in English is a function of learners' reading background in the subject / language.

Accordingly, one's linguistic background can influence learners' strong semantic input in

reading exercises (Coady, 1979; Enkin, 2014). In his opinion, therefore, Coady (1979) avows that learners' diverse background knowledge influences the rates at which they develop reading comprehension skills and overcome syntactic difficulties. Thus, for this study, the researcher explored Coady's model of English Second Language (ESL) readers further, with a view to determining its efficacy in addressing teaching English HL – which stands as a very complicated process in South Africa, which is a multicultural country with eleven official languages in formal and informal communications. Coady's model of ESL readers is illustrated in Figure 2.1. In this study, the notion of ESL is taken to be conceptually similar to the concept of English HL.

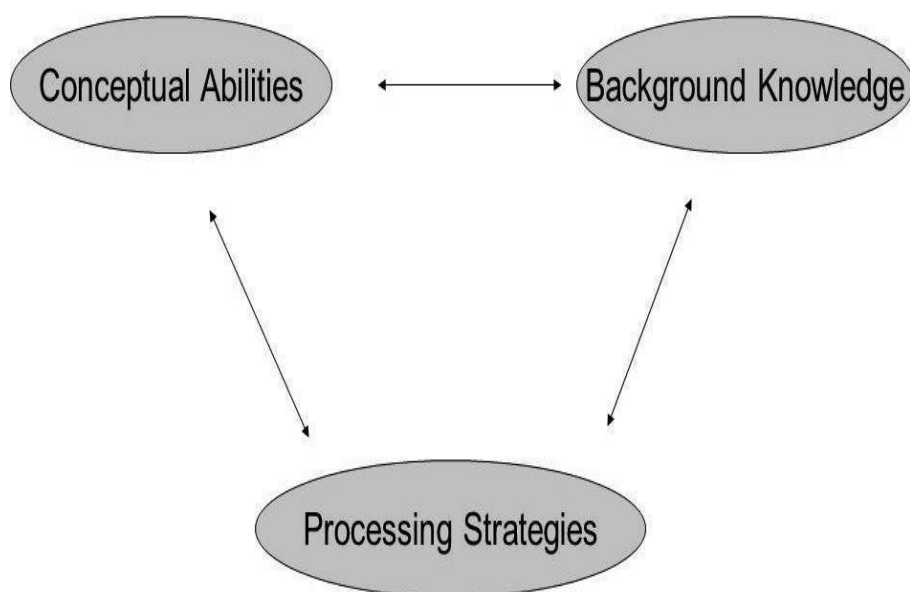


Figure 2.1 Coady's Model of ESL Readers [adopted from Klapwijk, 2016]

2.4 TYPES OF SCHEMAS

Al-Jarrah, Ismail, and Segni (2018) list four forms of reading comprehension strategies, namely: the linguistic schema, the material schema, the formal schema, and cultural schema, all of which have a significant impact on the comprehension skills of learners. These are briefly described below.

2.4.1 Linguistic schema

The language schema is described as being about language, vocabulary awareness, grammar, syntax, and usage (Spencer & Wagner, 2018; Patnaik & Davidson, 2018; Li & Zang, 2016; Pourmohammadi, 2016; Ngabut, 2015). According to this schema, language competence is the required prerequisite for learners to understand communication. Within the absence of a language schema, a learner cannot take evidence into account in the material schema and formal schema. It is argued that the language schema is the basic or base of English HL comprehension skills, and that learners should be familiar with it for them to be able to read and understand texts (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018; Zhang, 2018). The language schema applies primarily to some of the language's basic elements, such as vocabulary, sentence form, and grammar practice (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018; Spencer & Wagner, 2018).

2.4.2 Content schema

The material schema refers to the historical information about the learner's comprehension devices (Patnaik & Davidson, 2018; Pourmohammadi, 2016; Li & Zang, 2016; Ngabut, 2015). To Zhang (2018) and Gilakjani (2016) content schema refers to awareness and familiarity of the text's subject matter to the learner, including the historical awareness of the content regarding the comprehension skills. The content schema provides information on cultural backgrounds which can reinforce individual awareness or information about what often occurs within the individual's environment. Hence, all of these happenings are connected to each other in one piece to create a coherent meaning. For this reason, Al-Jarrah, and Ismail (2018) and Pourmohammadi (2016) posit that, for a text to be well understood, the context awareness of the reader's environment, previous experience and other relevant details is irreplaceable. For the reader, it is both important and necessary that he or she has adequate linguistic mastery in order to have the unrestricted opportunity to learn. Thus, the abundance of historical information could make up for the shortage of the learner's skills in understanding English HL (Zhang, 2018; Yafeng, 2017; Zhao, 2015).

It is, therefore, important that teachers are motivated to pay greater attention to simplifying English HL content for the learners, including directing learners through reading while paying attention to the cultural aspects of what is being read so that learners can easily follow and understand the text (Xue, 2019; Yafeng, 2017).

2.4.3 Formal schema

Formal schemata refer to the knowledge of how various styles of speech are expressed and the historical knowledge of speech forms (Spencer & Wagner, 2018; Patnaik & Davidson, 2018; Li & Zang, 2016; Pourmohammadi, 2016; Ngabut, 2015). It is about the linguistic knowledge of language agreements, including the knowledge of how texts are prearranged and what the key features of specific forms are (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018; Zhang, 2018). Thus, the formal schema is intended to bring a higher order of text structure which contains ordered forms and rhetorical structures of written texts. These include experience of various forms of text, formats, language structures, vocabulary, grammar, and level of formality. As such, it is emphasized that chronologically organized narrative writing is easy to recall and the reading text elements are likely to improve the learner's comprehension skills (Zhao, 2015; Nwabudike, et al., 2018). This approach could also help the learner remove confusion and improve text comprehension. Therefore, teachers should inculcate in the teaching of comprehension skills the requisite clues in the learners to familiarize themselves with the formal schema to understand the objects.

2.4.4 Cultural schema

The cultural schema is described by Al-Jarrah and Ismail (2018) and Mahmoudi (2017) as a technique that extends particular information of the human culture to the world – such that the text is interpreted as appropriate, and deemed necessary, to the attendant cultural schemata and scripts. Thus, the cultural schema is ideal for enhancing the responsiveness of learners to content information about their cultures.

2.4.5 Differential ways to activate schema

Patnaik and Davidson (2018) list six ways to help teachers trigger their learners' schemata at the start of the lesson. The importance of this is that while explaining the lesson the instructor must activate the operation of the schema. There are various techniques that can be used by the instructor to help develop and enable their learners' schemata to get activated:

Prediction plays a significant role in the teaching cycle of English HL comprehension skills

in various language contexts. Whether the prediction is correct or wrong is to help learners get closer to the substance of an article which is good for understanding. Leading questions appeal to the previous experience of the learners. Once the learners can forecast an event, this is an indication that they probably know and will be attentive to see if their predictions of the happening come true.

- Pre-reading is a valuable strategy which stimulates schema. Pre-reading is a strategy which helps to build and activate language schemata, which is a requirement for comprehension skills in English HL. Teachers may help learners gain skill and experience in pre-reading.
- Comprehension is rendered by creating mind images that are based on learners' words. This is made easy when the knowledge of the learners' context is triggered. The text starts to become easy to understand as learners create images in their minds. Visualization elicits the imagination that strengthens the relation with the text to increase the creativity of the mind.
- Mind mapping is an efficient technique that stimulates the surface of the minds of the learners with relevant subject material. Strategies that trigger the human mind could also assist in the retention of information in the learner's memory.
- Previewing follows developed targets to teach English HL comprehension skills to foundation-phase learners from diverse backgrounds in the language.
- Recall is a technique that teachers use by highlighting key points to indicate what learners have read. To improve their English HL comprehension skills in the subject, the learners are linked to their experiences.

2.5 TYPES OF READING

Gilakjani (2016) advances two different types of readings that can be adopted:

2.5.1 Extensive reading

Extensive reading, as opposed to skimming and scanning activities – which are reading techniques, helps in the expansion of learners' reading skills and could yield good results if

included in the English First Language (EFL) / English Second Language (ESL) programmes, provided that the texts chosen are true and graded (Hedge, 2003 – as cited in Gilakjani, 2016). In addition, extensive reading helps learners gain independence by reading in class or at home. Extensive reading exercises can be helpful in helping learners become self-directed individuals who are looking for meaning, given that they are focused on texts chosen by the teacher that interest learners in what they are reading. The selection process for reading texts should be based on quality, difficulty level, and duration. Hedge (2003), as cited in Gilakjani (2016), refers to the benefits of extensive reading as follows: learners can develop their language skills, advance their reading skills, become more independent in their learning, learn cultural knowledge, and increase confidence and encourage to pursue their own learning.

2.5.2 Intensive reading

In intensive reading, learners read a page to find the meaning and familiarize themselves with the writing strategies. Through this reading, learners can have a fundamental practice in implementing their strategies on the basis of a series of materials. These strategies may be either text-related or learner-related. The first involves the identification of the structure of text, and the second involves techniques such as linguistic, structural and metacognitive techniques (Hedge, 2003, cited in Gilakjani, 2016). For learning the vocabulary and understanding how text is created, intensive reading is very important. Gilakjani (2016) points out that there is a relationship between intensive reading activities and language skills. For better language preparation, acquisition, and activation strategies teachers need intensive reading to increase the three phases of learning referred to as pre, during, and post- reading. Intensive reading is seen as an effective method for improving understanding of diverse language backgrounds in English HL comprehension skills.

2.5.2.1 Assimilation and accommodation

Assimilation is a cognitive process whereby learners in the form of perception, meaning, rule, beliefs, or new experience with the current schema integrates stimuli that are in the learner's mind (Clapper, 2015). This situation occurs by assimilation, using an existing schema to deal with a new entity of circumstance. Accommodation happens when the existing schema (knowledge) does not operate and needs to be changed, as a result of the new information or

experience, to serve a new purpose. Equilibration is the force pushing creation from one end to the other. Piaget is of the opinion that cognitive growth does not advance at a constant pace but rises and regresses. Equilibrium occurs because most new knowledge can be managed by assimilation in the learner's schemata. However, unpleasant disequilibrium occurs when new information cannot be incorporated into existing schemata (assimilation). Equilibrium is the force that drives a cycle of learning because we do not like being upset and would strive to regain equilibrium by overcoming the new task through the process of accommodation. After the new information is obtained, the assimilation process of the new schema will continue until we have to adapt to it next time. Sarwanti (2016) suggests that the version's creation process can be achieved in two ways: assimilation and accommodation. The characteristics of the existing stimulus may accommodate the form with which it agrees to develop new theory of the schema. Equilibrium between assimilation and accommodation is necessary in learning. If accommodation exceeds assimilation, a learner will have plenty of schemata but exhibit low quality learning (Dlamini, 2018 & Clapper, 2015).

2.6 MODELS OF READING PROCESS

According to the schema theory, comprehension skills can be divided into three lecture models, based on the correlation between the bottom-up and the top-down approaches (Patnaik & Davidson, 2018; Gonzalez, 2017; Gilakjani, 2016; Ngabut & Zhao, 2015). These are described below.

2.6.1 The Bottom-up Model

A bottom-up model is a phonic approach to understanding English HL skills which emphasizes an attraction to the skills of the learners as proof of learning (Spencer & Wagner, 2018; Patnaik & Davidson, 2018; Qrgez & Ab Rashid, 2017). This starts from constantly recognizing letters and words and relevant details to accomplish the task. The bottom-up model originated in the 1960s with a focus on the process of comprehension skills, starting from reading as a type of inputting information. Gough's model indicates that several 'giving-out' components are used for text practice (Patnaik & Davidson, 2018; Paul & Christopher, 2017; Yafeng & Gonzalez, 2017). His description shows the process of reading from the perception of the letters that make up the text, and through its oral realization. Bottom-up approaches involve lower-level reading processes that enable learners

to construct meaning from the most basic language units including letters, clusters of letters and words. Apprentices make sense of a text by building upon a base.

Zhao (2015) explains that bottom-up reading strategies continue with letter-sound correspondences (looked at the bottom) to enter comprehension (looked at the top). This starts with accurate manipulation of letters and sounds for the bottom-up processing, building on morpheme and word recognition, and then slowly progressing to grammatical identification of form, sentences, and longer texts. A phonics approach to lecture instruction also embraces systems from the bottom up. Phonics is a sound patterning device for letters that can promote learners' exposure to text and eventually contribute to comprehension. Xue (2019) agrees that in a phonics approach, the reader begins with the letters that are heard, and that the decoder transforms the sequences of letters into phonemes. The decoder construction comes to the recognition of a term. The reader continues to own the next word in the text until he or she has learned every word in that paragraph.

2.6.2 The Top-down model

The top-down model of comprehension abilities, or otherwise referred to as the idea-driven approach, takes the idea theory as the basis (Ngabut, 2015; Pourmohammadi, 2016; Gilakjani, Qrquez & Ab Rashid, 2017; Spencer & Wagner, 2018; Patnaik & Davidson, 2018;). In these stages, the learners forecast materials to previous syntax and semantic information to validate and adjust the cycle of their comprehension ability.

The Goodman model came up with a psycholinguistic-based reading model known as a top-down model, which was used from the late 1960s through the early 1970s. Gonzalez (2017) contends that Goodman 's model is a simple approach to reading and suggests that readers carry to the text infinite information, skills, and values about the questions, having a clear comprehension of the vocabulary. Khaghaninejad (2015) notes that the top-down model of the theory of reading assumes that learners match the text within their own cultural and linguistic understanding – and will continue to read until the wording confirms their expectations. The knowledge the reader brings with the schemata strings plays a major role in understanding the text. Gonzalez (2017) and Al-Jarrah and Ismail (2018) see reading as a division of problem-solving, rather than an exercise of matching linguistic responses to

linguistic stimuli. This is the most relevant feature of the top-down theory. The recognition that both top-down and bottom-up handling are essential aspects of a taught reader's actions orientated towards the creation of interactive reading theories. Training using the top-down technique focuses on practices that create sense rather than learning bottom-up competencies.

2.6.3 The Interactive model

An adaptive reading model blends the bottom-up and top-down models (Spencer & Wagner, 2018; Patnaik & Davidson, 2018; Gilakjani & Pourmohammadi, 2016). This view has given rise to the 'interactive model', where the bottom-up and top-down processes interact simultaneously to improve acquisition of reading comprehension skills (Khaghaninejad, 2015; Nwabudike, et al., 2018). The interactive model is described as the most detailed definition of the understanding skills cycle. A learner starts reading a text using top-down strategies to understand the language, and then switches to bottom-up strategies when he or she comes across an unknown word. The learner uses bottom-up techniques before going on to decode the new term. So, this model adopts the transactions of both the bottom up and top-down forms of interactions. In this respect, the learner forms connections with the text as the he or she attempts to make sense of the meaning of the text. The reader is involved in a mutually active process in this process of building meaning where he or she combines information from the text and previous knowledge, as well as experience. Cloud, Genesee, and Hamayan (2009) list six characteristics of learners which a teacher of English HL should be familiar with, prior to teaching literacy:

- Level of proficiency in English upon entry to school
- Prior literacy skills and training
- Prior schooling
- Grade level
- Family Background
- The similarity of the home language and culture to the mainstream culture

Some authors see reading as a kind of dialogue between the reader and the text, or even between the reader and the author (Zhao & Niu & Ngabut, 2015; Hedge, 2000– in Gonzale, 2017; Yafeng, 2017). This implies that reading is a type of direct dialogue with an indirect reaction or action. However, the answer comes from the understanding which one has of the text. Rumelhart (1980) proposes a model of interactive-activation and theorizes that

information levels are distinctly characterized as flowing from grapheme to word. In particular, the model emphasizes the different types of components involved in comprehension skills such as analytical abilities, process techniques and context information, rather than the reading process. The main problems are behavioural concerns when adapting the model to English HL and reading, which may account for the lack of context awareness. Figure 2.2 summarises the above discussion by illustrating the reading model processes of the schema theory.

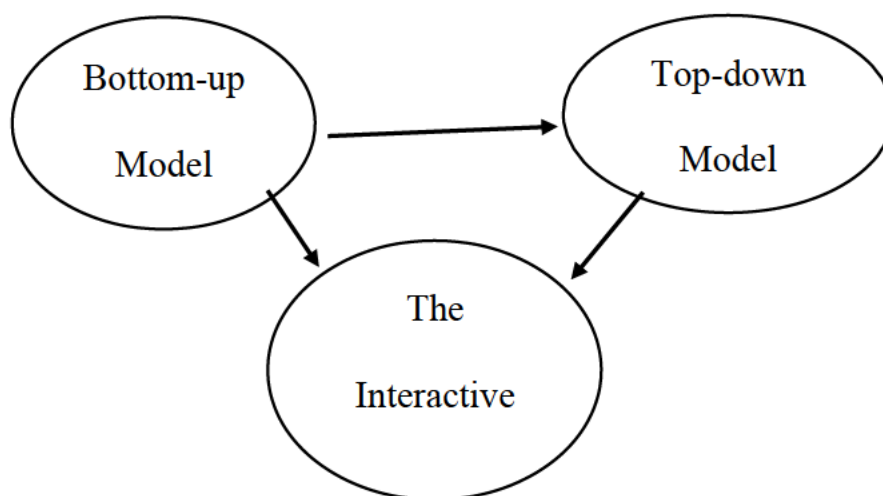


Figure 2.1 Three reading models process of schema theory [adopted from Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018]

2.7 THEORIES OF READING COMPREHENSION

In this section, three theories of reading comprehension are presented, namely mental representation, content literacy, and cognitive processes.

2.7.1 Mental Representation

Gilakjani (2016) posits that it is possible for a reader to read a text with mental representation, created in the way the reader understands the text. Mental representation has three ‘models’ – (a) surface, (b) text-base, and (c) situation. When the words and phrases are encoded in the mental representation, and not the meaning of the words and phrases, this is defined as the surface model of mental representation. The text-base model reflects the text's meaning and

the context of the text – and consists of those sections and links that originate from the text itself, without raising anything that may not be clearly defined in the text. In this regard, a knowledge-base can be generated without memorizing the exact words or phrases from the knowledge. The reader applies prior knowledge in a pure text-based way to build a more accurate and clear mental representation. The situation model refers to a system-integrated text- base with the associated information features of the reader (Gilakjani, 2016). Some previous knowledge is needed in order to construct a text-base, but this knowledge is general and essential in order to decipher texts in general, while the previous knowledge in the creation of a situation model is more relevant to the content of the text.

2.7.2 Content Literacy

Text literacy is the capacity to read, understand and learn from a specific subject from the text. There are three types of content literacies: general literacy skills, content- specific literacy skills and previous content awareness (Gilakjani, 2016). The general and content-specific literacy skills suggest a broad form of information that does not depend on a particular text 's comprehensive content. This awareness is expressed in mental representation to construct a text-base. Previous knowledge of the content is the knowledge that relates to the content of a particular text and is applied to make a mental representation situation model.

2.7.3 Cognitive Process

The application of syntactic and semantic rules is performed automatically and implicitly along with the activation of more specific previous information (Gilakjani, 2016). It is more or less conscious of various cognitive processes. Therefore, when we read a text without having any difficulties in knowing what we are reading, the mechanism is linked to interpretation rather than problem solving since the comprehension process is unconscious. This awareness is somewhere between interpretation and problem solving, identifying the factors that cause the action and actions of a character.

2.8 APPLICATION OF SCHEMA THEORY IN TEACHING ENGLISH COMPREHENSION SKILLS

The schema theory can be practical for teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse backgrounds (Patrick, 2019; Nwabudike & Adedokun, 2018; Farangi, Saadi & Yafeng, 2017; Pourmohammadi, 2016; Alfaki, 2014). Throughout the entire teaching cycle, it is expected that all learners and instructors are engaged in closely related practices at often separate intervals before the lesson, in the lesson, and after the class to enhance the teaching and learning. In teaching English HL comprehension skills, a schema is both a prerequisite and the basis for teaching learners from diverse language backgrounds (Farangi, Saadi & Yafeng, 2017). Hence, increasing the vocabulary of learners, and teaching basic words, sentences, and grammar are all important aspects of teaching English HL comprehension skills. The biggest challenge for weak learners in teaching English HL comprehension skills is their lack of language skills, especially if they have not mastered some basic words. For learners who have trouble understanding a sentence, the reason for this could be confusion between 'in' and 'from' without knowing which *cause* is referred to and which one is the *effect*. Another could be the unfamiliarity that affects the comprehension ability of the English HL. To grasp the text, vocabulary shapes the challenge. Teachers may enable learners to improve vocabulary by emphasizing meaning in teaching, distinctly from increasing the range of communication skills for learners. The learner can improve language pieces and consolidate new words by applying his or her language schema.

In addition, while this research focused on Grade One learners, it is important to note that their reading progressed from early Grade One to mid-Grade One and then late Grade One (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Stages of reading development [adopted from Chall, 1983:86-87].

Stage	Grade level	Characteristics	Major focus
Emergent reader	pre Grade R/early Grade R	Has no concept of word. Has little phonemic awareness Recognizes few sight words.	Tracking print. Distinguishing beginning consonant sounds. Recognizing 10 sight words.
Beginning reader	late Grade R/early Grade 1	Is beginning to track print. Is able to hear some sounds. Recognized 10 sight words.	Using beginning and ending consonant sounds. Recognizing 50 sight words. Reading simple text. Using sentence context and pictures or word recognition cues to decode.
Fledging reader	early/mid-Grade 1	Confirms with beginning and ending consonant sounds. Recognizes 50+ sight words. Reads simple text.	Recognizing and using word families in reading and writing. Recognizing 100+ sight words. Reading more complex text. Developing fluency. Developing comprehension strategies. Self-correcting errors.
Transitional reader	mid/late Grade 1	Recognises word families in isolation and in texts. Recognizes 100+ sight words. Reads developed texts.	Using word patterns in reading and writing. Developing independent reading using decoding and comprehension strategies. Developing fluency.
Independent reader	early/late Grade 2	Reads and writes independently. Uses strategies to figure out new words. Reads fluently. Uses patterns in reading and writing.	Developing diverse comprehension strategies. Using complex word patterns. Developing fluency in a variety of texts. Responding to text in a variety of ways.

2.8.1 Functions of content schema in teaching English HL comprehension skills

In this section, I look at the application of a content schema in teaching English HL to learners from diverse language backgrounds using three class phases: before reading, during reading and after reading. These are described and explained below.

2.8.1.1 Pre/Before reading

A schema is the mental structure that acts as the foundation for new knowledge achievement in the minds of the learners (Patrick, 2019; Zhang, 2018). In this regard, Patrick (2019) encourages pre-reading practices to stress the point that learners must be drawn to the practice of pre-reading as a way of providing them with relevant background information and activating their minds with an appropriate schema Patrick (2019) and Zhang (2018). This

means that, at the outset, proper comprehension skills of the learners should be guaranteed and curiosity of the learners in additional reading should be aroused before reading activities commence. In the process, learners must have access to learning, interacting, and sharing. In order to develop the learner's ability in reading for deep understanding, teachers should enable learners' schemata to be challenged as much as possible. This may involve English teachers allowing learners to repeat the text quickly. Readers are mainly given two ways to start reading. One is to read word by word without paying too much attention to what is said in the text, and the other is to spend some time reading the entire text, looking over a couple of phrases, and making out what the writer intends to say. Some readers may go by the first reading style (reading without paying much attention to the meaning), especially when there are not many new words. However, they are likely to lose interest in reading when they find it hard to capture the key ideas as a result of coming across too many new and difficult words.

Often, teachers ask the learners to finish reading texts within a short timeframe, but this could discourage learners from word-by-word reading. Most learners have the ability to decipher the keywords and essential sentences, especially when teachers remind learners that they should remember and understand the title and the essence of each paragraph. When teachers introduce learners to the context details and the genre of the text, this is important and necessary for a good interpretation of the text, context information or awareness. English teachers should therefore allow learners to look up the knowledge in advance of the reading session. In addition to the efforts of the learners, teachers should also undertake good lesson preparations, including showing relevant videos and pictures to aid their teaching. This means that it is important to have variety in one's teaching repertoire, as this will appeal to the different learning styles of learners in one's classroom.

Nevertheless, the genre is significant as type schema representation, as it is often not easy for a learner to discover several new terms and even sentence structures until he or she discovers a genre that he / she has already learned. This shows that readers' knowledge of the genre and design can be useful for their good understanding. Thus, the teacher should first guide the learners to recognize the genre, and when they are familiar with the genre, the teacher can now withdraw the encouragement and allow the learners an opportunity to practise. At the same time teachers can guide the learners to predict the text's form and content before they read. Positive prediction should be part of the process of reading, although the forecast may

not always be consistent and precise. So, further research should be carried out to guide one a better direction. Good readers also infer the type and content of the text before reading, which can help them track their reading process, hold their focus on key points and actively link the quality of the text with what they have already learned. In other words, expectations can help unlock their schema and, in addition, new information can strengthen and complement the activated schema.

2.8.1.2 During reading

Al-Jarrah and Ismail (2018) and Patrick (2019) assume that it is necessary to develop the comprehension skills of learners during reading in class; that in an English reading class, learners' schemata should be appealed to and enhanced to help them take a bird's eye view, as well as a worm's eye view, of the entire text. Learners make some assumptions before the lesson, so they should be made to test the strength and validity of those assumptions during the course of the lesson. In the process, they gradually approach the writer's true intention with modifications and correctness, and grasp the major ideas expressed by the writer. In this respect, Zhang (2018) avows that English teacher need to provide attractive and meaningful questions that can activate the schemata of the learners and foster their imagination leading to ideas and themes of the text. In developing comprehension skills, skimming and scanning strategies are very useful.

For his part, Patrick (2019) contends that English HL teachers need to explore the rules of each genre and the rules for answering questions with the learners. The key challenge is that the information comprising the content of the text must be mastered and the attendant syntax perfected. During this process, teachers can design different types of activities to attain the purposes, including assigning questions, filling empty spaces, assessing what has been taught through quick response questions. Such exercises should assess the ability of the learners to find, interpret and synthesize information. This entails modifying the old schema through the two complimentary processes of accommodation and assimilation.

2.8.1.3 After reading

In the view of Patrick (2019), learners will know a great deal about the contents of a text after

reading it. To demonstrate what has been learned, assessment and consolidation tasks are necessary. Activities such as retelling, imitation, and discussion after-class are some of the strategies which could be used to help learners to internalize what has been learnt. To this end, Al-Qahtani (2016) suggests that English teachers could use language schemata to help learners acquire new vocabulary and fine-tune their grammar. Learners may also use content schemata in updating specific and practical information that expands their knowledge and language use. When learners have learned a lot about the contents of a text after reading, teachers can use language schemata to help learners review new words, syntax and grammar- or use content schemata to help learners review details and specific information. Figure 2.3 summarises the above discussion on the stages of content schemata in teaching English HL comprehension skills.

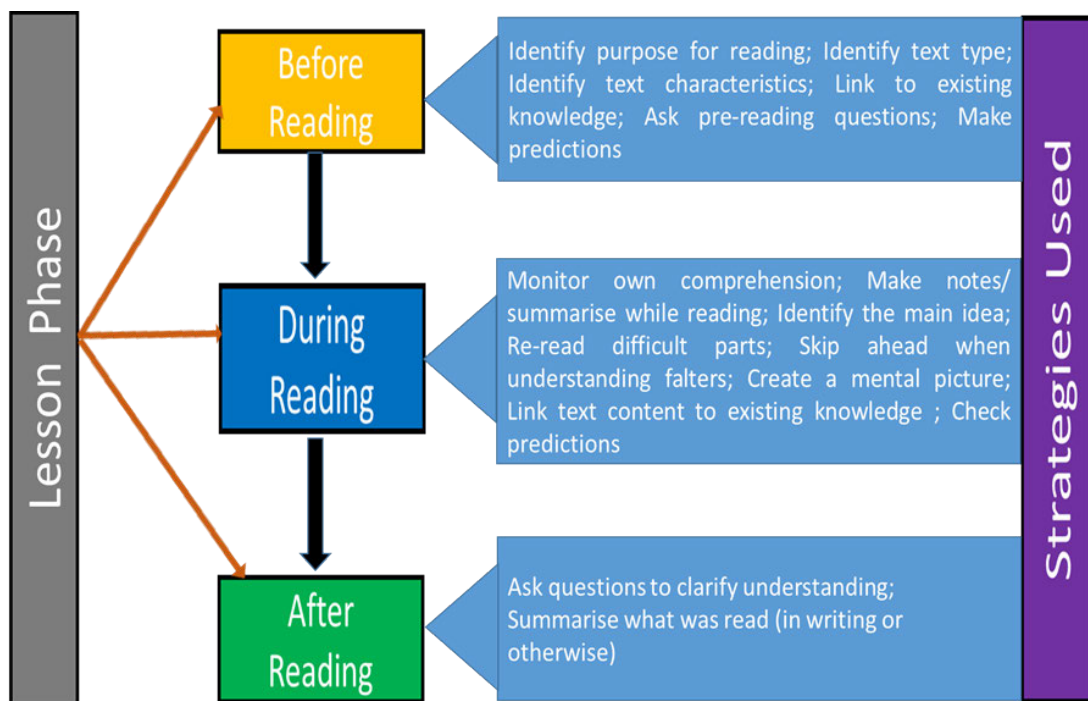


Figure 2.3 Stages of content schema in teaching English HL comprehension skills [adopted from Xue, 2019]

2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter dealt with the application of the schema theory to teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from different language backgrounds. A model of teaching reading comprehension skills is suggested, supported by schema theory. Learners need to be equipped with robust capabilities to effectively collect and analyse data.

The model envisages that the schema theory could make a vital contribution to the teaching of English HL to Foundation Phase learners who come from diverse language backgrounds. The chapter also explained how the schema theory could help learners and teachers address vocabulary and grammar deficiencies. Chances are high that such strategies will meet the needs of the learners and help them acquire the espoused English HL comprehension skills. This study adopted the Schema Theory to the most appropriate theoretical framework for this study. This really explains the appropriateness of the schema theory for this study. It describes how learners deal with previous knowledge for them to understand and learn from a new manuscript. Thus, this theoretical framework stands a good chance to direct the researcher in ways that are likely to make a significant contribution to both theory and practice. Furthermore, this chapter explained that if learners are equipped with positive English HL comprehension skills, their results are likely to improve. Additionally, as the learners' comprehension skills improve, the learners are likely to develop appropriate reading styles and, subsequently, become motivated to learn English. In turn, this will have a positive effect on their level of reading comprehension skills in English HL.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores extant literature on the study to serve as a foundation for the study.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the theoretical structure and the relevant principles of the study were discussed. This chapter focuses on the review of relevant literature to the present study with an emphasis on the objectives of the study. In this chapter, the researcher provides clarifications on the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners, using their different language backgrounds to guide research questions. Literature review is an important part of any research study because this is where the researcher reviews the accumulated knowledge that is related to his or her research objectives (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020). It gives foundational knowledge of what others have done and provides the researcher with the requisite basic knowledge to guide one's study. The purpose of the literature review is to give the researcher an opportunity to find out what other scholars have found in relation to the problem in which the researcher is interested and what body of knowledge is available on it (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020). Hence, the focus of this literature review is on how to effectively apply the techniques of teaching English HL comprehension to Foundation Phase learners, specifically at Grade One level. In doing this, first, the study's theoretical framework is described, followed by a look at the importance of strategies for teaching English HL comprehension skills. After this, the chapter presents an argument for the need for English HL comprehension skills, followed by a brief survey of the philosophies behind teaching reading to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds. This is followed by a survey of strategies to improve learners' reading for understanding, followed by the techniques which teachers could use to teach English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learner in the Foundation Phase. Lastly, the chapter looks at some empirical studies on the teaching of English HL and the challenges attendant thereto.

3.2 THE STUDY'S THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Vygotsky coined the term Zone of Proximal Production (ZPD) in an attempt to explain conditions under which learning may occur (see Figure 3.1). A learner who is in the third outermost circle will find it very difficult to follow the lesson, whereas the learner who already possesses some essential background knowledge or skills (the middle circle) can be assisted

to learn. So, teachers are able to mediate learning successfully for learners in this 'zone', whereas learners who are in the innermost zone have attained a level of independence to learn on their own. Cooperative learning will thrive in the ZPD as each learner is supported both by peers and the teacher towards attaining the espoused learning outcomes. The ZPD consists of two significant components: the future development of the learners and the function of contact with others (Kurt, 2020). Learning takes place in the field of proximal growth after the recognition of existing information. Potential innovations are essentially what the learner is capable of understanding.

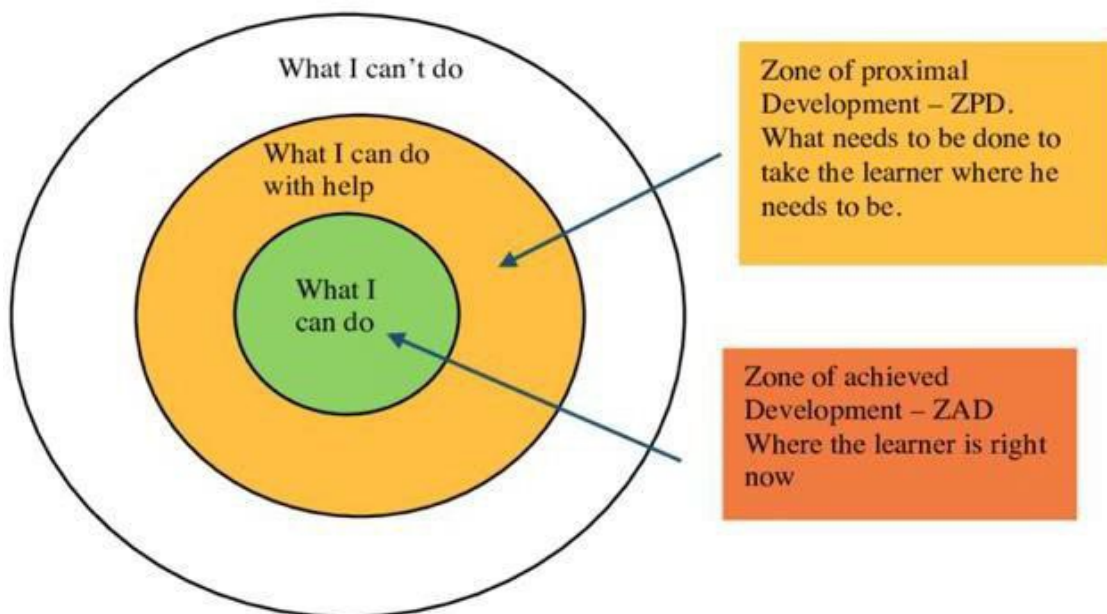


Figure 3.1 Vygotsky's ZPD Model (adopted from Vygotsky, 1978:86)

Thus, the most salient construct introduced by Vygotsky is the ZPD, which is defined as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Vygotsky recommended that teachers should always be alert for any mismatch between the requirements of a task and the ability of the child to finish that task. In other words, teachers should be aware of the current level of understanding a child has and the difficulty level of the upcoming task (McLeod, 2012).

Going further, Vygotsky (1978) contends that much emphasis should be placed on learners who experience challenges in learning by ensuring that adequate cognitive support is given by teachers, as experts, to such learners. This model is based on the notion of scaffolding and borrows from the works of Bruner (1986), in his statement that the greatest ingredient in learning new things is what the learner already knows. Therefore, to teach English HL comprehension skills successfully to learners from diverse home language backgrounds, it would require teachers' careful implementation of strategies and techniques which recognise the importance of learners' prior knowledge and experiences. Thus, the paradox in teaching English HL to learners who come from diverse home language backgrounds is that the teacher may not be familiar with the nuances of the learners' home languages which may have a bearing of what he or she is teaching. This is further compounded by the circumstances of this study whereby the 'expert' teachers assisting learners to learn English HL comprehension skills are, themselves, not native English speakers of the language.

In this study, the researcher ascertained that Barlette's notion of the schema theory was appropriate for looking at the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learner with regard to strategies and techniques; that, in doing so, the previous experiences of both the teachers and learners would be very important ingredients to ensure successful teaching and learning. This is the point where the schema theory meets Vygotsky's ZPD in that both perspectives place a very high premium on learners' prior knowledge and experiences. Thus, the teacher is seen as a professional individual who provides an unrestricted opportunity to learners to learn in the classroom. Accordingly, to enhance English HL teaching in schools, the study proposes a model, built on Vygotsky's theory, to support teaching and learning. Thus, drawing on the model depicted in Figure 3.1, effective teaching of English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learner may be achieved by following the schematic steps illustrated in Figure 3.2.

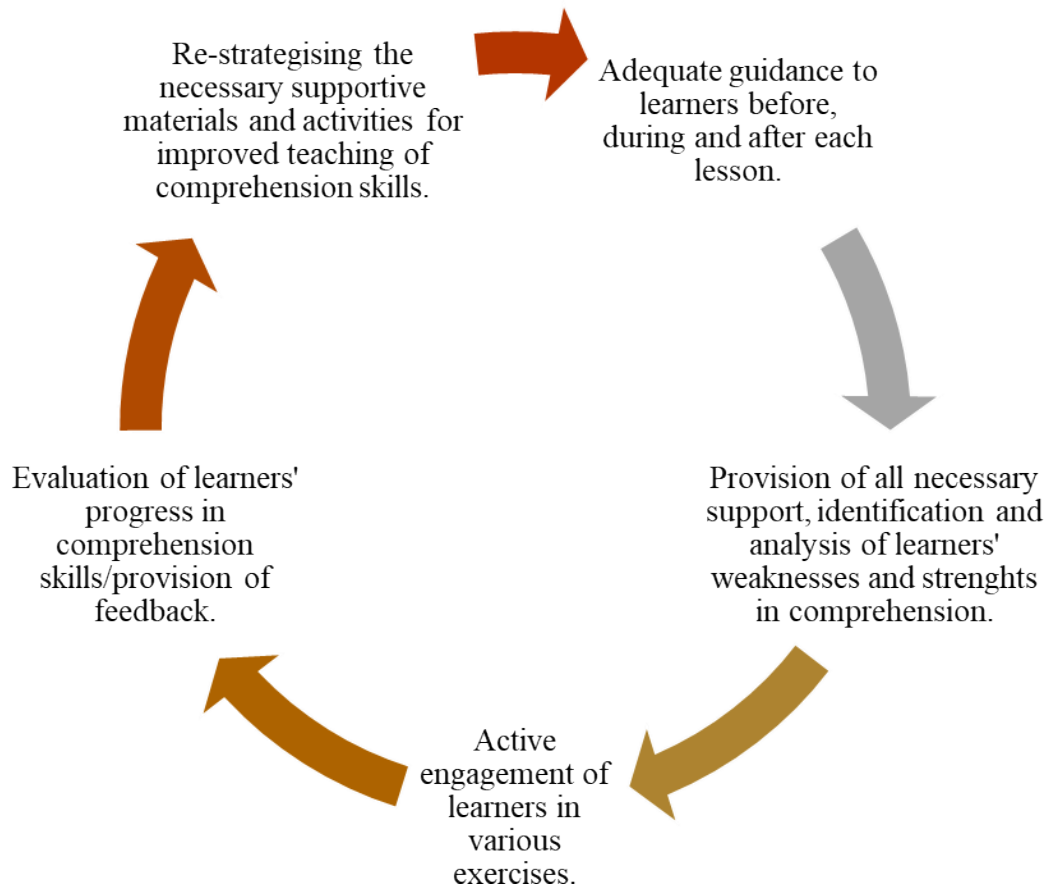


Figure 3.2 English home language comprehension skills model (Adapted from Vygotsky (1978)'s reading skills)

3.2.1 Key Elements of Comprehension Skills

To achieve effective teaching of English HL comprehension skills, teachers need to guide learners to achieve the expected outcomes. This should be done through various reading sessions before, during and after each reading lesson to consolidate learners' understanding. The main goal of the conceptual framework adopted in this study was to find out how the elements of the model could be used as a springboard to analyse and understand the participating teachers' strategies for teaching English HL, especially to learners from diverse language backgrounds at Grade One level. In this regard, the first point is to identify the key aspects of the comprehension skills to be addressed in a particular lesson.

3.2.2 Provision of Adequate Guidance

The ZPD feature of the transition of responsibility for the task to the learners is seen as the key objective of scaffolding in teaching (Mercer & Fisher, 1993; Wells, 1999). In order to qualify as scaffolding, the teaching and learning event should: a) enable the learners to carry out the task which they would not have been able to manage on their own, b) be intended to bring the learners to a state of competence which will enable them to eventually complete such a task on their own; and c) be followed by evidence of the learners having achieved some greater level of independent competence as a result of the scaffolding experience (Wells 1999, p. 221). Such view of scaffolding is highly consistent with the definition of the ZPD provided by Vygotsky (1978) and emphasises the collaboration between the teacher and the learner in co-construction of knowledge and skill.

3.2.3 Adequate Guidance to Learners Before, During and After each Lesson Key Elements of Comprehension Skills

It is recommended that the teacher, mentor or tutor provides either implicit guidance or direct assistance to the learners in the first place. This stage is only complete once learners can operate independently to solve the same or a similar problem. Teachers need to ensure that learners are prepared to try the task at hand before they attempt it. In order to nurture their trust and morale, the questions raised should arise from the work they have covered, not what they do not know.

Hammond (2001) argues that the use of scaffolding reflects the temporary support structures that support learners in the creation of new understandings, new concepts and new skills. By so-doing, scaffolding allows learners reach higher levels of academic success relative to what they can do while operating individually, or in the absence of intelligent instructor guidance. Thus, Gibbons (2002) indicates that language and scaffolding practices are characteristically based on making clear the criteria for literacy and learning goals contained in texts and tasks essential for good school learning. Scaffolding also focuses on the opportunities between teachers and learners for joint or co-construction of skills, as well as helping to transfer learners toward independence across the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978; Gibbons, 2002). The help experienced through scaffolding is the stimulus that increases the pace and depth of the

cognitive growth of learners as they grow in trust (Vygotsky, 1978; Rose, 2005).

3.2.4 Provision of the Necessary Support, Identification and Analysis of Learners' Weaknesses and Strengths in Comprehension Skills

Some authors contend that with the minimal and focused assistance of parents, some children can learn the language earlier and easier, while the majority may need higher levels and more intensive encouragement to develop linguistic skills (Vygotsky, Rieber, & Wollock, 1997). Vygotsky, et al., further observe that the cognitive development and accumulation of knowledge of children is not merely induced by genetic and natural (innate) factors, but the environment plays a vital role in any type of learning. As a result of children's interactions with their parents, peers, siblings, and teachers, within the environment, the learning process is continuously shaped and reshaped (McLeod, 2012; Verenikina, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, once the learner has grasped the concept or method, support may be indirectly provided by offering tips and reminders. So, instead of being given ready answers, questions should be used to direct the learner towards a solution to the practical or intellectual problem. Therefore, collaborative learning methods that enable advanced learners to support other less advanced learners through consistent social interaction should be commonly used (Hufakker, 2005). In summary, the Vygotskyian perspective on literacy practice has had an enormous influence on literacy education and development, primarily through reciprocal teaching and scaffolding teaching techniques. It may also be pointed out that the Vygotskyian philosophy has been borrowed from home literacy learning and collective learning technique.

3.2.5 Active Engagement of Learners in Various Exercises

With reference to the model depicted in Figure 3.1, the primary goal of teaching in the ZPD is to positively involve learners in their learning with the potential prospect of turning them into lifelong, self-directed learners. The notion of ZPD means that teaching is a co-construction of knowledge between the teacher and the learner and a further transformation of that knowledge into the learner's individual knowledge. Therefore, the relationship between the teacher and learner becomes one of cooperation and co-learning – with an emphasis on an active role of the learner, which is important for being a self-regulated learner. So, according to Vygotsky, the education process should be based on the participation of the learner in an

operation where the teacher is the director of the social environment in the classroom, the governor and guide of the interactions between the educational process and the student" (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 49).

In the process of teaching according to the Vygotskyian philosophy, the teacher does not directly impact learners but shapes and fashions their social environment to enable them to achieve the espoused learning outcomes. However, to help children to become healthy, self-regulated learners, the manner in which adults communicate with the child is crucial (Diaz, Neal & Amaya-Williams, 1992). As Bodrova and Leong (1996: 3) surmise, "the teacher's role is to provide the path to independence – a goal of all educators."

According to the Vygotskyian philosophy, observing the child as an active participant in his or her own learning is at the heart of the notion of ZPD. The child is not seen as simply a passive recipient of adult teaching, nor is the adult simply a model of professional, successful behaviour. Rather, the adult-child dyad participates in joint problem-solving activities, where both knowledge and responsibility for the task are shared (Wells 1999: 140). Vygotsky states that through the interactions of a subject with the world, consciousness is built or constructed in such a way that it is not possible to separate cognitive development from its social and cultural context. This leads to the idea that if we comprehend social interactions, tools and signs that mediate them, only then can we understand mental processes Wertsch (1985).

3.2.6 Evaluation of Learners' Progress in Comprehension Skills: Provision of Feedback

Evaluations should be presented to each learner, based on their proximal growth region so that as educators aim to see the possible degree of cognitive growth of all learners, a variety of skills are addressed by the assessment tools used. With their teacher's help, some students can reach a higher level before others do. So, scaffolding becomes a cycle, with the instructor continually reviewing learners' progress in a learning activity and responding consistently to their needs. This requires the teacher to vary the complexity of the assignments and learning objectives in order to fulfil the needs of the individual learners. The ZPD shows the level of task the learner can perform independently, which in turn, illustrates the level of cognitive activity that can be done with the teacher's guided help. Furthermore, teachers must take into account the fact that each learner has specific personality attributes that will influence how they interface with their specific subjects when they design learning objectives.

In addition, learners need more chances to show what they have learned so that the instructor can develop the next steps and give support as needed. The teacher's gradual release of obligation towards the learner, which we know as scaffolding, helps learners to achieve independence as they meet their goals on learning tasks. The teacher starts with a strong presence and close guidance, which may be in the form of demonstrations or practical activities. As the student moves through ZPD towards the goal, the teacher gradually releases control of the learners as they approach their level of potential learning. The tasks become progressively more difficult as the learners gain more knowledge and come closer to reaching their potential level of cognitive development. Some suggest that towards the optimal level of ZPD all tasks should be on the higher end in order to maintain the interest of the learner. Scaffolding is used as a tool to achieve the potential learning outcomes of learners.

The question remains then, "Is the theoretical idea of zones of proximal development really that different from what experienced teachers do in the classroom?" Vygotsky's theory is centred on the idea that social interaction is critical to cognitive development. With the exception of some large classes, learners should actively engage with their teacher and with each other. Collaborating with peers is encouraged but cannot be over-used, as it may actually cause stagnant growth in some cases. Additionally, the teacher is the most enlightened about the learning process (the expert), tasked with the responsibility to assess various aspects about the learner's potential growth.

In education, language tasks are still the best indicator of cognitive development as they allow chain reactions to occur that begin with solid communication skills, lead to clarification of inner speech and continues with growth in thought patterns. However, one must not view language activities as exclusive. It does not mean that a learner possesses a low level of cognitive ability if he or she is unable to orally express him or herself. Language is complex, and some do not grasp the subtle meanings present in communication. It is important to note, however, that early development of language offers an advantage to children and favours them in their development of other educational skills.

It was Vygotsky's goal to examine the socialization impact of cognitive growth. To start with, the key approach to his theory is language. From there, it is easy to see how learning is

influenced by cultural and societal relationships. We addressed the teacher's use of the notion of ZPD in real-life applications, which also stresses the need for student-directed learning in the educational system. As we move towards remote learning and computer-based applications, we need to evaluate the impact of the social world and the attention of the 'experts' which the learners may require.

3.2.7 Re-Strategizing the Necessary Supportive Materials and Activities for Improved Teaching of Comprehension Skills

Reading is the backbone of all educational processes. Without reading there is no academic progress yet, ironically, it is relegated to the margins of the learning process in some South African schools. In some schools it may be a pastime activity where learners are left to their own devices whilst the teacher is engaged in activities divorced from learners' reading exercise. However, the reality is that it is only through the active learner participation, accompanied by authoritative modelling by the teacher, that learners can gain from reading in class. It is only through close guidance and coaching that learner can confidently decipher information when they read to learn. Vygotsky (1978) was convinced that cognitive capacity does not override instruction but is demonstrated through constructive engagement between the more knowledgeable other (the 'expert') and the learner. Furthermore, Vygotsky encourages the teaching of grammar because it is the vehicle for intellectual ways of reasoning and for using language as a medium peculiar to writing. He insists that teachers should not focus on what learners already know but rather constantly introduce new skills, at the same time realising that these skills will not develop in a vacuum: the teacher has to teach and/or offer the necessary support.

Vygotsky places much emphasis that social interactions are crucial in a child's life for his or her development from the very beginning. In this respect, he contends that any higher mental function necessarily goes through an external social stage in its development before becoming an internal, truly mental function. By this, Vygotsky suggests that the function is initially social and the process through which it becomes an internal function is known as internalisation (Vygotsky 1962). The role of social mediation in human activity has been strongly emphasised by Engestrom (1996) who posits that the child's activity becomes self-regulated when "external behaviours that were defined in part by the culture and internalised

by the child can now function as mental tools for her” (Dixon-Krauss, 1996, p. 10). To become self-regulated and self-motivated learners, children have to develop interest and intrinsic motivation to learn which, accordingly “emanates from the social part of the child's life” (Hedegaard, 2002, p. 67). Further, Hedegaard avers that “the intentional interaction with adults and their friends can thus be used as a spontaneous factor for creating motivation.” Thus, central to the concept of mediation is intersubjectivity which is described by Wertsch (1985, 1998) as the establishment of shared understandings between the child and the adult. Intersubjectivity is an essential step in the process of internalisation as the adult gradually removes the assistance he or she gives to the learner and transfers responsibility to the learner. Diaz, et al. (1992) point out the importance of intersubjectivity in promoting self-regulated development in children.

3.3 NEED FOR COMPREHENSION SKILLS

Comprehension skills are employed to assist learners to create meaningful interpretation of a text for successful reading strategies (Gilakjani, 2016; Kendeou & O'Brien, 2018). In short, comprehension skills are important because they enhance learners' ‘reading for understanding’. Skills and techniques are assessed as critical skills needed for English HL comprehension because they promote a distinct focus on the expertise of the English HL understanding skills of the learners. Gilakjani (2016) emphasizes the need for effective expansion of the English HL comprehension skills and many lower and higher-level skills and procedures. There are also several outlets for potential breaks in understanding that are dependent on learners' ability levels and age. Gilakjani (2016) highlights two forms of comprehension skills in English HL lessons as thus:

3.3.1 Extensive reading

Gilakjani (2016) argues that comprehensive reading is a reading of long passages that typically focuses on pleasure, while reading to provide learners with new information. Extensive reading assists in intensifying the comprehension skills of English HL learners and integrating them into the texts offered. Skimming and scanning are techniques of reading which are used to convey eye movement through text for slightly diverse purposes.

The use of skimming and scanning for detailed reading ensure that learners:

- 3.3.1.1 are able locate key concepts or words in a reading material – and are able to read to find the specific details of understanding.
- 3.3.1.2 can find particular proofs, topics, and can answer questions demanding truthful support. This is significant for teaching English HL comprehension skills, especially in activities which use songs, word puzzles, and games.
- 3.3.1.3 are enabled to engage in ‘forecasting reading’ which involves guessing about what the text is saying: some of the guesses may be correct, while some may be incorrect.
- 3.3.1.4 are enabled to, so to speak, ‘use suspicions to foretell the significance of words’ – that is, reading without the requisite level of vocabulary but being able to decipher what the text is saying.

3.3.2 Intensive reading

Gilakjani (2016) posits that intensive reading is a teaching skill to enhance in- depth comprehension, vocabulary, and phonological guidance in short passages. Learners use this technique by reading page by page to understand the text and its context (Gilakjani, 2016). With regard to the teaching of English HL comprehension skills in Foundation Phase to learners from various language backgrounds, learner may, for instance, be asked to classify certain materials which may be linked to a text or learner (Gilakjani, 2016). This requires intensive reading and could be an effective method for developing comprehension skills in English HL. Gilakjani (2016) emphasizes the point that for better language preparation and activation techniques, teachers need intensive reading to increase the three phases of reading, namely pre-reading, during and post- reading.

3.4 PHILOSOPHIES OF TEACHING READING TO FOUNDATION PHASE LEARNERS FROM DIVERSE LANGUAGE BACKGROUNDS

3.4.1 Inspiring of the Learner’s Background Knowledge

Madikiza, Cekiso, Tshotsho, & Landa (2018) and Thuraisingam, Gopal, Sashidaran, Naimie, Asmawi (2017) argue that the pre-reading starts with a phrase, idea and/or picture introduced

by the instructor to initiate a discussion by making the learners guess about something that first comes to their minds about the phrase, idea, or picture. Jingwei (2016) is of the opinion that learners who fail to comprehend lack a schema that can help them understand the text. This might mean that teachers need to strengthen their learners' schemata to enable them to learn the new skills. This is the kind of support learners need to succeed. In concurrence, Kendeou and O'Brien (2018) and Gajria and Jitendra (2016) agree that teaching context knowledge about a subject will improve the comprehension skills of English HL learners.

3.4.2 Language for Pre-Teaching of English HL Comprehension Skills

Madikiza, et al. (2018), and Thuraisingam, et al. (2017) avow that the new language needs to be learned before reading, because the learner may spend much time guessing the new words. This can help the learner to understand the entire passage through reading. Wagner, Petscher, and Lopez (2016) posit that words are structured for learners to connect their minds to the understanding of the texts because terms cannot be understood in isolation without understanding their related meaning. Similarly, McKeown and Curtis (2014) note that the impact of sound effects on vocabulary instruction of comprehension skills will increase if clear associations between vocabulary awareness and reading comprehension are realised.

3.4.3 Role-Play in the Teaching of English HL Comprehension Skills

Role-playing is a communicative dimension that lets learners gain new information while interacting (Kendeou & O'Brien, 2018; Yusuf, 2014). According to Yusuf (2014), emphasis is placed on the benefits of using role-playing and drama as teaching resources to help learners learn new vocabulary. In particular, playing could increase trust and interest in using comprehension skills in English HL. Capellini, Pinto, and Cunha (2015) emphasise the contention that role-playing in teaching English HL can improve learners' comprehension skills. Similarly, Vaish (2016) asserts that enhancing self-conception after role-playing could improve learners' English HL comprehension abilities. In addition, role-playing offers insight into the different ways of imagining what can be used to inspire learners to create and recreate English HL in a variety of languages. Furthermore, Alawiah (2018) is of the view that role-playing can minimize classroom dishonesty and provide a purpose for discussion that can encourage learners to speak expressively with others. Role-playing is a classroom strategy that encourages learners to actively engage in the learning process and differs from the

standard dialog instruction. In the context of this study, learners would play roles that allow English HL immersion in a number of authentic (real-life) contexts.

3.5 IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION SKILLS

As an extended way of teaching, practice offers an extension to learning by using exercises or strategies in the classroom to help learners understand (Gonen, 2015; Iwai, 2016; Yang, 2016; Kolthoff & Guda, 2016; Muijselaar, et al. 2017). Joubert, et al. (2019) consider a teaching approach to be a specific planning process that involves both techniques and procedures. The choice of techniques and methods is necessary if the learner's home language is to be successfully proficient. This implies that there is a need for teachers to choose appropriate "strategies" that can enhance understanding of the communication skills intended for English HL learners from diverse language backgrounds, particularly at the Foundation Phase level. Examples may include building lessons on the recognition and importance the role of human relationships as key drivers of language development, how social and cultural contexts support and/or undermine individual development, and the dynamic, idiographic developmental pathways that result from mutually influential individual-context relations across the life span (Cantor, Osher, Berg, Steyer & Rose, 2019: 307). A technique is a way of studying learning and teaching, a theory of language learning and a philosophy of learning. A strategy for language instruction is a theoretical construct of what language is, and how it can be taught (Hugo, Lenyai, Coltman, Place & Thornhill, 2016).

Kara (2015) and Madikiza, et al. (2018) contend that techniques are necessary in language teaching for learners to successfully cope with the text. Teachers need to concentrate on teaching techniques to help learners deal with the text when learning to read. Therefore, the conduct of teachers in the classroom is critical as they teach reading. They need to decide the types of techniques to be employed to best enhance the comprehension skills of their learners as they teach reading. Kara (2015) avers that teacher find it difficult to teach comprehension skills. They need to devise, adopt, adapt, or identify teaching strategies which will help learners deal with every level in English HL comprehension skills, especially at the early stages. Waddington (2017) argues that the advancement of text type in the field of strategies for reading indicates that a significant attempt has been made to demonstrate how teachers

understand the techniques to teach English HL comprehension skills. Hence, the English HL comprehension skills teacher should use appropriate methods to inspire learners to attain the goal of interactive engagement and remain focussed during the teaching and learning process. Evans and van der Walt (2019) stress the point that the word "technique" is an open-ended approach that is underpinned by language teaching theories. For his part, Killen (2015) acknowledges the point that teaching methods are teacher-centric, whereas the teacher of English HL comprehension skills is inspired to teach young learners to understand certain skills in a comfortable environment in the learners' classroom.

Guzmán-Alcón, Fattah, and Saidalvi (2019) identify seven philosophies that can aid learners in teaching the learning process of communicative languages. These will be discussed below. Killen (2015) believes that promoting teaching and learning strategies would help learners appreciate the positive outcomes required for skills growth and that supporting appropriate teaching methods could build a conducive classroom atmosphere. In addition, Killen (2015) asserts the point that by allowing tentative speaking, this could enable learners to learn successfully, resulting in the acquisition of an ability to test their understanding and exchange new ideas. Chen (2015) reports that explaining the use of strategies in practice will help learners gain more optimistic attitudes to learning and become successful learners. Indeed, it is possible that appropriate English HL teaching approaches could enable learners to make positive contributions at various stages of comprehension skills development. In this regard, Evans and Van der Walt (2019) believe that teachers should be versatile in developing content and the attendant teaching strategies for their lessons. They should not be afraid to experiment and try out new teaching approaches and then, from experience of what works best, build a repertoire of strategies and techniques to effectively teach English HL comprehension skills. Creativity should be every teacher's middle name – so to speak. This underlines the need for every teacher to be adequately trained and capable of successfully applying relevant strategies during the teaching process.

3.6 STRATEGIES TO TEACH ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION SKILLS

3.6.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

It is recommended that teachers should promote communicative language teaching for learners' competences (Kendeou & O'Brien, 2018; Jeyasala, 2014). To enhance language fluency and accuracy, teachers should provide space for learners to communicate with others or involve them in speaking activities. This can boost their ability to use the language they are learning. This is achievable when learners are given opportunities to play an active role in their learning during lessons. In a longitudinal study conducted to explore the impact of CLT practice in a mixed conversational English class, Chen (2015) reported on the impact of the CLT approach in a mixed English Language class where learners strengthened their attitudes to learning and became successful learners after a reintroduction of the teaching techniques. CLT is a language teaching and learning approach which aims to use real-life situations to stimulate the use of language. In this technique the character of the learners is essential in the process of teaching and learning. At the same time, the teacher of English HL becomes a mediator whose role is to direct the learners to develop their communicative skills. Not only will the communication of the case be taken into account by CLT teachers, but consideration should be paid to the socio-cultural dimensions of communication. This is where the relevance of this technique to this study lies, in view of the diverse language backgrounds of the learners – and all coming together to study a foreign language as if they were native speakers of that language. By being poised to respect and consider learners' socio-cultural backgrounds, the CLT could be a powerful and effective teaching strategy within the context of this study.

The CLT approach entails learning a language through contact and communication, rather than memorizing it through various features of the Toro language method (Toro, Camacho-Minuche, Pinza-Tapia and Paredes (2018). In the context of this study, the CLT approach would be used to develop the oral skills of the learners in the English HL comprehension classroom. This technique has been used to incorporate the basic tenets of a language that encourage learners to apply established English HL skills to the learners' other subjects in order to respond to unique academic needs. Ghofur, Degeng, Widiati, and Setyosari (2017) concur by stating that the communicative language teaching method increases learners' English HL speaking skills. Similarly, Nguyen (2019) and Sanoto (2017) also contend that the

approach to communicative language is based on fluency, which reproduces the natural use of language and achieves communication. In turn, this enables the learner to use the language in real-life or realistic conditions that require communication. In the eyes of some authors, this makes it an appropriate approach to teach English HL, as it enables learners to learn the language better (Derakhshan & Torabi, 2015; Nguyen, 2019).

Furthermore, CLT exercises promote the learning process and enhance the respective roles of the classroom teachers and learners. The CLT skills are far more than linguistic competencies for teaching and learning conditions in classrooms as they serve as the way for learners to improve their ability to interact with one another. English HL recognizes the attitudes of teachers towards CLT and the reasons for the teachers to teach learners. This promotes documentation of teachers' perceptions about CLT and the impact of their experience in the subject. Nguyen (2019) reports that most teachers have optimistic attitudes towards CLT values but find it difficult to implement it in their classrooms. In concurrence, other authors also opine that teacher hold moderate attitudes to CLT values but must be mindful that the highest score belongs to a part of the learner (Toro, et al., 2018; Derakhshan & Torabi, 2015). More specifically, Derakhshan and Torabi (2015) aver that teacher hold optimistic attitudes towards CLT principles, including in certain cases in the field of grammar.

Overall, the CLT strategy is capable of having a beneficial impact on success rate of learners and can incentivise them to attain the espoused English HL comprehension skills. Through CLT practices, learners should also be introduced to ICT devices and equipment, in line with the fourth industrial revolution, to develop their language skills. The use of ICTs could also help teachers implement constructive approaches in applying the CLT approach – such as in pair-work or group activities and other situations that demonstrate how CLT can be used to increase communication comprehension skills and motivate learners. In many societies, including South Africa, there is need to improve teacher education programmes to enhance the standard of teaching English HL comprehension skills in the education system. In doing so, however, the country's socio-cultural contexts are central to the implementation of the CLT approach (Herrera & Murry, 2016).

Through the use of appropriate ICTs learners can be developed to attain comprehension skills, as the teacher supplements the technologies by offering clarifications, as needed. As Nguyen

(2019) avows, learners can be inspired to learn English HL through the use of digital technologies. According to Nguyen (2019), the use of conventional teaching methods is no longer recognised as appropriate for teaching English HL comprehension skills as they are not found to be effective in promoting language development, except where there is adequate integration and support of audio, visual and computer graphics. For this reason, the integration of various multimedia technologies into English HL teaching has rapidly and efficiently encouraged learners to learn and understand concepts fast. In addition, with the adoption of such technologies, learners have been provided with abundant knowledge within their quality time and space. The benefit comes from the fact that multimedia technology creates real-life learning situations, which can be very helpful especially to learners from diverse language backgrounds (Thamarana, 2016). This implies that technological growth in this period has significantly improved English HL teaching for many learners to whom English is a foreign language.

Herrera and Murry (2016) reported from their study that post-test scores showed that there was no interactive impact on English-speaking skills at meaningful level between learning methods and learning styles. In the context of their study, this suggested that the CLT approach enhanced learner's ability to speak English HL, irrespective of their learning styles.

Derakhshan (2015) posits that since the introduction of the CLT approach, many teachers are not happy with old methods. The CLT approach has since become a common theoretical paradigm for teaching English HL where learners are likely to experience real life situations as second language speakers of the language. As Ghofur, et al. (2017) point out, communication skills involve functional language competence (an ability to use information in context to achieve the outcomes set that are required to improve learners). Recent studies avow that teacher of English HL have been motivated to introduce CLT to improve their learners' abilities to use English effectively. This implies that CLT strategies can integrate the requirements of a curriculum to accommodate all learners from diverse language backgrounds for successful teaching and learning of comprehension skills in English HL at the Foundation Phase level.

Studies by Toro, et al. (2018), Harmer (2015) and Jeyasala (2014) all report that teachers should always promote communicative language skills in learners, by using whatever

necessary resources. Besides language fluency and accuracy limitations, teachers should provide opportunities for learners to communicate with each other or be engaged in interactive activities that will hone their abilities and skills to communicate in the language in and outside the classroom. This can enhance their ability to communicate effectively in the language, especially under instruction. The main point is, indeed, that learners should be made to play active roles for them to learn the language.

3.6.1.1 Assumption for learning communicative language skills

Guzmán-Alcón, et al. (2019) highlight seven key assumptions that may help learners learn English HL comprehension skills. These assumptions can also be viewed as measures:

Principle 1: Using tasks in organizational principles. The use of CLT involves the use of tasks that shift attention or focus from grammar to what learners can do with the language. This implies that the purpose is to develop communicative skills in learners by the facilitators/teachers. Hence, grammar is used to structure language for real-life situations.

Principle 2: The responsibility to promote learning. A task-based approach to learning promotes the idea of learning by doing. This is built on the theory that a hands-on approach positively enhances learners' cognitive commitment. Moreover, the principle of "learning by doing" is strongly supported by an active approach to language use for early grade learners.

Principle 3: Rich input of needs. Natural settings are significant to home language (L1) achievement in a wide range of rich input in abundant backgrounds and situations over many years. Learners need to be provided with rich input to enhance their learning of the language skills as non-natives. Therefore, learners need oral and written input from the teachers, the teaching material, multimedia resources, or real-life communication.

Principle 4: Input needs to be understandable and elaborative to be meaningful. The information offered must be connected to the learner's pre-existing knowledge. Therefore, it should be highlighted that the knowledge of learners needs to be organized in such a way that the new information is easily incorporated into their mental structures / schemata.

Principle 5: Collaborative and cooperative learning to be encouraged. It is assumed that learners need to be encouraged to work together in small cooperative teams. These can be through activities that can make them to be grouped or paired for cooperative learning activities. In second language (L2) learning, learners also work cooperatively on language-learning tasks, or they even achieve language learning goals collaboratively through communicative use of the target language.

Principle 6: A form of focus. Learners need to combine fluency with accuracy. One of the concerns of grammar teaching is to teach grammar clearly for the learners to understand the rules. Therefore, the focus on a practical communication approach must ensure a fairly traditional approach to teaching grammar, where learners spend much of their time learning remote linguistic structures in an arrangement determined and forced by a syllabus. In this approach, the meaning is often ignored.

Principle 7: Feedback that provides remedial. Feedback can be classified in two ways, positive and negative. Positive feedback confirms the truth of a learner's reply while the negative feedback shows learners' deficiencies.

There is a view that CLT leads to substitution of communicative competence in schools, thereby diminishing the prospects of the school's English HL skills development for the majority of learners, as other types of classroom activities are neglected (Toro, et al., 2018; Bruner, Sinwongsuwat & Radic-Bojanic, 2015). These authors aver that modelling, repetition, matching, and group work are the main techniques that teachers can use to improve learners' 'communicative skills; that these techniques have been commonly used to encourage learners' active participation in schools, although they have not been adequately maximised. Furthermore, it is argued that there are a variety of strategies which can provide learners with opportunities to understand English Home language, such as adopting culturally responsive instructional approaches (Cantor, et al., 2019).

One criticism of the CLT approach is that it is skewed in favour of native language speaking teachers (Zhou & Xiaochun, 2015). This implies that the CLT approach is mostly seen as straightforward grammar teaching because of its stress on fluency and accuracy, when, in fact, there should be less emphasis on grammatical accuracy because the focus is on conveying the

message. Thus, a distinctive feeling is that the disposition of the CLT is towards the errors of the learners, where mistakes are usually seen as indicators of weakness on the sides of the learners and the teachers. Some teachers see the approach of teaching communicative language as focusing a lot on communication skills where fluency is stressed even more than accuracy. According to Bruner, et al. (2015), the situation whereby learners acquire English HL comprehension skills provides insights into how language learners process language in the communicative language teaching approach. Zhou and Xiaochun (2015) agree that CLT primarily focuses on learners' progress through language-based issues, how their thoughts are articulated, and the way communicative acts are carried out. CLT seeks to teach communication skills in the target language and focuses on teachers as facilitators, not instructors. This technique is also a non-methodical framework, as no textbook is used to teach the target language and emphasis is on improving spoken sound skills before reading and writing. Thus, CLT is used at different levels to various age- groups, with higher skills, based on the previous experience and knowledge.

3.6.2 The Total Physical Response Approach

Nowadays, multi-sensory input is available: visual, audio, and kinaesthetic – and this is what constitutes the Total Physical Response (TPR) approach, as it has the potential to provide memorable follow-ups as opposed to isolated word-for- word comments. Further, these multi-sensory inputs allow learners to internalise feedback more quickly and retain what has been learned longer, while providing instructions for producing a special phenomenon in which "output-is-more-than-input" (Savic & Shin 2014). With multi-sensory inputs, learners can not only respond to the same statements used in training but also recognise the new commands. However, it is not easy to implement multi- sensory inputs. To do so successfully, teachers should have the ability and competence to use multi-media devices in teaching. It is much like successfully using suitable tricks and therapies, generating the curiosity of learners, and making them pay great attention to the classroom learning process (Ummah, 2017).

The TPR approach can be used to teach words associated with acts, guidance in the classroom, and storytelling. In order to foster interaction and improve listening fluency, teachers are advised to plan lessons thoughtfully with TPR in mind. Learners start to speak the target language once they have attained adequate listening fluency. Language acquisition would be

easy for children if they are connected with a specific word of physical activity and appear to prefer a physical response rather than a verbal response (Sari, 2015). Learning vocabulary, exercises or games may assist children to learn vocabulary and reinforce the brain connection. TPR involving game-like movements keeps learners engaged, productive, and generates a positive mood. The use of TPR has also been effective in enhancing vocabulary mastery, as demonstrated by the outcomes of the accomplishment of the learner before and after implementation.

Millsaps (2019) reports that it is amusing and simple for young learners to appreciate the TPR approach as it boosts their speed and mood. Thus, TPR can serve as a fun learning resource for vocabulary acquisition and assists learners to recall words that are insignificant in the lesson. The approach does not follow any formality: as long as the instructor is ready to teach, the learners will obey. Similarly, there is no age barrier or restriction to what learners can learn, to excel in the language, as Millsaps (2019) explains from his / her experiences:

- 3.6.2.1 Learners who are not used to such learning resources might find it embarrassing initially but as the teacher unpacks his or her actions, the learners will begin to feel happier to copy fast. Furthermore, if the learners work in group, they only have to perform for the whole class from time to time, as designed by the teacher.
- 3.6.2.2 It is really suitable for beginner levels.
- 3.6.2.3 Whilst it is clear that it is far more useful at lower levels because the target language lends itself to such activities, I have also used it successfully with Intermediate and Senior Phase levels. Teachers need to adapt the language accordingly.
- 3.6.2.4 These activities helped me to teach 'ways of walking' (stumble, stagger, tiptoe) to an advanced class – and cooking verbs to intermediate learners (whisk, stir, grate).
- 3.6.2.5 You cannot teach everything with it and if it is used a lot, it would become repetitive. I completely agree with this but, used in conjunction with other methods and techniques, it can be a successful and fun way of changing the dynamics and pace of a lesson.

Millsaps (2019) highlights the point that, typically, the instructor would be eager to carry out the tasks – and the learners happy to copy. However, if the learners are not used to the TPR approach, they may find themselves uncomfortable. Overall, the application of this approach has generally been effective and successful, with limited inaccuracies. The limitations of the

TPR usually lie in the teachers' inappropriate application of technique, which can bring difficulties with respect to teaching knowledgeable vocabulary or expressions. To mitigate this, in preparation, the teacher can write the words on a card with a picture, if appropriate.

Another limitation of the TPR approach is that it can be ineffective if the teacher uses it for a long period without switching to other activities that help to teach the target language, particularly considering that the TPR is made up of commands, that tend to neglect stories, pictures, and conversation practices of language.

The TPR is a method of teaching language by using physical gestures to respond to verbal feedback (Astutik & Megawat, 2019). This technique is an effort to mirror how their mother tongue is acquired by preverbal infants. This approach is an example of a language instructional approach which is based on 'understanding the language'. It serves three purposes: language play, physical play and imaginative play. The TPR approach is also described as a complete physical response which emphasises communication – entailing speech and action, organized with motion, order, voice, and physical activity synchronization (Astutik & Megawat, 2019; Ummah, 2017; Siti, 2017). The TPR approach is a commonly used tool for the implementation of vocabulary development in action and movement for learners in the Foundation Phase. Siti (2017) affirms the position that TPR is an appropriate method for teaching Foundation Phase English HL comprehension skills. The approach makes learners become good listeners and performers, as they are made to listen attentively and physically respond to orders from the teacher.

In concurrence, Astulik, Megawati and Aulina (2019) also contend that TPR is an appropriate approach for beginners and young learners in education in that it can be used to teach young learners on how to respond constructively to their desire to learn best through success. According to Astulik, et al. (2019), the TPR approach entails that while carrying out activities, learners should not talk, which makes the learners to build comprehension of listening skills before speaking and take appropriate time before they speak. The approach is seen as largely stress-free – as the brain and body work together to learn the target language easily and thoroughly. Thus, Astulik, et al. (2019) explain that the TPR is a growing approach to teaching beginners and that the physical dimension of the TPR learning cycle enables physical activity to be integrated and played into the language teaching activity. In the process, the main challenge is to get learners involved and their interest grows, they find themselves listening,

responding to orders and performing behaviours in line with the guidance and directives of the teacher. This involves understanding the shape and function of the lesson's object thereby allowing the learners to connect body movements to respective concepts. In addition, learning within the aegis of TPR can easily be evaluated by giving assertive and labelling commands.

Therefore, this approach has the potential to help learners acquire the espoused language competences and skills by being physically involved, notwithstanding that they may be coming from diverse language backgrounds. Learners' practical involvement in the activities that promote acquisition of the language competencies could, in turn, enhance their interest and enjoyment in learning the language. Overall, this approach encourages learners to practise different aspects of the language to attain the required understanding – in this case, of English HL comprehension skills.

Millsaps (2019) is of the opinion that there is no specific document to the TPR strategy. Nonetheless, there is a need for identification and specification of the content to be addressed in the classroom exercises. In the classroom, teachers could use items such as books and puppets to articulate words for learners. In this regard, Millsaps (2019) opines that TPR is used to complement verbal speech for physical acts, including gestures and body language, with teachers using terms to help the learners equate meaning with phrases. This gives the learners a greater understanding of what is being conveyed. However, the TPR is not a stand-alone way of teaching but it needs to be paired with other equally useful techniques. It was an approach that was designed primarily to support beginner language learners in tandem with other approaches, to help learners to take full advantage of classroom time effectively. The approach seeks to simultaneously target the three main styles of learning: visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic. These three types of learning styles are accommodated when the words are spoken, interpreted and acted out. Thus, Millsaps (2019) outlines the advantages of using the TPR approach to teaching English HL communication skills to learners from diverse context language backgrounds as follows:

3.6.2.6 Teacher-centeredness: Learners need to understand what teachers will do or teach in the classrooms, rather than looking at each other or even being self-conscious about their way of speaking the target language.

3.6.2.7 Engaging shy learners: Helps to take the pressure off those who are paralyzed by the thought of speaking incorrectly or in front of their peers.

3.6.2.8 Time management: The use of TPR can promote effective time management in correspondence to actions related to reading and auditory instructions.

The TPR methodology is substantially a stress-free learning method in the teaching of communication skills in English HL. The learners are engaged in activities that promote cooperative activities that make them happy and are rewarded with feelings that accompany learning of new languages. Thus, this approach encourages more contact with learners, raises the curiosity of learners and enhances comprehension of the text. Qian (2017) reports that in the classroom, learners on TPR should be directed to use minimal terms and sentences.

However, the TPR approach does not compel learners to talk until they are ready to answer. Learners should learn in a relaxed atmosphere, stress-free, guided by the notion of recognising and rewarding the effort which the learner has made, while lowering the strain on the learner (Qian, 2017). Thus, the TPR approach has features that are beneficial to learning by beginners in the language, particularly the young learners. TPR is centred around the direction of speech and action in teaching English HL, especially to learners from diverse home language contexts in the Foundation Phase. It involves teaching songs, games and stories which attract young dynamic learners' attention because they are not yet at the level of learning from written texts.

Hugo, et al. (2016) note that in the Foundation Phase, the TPR approach can be used to teach listening and speaking to young learners. Young learners need to be more physically involved, as they have tremendous strength. However, they generally have very short attention spans and are closely associated with their surroundings – and they are more involved in both the abstract and the tangible. As Hugo, et al. (2016) point out, the perceptions of young learners come from the hands, eyes and ears, and that their physical environment is always in the forefront. If TPR tasks are games, it is ideal for kinaesthetic learners who learn better by doing something physically or by relating actions to memory. TPR provides visual programmes to learners who learn from the behaviour associated with the directions provided by visual indications, and audios that follow the visuals – while auditory learners benefit from the audio songs that the words and rhythms, associated with a particular movement (Hugo, et al., 2016).

Furthering this point, Millsaps (2019) opines that TPR can be effectively used in daily classroom routines, when teachers encourage their learners to understand and respond to basic

directions and movements in the classroom – such as lifting hands, standing up, sitting down and waving goodbye. So, the teacher can create visual comparisons with words that learners can understand and express themselves in the language (Astutik & Megawat, 2019). For instance, this could involve using and demonstrating words such as big, happy, small and sad.

It is important to note that children love food, cars, weather, and circumstances. So, it is important for teachers to, first, listen and consider the messages in the approach and determine if they are right or wrong. In particular, games are the most important component of TPR as they support quick comprehension of different concepts and meanings by the learners (Astutik & Megawat, 2019). Hence, choosing simple, repetitive games that can promote understanding and memorability is useful. Memorable games help to build conceptual links between the words and their meanings tremendously.

3.6.3 The Immersion Approach

The Immersion Approach to language immersion is a complex subject that involves several different languages, educational, social, and political aspects. The approach entails that to fully attain English HL skills the learner must always surround him or herself with the target language. It is claimed that this approach based scientifically proven ways in which the brain functions and behaves, as a result of exposure to a language and the attendant culture in everyday life (Chen & Modlin, 2019). Accordingly, the notion of language immersion is a method which aims to teach people an additional language when the language being taught is primarily used for instruction purposes. Modlin (2019) concurs with Kersten (2015) that the figurative use of the word ‘immersion’ is construed as a challenge to the use of the term ‘bilingual language learning’ and, instead, emphasize the notion of a language in which learners are ‘wrapped up’. Modlin (2019) and Kersten (2015) highlight the following characteristics of language immersion systems:

- 3.6.3.1 L2 is a medium of instruction.
- 3.6.3.2 The immersion curriculum matches the local L1 curriculum.
- 3.6.3.3 Explicit support exists for L1.
- 3.6.3.4 The package targets for additive bilingualism.
- 3.6.3.5 Experience in L2 is limited to the classroom.
- 3.6.3.6 Learners enter with related levels of L2 expertise.

3.6.3.7 The teachers are bilingual.

3.6.3.8 The classroom beliefs are that of the local L1 community.

By moving to an English HL speaking country to study the language, the learner would be required to use the language outside the classroom, either for a long or short period of time. The approach to immersion in educational programmes adopts three modes: early full immersion, partial immersion, and subsequent partial immersion (Chen, 2019; Kersten, 2015). Explaining this approach within the Canadian context, Chen (2019: 473) states that full early immersion progresses in three stages:

The first stage begins in kindergarten and ends in a second or third grade. The whole process of education and teaching is carried out in a single environment of French as a second language. The second stage is from grade two or grade three to grade six, in which English and French are both used as instructional and media language in education and teaching. The third stage is from the seventh grade to the end of secondary education.

The second paradigm is immersion in medium term, which leaps over the French immersion in the kindergarten and lower grades and begins to use French as the instructional language directly from the fourth grade. The particular circumstances of the learners and their communities usually decide this model. The third type is late immersion, whereby the second language is delayed to later stages of the primary school or beginning of junior secondary.

Chen (2019) further explains that there is a comprehensive type which integrates the above three types into one which is completed in three steps: the first step is followed in kindergarten, grade one and is completed in grade three – 100% French environment. This is done to provide a solid foundation in French. The second step is to start offering English in grade three to cultivate learners' English language cognitive ability, appreciation and application ability, as well as a bilingual awareness and learning ability. The third step is that in junior secondary, French accounts for 40% of the language of instruction. and 30% in senior secondary (equivalent of FET in South Africa). This is versatile to the degree that the learners, their families, and local education criteria, which combine three modes into one, are achieved in three phases.

Kersten (2015) notes that the language immersion approach starts with the need to understand what material is to be learned at each point. The teacher needs to be familiar with "comprehensible effort," which stresses the exposure of the learners to new contexts words and patterns. The familiar language is constantly joined by teachers with new words and new knowledge. For that, the learners must constantly develop their language skills. In fact, language development in an immersion approach closely mimics normal first language learning, in which a child is actively speaking.

Bakhov and Honcharenko-Zakrevska (2018:2) explain the notion of language immersion environment as follows:

Immersion in a language environment is an approach to teaching a foreign language where usual educational activities are carried out in the foreign language. This means that the new language is a means of teaching as well as the subject of teaching. Students enrolled in an immersion program acquire the necessary language skills to understand and discuss the subject established by the school curriculum.

In all, there are five Higher Immersion Teaching Skills encapsulated in the ability to use images, gestures, body language, expressions, patterning, and movement to accompany Kersten verbal signals (2015). In this respect, teachers use any instructional techniques available to them to help learners learn a foreign language in practical ways. Within the context of this study, to achieve the intended outcomes, the following guidelines may be followed to enable learners improve their English HL comprehension skills:

3.6.3.9 As learners progress toward higher levels of proficiency, they are supported and urged to stay in one language and discouraged from mixing the two languages.

3.6.3.10 In immersion classrooms, teachers must encourage learners to give extensive and diverse responses. For instance, ask learners to expand and support their answers with illustrations. Following up in this way helps learners to practise a wide range of expressions that will keep on incorporating fresh words and patterns into their creative collection.

3.6.3.11 Teachers should frequently assess learners' English HL comprehension skills development by monitoring their understanding through questioning

techniques and formative assessments. Teachers should also encourage learners to use more vocabulary, as they continue to develop their English HL comprehension skills.

- 3.6.3.12 In response to the diverse learning backgrounds of learners, teachers must develop the ability to think strategically about the various types of learners' communications.

3.6.4 The audio-lingual approach

Ghofur, et al. (2017) define the audio language approach as a style which can be used effectively and realistically to teach foreign languages, including English HL comprehension skills, to learners from different language backgrounds at the Foundation Phase level. In concurrence, Sanoto (2017) explains that the audio-lingual approach to language teaching relies on repetition and drilling – thereby ensuring that the involvement of the learners is significant to the outcome of the class exercise, which can be varied in their reactions and responses. Expanding on this view, Matamoros-González, et al. (2017) avow that the audio-lingual approach addresses the need to improve the oral skills of language learners by involving the learners in different target language listening exercises and language drills. On their part, Natsir and Sanjaya (2014) aver that the audio-lingual method is capable of teaching learners a new language through the use of dialogues or text reading, and to perform related drills. This approach enhances learners to understand grammar and to practise the language rules through different forms of exercises before patterns are formed in the new language and speech is finally embraced. In the process, learners develop a new form of vocal activity by listening, imitating and performing guided tasks. The prerequisites for this strategy Matamoros-González, et al. (2017) are:

- 3.6.4.1 Language learning is a process of habit formation, and good habits are formed by giving correct responses.
- 3.6.4.2 The language is oral; a spoken form is presented or well understood before written form.
- 3.6.4.3 Translation or use of the native tongue is discouraged as learners are, in the context of this study, encouraged to learn English HL.
- 3.6.4.4 Learners adhere to the rules of the language through practice, so this approach to the teaching of grammar is essentially inductive (as in the direct method).

The classroom is one platform which has been identified as an important one for achieving adequate audio language practice. Gonzalez (2017) describes as important for classroom practice that dialogues and drills form the basis of audio-lingual classroom activities because they (dialogues and drills) provide a framework for the language through repetition and memorization. After conversation, the instructor chooses unique grammar patterns that become the subject of various types of exercises, as learners can remember. Thus, according to Machado, Ramos, and Ramos (2016), this approach focuses on improving learners' awareness of the proper pronunciation that can enable the learner to respond quickly and accurately. In this regard, Machado, et al. (2016) propose that an audio-lingual solution works as follows:

- 3.6.4.5 Learners listen to the dialogue to comprehend the text.
- 3.6.4.6 The dialogue is adjusted to the learners' interests, relative to their age level.
- 3.6.4.7 The key structure of the dialogue is used as the basis for pattern drills of different kinds.
- 3.6.4.8 The learners refer to their textbook, and follow-up reading; subsequently, writing and/or vocabulary, based on the dialogue, are introduced. As proficiency increases, learners may create their own structures on given topics.

3.6.5 The bilingual approach

Durga (2018) and Enama (2016) opine that the bilingual solution permits the use of two languages by teachers and learners to communicate in English, as one finds in South Africa in some provinces where several regional languages are used for communication. The target language is to be mastered, and the other mother tongues are used to reach the target language (in this case, English). This approach provides learners with additional languages. Thus, the bilingual approach appears to be appropriate for the various culturally diverse contexts in which people speak different regional languages (Durga, 2018). Other significant aspects of this approach are briefly presented below:

3.6.5.1 Principles of the bilingual approach

The bilingual approach is the synthesis of the direct form and the form of grammar-translation, while noting that the teaching-learning method, without repetition, is central to the learner's

mother tongues. The proponents of the bilingual solution believe in reorganizing the language situation when teaching comprehension skills in English HL (Santhosh & Meenakshi, 2015; Quinn, Wagner, Petscher & Lopez, 2015). Santhosh and Meenakshi (2015) believe that by using their mother tongues, learners can understand words and sentences in foreign languages more easily. However, the instructor should not create any unrealistic conditions when teaching or illustrating the meaning of the target language's terms and sentences. Accordingly, the use of the mother tongue is to measure actions in the following terms:

- Bilingual method assists learners who use their mother tongues to clarify learnings.
- The learners are properly exposed to sentence patterns in pieces of training, which are not delivered in the Grammar Translation Method. Learners are not allowed to practise in their mother tongue.
- L1 is used by the teacher to mark the message or explanation.
- The teacher provides meanings in L1 for meaningful parts or sentences.
- This method supports teachers to be creative in their teaching in order to enable their learners to understand the meanings of conversational words.
- An average teacher of English can teach with this method without any intricate preparation.

Thus, it is argued that the bilingual approach promotes fluency as well as precision, thereby strengthening the acquisition of the skills of the foreign language by stressing the art of expression and pattern. Accordingly, by improving learners 'precision, the meanings of new words are defined in the foreign language, as they are in the learners' mother tongue. This can be done with no teaching aids, although the bilingual strategy has some barriers, which include:

- Too much attention is placed on grammatical buildings in day-by-day conversation.
- It requires the teacher to be skilful (fluent) in L1 and L2 for the strategy to be effective.
- There is too much dependency by learners on their home language.

3.6.5.2 Advantages of the bilingual approach

This approach emphasizes language practice and offers greater opportunities for learners to gain English HL comprehension skills (Santhosh & Meenakshi, 2015). It is applicable to both

rural and urban schools and takes advantage of linguistic patterns developed during mother-tongue learning. This approach provides learners with opportunities to study two languages to save the teacher's time, money and labour. It also encourages, even the average teachers of English HL, to successfully teach lessons. Conversely, the situation does not require teaching aids and is, therefore, ideal for all learning styles.

3.6.5.3 Disadvantages of the bilingual approach

As a limitation of this approach, it is argued that it is still being experimented, and takes no note of factors such as reading and writing (Santhosh & Meenakshi, 2015). This situation could neglect systematic grammar teaching and make learners passive listeners – thereby making learners unable to think freely and become dependent on their mother tongue. Further, it is argued that providing a proper mother-tongue communicator in both languages is, so, this will limit the effectiveness of the approach. Finally, it is argued that differences in the features between the two languages is likely to confuse learners, unless handled really well.

3.7 TEACHERS' STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE LEARNERS' READING FOR UNDERSTANDING

The views of teachers about teaching English HL are influenced by their own learning experiences developed while in college (Madikiza, et al., 2018; Abdi & Asadi, 2015). More often than not, what student teachers have to do in the classroom after leaving college is not always suggested. Thus, these teachers end up using their own experiences, which end up having a great impact on their teaching options for teaching English HL comprehension skills. The DBE requires all teachers to implement the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), as encapsulated in CAPS. However, at Foundation Phase level, the teaching of English HL continues to pose specific challenges for teachers most of whom are, themselves, not fluent in the English language. Ilter (2018) opines that learner must read and answer questions about what they are reading as a demonstration of their comprehension of new subject matter, including building and defining what they are reading. This is more so, considering that literacy communication skills are needed and used in various subject content contexts.

Gilakjani and Sabouri (2015) also concur with the view that the beliefs of teachers are established during their teaching development, integrated with personal knowledge about

basics of education. They further note that the origins of teacher beliefs may also be the result of cultural and social values generated from their interactions with society and school cultures. In this regard, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2015) posit that there are three main sources of teachers' beliefs: personal experience, instructional experience and structured knowledge experience – including the relationship between cultural and religious practices of teaching English HL comprehension skills.

Depending on the activities that characterize the teachers' interpretation of teaching and learning, teaching is accepted when it is appealing to learners. The values and understandings of teachers' influence both the theoretical sections of teacher training and the conduct of teaching, while creeds of teachers are established during their lifetime (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2015). These unfold through different factors, such as behaviour, interactions, and others. Many values are taken from the school and societal cultures, and others are influenced historically by common experiences. However, there could be contradictions between teachers' values and beliefs that are shaped by their personal experiences vis-à-vis those shaped from their interpretation of the expectations of the curriculum. Overall, the teachers' creeds come from four sources, namely (a) content awareness, (b) instructional resources, (c) formal teacher education, and (d) experience that is: the teaching beliefs of teachers regarding their positions, the positions of learners, the goals of science and their teaching methods – including personal religious beliefs derived from one's concepts of religions (Gilakjani & Sabouri 2015).

There are two ways to understand things: formal and informal. In the formal education, formal teacher training is undertaken, in addition to school or at university level education. The informal experience is seen in daily interactions of teachers who can control, help, question, or alter their beliefs and knowledge (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2015). In this regard, both informal and formal interactions do have socialization effects, implying that the ways in which teachers approach the teaching English HL at schools could be a product of both formal and informal education.

There are seven effective cognitive strategies and techniques which can be significantly adopted to teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds. These seven cognitive techniques and strategies can promote in-depth attainment of English HL comprehension skills. These strategies and techniques are

discussed as follows:

3.7.1 Activating and using background knowledge

This technique stimulates the context awareness of the learners and can contribute to their understanding of comprehension skills (Gilakjani, 2016). The knowledge is made up of experiences from the individual's world, as espoused by the schema theory, which makes prior knowledge imperative for understanding new content.

As already explained, the schema theory is based on how people need to have their prior knowledge activated in order to learn new things. This theory explains how cognitive structures, or schemata, are constructed by learners from their experiences and knowledge. As people learn new information through experience and reading, these schemata develop and shift with every additional knowledge or experience of the learner. For instance, a child's schema evolves and can be enhanced as the child gets more encounters with a lot of different environments. It is for this reason that Gilakjani (2016) avers that cognitive scientist hold the view that the comprehension abilities of successful learners are permanently linked to their prior knowledge of new texts. Once they start reading well, it triggers their schema and the schema impacts on how they interpret and respond to the text. Schemata are especially important for a learner to recognize competences which will assist him or her to better understand the new text.

3.7.1.1 Monitoring comprehension

Gilakjani (2016) contends monitoring allows learners with strong abilities to track their English HL comprehension skills and to know what to understand and apply as correct strategies. Successful learners, in early grades, demonstrate the monitoring strategy. Strategies that can effectively help learners to develop their comprehension skills in English HL are known as the "fix-up" strategies (Gilakjani, 2016). Using comprehension techniques for tracking, the teacher is able to determine learners' complexity of understanding. The learners are trained to think about what delays their understanding on that level, as well as to understand what they do not know – and make any learning deficiencies known to the teacher. The teacher encourages learners to be observant of what they understand and helps them with

control techniques. This method is an effective technique that can be used to overcome the difficulties of learners attaining English HL comprehension skills.

3.7.1.2 Making inferences

Gilakjani (2016) states that good readers judge and have influence over their interpretation of conclusions and are able to clarify the intent of reading by previewing the text prior to reading. Successful learners are able to track their comprehension while reading, changing their reading speed to match the text's difficulty. This method develops the comprehension skills of learners by enabling them to integrate the relevant previous knowledge and the content of the new text. Successful understanding abilities are important for the learner to be able to use inferences, which may then be used as reference points to track one's comprehension skills in English HL. Some of the tracking strategies are:

- Detecting where difficulties occur during English HL comprehension skills tasks.
- Ascertaining what the trouble is while reading.
- Looking back through the text with a clear mind of understanding what has been read.
- Looking onward in the text for information that might help to determine the difficulties the learner might experience.

3.7.1.3 Graphic and semantic organizers

Graphic organizers in a text, or using diagrams, to explain concepts and relationships between concepts are very useful apparatuses for visualizing and arranging summaries for learners (Gilakjani, 2016). Graphic organizers are identified by various names, such as maps, blogs, graphs, tables, frames, clusters, and others. Graphic organizers can help readers focus on concepts and how they relate to other concepts, regardless of the label. Graphic organizers help learners interpret and understand textbooks and picture books. More specifically, graphic organizers can:

- Support learners' focus on text structure differences between fiction and nonfiction as they read the story.
- Offer learners with tools they can use to scrutinize and display relationships in a text understanding.

- Assist learners to write well-organized truthful concepts about a text to show knowledge.

3.7.1.4 Answering questions

The teacher is expected to craft relevant questions during the teaching of English HL comprehension skills. Teaching learners to answer questions motivates them to concentrate on comprehension ability difficulties and to take the required actions to respond to problems (Gilakjani, 2016). From the learners' answers, the teacher is able to correct the errors and provide relevant feedback and guidance during question-answer classroom sessions on guided reading. In doing so, the teacher recognizes the capacity and skills of the learners.

Thus, with regard to answering the teacher's questions as an approach to enhancing learners' attainment of English HL comprehension skills, Gilakjani (2016) the questions be authentic by:

- providing learners with a purpose for understanding the text,
- focusing learners' attention on what they are to learn,
- assisting learners to think deeply as they read,
- encouraging learners to monitor their English HL comprehension and
- helping learners to review content and relate what they have learnt to what they previously knew.

Accordingly, Gilakjani (2016) encourages learners to learn how to respond better to questions using a Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) approach. In using the QAR approach, learners are asked to show if the information they used to answer questions about the text was textually clear or related to the text or information from the experience of their respective language backgrounds.

As a general point, Gilakjani (2016) opines that by the time learners reach Grade One, there are four different types of questions learners will have been exposed to:

- Questions found right in the text where learners are asked to find the right answer in a sentence or paragraph.
- Questions based on the recall of facts that can be found directly in the text.
- Questions requiring learners to relate their prior knowledge before answering the

questions.

- Questions based on learners' prior knowledge and experiences, whereby reading the text, *per se*, may not be helpful to them in answering this type of question.

3.7.1.5 Generating and asking questions

This approach assists learners to integrate knowledge, defining key ideas and summarizing knowledge (Gilakjani, 2016). Learners engaged in this approach understand what they are reading and are able to formulate or create their own questions about the text. The learners are conscious of how to respond to questions, while they learn to ask themselves questions involving a combination of knowledge from different parts of the document (Gilakjani, 2016). The approach also allows learners to work out some aspects, and be aware, of the text. Questioning and creating questions makes the learners interested in what they are reading, as they question themselves. This helps them to be comfortable and understand how to develop their understanding of the English Home Language.

3.7.1.6 Recognizing story structure

Through instruction on the structure of stories, learners learn to define the content categories and constantly learn how to discern the structure of the narrative through the maps of the plot (Gilakjani, 2016). Story structure training strengthens Foundation Phase learners' acquisition of communication skills in English HL – even if they may be from diverse language backgrounds. This strategy pulls up the minds of the learners to learn to ask questions on their own during lessons on comprehension skills in English HL. As the teacher asks questions, while using the maps of the story, learners should be able to recognize the structure of the story. This strategy helps learners to, *inter alia*, identify the main character, where and when the story occurred as well as how the story ends.

3.7.1.7 Summarising

This approach assists learners to integrate knowledge, define key ideas and summarize knowledge (Gilakjani, 2016). To achieve this, learners have to understand what they are reading and have the ability to create questions. They must be conscious of how to respond to questions, while they learn to ask themselves questions involving the combination of knowledge from different parts of the document (Gilakjani, 2016). The approach also allows

learners to work hard and to be independent of the text. Asking and creating questions makes learners engaged with the text. This helps them to be comfortable and understand how to develop their own understanding of English HL. This technique also motivates learners to practise the style of summarizing before applying the text to their experience and how to define key themes without omitting key information.

3.7.1.8 Purpose of using simple teaching strategy instruction to teach English HL comprehension skills

According to Gilakjani (2016), simple teaching strategies are particularly effective in teaching English HL comprehension skills. This is accomplished through specific guidance, where teachers inform learners why and when which strategies should be used, and how to apply them. Furthermore, Gilakjani (2016) advances the following four steps as constituting clear instruction-directed description, teacher modelling, guidance, and implementation.

- Direct explanation: The teacher explains to learners why the strategy helps comprehension and when to apply the strategy.
- Modelling: The teacher models, or demonstrates, how to apply the strategy, usually by "thinking aloud" while reading the text that the learner is using.
- Guided practice: The teacher guides and assists learners as they learn how and when to apply the strategy.
- Application: The teacher helps learners to practise the strategy until they can apply it independently.

The successful teaching of this English HL comprehension skills technique can be done through cooperative learning, which entails learners working together as small group members (Gilakjani, 2016). The teacher's role is to clearly explain the learning tasks. Cooperative learning training has effectively been used to teach English HL communication skills. Through cooperative learning, learners work together to interpret texts and help each other learn and respond to questions. This is what makes this an effective technique for developing English HL comprehension skills. As learners work in groups, teachers help them, not only to understand how to work in groups, but also give guidance on the substantive matters at hand. Learning to read is an ability that primary school learners need to develop further.

Comprehension skills include the relation of text to grasp the syntax or prior information (Rumelhart, 1980). Teaching comprehension skills in South Africa's English HL classroom, teachers come across struggling learners who have difficulty interpreting the text. Therefore, approaches are required to expand the current awareness of learners and build a theoretical structure to which new concepts can be added. Importantly, pre-reading techniques can be applied carefully to help struggling learners to grasp what they are reading and to build interest in English HL lessons as a way of supporting them to become fluent readers. Klapwijk (2015) advances the Establish, Maintain and Consolidate (EMC) strategy as an important technique for enhancing English comprehension skills (see Figure 3.3).

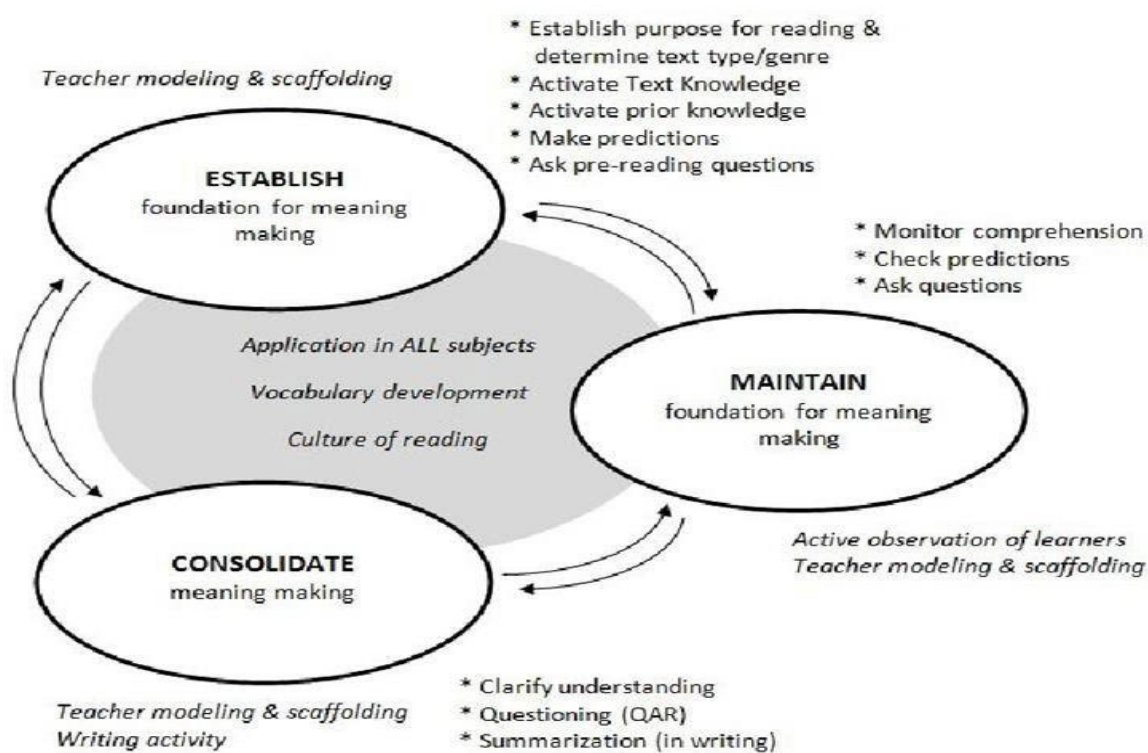


Figure 3.3 The EMC strategy instruction framework (Source: Klapwijk, 2011; 2015:4)

According to Figure 3.3, teachers have a significant role to play in teaching English HL comprehension skills. Quite evidently, the EMC strategy instruction framework integrates three important elements of ‘establishing foundation for meaning’, ‘maintaining foundation for meaning making’, and ‘consolidating meaning making.’ In turn, these reinforce Vygotsky’s ZPD – in as much as they embrace both the Schema Theory and most of what emerged from the literature review. More specifically, teacher modelling and scaffolding are direct aspects of Vygotsky’s ZPD. Accordingly, through the teacher’s strategy of establishing

purpose for reading and determining text type or genre, activating text knowledge and prior knowledge, engage in reflection by making predictions and asking pre-reading questions much can be achieved by way of teaching English HL comprehension skills. This approach is further enhanced by monitoring learners' comprehension of the intended skills, checking the accuracy of the predictions they made and asking further questions to enhance comprehension. Subsequently, the teacher consolidates learners' understanding on the basis of the feedback received, which may involve offering further clarifications. Thus, teachers can achieve a lot when there are clearly defined approaches that can enhance the classroom pedagogy to give learners good learning experience, especially when they come from diverse language backgrounds. The model in Figure 3.3 appears to be a good guide in this respect.

3.7.1.9 Challenges of teaching English HL comprehension skills

Much as various comprehension skills can enhance the teaching of English HL, some factors militate against the effective use of these strategies. These include a lack of proper teacher education. Teachers appear to lack adequate experience in teaching communication skills in South African schools (Klapwijk, 2016). Furthermore, continuing professional teacher development (CPTD), particularly related to the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds, has been lacking – or at best inadequate and irregular. Most learning seems to concentrate on reading instruction and teaching learners to decipher meanings from texts (Klapwijk, 2016). As a result, for most teachers, teaching English HL comprehension skills is frustrating and challenging, in addition to being time-consuming (Pressley & Beard El-Dinary, 1997; cited in Klapwijk, 2015). Thus, without professional growth, teachers can experience difficulties implementing strategies to promote learners' attainment of English HL comprehension skills. Teachers seem unconvinced about the impact of strategic teaching on the success of their learners and prefer to provide 'direct proof' of the intervention or process on the performance of their learners (Klapwijk, 2015). This implies that teachers are concerned with how learners' English HL comprehension skills can be enhanced.

With regard to CPTD, Klapwijk (2015) observes that teachers do not take up strategic instruction due to some historical reasons relating to the teaching some of the English HL-related communication skills – such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In other words, because 'language problems are in the language classroom,' teachers of other subjects

necessarily presume that any language-related problems (spelling, comprehension, writing) are the problem of the language teacher, or worse, the problem of the learner.

Conversely, teacher training on competence, with respect to using certain techniques, appears to be limited to comprehension skills for prospective 'language' teachers of English HL. Klapwijk (2015) further argues that the teaching of English HL comprehension skills is not just the responsibility of the language teacher, but that every teacher in the school is responsible for recognizing difficulties which learners may be exhibiting in English HL comprehension skills. This point stresses the need for every teacher to acquire explicit comprehension skills to be able to assist learners to attain the expected level for English comprehension skills as they pursue every subject in the school. Thus, the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from various language backgrounds should be part of the normal skills of each teacher. This will eradicate discrepancies and disconnectedness in classroom teaching. However, Klapwijk (2015) notes that teachers tend not to like taking instruction in English HL comprehension skills and teacher training institutions tend to be ineffective in incorporating the teaching of English HL comprehension skills in their curricula for all student teachers. Therefore, not all the teachers in a school are adequately trained to intervene where English HL comprehension abilities of learners prove to be weak.

3.8 EMPIRICAL STUDIES ABOUT TEACHING OF ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION SKILLS

In a study conducted in South Africa, Waddington (2017) argued that while improving text forms in the field of comprehension skills strategies, a minor attempt has been made to explain how teachers understand comprehension skills strategies and how to apply them in their classes. Accordingly, no study appeared to have been conducted on the understanding and application of teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners by teachers of different language backgrounds. Similarly, little appears to be known about teachers' decisions on their choices of which approaches to use for teaching English HL communication skills, particularly at Grade One level in the Foundation Phase (Waddington, 2017). Furthermore, Waddington avers those strategies for teaching English HL comprehension skills show a positive relationship between how they are perceived by learners versus the teachers.

In a related study conducted by Jian-ping and Li-sha (2016), applying the schema theory to the teaching of learners in China's Junior Primary School, the findings indicated that this method was effective in bringing about learners' awareness and building their skills of interpreting reading material along with the content. The study reported that learners needed to trigger their current schemata prior to the pre-reading activities, while teachers needed to direct their interpretation of the text in order to improve the language awareness of the learners. Furthermore, the results showed that with respect to English HL comprehension abilities, learners lacked the necessary mental schemata to read texts with understanding. Conversely, the process of teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds required the application of *language* schema, the *content* schema and *form* schema to be integrated.

From their study conducted in India, Vishnevskaja and Zhou (2019) opined that English HL teaching was a process that emphasized the use of music in the classroom to increase the pace at which a new teacher could interact with learners. This suggested that teachers could make the English HL teaching cycle exciting and motivating to Grade One learner, especially with the introduction of music. In the world of learners with diverse language backgrounds, the songs are a mirror image of the current picture in society, reflecting the worries, anxieties, joys, and ideals of the community. Accordingly, even a different culture becomes best understood through the songs.

In a study from Iran, Gilakjani (2016) posited that learners must develop comprehension skills through the styles, models, and theories of English HL comprehension skills. The extant literature review, as reflected in this chapter, has showed that reading approaches play a significant role in developing learners' English comprehension abilities. Consequently, successful approaches for developing comprehension skills are considered to have a significant impact in capacitating learners to understand English HL.

3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter reiterated the objectives of the study by exploring the types of strategies employed by teachers to teach English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners

from diverse language backgrounds. The chapter explained how teachers can ensure learners read with understanding when teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds, strategies that can enhance the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds. The need to assist learners to read with understanding and to find out the kind of challenges teachers encounter in the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds was argued. Overall, bringing together the schema theory and Vygotsky's ZPD is one of the unique contributions of this study. This has allowed the study to benefit from the many extant empirical studies which have followed Vygotsky's theory – a theory that places a very high premium on learners' prior knowledge and experiences as very important precursors to successful teaching and learning. This is the meeting point between the schema theory and Vygotsky's ZPD and the combination of these two theoretical perspectives, buttressed by findings of the empirical studies cited in this chapter, has provided a very solid theoretical foundation for this study. The next chapter focuses on the research methodology followed in this study.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a description of the techniques and procedures for generating, analysing and evaluating data, followed in this research. It introduces the preferred research paradigm and the research methodology that were used to collect, register and analyse data. In this study, a qualitative research paradigm was used. Strategies for data collection suitable for a qualitative research design are clarified and justifications provided. A case study research design was used to gain a better understanding of what happens to Foundation Phase learners from different language backgrounds when they are taught English HL comprehension skills. In this regard, the researcher gives a motivation for choosing the case study as an appropriate research design for this study, as it seeks to build a rich and deep-rooted understanding of the area being investigated. For this study, this referred to an in-depth understanding of what actually occurs in teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners in the first year of schooling from diverse language backgrounds. The experience of teachers teaching English HL comprehension skills in Grade One was also part of the research, so the teaching methods they used were of special interest to the study – as well as their reasons for using the teaching approaches they used. The study locale was one urban school in KwaZulu- Natal's King Cetshwayo District.

4.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To recap, the research objectives of this study were:

- To explore the strategies employed by Foundation Phase teachers to teach English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds.
- To assess how Foundation Phase teachers, ensure that all learners can read with understanding while teaching English Home Language comprehension skills.
- To establish how teachers' beliefs about their teaching strategies assist Foundation Phase learners from diverse home language backgrounds to learn English Home Language comprehension skills, including reading with understanding.

- To find out the challenges Foundation Phase teachers encounter in the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds.

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm can be defined as a mental model or system of thought or belief, within which truth is interpreted (Riyami, 2015). It describes the researcher's philosophic focus on ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods in a research project. Bertram and Christiansen (2020) explain the idea of a research paradigm as one's vision of the universe; how the person perceives the world. A research paradigm is also characterized as a context that is guided and / or influenced by people's belief systems about how the world should be perceived (Cohen, et al., 2018). Likewise, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017: 26) define the term 'paradigm' to refer to "the abstract beliefs and principles that shape how a researcher sees the world, and how s/he interprets and acts within that world." It is, thus, "the conceptual lens through which the researcher examines the methodological aspects of their research project to determine the research methods that will be used and how the data will be analysed" Kivunja and Kuyini (2017: 26). The authors go further and state that paradigms are very important in research "because they provide beliefs and dictates, which, for scholars in a particular discipline, influence what should be studied, how it should be studied, and how the results of the study should be interpreted."

Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) describe positivism, as the research paradigm for the natural sciences and interpretivism, as the research paradigm for social sciences – based on the notion that physical objects are fundamentally different from human being and cannot therefore be studied from the same philosophical foundations and assumptions. For other researchers there are three research paradigms, namely quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007; Guest, 2012; Poni, 2014). To Pham (2018) there are three research paradigms: positivism, interpretivism and critical inquiry, while Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 109) describe four research paradigms, namely: positivism, postpositivist, critical theory and constructivism. To these four, Sławecki (2018) adds the *participatory* paradigm, which is similar in concept to the *mixed methods*. Goldkuhl (2012) refers to pragmatism, which is also similar in concept to mixed methods. Those who define interpretivism as a research paradigm include Trauth (2001) and

Goldkuhl (2012).

Essentially, one's study model has to do with people's beliefs regarding a specific phenomenon. Creswell and Poth (2018) opine that a paradigm can be understood either as an approach or a design. So, there are some paradigms which are suitable for quantitative approach while there are others which fit into qualitative research approaches while some paradigms are appropriate for mixed methods research approaches (Creswell & 2018).

Bertram and Christiansen (2020) came up with three categories in their work in social science research to describe the views and opinions of people on how to observe the environment and gain an understanding of the various phenomena in it, namely, ontology, methodology and epistemology. Truth is the key concern of ontology – the substance of the phenomena being examined (Cohen, et al., 2020). As the analysis of being, ontology is characterized by Creswell and Poth (2018) as addressing the basic question: what is it?

On the other hand, existence and modes of knowledge are concerned with epistemology (Cohen, et al., 2020), which focuses on how to develop, gain, and communicate information to other individuals. Epistemology seeks to answer the question of what knowing entails. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that epistemology pertains to the relationship between a researcher in the quest for understanding of a given phenomenon and what can be learned about it.

Another branch of the study model, methodological inference, is essentially concerned with the ways and techniques that people use to understand the environment. It is an action plan for the development of information and techniques used to gain knowledge of the environment (Cohen, et al., 2018). In describing methodological assumptions, Creswell, and Poth (2018, p.21) note that the key question in this category is: how can a researcher find out what they think can be learned about a specific phenomenon? As a consequence, questions such as why, when, from where, when, and how data are obtained and analysed, are answered.

Cohen, et al. (2018, p.21) point out that the three model assumptions are intricately related

to each other in such a way that one can tell the ontological and epistemological knowledge by looking at the methods used to gather data and how to interpret the data – and the assumptions that drive the analysis. Cohen, et al. (2018) further claim that, overall, these assumptions influence the design of the study. The current researcher considered the interpretive research model to be most fitting for this study, as the overriding research paradigm.

4.4 QUALITATIVE / INTERPRETATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM

Some researchers argue that because “interpretation exists in all types of scientific studies, be they quantitative or qualitative,” (Gummesson, 2003) it would be misleading to refer to one type of research as ‘interpretative’ as an exclusive defining characteristic of that particular type of research. Indeed, in all types of research, we find theories playing a major role in directing the research process. However, “interpretive methods of research start from the position that our knowledge of reality, including the domain of human action, is a social construction by human actors. Our theories concerning reality are ways of making sense of the world, and shared meanings are a form of intersubjectivity rather than objectivity. Earlier, Schwandt (2000: 210) echoed this point that “all research is interpretive, and we face a multiplicity of methods that are suitable for different kinds of understandings.” Much earlier, Geertz (1973, p 9) made an important point, in this regard, that in social sciences “what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to.” This speaks to both the subjectivity of the meaning-making process and the resultant knowledge claims.

However, over the years, the challenge has been in researchers’ conceptualisation and consistent use of terminologies to refer to the term paradigm vis-à-vis approach, design and method – among others. Creswell (2009) prefers the term ‘worldview,’ while acknowledging that other authors prefer different terms to describe these basic sets of “beliefs that guide action” (Guba, 1990: 17). Lincoln and Guba (2000) and Mertens (1998) refer to these ‘sets of beliefs’ as constituting ‘paradigms.’ For Crotty (1998), they are called epistemologies and ontologies, while Neuman (2000) prefers to call them ‘broadly conceived research methodologies.’ Creswell (2009, p 3) goes further and refers to qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods as “selected strategies of inquiry.” For this

reason, he sees them as “approaches” and “designs” (Creswell, 2009, p 3).

Jackson II, Drummond and Camara (2007: 21) refer to the ‘interpretive approach’ in their statement that ‘qualitative research’ is primarily concerned about “understanding human beings’ experiences in a humanistic, *interpretive approach*.” This adds to the confusion as to which of the two terms is the higher order organising concept (paradigm) between ‘qualitative research’ and ‘interpretive research.’ So, one contentious point which emerges from this is whether or not the terms ‘qualitative’ and ‘interpretive’ refer to the same notion about research. Goldkuhl (2012: 136) construes interpretivism “as the dominant research paradigm for qualitative research” – implying that qualitative research is an aspect of the interpretive research paradigm. Similarly, Trauth (2001, p 7) explains that “interpretivism is the lens most frequently influencing the choice of qualitative methods.”

For their part, Myers & Avison (2002, p 5) aver that ‘qualitative’ is not synonymous with ‘interpretive’ because qualitative research may or may not be “interpretive, depending on the underlying philosophical assumptions of the researcher.” As Trauth further elaborates, (2001, p 15) “this is because basic views on knowledge in pragmatism and interpretivism differ” as it appears that “as a qualitative researcher you either adopt (a) an interpretive stance aiming for understanding that is appreciated for being interesting, or (b) a pragmatist stance aiming for constructive knowledge that is appreciated for being useful in action.” However, this dichotomisation may not be necessary as some pragmatic research projects can also be interesting, and vice versa.

To exacerbate the confusion even further, Creswell, Hanson, Clark and Morales (2007: 238) state that “*qualitative researchers use various interpretive paradigms* to address these assumptions, such as positivist or postpositivist, constructivist, critical, and feminist-poststructural.” (Emphasis mine). In this respect, Creswell, et al. (2007) construe ‘positivism or post positivism, constructivism, critical theory and feminist-poststructuralism’ as interpretive research paradigms. Furthermore, Creswell, et al. (2007: 239) refer to ‘qualitative designs’ as comprising narrative research, case study, grounded theory, phenomenology and participatory action research. So, certainly, there is no universality in the conceptualisation and use of these terms.

Young and Wayne (2019) describe qualitative research as an umbrella term that combines a family of inductive reasoning-based methods. In this regard, the term 'Interpretative' is often used interchangeably with 'Qualitative' to refer to data collection procedures conducted in naturalistic environments to achieve comprehensive understandings of the participants and the context within which they live. Indeed, some studies suggest that human behaviour is better investigated or settled upon when taken naturally (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020). Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2018) agree that the perspective of qualitative researchers is a 'whole-world experience' that is interested in the complexity of human interactions related to a specific phenomenon. Accordingly, qualitative researchers use interviews, observations of participants, analyses of documents to create patterns or trends that describe and explain the phenomena in depth (Babchuk, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The main focus of data collection in natural settings includes long-term involvement of researchers in the field, with a view to collecting comprehensive and rich descriptions of the phenomenon being studied. Similarly, this also involves research methods such as, non- random, purposeful sampling, the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection, an evolving and versatile design, and the use of various sources of data and perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Furthermore, qualitative research usually relies upon different epistemological frameworks and tends to shift the researcher's viewpoint from positivist toward post-positivism, interpretivism, or critical theory (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2018).

Thus, qualitative research designs can be defined as methods "of investigating and interpreting the significance ascribed to a social or human issue by individuals or groups" (Creswell, 2014:34). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argue that qualitative analysis is aimed at exposing the significance of an event to those concerned. Thus, qualitative researchers are concerned with conducting research that enables them to understand how people interpret their own experiences, "how they construct their worlds and what significance they assign to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 6). The facts, as well as participants' details are searched for as in-depth accounts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Accordingly, the purpose of qualitative research is to study issues in their real-life world with a view to obtaining an in- depth understanding of the phenomenon (Cohen, et al., 2018). Data are collected methodically and evaluated inductively from the data during the

study.

Thus, qualitative research aims to understand and uncover what is happening in a social context. This, therefore, requires an ability to analyse and interpret reality to establish a theory that can clarify perspectives (Turhani, 2019). The purpose of qualitative or interpretative research depends on the situation being examined. So, a qualitative or interpretative study does not have a fixed framework (until it is completed) as it may change over time depending on the phenomena that arise during the course of the investigation. Therefore, the phenomena are often concerned with the significance ascribed to them by the participants and not decided upon, *a priori* (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Cohen, et al., 2018).

In line with the case study research design, this study used an interpretive framework and qualitative analysis to investigate how teachers' techniques are used in teaching English HL to learners of different home language backgrounds. Therefore, qualitative research approaches explore practical growth in the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to learners in the Foundation Phase from diverse language backgrounds. Similarly, some authors aver that qualitative research is the form of investigation in which the researcher examines the attitudes, emotions, and thoughts of people in their natural settings by using a variety of techniques, such as interviews, observations, and record review (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Akhtar, 2016). Furthermore, qualitative research is about understanding social phenomena through the eyes of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Cohen, et al., 2018). This occurs through the involvement of the researcher in the everyday experiences of those interested in the study. In this study, the rationale for this approach was based on its potential to understand the participants as they went about their business, as well as study their reactions and emotions as they responded to the various questions. Hence, the researcher searched for rich and comprehensive knowledge about the participants through in-depth interviews, observations, and the analysis of school records.

The qualitative / interpretative research paradigm was adopted for the purpose of openness to multiple realities and the need to obtain valid answers to the research questions. Although the research questions being studied in qualitative research involved in-depth

explanations and narratives from participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Cohen, et al., 2018), the core part of qualitative research is to examine issues in their real-life environment with a view to gaining in- depth understandings of phenomena of interest, in terms of the significance given to them by the participants and not the defined meaning that they have already acquired. More specifically, the qualitative research design used in this study investigated how teachers felt and perceived their experiences of teaching English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse language contexts in the Foundation Phase. Furthermore, qualitative research enabled the researcher to examine the perceptions, attitudes and feelings of people in their natural settings, using of a range of techniques, such as semi-structured interviews, observations, and record analysis. Indeed, qualitative research is about understanding social phenomena from participants' perspectives.

The researcher was able to take note of their reactions and emotions from their answers to different questions, as well as witness their non-verbal signs. Through that, the researcher emphasized and retained interest in terms of the individual Through that, the researcher interpretative aspects of the research and the participants' awareness about their social environment. These activities were important in understanding the phenomenon being studied and were crucial for the interpretation of the participants' responses (Creswell, Ebersohn, Eloff, Ferreira, Ivankova, Jansen, Nieuwenhuis & Pietersen Clark, 2016). For this analysis, qualitative research was chosen to understand the behaviours of teachers and their points of view, as they made sense of the phenomenon under study – namely teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds.

Furthermore, Creswell and Poth (2018) posit that the qualitative research approach is focused on the point of view which assumes that there are several social realities that could predict human behaviour. Furthermore, the approach shows how people organize themselves in doing things, complexities, and difficulties to observe in the participants' natural settings. For this study, the Grade One classroom where teaching strategies of English HL comprehension skills to learners from different language backgrounds at the Foundation Phase level was such a natural setting. A true representation of the participants' thoughts, attitudes and emotional state were there to be studied at the chosen location

where the participants encountered the challenge of teaching English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learners who were not native English language speakers. The use of the qualitative research approach allowed the researcher to get close in touch with the community being studied in order to get an insider's point of view (Turhani, 2019).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) opine that there are a couple of notable characteristics of a qualitative research approach, namely (a) the study's aim is to understand the teachers' experiences, and (b) the research data are analysed inductively such that the investigator may produce explanations in the form of ideas, hypotheses, or theories from the data. Babchuk (2019) affirms the position that qualitative research has the ability to get individuals together to provide a rich summary or conclusion from multiple data sources, such as semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis.

The interpretive research paradigm refers to people's awareness of the environment through their perceptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The central focus of the interpretivist paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience (Bertram & Christiansen, (2020). This approach makes an effort to 'get into the head of the subjects being studied' so to speak, and to understand and interpret what the subject is thinking or the meaning s/he is making of the context in which he or she is. In this regard, the researcher's effort is to understand the viewpoint of the subject being observed, rather than the viewpoint of the observer. Thus, the emphasis of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the phenomenon from an individual perspective, keeping in mind the historical and cultural context the individual is placed (Scotland, 2012). In this study, the researcher retained the ontological presumption that the social construction of the universe by the participants would give her a deeper understanding of teaching English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learner coming from different language contexts. The researcher believed that the interpretive / qualitative research paradigm would help her to understand how participants developed and understood their teaching of English HL comprehension skills and how they catered for the diverse language background positions of their learners. The researcher believed that for this analysis, the interpretive research paradigm was a suitable research paradigm, as she attempted to explain the phenomenon in a real-life setting, precisely how it was perceived by the participants. The interpretive paradigm also

allowed the researcher to concentrate on understanding what actually occurred in a given context, how it occurred and how people perceived what happened in their social context. This paradigm indicates that reality is socially constructed and fluid; that what we know is conditioned by history, social meaning, and relationships with others (Cohen, et al., 2018).

4.5 APPLICATION OF THE INTERPRETIVE MODEL IN THIS STUDY

Table 4.1 illustrates how the interpretive model was used in this study

Table 4.1: Application of the interpretive model in this study

Purpose	Description
Main research question of the study	How to teachers in the Foundation Phase teach English Home Language comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds?
Purpose of the study	To explore the strategies employed by the teachers to teach English Home Language comprehension skills to learners from diverse background in Foundation Phase.
Epistemology	Events are understood by an awareness of the environment that is influenced by social contexts. Similarly, through their interaction and behaviour, as witnessed by the researcher, teachers' explanations and understanding of their teaching of English Home Language skills in this study were understood through their interactions and actions as observed by the researcher.
Ontology	An overview of these realities was done by talking and watching four Grade One teachers in action. There are several realities. Truth can be examined and built by human interaction and practical action. Social realities arise on the basis of various human experiences, including knowledge held by individuals, beliefs, experiences of the world and their perception of the world. In the same way, because of a variety of reasons, teachers have encountered teaching English at home in Grade One in various ways.

4.5.1 Characteristics of the Interpretive Paradigm

The following are some characteristics of the interpretive research paradigm, according to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017):

- (a) Social world cannot be understood from just one individual's point of view.

- (b) There exist multiple realities which are socially constructed.
- (c) The importance of context is vital for knowledge gathering.
- (d) Knowledge created can be value-laden and values need to be explicitly mentioned.
- (e) Focus on the individual rather than universal laws.
- (f) Cause and effect are interdependent.
- (g) Contextual factors play a very important role in the pursuit of any knowledge

4.5.2 Limitations of interpretivism

- Personal bias is a constant threat to data collection tools and analytical techniques that generalize results to people and situations (Cohen, et al., 2018); to minimize bias, the researcher triangulated collected data through the use of three different data collection instruments. The participants were asked to review the transcripts of the interviews to ensure that original presentation of their views had been correct. The interviews, observations and documents reviewed were kept anonymous and participants were encouraged to respond honestly.
- Lipinge (2018) avows that unfair sample selection weakens the credibility of the researcher's interpretation that triggers bias. Participants were hesitant to provide information initially but were also reminded of the confidentiality of their responses.
- The weakness of qualitative study findings is their lack of complexity and scale of the samples that have the capacity of crucial analysis to improve study achievement. Since the leading limitation was the smaller sample size, this study finding could not be generalized to the larger population.

4.6 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is a researcher's method of conducting a particular study. To Kumar (2014) and Cohen, et al. (2018), a research design is a guide that describes the study journey to finding valid answers to research questions. Some authors see 'research design' as referring to a study's architecture (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Cohen, et al., 2018). In this regard, as a study architecture, a research design underscores the important aspects of how the study will be undertaken in order to adequately find answers to a study's research questions. Thus, a study architecture allows a research

project to be logical, sequential, and regular. Further, the research architecture should be capable of providing a clear plan for answering the enquiries under review (Akhtar, 2016). Thus, a research architecture presents a fitting structure for the study and guides the notable decision process is the choices to make concerning the research strategy. Creswell and Poth (2018) further stress that a study design helps the researcher to plan. This then enables the researcher to obtain the intended results associated with the real situation and directs large parts of the research analysis on responses to the research questions.

A research design is also defined as the road map that explicitly explains a researcher's process of collecting data to address his or her research questions, using scientifically acceptable and accurate measurement instruments (Kumar, 2014). This is a procedural-cum-operational plan detailing when and how various methods and procedures will be implemented during the study process. Taking these essential elements into consideration, the researcher discussed every step considered in conducting this research.

In the field of education, especially in qualitative studies, a case study research design has proven to be the most common research design. A case study produces qualitative data which can contribute to the use of the interpretive model, which is important to this study. For this study, the researcher chose to use a case study research design, which is typically used to investigate real-life and multiple bounded cases through in-depth data collection involving various sources of information and reporting (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Cohen, et al., 2018). A case study is also viewed as a technique and an investigative tool – or a sample of what is to be investigated (Yin, 2017, Creswell & Poth, 2018).

So, in this study, the researcher identified the case study design as a rational and cost-effective methodology, especially as it had the potential to generate rich and extensive data needed for answering the research questions which framed the study. The most important reason for choosing this design was that the researcher would be able to work with the participants, in their natural environment, to obtain a holistic image of the case

being studied. Indeed, the case study design helped the researcher to investigate the approaches that teachers were using in their school settings at the Grade One level to teach English HL comprehension to learners from various language backgrounds. As a teacher guide, the researcher considered the case study to be an efficient design that would allow her to thoroughly study her research topic to obtain results that would be helpful to inform the practice.

In its broad appeal, a case study occupies a specific position and has proved to be an important approach to researching trends in various fields (Yin, 2017, Creswell & Poth, 2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) refer to a case study as an extensive, systematic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit. To Creswell, Ebersohn, Ferreira, Ivankova, Jansen, Nieuwenhuis, Pietersen and Clark (2016), a research design is a comprehensive plan or blueprint for the systematic exploration of the phenomenon under review. Creswell and Poth (2018) describe a case study design as a research plan that focuses on the ontology and epistemology perspective of the researchers and the research skills.

Furthermore, a case study is regarded as both a methodology and an investigative product that is influenced by its data collection styles, research site selection, participants, and tools for data collection. The case study design is used as a guideline that helps the researcher to address his or her research questions through a number of actions involving the research process's last three steps of data collection, review and presentation of results (Cohen, et al., 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, the case was one primary school in the town of Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal, focusing on the methods used to teach English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learner from diverse language backgrounds.

4.7 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

Sampling refers to the methods used to choose a smaller group of participants from the target population, resulting in a research sample (Marshall & Tisdell, 2019). As Creswell and Poth (2018) aver, a sample is a subset of members of a population, selected to participate in a study. Accordingly, Creswell and Poth (2018) refer to purposive

sampling as the selection of individuals and groups that possess information and understanding of the phenomenon being studied. In purposive sampling, the researcher selects purposively specific participants who could provide well-informed information and are willing to share the details comprehensively to allow the researcher to address his or her research questions (Cohen, et al., 2018). Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of possession of the most useful information the researcher is looking for (Cohen, et al., 2018). Kumar (2014) also describes purposive sampling as a strategy in which the researcher selects main informants who can provide the best information to help achieve the study's objectives. So, purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which participants are selected based on the decision of the researcher on which ones are most beneficial. Kumar (2014) further notes that purposeful sampling is a method employed by a researcher to ensure that main informant selection is judged individually. In essence, purposeful sampling is suitable for collecting relevant and rich information to help achieve the study's objectives; thus, as a qualitative approach to data collection, it has been deemed suitable for this research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As such, purposive sampling is based on the premise that the researcher is able to select information-rich people from the target population (Cohen, et al., 2018).

So, in adopting purposive sampling, the researcher identified participants who would provide information to help her answer her research questions. The selected school was purposively chosen to provide participants who came from diverse language backgrounds and were being taught English HL comprehension skills, as well as teachers who were involved in teaching the learners. In particular, four teachers who were Post Level 1 and a Head of Department (HOD) for the Foundation Phase were selected. These teachers were deliberately chosen because they had more than five years of teaching experience in the Foundation Phase. Thus, for the teachers, purposive sampling covered two elements, namely, year of experience and the specific level they taught to ensure accurate, reliable, and rich first-hand knowledge. Their thorough analysis and interpretation of the main concepts of how to teach English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from different language backgrounds. These were the attributes used to identify teachers to participate in the

study.

4.8 PROFILE OF THE STUDY LOCATION

The identified study locale was one Empangeni Urban Primary School in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. Within the context of this study, the chosen ‘case’ was important as it enabled direct observations of classroom lived experiences of both the teachers and learners involved in English HL teaching and learning/acquisition by the learners. This helped the investigator to gain new insight into the phenomenon under investigation. In addition, Creswell, and Poth (2018) argue that a purposively selected sample enables a researcher to focus on her research needs – thereby allowing the researcher to obtain a better picture of what is happening in the English HL comprehension skills classroom experience in the Foundation Phase, involving learners from diverse backgrounds. Participants were assumed to be rich in knowledge and experience to provide credible and accurate knowledge about the teaching of English HL comprehension skills in the Foundation Phase for learners from diverse backgrounds (Cohen, et al., 2018).

The school for study location, is well-resourced and features double-story buildings with excellent views. The school had access to all modern educational services, situated within the city and has a good reputation. The classrooms were well designed for reading purposes and reading / comprehension books were made accessible to the learners, while the teachers had books for reading phonics that were prepared for their learners. Printed flashcards were also used to assist the learners. The school grounds were beautiful and surrounded by trees; while open-plan verandas and staffroom stood next to the offices of an administrator, principal and deputy principal. The local neighbourhood where the children live was dominated by the overwhelmingly working class and, according to the teachers, many learners came from affluent families / homes.

The school was chosen because of the availability of learners with diverse language background experiences and were being taught comprehension skills in English HL in Grade One. Apart from the diverse language characteristics of the learners, the researcher’s ability to use public transport in order to get to the school, and back; the

current relationship of the school with the University where the researcher is working. Furthermore, the four Grade One classrooms at the participating school had reasonable numbers of learners and were not overcrowded. The teachers all agreed that the school environment was very positive, with effective classroom management. Where this was necessary, the school had the ability and systems in place for giving individual attention to learners. Overall, there were positive learner-teacher interactions at the school.

The school's teachers and learners shared a common language, IsiZulu, but some were from other African countries, making English the official language of learning and teaching (LoLT). For classroom interactions and other communications in the community, use of English (the LoLT of the school) was regularly encouraged. Despite the encouragement of learners to use English as the medium of communication, learners still struggle with communication skills in English HL. This could be due to a number of reasons, some of which may be revealed by investigations such as the current one.

Specifically, the data used in this study were based on interviews, observations, and opinions about classroom interactions. The research focus was on the acquisition of Grade One comprehension skills, as a crucial aspect of learning in the Foundation Phase. South Africa's education programmes concentrate on the high Grade 4 assessment failure rates – and not much is said about the previous years. This is debatable and controversial as the successes and failures start from Grade One, where low performance of learners in the Foundation Phase could signify areas of concern in the academic achievement of learners. Hence, there is a need to rigorously address issues of learner performance from as early in the school system as possible in order to improve learner pass rates of the whole school system. This research work is thus investigating Grade One teachers' pedagogical activities to find out how they implement the teaching of English HL to enhance learners' attainment of comprehension skills with respect to learners from diverse language backgrounds.

4.9 PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The study was conducted at Empangeni Urban Primary School involving four purposively selected female teachers whose home language was IsiZulu. Their years of teaching experience at the Foundation Phase ranged from 5 to 25 years, including the HoD. Two of the participants had 5 to 10 years of teaching experience while the other two had 11 to 25 years of teaching experience. Out of the four teachers, two had attended former Model C schools. The Model C school system refers to previous semi-private schools in South Africa that were only for White students during the apartheid era. The term "Model C" is still widely used to identify these schools since they are distinct from the rest of the schools in that they retain their previous resourcing rights. They were first implemented in the 1980s and 1990s, and they were funded by the government but managed by their own School Boards. Currently, some Black (African, Asian, and Coloured) instructors are employed to teach in these schools, which the majority of them were not able to attend because they were non-Whites.

All the four teachers were trained Primary School teachers, holding various qualifications such as Diplomas and higher qualifications. In addition, two of them were, at the time of this study, studying for their Honour's degrees. Teachers' qualifications were significant to this study as they signified the level of teacher education attainment of the participants, which was seen as having the potential to influence the quality of teaching and learning, particularly at the Foundation Phase level. Typically, in the Foundation Phase, qualified teachers are carefully selected to teach Grade One. This was why participants with a better understanding of what they were doing were purposively selected for the study. Table 4.2

Table 4.2 Participants' age, gender, qualifications, and experience teaching Grade 1

Participants	Age	Gender	Qualifications	Experience in Grade One
PA 1	33	Female	Primary Teachers' Diploma, Higher Teacher Certificate	05
PA 2	35	Female	Primary Teachers' Diploma	09
PA 3	54	Female	Primary Teachers' Diploma and Advanced Certificate in Education	20
PA 4	57	Female	Primary Teachers' Diploma	25

4.10. INSTRUMENTATION

Creswell and Poth (2018) describe the term ‘method’ as an enquirer’s operation, device or technique for producing and analysing data. Data triangulation involves using a number of data sources to collect rich knowledge about the phenomenon being investigated. There are several ways to do this – including collecting various information types, conducting interviews, posing as a participant observation or a non-participant observer. Further, the use of both main and secondary data strengthens information sources for a qualitative researcher. Inclusion of significant documents such as textbooks, novels, advertising material, minutes of meetings, newspapers, and letters in research studies are rich sources of data in qualitative research. In this study, data were triangulated through the use of semi-structured interviews, direct observations and document analysis. Information was collected from four Grade One teachers in one Primary school offering English HL to learners from different linguistic backgrounds. Additional data were collected from the HOD for Foundation Phase. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), data collection is the process of collecting the necessary information on a research issue.

4.10.1 Interviews

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants to obtain first-hand information that explained the participants' views on the answers to the research

questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). An interview schedule was used to encourage the researcher to use a collection of predetermined questions to guide the interviews (see Appendix G). The researcher used open-ended questions and probed further to get broader and clear understanding of the participants' responses to the questions (Maree, 2016). Thus, the use of a semi-structured interview schedule provided the researcher with opportunities to raise probing questions for rich and detailed information on the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to collect large, in-depth qualitative data from participants. Maree (2016) posits that a semi-structured interview is a two-way dialogue that enables the interviewer to ask questions that express participants' thoughts, values, views, and behaviours.

The semi-structured, one-on-one, and face-to-face interviews were conducted outside school working hours. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The researcher asked the teachers which language they preferred for the interview, and they all preferred to use IsiZulu, which led the researcher to use IsiZulu for the interviews. The researcher also requested and secured permission from the participants to audio-record the interviews. This ensured that no data were lost. Notes were also taken as backup for audio recordings. Before the interviews, the researcher explained the purpose of the interview to the participants and made them aware of the ethical rights and privileges. She explained that at any moment they chose, they had the right to continue participating or withdraw from the research, and that their decisions would not have any consequences. Consent forms were subsequently signed.

4.10.2 Method for carrying out interviews

The interviews were primarily focused on how the participants went about teaching English HL comprehension skills, what techniques / strategies they implemented in their different language contexts, and their reasons for using those techniques / strategies. The interviews also looked at their Grade One teaching experiences. An interview schedule was used to guide the interview, and this comprised the four research questions, each of which consisted of three to four sub-questions. During the interviews,

the researcher paid attention to every verbal and non-verbal reference made by the teachers (participants), particularly facial expressions, movements, tone of voice, and general body language (Maree, 2020).

The researcher started the interviews by first having a brief discussion about general matters, such as the appearance of their school, its sports grounds and facilities, events offered by the school, and such-like matters. This was by way of icebreaking to ensure that the teachers were at ease and relaxed before delving into issues specific to the teaching of English HL comprehension skills. Through the warm-up session, the researcher established a bond and good relationship with the interviewees. In addition, during the interview, regard for their feelings was always kept in mind, particularly seeing that the interviews were held outside school hours. In particular, the researcher would pause during the interview to allow participants time to reflect on their responses. Overall, all the four interviews progressed smoothly to the end.

Different types of questions were included in the questions in the interview, from simple straight-forward questions to complex questions that required respondents to reflect on their practices before providing an answer. The researcher allowed the respondents enough time to reflect on their answers and rephrased some questions, where necessary, to get as much information as possible from the participants. A comfortable environment was preserved between the researcher and the participants by allowing ample time for participants to say what they wanted on the topic, while remaining careful not to encourage them to stray from the question's emphasis. Audio recordings of interview transcripts were made within a few days after the data processing of the interviews had been completed immediately.

4.10.3 Observations

An observation schedule is a tool of gathering data which relies on a researcher observing things and documenting these observations, rather than relying on self-report answers to questions or statements by subjects or participants (Creswell, 2014: 90). Indeed, the observation process is a basic and very effective instrument of collecting data and is typically used for the exploration of multifaceted relationships in natural

social settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It enables the researcher to gain in-depth information from all the five senses in taking and recording notes. Observation is typically based on research goals and questions with observation of individuals, most specifically in the natural setting (Cohen, et al., 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thus, observations are beneficial to research studies which include the use of direct data collection tools to observe events without talking or interfering in the activities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, observations were all done during the school hours, as this enabled collection of data within the natural school-based learning setting. Prior to data collection, the researcher visited the school several times in order to establish a rapport with the participants (see Appendix J).

The researcher was at the school on scheduled days, sat at the back of each Grade One classroom to observe the cycle of teaching and learning activities and took notes of all significant activities. Learner interactions with each other and with teachers, and teaching approaches in the classroom were phenomenologically noted in the observations. The researcher paid particular attention to events where questions were asked, how conversations and explanations were taking place.

On the whole, the classroom observations helped the researcher to gain a better understanding of the classroom atmosphere and the challenges that the learners faced during the teaching and learning process in their classrooms. Thus, observations allowed the researcher to pick up the most appropriate portions of the activities reported. The researcher stayed in the field longer and this allowed her to get an in-depth overview of the attitudes of teachers towards learners from different backgrounds. Indeed, one important purpose of the classroom observations was to assess how diversity problems were attended to in the classroom activities.

4.10.3.1 Advantages of using observation

Using lesson observations as a data collection technique has a range of advantages and they provided the researcher with a detailed and clearer perspective on the issue being examined in this report. It also made it possible for the researcher to get a real-life experience about how English HL teaching was handled in the participating schools.

She watched every event that took place over the course of the lesson. In addition, lesson observations allowed the researcher to recognize the attitudes and behaviour of participants in their normal learning environment. In doing so, the researcher tried to understand from their viewpoints the phenomenon of teaching English HL comprehension skills. This is in line with the recommendation that the researcher could collect information about events as a non-participant observer (Bertrams & Christiansen, 2020). The data collected from the observation of lessons provided the data collected through semi-structured interviews with important additional information of the activity in documenting the actions of the participants in their natural environment.

4.10.3.2 Method for carrying out observation

The researcher observed the teaching of English HL comprehension skills lessons, that included spoken exercises and reading activities, in four Grade One classrooms from the same school. Visits were made to the classes on different dates. The respective class teachers arranged the topics of the observed lessons. The researcher assumed the role of a non-participant observer in the classroom. Teachers and learners were aware of her presence. However, she did not take part in the classroom activities.

A lesson observation schedule was developed for this study based on the results of the literature review on successful teaching of English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners coming from diverse language backgrounds. The schema theory, which was used as a framework for this study, also guided the development of the Classroom Observation Guide (Refer to Appendix H). The researcher was guided by the observation schedule, which helped her to be consistent by sticking to the observation's intent and focus. In turn, the observation schedule was based on the research questions of the study (Maree, 2020). As a teacher, she had experience teaching English in a variety of language contexts, including an emphasis on various language environments for Grade One learners. This helped the researcher to build confidence in all observable activities in the classroom and make sense of the attendant documentation.

4.11 DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, the process of data analysis began with the categorization and organization of data in search of patterns, themes, and meanings that emerged from the data. Data were coded and categorized into different themes. It was also important to note that before patterns were developed, data were transcribed into sections, classified, and categorized from verbatim transcription. During the coding process, the terms and words which were used by the participants were retained due to participants' emphasis on some concepts. Transcripts were given to the participants to confirm their responses in audio-recorded interviews to ensure accurate use of their responses for direct quotes to establish trustworthiness of the reported results (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

4.11.1 Thematic Constructions

The process of reducing the amount of data collected into emerging categories of meaning (thematic construction) from the information collected has become a typical and established way of processing and analysing qualitative data (Bengtsson, 2016, p.8). Polit and Beck (2006) share a similar concept and claim that in order to draw practical conclusions from them, the purpose of data analysis is to organize and elicit meaning from the data collected. Typically, qualitative data analysis includes precise transcripts from the semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis – with a view to establishing patterns, concepts, themes, and meanings (Yin, 2018). This was, in part, how data were analysed in this study.

4.11.2 Document Analysis

In this study, the researcher used document analysis, of school records, to triangulate data collected through other methods in order to attain a high level of validity. The term ‘document analysis’ is an umbrella term for discussing a broad variety of published, visual multimedia, and physical content related to a particular study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These approaches enable theory to be tested with common information based on the triangulated data. Documents are defined as "helpful to study" when the aim is to "discover meaning, build understanding and discover insights relevant to the research issue" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In concurrence, Lima, Franco, Kuramoto, Abdalla, Oliveira, Azevedo, and Gonzalez, (2018) aver that triangulation of data involves the use of several related methods to yield a better understanding of a given theory or phenomenon. The research issue in this study was that most of the diverse non- native English-speaking learners did not have the requisite English skills to use it as a LoLT. It was for this reason that the researcher investigated how teachers approached the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds. Secondly, the researcher examined the lesson plans of the teachers to understand the methods they used to teach various language contexts. Finally, school language policies and the national education language policy were also examined to reveal policy provisions in South African schools, with specific reference to the teaching of English HL to learners who are not native speakers of the language.

After classroom observations and a review of school records, permission to view learners' books and teachers' lesson plans was requested verbally from the principal and the HODs. Permission was given to the researcher to access the workbooks of learners and teachers' lesson plans, on condition that she would do so only while on the school premises. The principal also permitted the researcher to print the school language policy.

In undertaking document analysis, the researcher developed a basic tool to guide her in the analysis of documents taken from the works of Van der Walt and Klapwijk (2015), who studied the language of learning and teaching in a multilingual school setting. Overall, teachers do not have enough say in addressing language issues, especially the language of learning and teaching, or may not be fully informed of alternative models for multilingual classes. In the Foundation Phase, the study helped to shed light on what inspired teachers, how they coordinated and arranged their teaching of home language comprehension skills lessons, and what kind of exercises they used to enhance the mastery of teaching learners' diverse background activities. Language policy and lesson plans used to educate the researcher of the various components of teaching English HL skills learned in Grade One. The researcher was interested in seeing alignment from the learners' workbooks and worksheets of finding missing sounds in period (Refer to appendix K), including activities in which learners were engaged. By analysing the learners' responses to questions during the lessons, the researcher sought to see how the teacher's asked questions and their fluency in the language. Appendix I displays the tool used for document analysis. Table 4.3 presents the data collection methods and instruments used in the study.

Table 4.3 Data collection methods and instruments

Data Collection Methods	Type	Data Collection Instruments	Prompts	Data Capturing Method
Semi- structured interview	Individual interview	Interview guide	Discussions about teaching English comprehension skills in diverse language background and teachers' experiences	Informal field notes. Audio-tape transcription of interviews

Observation	Classroom observation	Observation Schedule.	Used “natural” settings	Formal field notes
Document analysis	Official policies, assessment and writing books	Collection of Policies and artefacts	Discussions about teaching English comprehension skills in diverse language background	

4.12 TRUSTWORTHINESS

A study's trustworthiness or rigor refers to the level of trust in the data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study (Pilot & Beck, 2014). This allows researchers to develop the protocols and procedures required to ensure trustworthiness of research studies (Amankwaa, 2016). Seemingly, research experts agree that trustworthiness is important, but debates about what constitute trustworthiness in research studies continue to rage on (Leung, 2015). In this regard, a number of subsidiary concepts are worth looking at:

4.12.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to how reliable or credible the findings of a qualitative research are from the available perspectives, as obtained from the research participants (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007). In this study, to ensure credibility the researcher examined the participants’ perceptions, experiences, feelings, and beliefs from sampled participants about the importance of teaching English HL comprehension to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds, and to assess the extent to which the reader believes the recommendations are credible. This has implications for the expected success of the implementation. The responses from the participants reflected similar patterns to the questions. This proved to the researcher that the participants had common in-depth understanding, experiences, and beliefs about the strategies to be used in teaching English HL comprehension to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds. Kumar (2014) opines that credibility of the findings is judged by the extent of the concordance of findings from the participants. Conversely, Polit and Beck (2014) assert that the credibility of the study, or the confidence in the truth of the study from the findings, constitutes the most important criterion to assess the value of the study and its findings.

Credibility also relies on the richness and quality of data collected as opposed to its quantity. The accuracy of findings in this study was gauged through the strategies of triangulation and “member checking.” Triangulation refers to the “process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research” (Creswell, 2012: 259). Therefore, the researcher made use of triangulation to ensure the credibility of the study. The researcher also solicited the inputs and opinions of his supervisor and the English Subject Advisor from the Department of Education to check the appropriateness of the research instruments against the research objectives.

The researcher also solicited the inputs and opinions of his supervisor and the English Subject Advisor from the Department of Education to check the appropriateness of the research instruments against the research objectives – as well as the data-gathering processes for any biases, emotions, and feelings. Basically, member-checking entails a process whereby the data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with the participants from which the data were originally collected. Thus, to maintain credibility, the researcher also provided the participants with the transcripts and data analysis to ensure accuracy of the case descriptions and findings.

4.12.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the potential for extrapolation. This is based on the argument that effects can be generalized or extended to other groups or settings (Polit & Beck, 2012). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the degree to which the results of one study can be applied to other circumstances represents the notion of transferability. The main concern in qualitative research is often **not** to show that the study findings under review can be generalized to a larger population. Generalizability is often assumed to be unlikely in naturalistic inquiries as each situation is special and contextualised. To maximize the transferability of this study to similar contexts, the researcher provided the participants with ample background information, methods and concerns for other studies to be translated to their context. The degree to which the results of this study can be applied to different participants in a similar context point to prospects for transferability. However, this will be a matter of discretion on the part of the reader,

given that transferability in qualitative studies, generally – and this study, in particular, was not of major concern.

4.12.3 Confirmability

Confirmability of research is to ensure that the data accurately represent the information provided by the participants, and that the investigator or researcher does not create his or her own interpretations of those data (Polit & Beck, 2012). Similarly, Kumar (2014) contends that confirmability refers to the extent to which the results could be confirmed or validated by others rather than by the researcher alone. As a result, the researcher in this study remained neutral to exclude her own biases from the research procedures and outcomes, as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Consequently, the researcher is confident that the findings of this study are the result of the experiences, perceptions, and ideas of the participants, and not those of the researcher.

Furthermore, triangulation from a variety of data instruments was used to limit the biases of the researcher during the data collection and analysis. The researcher has, thus, endeavoured to maintain a concise and consistent summary of the investigation process, which has been explained step-by-step from the initial outline through system creation and findings reporting, to allow other researchers to effectively assess the credibility and integrity of the entire research process (Noble & Smith, 2015).

4.12.4 Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of data over time and under different conditions (Polit & Beck, 2012; Cohen, et al., 2011; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Moreover, dependability or reliability implies that using the same research design with a different group under a different set of circumstances would lead to the same interpretations (Shenton, 2004:71). In this study, dependability involved participants evaluating the findings, interpretations and recommendations of the study to make sure that they are all related to the collected data from the participants. As for reliability, the researcher took great care to ensure that the research process was rational, traceable and clearly documented. Basically, the more consistent a researcher is during the research process, the more accurate the findings are. The researcher also made use of a reliability audit in

which she used an external investigator who checked the researcher's activities in a critical manner to assess how well the procedures for meeting the reliability and transferability criteria were being followed. The external investigator was happy that the procedures had been followed satisfactorily.

4.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher has taken all ethical steps to conduct this research. At the start, before the researcher started the fieldwork, she wrote the research proposal and submitted it to the School of Humanities for acceptance of the project as feasible within the discipline of educational psychology. The researcher then submitted the idea to the panel, which then gave the researcher the go-ahead for the report. Ngozwana (2018) emphasizes the importance of ethical considerations, arguing that the qualitative researcher must be sensitive to ethical principles due to the nature of the research topic, face-to-face interactive data collection, evolving design and participant reciprocity. This study was conducted at a public school and adhered to all the stipulated ethical considerations. In particular, the following ethical procedures were followed:

A letter requesting permission to conduct research was forwarded to the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Head of Department in Pietermaritzburg seeking permission to conduct research in the selected school:

- i) An application was submitted to the Head of the Education Department in the province of KwaZulu Natal for permission to conduct the research in the province. (Please, refer to Appendix B).
- ii) A letter was forwarded to the Director of King Cetshwayo District, requesting permission to conduct the research in one school among the urban primary schools in the district. (Please, refer to Appendix A).
- iii) A letter was also sent to the principal of the targeted school seeking permission to conduct the research at the school. (Please, refer to Appendix C).
- iv) Once the school principal had agreed to the request to conduct the research at the school, another letter (Appendix D) was written to the Head of the Foundation Phase requesting her consent to participate.
- v) Permission was sought from the University of KwaZulu-Natal for ethical clearance, which was also granted. Consequently, the researcher obtained an

ethical clearance certificate which allowed her to conduct the research in the designated area. (Please, refer to Appendix F).

- vi) Ethical considerations critical to this study included informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, privacy, and freedom to participate or to withdraw, non-harm, care and fairness and thorough and truthful reporting of research findings. (Please, refer to Appendix E).

Collecting data without participants' knowledge, and of course without their expressed willingness and informed consent, is considered unethical (Kumar, 2014). Thus, the researcher obtained informed consent after participants had been made fully aware of the type of the information which the researcher wanted from them, why the data were being collected and for what reason. Participants were informed prior to the data collection of their right to know in advance how they were expected to participate in the study and how the process would affect them. It is necessary that consent be voluntary and without any kind of coercion (Kumar, 2014). In this study participants were informed of the researcher's respect for their privacy and were advised about how the use of the data collected would be used. The researcher handled all participants in a professionally acceptable manner with respect to reverence, consideration, and courtesy.

Creswell and Manion (2018: 89) emphasize the point that participants must sign an informed consent before their participation in a study. Thus, in this study, the researcher ensured that this matter was addressed. The participants were given consent forms which were discussed with them. Clarifications were provided, where possible, and questions were answered and addressed. After that, all the participants signed the consent forms, and these copies were filed for future reference. Signing of the consent forms suggested that the participants understood the nature of the study and were willing to participate voluntarily. The forms also acknowledged that the interests of the participants would be guaranteed during and subsequent to data collection.

Briefing the participants after completion of the research on the findings would be necessary to acknowledge the importance of the participants' autonomy and dignity. Briefing also involves presenting the results to the research participants at the end of the study to determine whether or not the findings are a true reflection of their views. For

instance, the researcher informed participants that the data collected would not be connected with any participant names. Confidentiality and privacy were emphasised in the consent form not to use their real names when answering the questions but pseudonyms. The briefing also entailed preserving and protecting the identity of the participants and keeping confidentiality of the details they provided during interviews (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020).

Voluntary participation meant that participants participated willingly and were not coerced into participation. It was therefore necessary for the researcher to notify the participants that participation or non-participation in the exercise was within their rights. They also had the option of withdrawal should they have deemed it necessary to do so. The participants in this study were categorically informed of the valuable contribution they would make as they participated in the study regarding the teaching of English HL comprehension skills.

4.13.1 Anonymity

Anonymity is a condition in which the identity of individual subjects is protected and not disclosed to anyone. To Brockington, John, Bonneted, Brockington, and Duffy (2016), anonymity means not knowing the names of the participants from which the data came from. Accordingly, the current researcher gave a guarantee to all participants that no-one would be able to identify to the names, views and opinions reported in the study. In this respect, anonymity means what they have said and done in both formal and informal interviews, classroom experiences (classroom practice), and knowledge gathered through record review would remain confidential. Brockington, et al., (2016) further argue that if anonymity cannot be guaranteed, this must be made clear to the participants before they agree to participating in the study. Thus, in this study, the anonymity of the participants was maintained by using pseudo names to stand for the four teachers who participated in the study, instead of their real names.

4.13.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to a condition in which the researcher knows the identity of a research participant but takes steps to protect that identity from being known by others

(Backbub, 2019). In this study, the researcher ensured that the identity of the respondents was kept confidential even in semi-structured interviews where their real names, by using pseudonyms.

4.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has provided an outline of the procedures that the researcher followed in data collection for the study. The methodology, including research design, has been presented, together with the way in which the researcher applied the research process in the study. The sampling strategies that were used to identify the various categories of participants were described, as well as the attendant instrumentation. The fieldwork programme was discussed, and the principles regarding the collection of data were explained. The importance of trustworthiness, with its strategies such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were also explained. Lastly, ethical considerations pertinent to this study were explained, as well as the detailed protocols followed. The next chapter presents data analysis, interpretation, synthesis, and the presentation of findings.

This chapter has been very extensive, with elaborate clarifications of important concept attendant to this study. Indeed, everything that needed to be covered has been adequately attended to.

CHAPTER 5: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents data collection procedure, analysis, and interpretation.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and interprets the results of this study. This is done after analysing the data collected from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and document analysis. In particular, the chapter presents and reflects on the themes generated from the semi- structured interviews, the classroom observations as well as document analysis. The purpose of data analysis was to provide answers to the research questions. Findings from the observations and document analysis were analysed to strengthen the findings from the semi- structured interviews – thereby triangulating the findings for validity.

5.2 PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were teachers of English HL to Grade One learner who come from diverse language backgrounds. The participants were four trained female teachers with a minimum of 5 years of experience, teaching English HL comprehension skills. Their profiles are illustrated in Table 5.1, showing differences in participants' highest educational qualifications. Two of the participants (PA 2, and PA 4) were unemployed for several years before they got employed as teachers and finally had different job experiences; while another participant (PA3) had experienced unemployment before she relocated to KwaZulu-Natal Province for a teaching job. Participant One (PA 1) started her teaching career with Grade 3 before she discovered her passion for Grade One, and she quit her previous school to teach Grade One. Table 5.1 displays the participants' profiles:

Table 5.1: Participants' school teaching experience

Research location (X Model-C School)	Participants' Code	Years of Experience in Grade One
SCH 1	PA 1	05
SCH 1	PA 2	09
SCH 1	PA 3	14
SCH 1	PA 4	20

There were also policy documents, highlighted in Chapter 1, which formed part of the document analysis. These are summarized in the Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2: Important policy documents used for the study

Policy	Results of comprehension skills emphasis part
Language in Education Policy (LiEP) (1995)	States that indigenous languages be supported and developed to the level of languages of teaching and learning, as required by learners, or as used by the communities.
Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (2012)	Stresses that learners' home languages (a) should be used for teaching and learning, (b) are important in the Foundation Phase for reading and writing.
Annual National Assessment (ANA) (2015)	Recognizes the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning literacy and numeracy in the early years of schooling.
National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) (2016)	Explores the issues that prevent or progress school improvement: reading as there was no good method to teach Foundational Phase learners how to read.
Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (2016)	Results showed serious flaws in the reading skills of the majority of South African learners, which fell below the average. The comparatively low score signalled learner difficulty in decoding the written word.

5.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In Chapter 1, the researcher indicated the purpose of this study as to explore the strategies used in the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase

learners from diverse language backgrounds. The data addressed the following main and sub-research questions stated below:

The main Research Question

How do teachers in the Foundation Phase teach English Home Language comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds?

Sub research questions

The main research question was further broken into the following sub-questions:

- What are the strategies used to enhance teaching of English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse background in the Foundation Phase?
- What is the understanding of teachers in teaching English Home Language comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds at the Foundation Phase?
- Why do teachers conclude that learners are supported by the strategies they apply to teaching English HL comprehension abilities in reading with understanding?
- What are the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds?

These research questions served as guidelines for presenting, analysing and interpreting data generated in this study. The respective results to these sub research questions are presented below.

5.4 RESULTS

All the interviews with the participants were well-coordinated and the participants were well-informed about each interview. The participants were interviewed on scheduled days and times. The interviews were audio-recorded and, later, transcribed. The information supplied

by the participants was insufficient, and was coded to generate appropriate themes, as recommended by Creswell (2018). The coding and categorization were well compared until they reached saturation. Four themes were developed with responses from the data. These are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Themes and Sub-Themes from Data Presentation

Theme	Sub-theme
1. Teachers used phonological awareness in to introduce a lesson	Sub-theme 1.1 Introduction of letters and sounds Sub-theme 1.2 Stories with pictures in “Special Reading Book” - designed by Grade One teachers. Sub-theme 1.3 Pronunciation and repetition to grasp the vocabulary. Sub-theme 1.4 Games, puzzles and songs.
2. Learners exposed to a reflective image of English HL comprehension skills.	Sub-theme 1.1 Reading and writing need more technological strategies Sub-theme 1.2 Drilling and modelling Sub-theme 1.3 Instant correction of learners during the lesson
3. Responding to questions during the lesson.	Sub-theme 1.1 Classroom communication language is decoded. Sub-theme 1.2 Words arrangements in the worksheet. Sub-theme 1.3 Identifying missing sound in a word.
4. Parents' and guardians' involvement in learners' homework not visible	Sub-theme 1.1 Parents-teacher communication mistakes. Sub-theme 1.2 Challenge of expression. Sub-theme 1.3 Radius location.

5.5 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Results from interviews, document analysis and classroom observations were carefully coded to generate the themes presented and discussed below. These themes further generated sub- themes for in-depth discussion of the findings.

5.5.1 Theme 1: Phonological awareness during the lesson introduction

Phonological awareness is a broad term that involves not only phonemic awareness, but also knowledge of things such as words, rhyme, syllables (Hugo, et al., 2016). Phonology includes the acquisition of the sounds of consonants and vowels (Adam, Booysen, Good, Jordaan, Kaminski & Nel, 2017; Schaffler, Nel & Booysen, 2019). A language's phonological framework contains a tale of sounds, structures, and laws that describe how sounds can be manipulated among themselves. All the teachers in this study applied various techniques, following their established strategy, during the teaching of English HL comprehension skills in the Grade One class. The teachers stated that there was no policy for teaching English HL understanding skills; therefore, that they relied on their previous experiences in teaching English HL comprehension skills. They further stated that they used phonological laws in implementing the lesson.

Theme 1 yielded the following four sub-themes:

- Introduction of sounds and letters
- Stories with pictures in “Special Reading Book”, designed by Grade One teachers.
- Pronunciation and repetition to hold the vocabulary
- Games, puzzles, songs, and words

5.5.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1 Introduction of sounds and letters

‘Learners understand better when the sounds and letters are recognized in the world to read, as sounds are the key.’

The results indicated that all the four participating teachers introduced their lessons by using sounds and letters as a common strategy. The participants stressed the importance of using appropriate strategies during the introduction of English HL comprehension skills to their learners. They indicated that they used different ways of teaching sounds and letters to the learners. In this regard, Participant **PA1** had this to say:

... learners can easily use the strategies unaware but appropriately and be able to make decisions as to where the suitable puzzle, word, and game apply;

PA2 put her views simply by saying:
... learners can apply in their daily lives.

PA3 put her views as follows:
... learners read with understanding but unaware.

PA4's views were that:
... learners expected to explain and interpret what has been read.

This was all the participants' regular strategy in teaching English HL Comprehension skills to Grade One learners from diverse language backgrounds. As PA1 explained:

I show a picture on the board, ask learners what they are seeing. Learners tell the things they see in the picture. Learners can see the related things of the picture that they see on the board. Young learners like to compare things by doing that, they add vocabulary because they will come across different pictures in the text'

Other participants also expressed their views on how they were using the strategy to teach Grade One learners sounds and letters to introduce them to English HL comprehension skills:

PA2:
I tell a story to ask learners to repeat sounds. Learners give words with related sounds. That is good to me as a teacher that my learners can identify pictures in advance before I tell them what to do.

PA3:
I put flashcards with pictures on the board, let the learners read after me. When they are reading on the board, I point to the letters, sound by sound. In the end they pronounce the whole word.

PA4:
I write the sight words on the board, and read word sounds to them repeatedly. Whilst doing that I point to the letter corresponding to the sound; then the whole word, to motivate or encourage pronunciation.

PA4 stated that *sight words* were compulsory for learners to be familiar with before

commencing with English HL comprehension skills of "Special Reading Book". This indicated that PA4 believed in learners starting with *building up words using sounds, repeat sight words* then proceed to *sentences, paragraphs, and storybooks*. PA4's approach agrees with the views of Walt (2019) that the effective approaches of teaching English HL comprehension skills need to increase assertiveness to address existing challenges in learning in the Foundation Phase. This view is based on the understanding that teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse backgrounds plays a significant part in the learners' education. Indeed, Gilakjani (2016) also supports the contention that teaching strategies influence learners' English HL comprehension skills ability. In concurrence, Siti (2017) (cf. 3.4) avows that teachers have an important influence on teaching English HL comprehension skills at the Foundation Phase, as learners are listeners and performers. In this regard, Siti (2017) argues that teachers must be supported to implement strategies which can motivate learners to listen, perform and avoid differences attributable to the diversity in their home language backgrounds. Learners must be focused on the espoused objectives of the lesson so that they all achieve what is expected.

The researcher supports the views expressed by these teachers that phonics is the first significant move in the approach to improving the teaching of English as a home language to learners of different language backgrounds. Indeed, as the Department of Basic Education (2011: 8) opines, "the CAPS document paces the introduction of phonics so that 1-2 new sounds are introduced each week during the first two terms so that at least eight sounds are taught by the end of the first term and the remainder by the end of the second term." Hugo, et al. (2016) stress the point that it is important for learners to consider word recognition in order to acquire adequate vocabulary for learners' comprehension of grade level reading for academic success. In similar vein, Vadasy and Sanders (2010: 799) report "significant positive effects of classroom phonics instruction time on phonological awareness and comprehension" among pre-school learners. This finding is further strengthened by Buckingham (2020: 1) who reports that "strongest available evidence shows systematic phonics instruction to be more effective than any existing alternative."

Indeed, studies affirm that there is a shortage of inclusion of letters and sounds within Grade One teaching strategies in the curriculum of South African learners from different language backgrounds (DBE, 2014). In a low-grade English HL comprehension education method, letters and sounds are included. The approach can help to impact the lack of competence and inability to understand English HL to benefit learners from diverse backgrounds. This is achievable because systematic phonics teaches learners “the correspondences between graphemes (letters and letter clusters) in written words and phonemes (speech sounds) in spoken words, and how to use these grapheme-phoneme correspondences to read and spell” (Buckingham, 2020: 3).

For his part, Guzman-Alcon (2019) advances the view that effective approaches of teaching English HL comprehension skills are needed to increase the independence of learning, which could lead to a clear thought about teaching English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learner. This concurs with the thinking of Hildebrand (2019) to the effect that learners’ phonemic awareness influences their understanding of words and sounds in words to provide clear attentiveness of English HL comprehension skills.

5.5.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Stories with photographs in “Special Reading Book” written by teachers in Grade One

‘Teachers have to make the lesson to be eye-catching, to create a lively classroom atmosphere’

Participants revealed that they used stories with pictures and gave them to learners as a strategy to increase their English HL comprehension skills. According to the participants, learners listened attentively throughout the lesson as their teachers read them stories, contending that stories with pictures easily made the learners understand the meaning of the stories before the introduction of the content. The teachers regarded using stories with pictures to learners was a prerequisite to teaching English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learners. In this regard, the teachers expressed themselves as follows:

PA1:

Really, this makes them happy, when I tell a story, while learners listen attentively to

the story. After that, I ask learners about the sound that is repeated several times in the story. After that, I ask them also to give me words with the same sounds that we are learning.

PA2:

I give learners A4 worksheet with pictures of the sound that they are learning, intending to see whether they can identify the sound or letter. In the worksheets, learners write following the dotted lines. After that, those who are fast are able to quickly identify that those letters form a word that they were sounding.

PA3:

Learners won't be the same..... I ask learners to draw any picture with the sound that they have learned, and learners end by colouring the drawn picture. Yes, some learners are very creative, they even explain the drawn picture and that makes me feel that I have worked.

PA4:

I let learners copy the sight words from the board while pronouncing them. Sight words are always on the wall. After they have read, I ask them to draw pictures that will have the sound of the sight words as they have seen which words have the common sounds.

In the above set of statements, the teachers pointed out that associating pictures with words served to expand understanding of English HL comprehension skills for their learners (Matamoros-González, et al., 2017) (c.f. 3.4.4). Matamoros-González, et al. (2017) found that letters were not easy to remember, and learners needed to surround themselves with imaginary 'language' (Kersten, 2015). Normally, attaching pictures to comprehension passages simulates thinking skills. The teachers in this study highlighted the point that sound manipulation in the course of teaching comprehension skills activated their learners' memories, as they got equipped to describe the pictures. The teachers emphasized the point that learners' response to pictures was the best strategy for teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds.

Therefore, the association of pictures with their learners' performance seemed to be meaningfully relevant to promoting learners' acquisition of English HL comprehension

skills. However, the teachers pointed out that they, and their learners, needed support with respect to shifting from their own home languages to the new language (English), for them to function comfortably as if, indeed, English was their home language. Therefore, the use of the Schema theory in this study makes it clear that learners' language backgrounds have some cause and 'attributes of influence' in attaining English HL comprehension skills. This means that the more understanding a teacher has about the varied linguistic backgrounds of the learners, the more prepared such a teacher would be in modelling and scaffolding learning for the learners – as was explained earlier in relation to the conceptual model in Figure 3.3. As Moodley (2013: 26) observes, the “child’s first language development is dependent on the quality and quantity of parental and teachers’ input, the socio-economic context of the home and school environment, the availability of good language models and the interventional support programmes available at schools to mediate language learning.”

CAPS assumes that, as they start Grade One, English HL learners are able to respond to social interactions, communicate needs and feelings, respond orally to read-aloud stories, identify basic sequence of events and stories, speak using verb tense and adjectives, and identify by name objects, people and events in the English language. Furthermore, they also assumed to be able to recite rhymes, songs and poems, retell simple stories placing events in sequence, follow oral directions and comprehend words, phrases and short sentences (Moodley, 2013: 69). As such, these learners are expected to use resources with their teachers’ assistance to learn new words, communicate with their fellow learners, listen attentively to questions posed by teachers and participate in classroom discussions in their first language only (Moodley, 2013, p. 71). This is what the typical native HL speakers can do. However, the reality in a South African English HL classroom is different.

So, when we consider that in the South African scenario, there could be minimal home support for the development of English, it is mainly left to the school to provide these learners with all the support necessary for developing the espoused English HL communicative skills. Given the importance of prior experience in Vygotsky’s scheme of things, as well as in the schema theory, the teachers must play a significant role in

ensuring that learners are assisted.

Thus, the relevance of the schema theory to English HL learners whose home language is not English lies in the importance of prior knowledge and experience, as will be explained later with respect to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (Kozulin, 2002). This directs teachers to focus on building an adequate knowledge base upon which they build the competencies of their learners in subsequent lessons. This is important, particularly considering that in South Africa, language learning refers to acquiring language competences and skills in all the official languages, namely, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga – as well as some non-official languages (Department of Basic education, 2011: 8). These languages can be offered at different language levels: (a) Home Language (HL) – the language first acquired by learners; (b) First Additional Language – a language which is not the learner's 'mother tongue' but which is used for certain communicative functions in the society; and (c) Second Additional Language – focusing mainly on the most basic language skills of a 'third' language. More specifically, "Home Language level provides for language proficiency that reflects the basic interpersonal communication skills required in social situations and the cognitive academic skills essential for learning across the curriculum" - emphasising the teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, as well as "literary, aesthetic and imaginative" abilities that will provide learners "with the ability to recreate, imagine, and empower their understandings of the world they live in" (Department of Basic education, 2011: 8). This is the level of focus in this study.

Secondly, in South Africa, many children start using their additional language, usually English, as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in Grade Four, suggesting that they must reach a high level of competence in English by the end of Grade Three, and they need to be able to read and write well in English. For those in an English HL stream, such as the ones in this study, this level of competency is ascribed to them on entry into Grade One. However, as Moodley (2013, p. 200) avers, in many cases in South Africa, learners' exposure to English, prior to being enrolled in school is non-existent. Accordingly, for such learners to be enrolled in an English HL class could be

disastrous, unless it is handled professionally.

Although it may be assumed that many children who enter the former Model C schools probably come from middle to higher income families, still, it is possible that some come from socio-economically depressed backgrounds – which adds another layer of complexity to the issue of linguistic diversity. For such children, their exposure to the English language, especially at Grade One level, may be limited. Therefore, the importance of assessing the proficiency of the learners as they begin their schooling journey in Grade One, against the expected entry-level English HL competences, cannot be overemphasised. In the South African situation, the emphasis on language skills will always be the nucleus of the Foundation Phase curriculum “since listening and speaking skills are the precursors for developing writing and reading skills” (Moodley, 2013, p.). In this respect, the Department of Basic Education (2012) expects Grade One learners to demonstrate the attainment of the following skills:

- Listens to stories and acts these out;
- Listens and responds to simple questions;
- Listens to and repeats rhythmic patterns, and copies correctly;
- Listens to and recalls simple word sequences in order (e.g. big, beg, bag);
- Names and points to parts of the body;
- Sings simple songs and does action rhymes;
- Talks about pictures in posters, theme charts, books, etc.;
- Participates in discussions and ask questions;
- Speak using an expanded vocabulary; and
- Tells stories and retell stories of others in own words

Typically, it is the quality of the teachers’ input which is most profound in influencing learning, particularly with respect to learners are coming from poverty backgrounds where parental input in English HL is limited. However, the DBE (2014) proposed the use of clues by way of images to help provide clues, or to break up the text into syllables in order to sound out the applicable phrases. This was after it had been reported that, generally, teachers experienced difficulties teaching story books.

5.5.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Vocabulary pronunciation and repetition

‘Rich and reach’

As already stated, the learners in this study were not English HL speakers. Therefore, their pronunciation of English words varied and even deviated from the pronunciations of English HL speakers. The same could also be said of the teachers, themselves. So, both the teachers and learners were hugely and strongly impacted by their respective home languages in their pronunciation of English words taught in class. It was clear during the semi-structured interviews and classroom observations that the teachers were able to converse in English, but the learners were only very slightly so – as demonstrated from their responses in class. So, on vocabulary pronunciation and repetition, the teachers had the following to say:

PA1:

Yes, I motivate learners to pronounce the words, but you know kids are kids. What I have seen that works for me: repetition helps. Though others are good to cram words, in the end, they can pronounce words.

PA2:

Mmm, I monitor them by standing nearby to encourage pronunciation. What I love with my learners is that they like to impress me as their teacher that they know.

PA3:

Yes, I usually give myself time to monitor them to ascertain whether words are correctly read. As you know young learners copy others only to find that I mix words after someone has pronounced the word.

Similarly, P4 also responded as follows:

PA4:

I read word by word with them pointing with the ruler. To help them to identify sounds. This method of pointing word by word has an advantage and disadvantage, but I use it. Because in the end, they pronounce words to me one by one.

Evidence from interviews and classroom observations shows that participants stressed repeating words to build learners' interest in learning English HL comprehension. Participants also mentioned that learners were good at cramming words, but they always gave them 'Reading Books' with pictures and letters taught throughout the week. Zhou and Xiaochun (2015) (cf. 3.4.1) aver that the success of learners lies in the practice and expression of communicative languages. One major challenge remained learners' accent and the phonic which appeared confusing, however, the teachers in this study *modelled* good pronunciation of words. This approach is consistent with Al-Khafaji's (2015) suggestion that teachers have considerable leverage in promoting an overhaul of the English HL curriculum in order to meet the needs of learners, including enhancing their language fluency. The act of modelling good pronunciation indicates that teachers have a significant impact on helping learners from a range of language backgrounds to learn English communication skills of a home language.

One significant result coming from these results is that the participants believed in using repetition techniques for strong learners' contribution and encouragement regarding pronunciation. The question that arises, therefore, is: using background knowledge from the Schema Theory as a theoretical lens to understanding the English HL dynamics, what would be the best way to learn some of the practical skills – such as pronunciation and using the right accent? Is there a place in this for technology? Fortunately, the question of accent has been addressed by Hewings (2004: 12-13) who points out the difference between a model as a target and as a point of reference and underlines that whether you use the one or the other accent “can have a significant impact on how you teach pronunciation.” He defines a target as “some standard of pronunciation to which the students aspire or which the teacher selects as a goal for students,” while also explaining the that ‘a point of reference’ is “a guide to English pronunciation with the understanding that variation from this model is acceptable provided it does not get in the way of effective communication” (Hewings, 2004: 13). Accordingly, in the final analysis and with the emphasis on CLT, what really matters is effective communication. Likewise, in this study, the participants thought it was important that learners should be able to read and know the techniques that can be strengthened to use the knowledge in their lives. Indeed, some authors contend that learners need to surround themselves with

the language at all times (Kersten, 2015; Chen & Modlin, 2019). This indicates that teachers should support learners during comprehension skills, even though that is not an easy task.

5.5.1.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Games, puzzles, songs and words

‘Active Playing’

As revealed by the participants, it was also corroborated by the classroom observations that the learners were very happy to use the 'games, puzzles, songs and words'. These learners were able to match the pictures in the missing space, and they were positively fitting in the space puzzle pieces and words. Ummah (2017) advises that teachers should create effective ways of teaching games, puzzles, and words' such as employing appropriate tricks and pleasures. In their own words, this is what they had to say:

PA1:

Ya, I give them puzzles to sort and arrange the words, accordingly. Puzzles excite them and I can see when they start to arrange word-puzzles. Learners who are shy work hard, as my school is having resources. Each child has a puzzle.

PA2:

I start with difficult words to explain, and then let them sort the puzzle. Sorting of words makes them crazy as there are pictures that direct them.

PA3:

I usually ask them to create a game with the sound of the week.... using the learned words. Games help them to remember sounds and make works also.

PA4:

I teach them songs with the soundsalways, they sing even outside during the recess time. What I have seen with my Grade One learners is that they like something that will make them play while learning at the same time.

These responses in the above excerpts, taken from the interviews, reflect the participants' belief in the effectiveness of the strategy of using 'active play' activities in teaching English HL vocabulary and word usage. From the participants' reporting, learners were excellent at not missing the songs and game played that had a weekly sound. The teachers also reported that they could often hear the learners singing as they

played outdoors. Ummah (2017) affirms the view that learners prefer to learn English HL by imitating, memorizing, recalling, and exhibiting physical actions. The researcher agrees with Ummah (2017) that teaching English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learners has an impact on a happier, interesting, enjoyable, funny and memorable understanding of different language backgrounds. Before storytelling, and after that, during storytelling, acts can be incorporated and exercised (Shin, 2014, 221). Storytelling is more active and pleasant in this way, and physical acts are important.

Astulik, et al. (2019) agree that the physical aspect of the Total Physical Response (TPR) learning procedure makes it promising to integrate physical exercise and play into English HL comprehension skills language teaching. Iribe and Mutua (2014) reported that games have a positive impact on activities in language teaching. Likewise, in this study, responses from teachers expressed their interest in using games and play to teach English HL comprehension skills. Astulik, et al. (2019) (cf. 3.4) reported that learners who were involved in doing actions with songs, taught by the teacher, also showed greater interest in the lessons. Using songs can lead to automatic recognition of words and the use of language patterns. (Kuśnierek, 2016; Vishnevskaja & Zhou, 2019). Thus, supporting songs in teaching could lead to a steady growth in learners' interest in English HL lessons, as well as actual performance. Songs can help automate the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to enhance practice. In effect, the learner is placed in an area where the targeted language can be used in communicative situations. I agree with them that, to achieve progress, learning a language is based on actions. The views of the participants about this were as follows:

PA1:

Mmm, yes, learners use the strategies ... unaware. As a Grade One teacher, I must use different skills to encourage my learners.

PA2:

Yes, to fit the puzzle, word, and game meaning. Learners like that as, to them, it is like a play whilst to me they are learning because they read the words at the same time.

PA3:

Songs and games are helping my learners to learn new sounds quickly. I like to play

with them as that makes them feel at ease while we are doing our schoolwork.

PA4:

Sometimes, they use what they have seen on TV as an example of sounds. Repetition is good but it is not good as good learners are crammers, but I have a way of catching them. They always read for me in the reading corner.

The interview revealed a variety of emerging, unconfirmed teaching strategies in this field that demonstrated a deep awareness of learners from different language backgrounds. Findings have shown that certain participants are not certain which teaching methodology to follow. For instance, teachers said the departmental policies were not compatible with English HL comprehension teaching, blaming the Department for their teaching.

The teachers further claimed that play remains one of the best comprehension skills strategies for English HL. As part of the teaching of preliminary classes such as Grade One, teachers need to relax, as they endeavour to create a positive environment and opportunities for their learners (Millsaps, 2019) (cf.3.4.2). In agreement, Rokhayati (2017) assert the point that teachers are necessary to build a good learning culture and correct guidance to learners – and this could include good guidance in relation to learning English HL comprehension skills. Likewise, Iribemwangi and Mutua (2014) suggest that academic achievement can be enhanced by the use of language games in teaching Foundation Phase school learners. This means that using games in teaching English HL comprehension skills is a very useful technique.

Indeed, in this study, the participants were all in agreement that while learners sang and played, the text remained in the minds of the learners throughout the day. The means that insofar as the participating teachers were concerned, they had, over their many years of teaching experience, that the use of games and play was very helpful method to teach English HL communication skills. The participants strongly believe that this approach will help learners to have a stronger understanding of the English HL language skills, despite coming from different language backgrounds.

5.6.1 Theme 2: Assessment of Learner’s English language skills

Theme 2 was about teachers’ assessment strategies of English HL comprehension skills of learners from diverse language backgrounds. Part of this was to ascertain the extent to which the teachers engaged in reflective practice. Reflective teaching is a process whereby teachers think over their teaching practices, with a view to analysing their practice to, inter alia, find the best ways to enhance better learning outcomes. So, this theme was meant to assist the researcher to see, first-hand, the appropriateness and effectiveness of the strategies and methods the teachers relied upon in ascertaining learners’ acquisition of the English HL comprehension skills of the Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds. In this regard, it was enlightening to listen to learners read during the classroom observations. Matamoros- González, et al. (2017) (cf. 3.4.4) support this notion in connection with how language may be used to develop learners’ oral skills by engaging learners in reading and listening activities. The researcher also paid attention to the expectations of the teachers and the support they gave to the learners as they read and listened. The sub-themes which emerged from under this theme were:

Sub-theme 1.1 Reading and writing need further technological strategies Sub-theme

1.2 Drilling and modelling

Sub-theme 1.3 Instant correction of learners during the lesson

5.6.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1 Writing and reading require additional technical strategies

‘Teaching comprehension skills is not an easy task’

The data showed that teachers had other ideas that they thought would increase their learners’ knowledge of English HL in Grade One. Some of these ideas included the incorporation of information technology into teaching and learning. During the semi-structured interviews, the participants stated that technology assisted learners to understand the text. Further, they stated that the acquisition of English HL comprehension skills is something that develops over a long period of time. The participants added the following motivating points:

PA1:

I give learners worksheet with pictures to see if they can identify missing letters in the word and fill them in. Sometimes you can find that they mix letters but that needs me as a teacher to correct them before it goes further.

PA2:

I give learners worksheets to match words with the pictures. What is exciting here is that my learners know technology, as they usually play with their parents' phones.

PA3:

I give learners a few short sentences to circle the learned sound of the week. In trying to find out whether they are able to identify the sound, even those who were struggling, manage to finish their work.

PA4:

Usually, learners read a word by linking it to the picture on the board. Learners usually look at the picture before they associate the word.

Livaccari (2013) (cf.3.4.3) states that effective teaching approaches begin with the need to understand what content must be imparted at each grade level. Such strategies have the potential to remedy learners who cannot write and read.

Kathleen (2019) contends that guided reading methods provide learners with the strategies that will turn them into lifelong learners. I believe that if this is achieved, it could provide learners with a clear understanding of a story by having a picture of the story in their mind.

The excerpt from PA2 indicated the importance of technology in encouraging learners to be good with reading while playing around with their phones. She expressed hope that technology could contribute a lot to learners' knowledge and understanding. Obradović, Vučetić and Bojović (2014) recommend that learners with the most severe reading disabilities be assisted to access special education services and extra instructional assistance, such as assistive technology, to enhance text-to-speech, speech-to-text and spell-checking. In the classroom, teachers should use ICT to overcome the challenges of different cultures and languages – and provide space for learning

(Marcino, 2018). Indeed, this is achievable because “culturally relevant teaching emphasizes teachers’ attempts to have culturally and linguistically diverse students sustain their own cultural values instead of assimilating mainstream cultures” (Yoon, 2007: 217). It may then be said that “by valuing students’ cultural and social needs, the culturally relevant pedagogy implies how English language learners need to be served in order to be engaged in learning and be successful in the classroom” (Yoon, 2007: 217). This is motivational to the learners as it affirms their identities, instead of alienating them from their own cultural circumstances, on account of learning a new language.

In this study, the participants strongly agreed that one successful way to teach oral skills is to stress the techniques of teaching English HL comprehension skills as central theme. The participants argued that providing such strong and effective techniques is necessary to relate the knowledge of English HL comprehension skills to practical practice; that this will have a beneficial impact on learning. Hammond, Flooka, Harveya, Barronb and Osherc (2020) aver that this situation would demonstrate the efficacy of teaching English HL learners from diverse backgrounds.

5.6.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Drilling and modelling

‘He and she’

Learners' attitude to learning English HL comprehension skills is very important. PA1, PA2, PA3, and PA4 all remarked that drilling helps to highlight the importance of practice, and practice is key to developing communicative skills. From classroom observations, the researcher observed teachers making great efforts to model the proper pronunciation of words. They all modelled the use of English HL comprehension skills by speaking throughout their classes, so that learners could copy from them. The teachers were a model for the learners to learn from them how to pronounce the phonic sounds for every lesson. Teachers repeatedly named the words for the learners to get the right pronunciation. Learners were then asked to repeat the words several times until the teachers were satisfied that they had achieved the right pronunciation. The benefits of the bilingual approach are clearly articulated by many researchers who claim that teachers make purposeful attempts to help learner develop comprehension skills (Durga, 2018;

& Enama, 2016). The four participants expressed themselves as follows:

PA1:

You know, the learners can't read English as it is not their home language but need to be directed. Modelling and drilling is the best method for my Grade One learner, as even the pronunciation needs to be done correctly.

PA2:

Yho, I do this to help learners, so that they can read. Repetition is good for my young learners, and after that, I give them a chance to repeat and repeat a word.

PA3:

Oh no, this method helps my learners to grasp words easily. And by doing drilling, it improves their vocabulary.

PA4:

Oh, it's hard to say much about reflective image as learners are not the same but drilling works for me. Learners imitate their teacher a lot. Whilst I was using this method, other learners gave me a new word with the same sound. I was very excited to see that they had started to understand, bit by bit.

Jessenia; Matamoros-González, Rojas, Romero, Quiñonez, and Soto (2017) and Natsir and Sanjaya; Rahmah; Sinulingga; Lubis; Yusuf (2014) (cf.3.4.4) opine that teaching of a new language through understandable dialogues and carrying out accompanying drills are essential. This assists learners to know grammar and practise rules through different types of drills. Through listening, imitating, and performing skilful tasks, learners obtain a new form of verbal competence, explicitly or inexplicitly. In this study, the participants reported that they found dialogues and drills motivating to learners from diverse language backgrounds. They further decried the lack of ongoing teacher development training opportunities and clear teaching strategies from CAPS documents, with regard to the teaching of English, HL for Foundation Phase learners. Specifically, the teachers stated that they found available CAPS documents and guidelines to be inadequate on the issue of the best teaching strategies to teach Foundation Phase English HL comprehension skills involving non-native speakers of English – especially as they, themselves as teachers, were also non-native speakers of English.

Nonetheless, the teacher indicated that they did their best, including making adaptations and improvising wherever they could. They appealed for clearer policies and specific guidelines from the DBE on the teaching of English HL comprehension skills for Grade One, with sample lesson plans. Killen (2015) (cf. 3.2.1) proposes that to encourage learners to learn successfully may involve allowing certain conversations that promotes opportunities to share new thoughts.

Indeed, friendly communication is likely to improve learners' mental routine of English HL comprehension skills. As Spaul (2015) and Mohammed and Amponsah (2018) points out, learners who cannot master basic English comprehension skills during the first few years of primary schooling are at a disadvantage. They will continuously lag behind their peers, both locally and from other countries. In this study, the teachers emphasized the importance of repetition of words and reading in a group. This will allow learners to improve their English HL comprehension skills. Hammond, et al. (2020) re-affirm the point that through drilling, teachers can teach learners a range of strategies and abilities to improve their background knowledge.

5.6.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Instant learner correction during lesson

‘Attention and participation promoted’

When it is done professionally, correcting learners while they read goes hand-in-hand with the need to raise learners' self-esteem through encouragement. In this study, the participating teachers concurred with the notion that attention and active participation improved the attainment of English HL comprehension skills. In this regard, the teachers had the following to say:

PA1:

In this time, learners find it difficult to exhibit comprehension skills in English HL. Oh yes, this is why there is a need for English HL comprehension skills training to be provided to help teachers to teach learner, strategies to develop the skills and knowledge for quick understanding of reading materials.

PA2:

Sometimes learners like to be corrected by their peers and that makes me see the

improvement of English home language comprehension skills.

PA3:

Correcting learners in the class promotes good English HL comprehension skills, articulation, and concentration. Whilst I am correcting the other one those who are quick also correct the peer group member.

PA4:

I do usually correct them while reading, as that helps to identify the mistakes quickly. As you know that learners like to play, all the time they need to be corrected.

Fattah and Saidalvi (2019) support the view that the teacher can interrupt the learners when they make spelling mistakes and directly corrects them. When learners have difficulty reading a word, the teacher reads the word loudly, thereby, making the learners develop the skills of listening to each other during reading time. However, Murrizda (2019) states that not all mistakes need to be corrected, as some of them simply represent natural outcomes in the development of English HL comprehension skills. Moreover, some corrections depend on the purpose of activities (Murrizda, 2019). Indeed, frequent corrections may prove to be both discouraging and disconcerting for some learners.

The teachers, in this study, supported the view that feedback and corrections are essential, not only to serve as progress display by a learner but also as a platform to raise their motivation. Additionally, the participants of this study contended that strategies were needed to enhance their lessons in the teaching of English HL comprehension skills, including correcting learners to master their skills to promote imagination. In this regard, the teachers in this study agreed that English HL comprehension skills will unlock learners' doors. Klapwijk (2015) (cf.3.5) recommends the EMC strategy for teaching English HL comprehension skills as a dynamic instructional strategic framework for all teachers.

5.7.1 Theme 3: Responses of learners to questions during the lesson

Theme 3 looked at how teachers ensured that learners read with understanding when teaching English HL comprehension skills. English serves as the LoLT of the school that participated in this study, but English is not the home language of the learners, and

therefore they experience difficulties in comprehension skills. The theme looks at the unique strategies to help learners understand their teachers' system of assessment. The sub-themes that emerged were as follows:

Sub-theme 1.1 Classroom communication language is decoded

Sub-theme 1.2 Words arrangements in the worksheet

Sub-theme 1.3 Identifying missing sound in a word

5.7.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Translating the language of classroom communication

‘Children are often shy of people they don't know.’

Learners reach the study purpose through the language of instruction. Therefore, the language used for communication in the classroom is very important and understanding the meanings of words in that language meaning is the main goal. For the communicative approach to teaching English HL comprehension skills to be relevant, the lesson needs to aim at helping learners to practise and develop their linguistic competence. To this end, participants in this study had the following to say:

PA1:

Besides, learners respond to questions even though others are shy. The teacher must use different skills to make learners outspoken in class. In Grade One, learners cannot read and write. There are many challenges particularly those who don't understand.

PA2:

Learners are always motivated to talk as it is an important stage for them to simply acquire the language. Young learners like to speak but during the lesson only those who have an idea of the English language, who can express themselves, usually say something.

PA3:

I ask learners to explain to each other with their spoken HL language. That also helps them to understand the idea of the word, even though English is challenging to them.

PA4:

I struggle but my learners are helpful to each other by explaining the word in their home language. I just do this to help my learners, so that it can be easy to start work with them.

Durga (2018) and Enama (2016) (3.4.5) argue that the bilingual approach allows the

teacher and learners to use two languages to understand the context of the language. I noticed that fewer learners did not find it easy to communicate and interpret a word without pictures being displayed. This point supports the notion that teachers need to initiate classroom communication about life incidents in their environment, even though learners speak in their home languages.

Gajria and Jitendra (2016) (3.6.1) contend that teaching background information about a topic can improve learners' English HL comprehension skills. In this study, learners were accustomed to obtaining help with words by reverting to IsiZulu translation. IsiZulu is a compulsory subject for all learners. As such, the class teachers, who were also native speakers of IsiZulu, were able to support the learners. The teachers allow learners to speak in their home languages to allow them to better understand certain concepts. Indeed, it was evident from the responses of the participants that when learners did not understand, teachers were able to codeswitch between the two languages.

5.7.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Organising words in worksheets

‘Group guided reading’

Learners can work with their peers in groups, leading to healthy competition and motivation as the learners attend to the tasks. During group guided reading, learners display confident skills. Livaccari (2013) (cf. 3.4.3.1) reports that to respond more to instructions, teachers must allow learners to communicate with peers. The views of the participants on the issue of how teachers’ beliefs about their teaching strategies impact learners’ attainment of English HL comprehension skills for Grade One learners from diverse language backgrounds, were as follows:

PA1:

Firstly, I give them flashcards that make a sentence to arrange it by themselves. That creates a very good spirit of competing and at the same time allows them to concentrate on their work.

PA2:

I give them word cards to form a complete sentence from word cards. Forming these sentences excite them as a group of six each.

PA3:

Learners repeat the sounds and words ... to know the words. What makes me laugh is that other learners are looking at others to correct each other, that is what I like with Grade One; learners are very honest.

PA4:

I give my learners worksheets with words and pictures that are mixed up, then learners read and attach the right picture under the word, and colour them, to practise.

Overall, learners like to work in their groups, and this appears to promote cooperation, rather than competition. The teachers reported not being very clear about what was needed to help learners with reading difficulties. Killen (2015) (cf. 3. 2.1) points out that to support teaching and learning, techniques which help learners to read for understanding are required. As a result, teachers must be assisted to acquire the desired techniques for teaching English HL comprehension skills. For learners, a positive attitude and readiness are important. For attaining English HL comprehension skills.

One way to achieve this would be to use technology, as this can help narrow cultural boundaries by bringing different realities to the classroom. For instance, technology can help teachers play videos which allow learners to experience English HL usage by native speakers of the language. In this regard, Ishtaiwa and Shana (2011: 1) make the observation that “the use of technology in language teaching and learning can bring improvements in students’ achievement.” It is further reported that the use of computers could have numerous benefits for English language teaching and learning – including (a) improving learner practices, (b) enhancing learner learning motivation, (c) improving learner achievement, (d) promoting the creation and use of more authentic activities and materials, (e) encouraging greater interaction between teachers and learners, and among learners themselves, (f) emphasising learner individual needs, and (g) enlarging learners’ overall understanding (Ishtaiwa & Shana, 2011: 1).

5.7.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Identifying missing sounds

‘Missing sounds’

On finding missing sounds, the results of this study revealed that the learners were struggling to fit in suitable missing sounds. Similarly, the concentration span of some learners was another problem as their teachers were mostly assisting them to concentrate. Zhou and Xiaochun (2015) (cf. 3.4. 1) point out that communicative language teaching (CLT) develops sound spoken skills before reading and writing. Based on the preceding statements, CLT is taught with higher skills to different age-groups at a different level. Furthermore, the CLT attracts the attention of learners to the significance of independent learning to point out that learners should be given chances to focus on their learning process. Through that, understanding their knowledge and the style of development is suitable for independent learning strategies. The following expressions confirmed learners’ challenges in identifying missing sounds.

PA1:

I give learners a worksheet with words to identify the missing sound or letter to fill in and colour pictures nicely. When colouring is done, they are encouraged to colour it faintly like a real object. Pictures are very helpful to learners as they look at the picture to get the meaning of the word.

PA2:

Mmm, yeah, other learners always need teachers' assistance or control and guidance to finish their classwork. Some learners need me to show them individually. But that is not an issue as I like to work with young learners. I have a strong passion to work with young learners.

PA3:

Learners regularly like to be reminded to look around the class walls where the letters are displayed. Displaying work that we have done is very good as learners easily look at the wall to see the letter that the class is currently busy with.

PA4:

As I have a little bit of long experience than others. When.... comparing the previous classes with the present ones, learners’ concentration is low now. I suspect that technology is the best aid more than pictures. My learners are good to create this when we are doing

art, which means that technology will play a major role if they start to practice in English Home Language.

During the classroom observations, the researcher observed teachers giving learners classwork to do within a limited time. However, only a handful of learners were able to successfully recognise what was required, even though some were asking others. In this respect, Odima (2015) suggests that this difficulty could be attributed to the influence of learners' first acquired languages on the process of teaching and learning English HL comprehension skills. Indeed, this is the main essence of being guided by the schema theory, which emphasises the need to assist learners to connect the new information to their existing schemata. In addition, some remarks from the teachers who participated in this study indicated that some learners lacked proper concentration – and that this may have contributed to poor performance. This is supported by Odima (2015) who stated that behaviour sometimes denies learners to work independently and forces them to sit next to their teacher to finish classwork.

Furthermore, with respect to classwork, and the issue of giving feedback to learners, the participants held the view that correcting learners' work during the course of the lesson was one of their primary activities. However, they reported that when it came to teaching English HL, they found it difficult to do so because they found themselves not to be sufficiently capacitated with the full range of abilities needed to correct the individual mistakes of the learners. Nonetheless, they saw the necessity of teachers keeping learners motivated so that they mastered the necessary literacy levels at an early age.

The views of the teachers corroborated the suggestion that the feelings and emotions of a person have a critical role to play in the learning process, especially the learning of a foreign language (Hugo, et al., 2016). The participants reported that they used different methods to inspire learners, such as displaying their work on the wall, generating competition amongst themselves, asking important questions and praising their efforts.

The participants also reported that they found it very hard to know when to correct learners and when not to correct them. The danger of over-correcting is that by knocking against each mistake and correcting it, learners can become demotivated, and you can also destroy

the class flow or achievement. However, when it is clear to learners that the corrections are done for a developmental purpose by providing them with a framework for progress, and not as penalty, most learners have no apprehensions about the teacher correcting their work.

Murridza (2019) (cf.5.7.2.3) points out that not all errors must be corrected immediately. Teachers need to emphasize that corrections are done for purposes of improvements. When this is done well, it leads to learner motivation. Typically, new mistakes are a sign that there is learning of new ways taking place, especially when learners are experimenting with new words. However, when learners keep making the same mistakes, it is not a positive sign. By noting learners' mistakes, teachers are able to keep a record of learners' success and track their progress. On their part, the learners can avoid making the same mistakes over and over again.

During classroom observations, I watched and listened to the learners while reading during group-guided reading sessions. In general, new errors indicated that they were learning various aspects of English HL comprehension skills or were simply playing with new words. However, some of the learners kept making the same mistakes.

Further, classroom observations showed that teachers were not sure when and how to correct learners. Each teacher had different opinions about this, as well as different ways of correcting learners. In the end, it was a matter of each teacher determining what she was comfortable with and what worked for her. One of the participants reported that focusing on learners' mistakes amounted to taking 'time out' from an operation. One option was to look at the class's mistakes as a group.

5.8.1 Theme 4: Involvement of parents and guardians in assisting learners with homework

The results of this theme revealed that the main challenge faced by teachers was the lack of parental involvement in their children's schoolwork. This challenge also extended to the learning of English HL comprehension skills for both teachers and learners. The

participants affirmed the view that lack of parental support was a major challenge in South African schools, generally. The participants lamented that there was a lack of, or inadequate, involvement of parents and guardians in assisting their children with their homework. This was attributed to parental and guardian commitments or engagements to other things. These challenges affected learners and teachers. Indeed, it is generally reported that social, cultural, linguistic, and economic factors do have a great influence on learners' achievement in class (Santhosh & Meenakshi, 2015; Quinn, et al, 2015). The participants agreed that teaching English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learner from diverse language backgrounds was affected, not only by the general lack of parental support but also because the parents were not native speakers of English. Therefore, there was a limit to which they could assist their children. Nonetheless, a few learners got help at home, and this was known to the teachers. Santhosh and Meenakshi (2015) and Quinn, et al. (2015). Indeed, supporters of the bilingual approach have a belief that to reshape the language situation while teaching English HL comprehension skills is the main challenge in many situations (Santhosh & Meenakshi, 2015; Quinn, et al., 2015) (cf.3.4.5). An ability to read is acquired over consistent performance in developing English HL comprehension skills. The sub-themes that emerged were:

Sub-theme 1.1 Parent and guardians are not participative Sub-theme 1.1 Challenge of self-expression

Sub-theme 1.1 RADIUS environment

5.8.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Parents and guardians are not participative

Based on the findings from the participants, most of the learners found it difficult to understand English HL. The teachers consistently agreed that comprehension skills for many learners were very difficult to attain – thus, when reading English texts, many learners faced different difficulties. In part, this was blamed by the teachers on the lack of, or inadequate, parental and/or guardian involvement in the work of the learners. Most of the learners were cared for by their aunties and grandmothers, as their biological parents were unavailable at home. Boakye and Linden (2018) report that the English-speaking ability of learners who speak a language other than English at home is low. This notion is

supported by Mishra (2015) who contends that the impact of non-parental involvement in the linguistic development of children makes some learners have a limited strength to communicate well, especially regarding English HL. Below are verbatim statements from the participants:

PA1:

Yah, as learners are not staying with their parents or guardians, their performance is not good. Every morning you can find that a certain number of them couldn't do their work. So that is when I can see that life of some of these children is difficult and they need me to help them.

PA2:

Yes, most of the parents are required to work, maybe long hours. Learners are usually using common transport that is driven by uncles, who usually pick up learners late after school. You can see by the time they arrived home they are tired and whoever stays with them doesn't have any time of asking about their school homework.

PA3:

Aiy! Usually, learners stay with the grannies or aunties who are not educated or do not understand anything in English. Learners are nice because they always report immediately in class that they didn't do the homework. That is where you see that this Foundation Phase class needs love.

PA4:

Mmm, yes. It's very difficult. Learners are hard to understand English comprehension skills, as the result of not doing their 'homework' well at home. They need strong support. As a Grade1 teacher, you need to love and understand the environment where your learners come from. Overall, parents are not participative to help their children.

Participants' affirmation that parents are not completely involved in their children's schoolwork concurs with the findings reported by Mwoma (2017). Mwoma holds the view that learners who are not receiving appropriate assistance from parent's encounter challenges in acquiring English HL comprehension skills. So, seeing that the teachers in this study decried the low level, or inadequate, involvement of parents and guardians, this

means that a lot of what the learners need to develop these skills must be covered at school. In this study, this worried the participants, knowing full well that school time is also limited. Furthermore, the participants were not happy that parents rarely visited them to discuss their children's progress and development. Such meetings would have afforded the teachers opportunities to discuss how the parents and guardians could contribute towards their children's development.

This shows that parents are not playing the vital role of supporting and enhancing their children's academic development. The main challenge may actually be that many of the parents and guardians require to be assisted to perform the role which the school wants them to play in the academic development of their children. Still, many of them may not have the academic preparation to play the envisaged role, especially with respect to the teaching of English HL comprehension skills. The value of integrating linguistically diverse families in one classroom to pursue the same curriculum may also be a matter requiring further examination as to whether or not it is an educationally sound idea (Amorsen, 2015). She believes that, once debated and resolved, the value of integrating linguistically diverse families in one classroom to pursue the same curriculum, will go a long way towards expressing and valuing the home language of children. In turn, this could promote good parent-teacher relationships, parent contact and participation in classroom activities. In the meantime, there is a good case to argue for the position that learners from diverse home language backgrounds need more exposure to English HL beyond the classroom hours. Where this is not the case, it means that only during their schooling can the learners receive quality education in English HL. Therefore, one would argue that the presence of parents in school educational programmes will dramatically change the behaviour and attitude of the children towards school. Parents and teachers need to interact regularly so that parents can academically track the activities and development of their children. This could have a strong impact on the teaching and learning of English HL comprehension skills, especially for learners from diverse language backgrounds. Among other learning benefits, such teacher- parent interactions could lead to the children's increased academic performance. In general, it is widely believed that parental engagement improves learners' learning opportunities and acts as a connection between school and home.

5.8.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Challenges of self-expression

‘Have to be engaged to be credited’

As already stated, most of the learners in the participating school were not English HL speakers. Therefore, the learners’ pronunciation differed from that of English HL speakers. That had a great impact on the way they articulated English words. In class, learners were encouraged to participate in each lesson, and all the teachers encouraged them with certain credits whenever they answered a question or successfully participated in activities within the stipulated time. However, verbal expressions aligned to English HL pronunciations on the part of both the participants and the learners indicated this as a challenge. The participants commented as follows regarding this matter:

PA1:

Learners who are from diverse backgrounds have the main challenge of expressing themselves in English. But what I like with them once they understand what they are doing my teaching of English HL comprehension flourish.

PA2:

Oh yah! Yes, I have to challenge the learners to help them to express themselves within a short space of time, especially in term one. What I can say when the term continues you can see that the learners are improving with their speech. They start to know words and their vocabulary development takes off.

PA3:

Mmm, yes, learners who have assistance at home grasp English HL comprehension skills fast and this shows. My learners are not the same, but I like them as they like to help each other, that alone drives those who are left behind.

PA4:

Those learners who have a good background in Grade R class in English HL comprehension skills can understand the instructions even though they can't express themselves well. You recognize that learners develop quickly and rapidly in constructing a sentence. Even as a teacher I feel pleased to see that I have succeeded, their progress is exciting to me.

Kulo and Omulando (2014) (3.8.1) opine that teacher need to engage learners more in reading to activate their comprehension skills. However, the teachers in this study mentioned that some learners are too slow, while others finish their class activities within the stipulated time. Yumbya and Githinji (2019) emphasize the point that through language activities, Grade One learners may enjoy an enhanced reading performance as part of the habits of engagement. Furthermore, the lack of reading strategies and guidelines was found as the biggest challenge faced by the Grade One teachers. Marima (2016) suggests that clear policy guidance on teaching English HL comprehension skills to learners who are not English HL speakers are important for teachers to be sufficiently guided, including developing awareness about the use of phonics and whole word approaches.

Odima (2015) studied the connection between teaching English in primary schools vis-à-vis learning English language skills and found that the teaching method for English HL was based on the previous first language information acquired by the learners. Mother tongue appeared to be an important factor in developing further language skills, thereby indicating that mother language skills were a gateway to learning (and teaching) language skills in another language – in this case, English HL comprehension skills. This suggests that learners in this study could have been easily assisted to acquire the necessary and relevant English HL skills through strategies which guided them from their own home languages. Certainly, strategies that exclude the learners' extant language skills and, instead, assume them to possess English HL skills, would be misguided strategies or approaches. This was one reason why the teachers felt that there was a gap in the sense that the CAPS policies, recommended strategies and guidelines vis-à-vis the teaching of English HL to learners who are non-native English speakers.

In their study, Moyo, Beukes and van Rensburg (2010: 23) decried the inability of the learners to take full advantage of the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach – thereby suggesting that “the learners might not be at the appropriate level of language development.” This observation is important, bearing in mind that the Department of Basic Education rationalises the teaching of English HL to non-native English speakers on the grounds that the label HL refers to the level of the learner's proficiency in the language, and not the language itself (DBE, 2011, p. 8). Accordingly, the HL level “provides for

language proficiency that reflects the basic interpersonal communication skills required in social situations and the cognitive academic skills essential for learning across the curriculum ... [with an emphasis on] ... the teaching of the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills...” (DBE, 2011, p. 8).

From a policy point of view, the question remains as whether or not it is wise to construe home language learning in the sense of ‘proficiency in the language’ when this may, in fact, not be the case. As Moyo, et al. (2010, p. 25) explain, “the premise for the defining difference between a home and a second language is the vexed construct of a critical period for language acquisition, which posits that the acquisition of a first language is completed by the age of five.” Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that, even at Grade One level, the CAPS English HL curriculum is premised on the understanding that “the learner already has the fundamental knowledge of the sounds and structures” of the English language by school-going age (DBE, 2011, p 8). In reality, this could be problematic and hold the potential for frustrations on the part of both the learners and teachers.

During lesson observations, the researcher witnessed all the participating teachers’ model for their learners on pronunciation of words to learners. In the entire lesson, the modelling was used to get the learners to speak out as a way of making them to benefit from the skills gained in English HL. The underlying strategy behind this approach was that learner participation in class was an important factor in learning comprehension skills in English Home Language. However, while the teachers worked hard to assist their learners with pronunciation, they mentioned that having a class with learners from diverse language backgrounds presented a major challenge. The participants reiterated the strong need to develop clear policies guidelines and strategies for teaching English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learners from a variety of language backgrounds. They even posited that, maybe, parents also needed to be developed and capacitated with the necessary skills to assist their children with homework, including English HL comprehension skills. These teachers were pointing fingers at the DBE, alleging negligence in not organizing workshops or in-service training to capacitate them in that regard. Certainly, this call for help points to a felt need among the teachers, partly arising out of their own academic backgrounds and partly as a result of a paucity in opportunities for continuing professional teacher

development. Thus, with the foregoing in mind, the participants suggested that more class time be allocated for the teaching of English HL comprehension skills in Grade One, especially in view of the diverse language backgrounds of learners, and the paucity of enabling policies, guidelines, and research-based instructional strategies.

5.8.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Supportive socio-cultural environment

The learners' environment plays the most important role concerning the frequency they practise the language. As reported earlier, most learners in the school came from families that were not English HL speakers. Durga (2018) and Enama (2016) (cf.3.4.5) support the notion that the bilingual approach allows the teachers and learners to use two languages. Generally, the target language to be learned and the mother-tongue, which is used to achieve the target language. The bilingual approach is appropriate for learners who come from diverse language backgrounds. The significant contribution of this method is to make it possible for learners to use the skills learnt from one language to support learning another language. In this study, PA1, PA2, PA3, and PA4 opined that their learners' English HL comprehension skills were low. More specifically, PA1 stressed the point that the curriculum as well as the policy had no reinforcement mechanisms for the teaching and learning of English HL. The participants had the following to say:

PA1:

Most of the learners have the same problem of the different radius of environment and poor exposure to the English Home Language comprehension skills. But in class, I work hard with them as I can see that if I am not fair to my babies, I would be killing myself. I love to work with Grade One learners.

PA2:

Completely, a teacher's contribution is very slow in achieving the awareness of English Home Language comprehension skills. But as I love them, I always help them in the reading corner.

PA3:

Some learners are not able to cope with the language, but other learners attempt to understand from peers to complete their tasks. I hope that encourages them with the classroom environment as most of the time their assessment includes colouring.

PA4:

The environment of a certain number of learners is not convenient for learners. For instance, learners are not speaking the English language at home. Learners struggle with assistance at home. They wake up early to come to school and arrive late back home.

In this case, these quotes show that the teachers decried the learner distance setting, which means that they saw this as a major issue. Teachers need to have enough time to help learners attain a higher level of English HL comprehension skills, considering that the language is not spoken at home – and there is very little help, if any, that the learners receive when they are at home. The issue of helping the children with homework in English HL remains a major challenge. All teachers who participated in this case study were aware that learners' distance to school contributes to their low performance. English HL comprehension skills need ceaseless practice to master the language. During the lesson observations most learners were able to follow instructions by responding to questions, although it was also evident that many of them needed further development. English language is often one of the best tools a person needs to fight one's way in the world today. So, since learners are not adequately completely exposed to English usage beyond school premises, teachers have to go an extra mile to help their learners gain as much of the required language skills as much. It was clear from this study that the teachers were trying their best to support their learners. Additionally, the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ, 2014) similarly expressed the view that the learners' performance was influenced by school, teacher, and learner characteristics.

The findings report of the Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS, 2017) study and the Annual National Assessments (ANA, 2014) indicated that in South Africa, the literacy levels of learners are below the global literacy levels. In 2004, the Department of Education (DoE) realized that English comprehension skills in South Africa needed to be prioritised. For that reason, in CAPS (2011), the First Additional Language curriculum is framed around 40 weeks of the academic year focusing on comprehension skills. This suggests that more practice in learning English comprehension skills is greatly valued, given that beyond the school exposure to the language is generally sporadic.

In addition, the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU, 2012) stresses the point that the purpose of evaluation work is to discover common practices in schools. However, in spite of the efforts of the DBE, learners continue to perform poorly in ‘reading for understanding’, indicating that the learners do not read at the level that is expected. Nonetheless, the views of the participants in this study were that cooperation, and assistance and the involvement of stakeholders would all be instrumental in developing the understanding of teaching English HL to learners from different language backgrounds. This still remains to be a huge challenge. For now, it appears that the explanation for the paucity of the appropriate and relevant strategies lies beyond the theoretical realm of the current practice. There is, therefore, a gap that needs to be addressed in order to avoid confusion among Grade One teachers, teaching English HL to learners from diverse language backgrounds. This involves preparation of teachers to improve their expertise with the required understanding the strategies required to teach English HL to learners who come from diverse home language backgrounds.

5.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the results of this study. These results showed that the majority of teachers had a strong view about the use English as the LoLT for Grade One learners. The results further indicated that it was difficult for most Grade One teachers to teach learners from diverse language backgrounds, as they could not teach them from the knowledge and an understanding of the learners’ native languages. At Grade One level, this affected the teachers’ ability to communicate easily, both among themselves as learners and in interacting with the teachers. In effect, most learners whose home language is an African language struggle to understand and decode English texts meaningfully – and most of them tend to display a low degree of English-language literacy. In this study, the teachers also decried the lack of support and collaboration from the learners’ parents and guardians as another confounding factor.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents discussions of findings from the data collected in the study.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the analysis and interpretation of the results of this study, in line with the research questions posed in chapter one. In this chapter, the researcher discusses the findings of the study. Furthermore, the researcher addresses the shortcomings of the findings and draws interpretive conclusions. Recommendations are also suggested on how to resolve certain factors that affect the teaching and learning of English HL.

For quick cross-referencing, the following research objectives guided this study:

- To explore the strategies employed by Foundation Phase teachers to teach English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds.
- To assess how Foundation Phase teachers, ensure that all learners can read with understanding while teaching English Home Language comprehension skills.
- To establish how teachers' beliefs about their teaching strategies assist Foundation Phase learners from diverse home language backgrounds to learn English Home Language comprehension skills, including reading with understanding.
- To find out the challenges Foundation Phase teachers encounter in the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds.

6.2 THEME ONE: THE USAGE OF PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS DURING THE INTRODUCTION OF THE LESSON

The first research objective of this study was to explore the strategies employed by Foundation Phase teachers to teach English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds. In this regard, there were five strategies that emerged, namely: (a) using phonological awareness to introduce the lesson, (b) encouraging the knowledge of letters and sounds, (c) using creativity of a 'Special Reading Book,' for learners, (d) motivation of pronunciation and vocabulary repetition, and (e) using of games, puzzles and songs to enhance comprehension skills. These are presented and discussed

below.

6.2.1 Using Phonics and Letters

Findings of the study showed that the participating Grade One teachers preferred to use phonics and letters in teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds (Odima, 2015; Nanchengwa, 2016). This type of awareness is what Alcock, Ngorosho and Jukes (2017) refer to as the 'all-rounded' phonological awareness skills, requiring recognition of the phoneme as the smallest unit of language that can bring about a difference in meaning. In using this approach, teachers teach learners new ideas that are used as an integration point for the techniques they know.

In other words, understanding English HL skills in teaching learners provides the connection between learners' previous knowledge and the new knowledge in the classroom. Making such connections is critical. Activating prior knowledge and experience of learners is believed to be effective in teaching receptive listening and reading skills in schemata, as schemata "help process information by reducing the processing load" (Farangi & Saadi, 2017). In addition, language is a key artefact that forms connections between the mind's worldview and the understanding of the world around us. Basic literacy skills are prerequisites for academic learning, economic development, and stability through the ability to participate effectively in the employment market (Govender & Hugo, 2020). Similarly, Zhang (2018) and Gilakjani (2016) argue that when the content schema is familiar to learners, this makes understanding the subject of the text easier. Indeed, this argument is consistent with the schema theory.

Learners come to school with cultural awareness which influences their approach to acquire a new language. The learner navigates and learns new concepts by using worldview as a reference point. It is also vital that the methods used to teach match well with the way learners learn the vocabulary that learners learn in the classroom. In other words, the use of the English HL in education connects the worldviews of learners. New information is then assimilated to promote comprehension and deep learning – thereby contributing to the full potential of learners. This implies that learners understand more

through the comments of the participants by using various ways of presenting letters and sounds.

6.2.2 Encouraging the knowledge of letters and sounds

On the other hand, by triggering the learner's prior knowledge, teachers posit that it facilitates the connections that enable the learners to think about what they already know, thereby promoting the notion of subject-content in-progress. In this study, teachers assisted their learners with images, stories, flashcards, and sight words to help establish a difference in teaching the understanding of English HL (cf.5.5.1.1 {PA1; PA; PA3; PA4}). In this regard, the success of learners in reading depends on their ability to develop comprehension skills, which would prompt other strategies to improve efficiency.

In a study using the phonic approach to boost the low reading capacity of pupils in Ghana, teachers were encouraged to use acceptable methods in teaching English HL, and it was recommended that teachers avoid terrifying learners with unfamiliar learning circumstances (Ankrah, Nyanta & Opoku, 2017). In addition, it was recommended that teachers use items and examples from their immediate environment to design their lessons. Similarly, in the present study, PA1, PA2, and PA3 used photographs to guide learners, while participant PA4 only used sight words to introduce new sounds. The learners frequently learn from sight to know words. Furthermore, it was established during the classroom observations that teachers used various approaches to develop the communication skills of the Grade One English HL learners from diverse language backgrounds. In concurrence Kathleen (2019) (cf.5.5.1) argues that learners learn the basic language of phonemic awareness as the lesson progressed – considering that reading comprehension is the ability to uniquely understand and use language sources.

However, because learners are generally weak in English HL comprehension skills, this means that context knowledge and techniques are required for them to understand the text. The results of this study affirmed the point that during the presentation of the text, learners need to have context knowledge. This means that previous knowledge is essential for learners' consistency in linking the new knowledge of content correctly with their prior

knowledge for them to understand new knowledge of content (Govender & Hugo, 2020). This will also encourage learners to gather new information and use it when needed – thereby indicating that learning needs to be reinforced by various techniques during the lesson presentation which could, for example, include providing the learners with a simple outline of comprehension of word types. By combining the relationship between sounds, the learners can pronounce the sound letters. Learners need to develop skills to read and write, ranging from the simple lower- level processes involved in print comprehension to higher-level skills, as well as text representation and idea integration abilities with learners' global knowledge (Govender & Hugo, 2020). Some authors identify various types of reading strategies that can affect classroom actions and content that the use of such approaches has the potential to enhance the teaching of English HL comprehension skills (Siti, 2017; Gilakjani, 2016; Kara, 2015).

Participants also agreed that if the understanding techniques were taught, learners would have an opportunity to accomplish their reading skills. In particular, teachers believed that by learning the phonics and letters, every learner would successfully learn English HL comprehension skills. In turn, this implies that teachers should know how to link the learning experiences of their learners to the curriculum, because the foundation for new experience is what learners already know. This is also in line with the Schema Theory which stresses the building of an appropriate schema for any new information to find meaning through the two complementary processes of accommodation and assimilation. Thus, teacher must be able to integrate learners' previous knowledge from their schemata into what they are doing, on the day, in the English HL lesson. This approach is further supported by the works of Vygotsky (1978) which maintains that the social and cultural experiences of learners are important for language development.

6.2.3 Creativity of a 'Special Reading Book' for learners

In this study, the participants placed emphasis on the use of stories with pictures in "Special Reading Book" developed by the Grade One teachers. Ankrah, et al. (2017) note that acquiring the ability to read gladly is not an easy operation. Reading is more than just acknowledging letters and decoding words.

Learners understand the content in the book by first looking at pictures then associating them with sounds. Pictures link previous learners' knowledge to the new story and help them learn new words in the process. There are many vocabulary words that can be taught using images or diagrams. Nowadays, most writers, vocabulary books and course books contain a large number of beautiful pictures, showing the meaning of the basic words. Liao and Wang (2018) report that learners' English language skills improve when visual pictures are used in home language teaching, since the pictures fit the given words and the concepts needed for the lesson being taught.

Learning to read is one of the most important things that a learner wishes to achieve in English HL. This is because English comprehension skills are needed for progress in all the school subjects. The phonics teaching method is used to teach learners sounds with letters and mixing them to ensure mastery of the decoding skills. Within the classroom set-up, the presence of teachers around the learners makes it possible for them to identify the relevance of a picture and the word in the book of reading (Matamoros-González, et al., 2017) (cf. 3.4.4).

Reflecting on my classroom observations, the learners were very excited when they saw themselves being able to read their books. In addition, it was clear during these classroom observations that the participants went that an extra mile with their learners to improve their attitudes and English HL comprehension skills. The participants expressed themselves on this issue as follows:

PA1:

Really, this makes them happy when I tell a story; while learners listen to the story attentively after the sound that is repeated several times in the story, which they have been asked to learn. After that, I would also ask them to give me words with the same sounds.

The use of word matching images was evident in classroom interactions employed by the teacher at the beginning of reading and writing lessons.

PA2:

I give A4 worksheets to the learners with images of the sound they are learning on the day, to see if they can identify the sound or the letter. Learners write according to dotted lines in the worksheets. After that those who are fast identify quickly those letters form a word in the book that they sounded.

In the classroom experiences used by the teacher at the start of reading and writing lessons, the use of word-matching images was evident.

PA3:

Learners won't be the same. I ask the learners to draw some images with the sound they've heard in the storybook, and the learners end up painting the picture they've created. Yes, some learners are very creative, they even explain the picture taken and that makes me feel like I've been working.

The above extract illustrates how optimistic the participant was in terms of bridging the gap generated by the learners' ability to construct the meaning of a word or image.

PA4:

I let the learners copy the board's sight words as they pronounce them. Words of sight still rest in the mirror. After they have to read in the storybook, I ask them to draw pictures that will help remember most of the words in the story book. When they have seen words of speech, the images and phrases in the storybook are easy to compare.

These excerpts illustrate how helpful the participants found the use of sight words, sounds and images in facilitating learners' attainment of the required English HL Comprehension skills.

Classroom findings also revealed that participants made an attempt to tap into learners' prior knowledge. Participants accepted the fact that there was previous knowledge that learners brought to the classroom, and they needed to use that knowledge in teaching English HL skills to their learners. To the degree that they appeared to be influenced by all these methods, the participants attempted to accommodate them in their teaching. The expectation was that when the learners were assessed, the result would indicate whether or not the teachers' strategies were effective in enabling them to acquire the requisite

English HL skills. If learners can be assessed to be successful readers, this would constitute proof that teachers are using effective reading strategies.

Klapwijk (2016) states that strategies can be approximately pronounced as the ability to ensure that pre-reading is introduced to encourage the learners to guess new words that are being taught (Madikiza, et al., 2018; Thuraisingam, et al., 2017) (cf.3.9.1). Thus, considerable emphasis is placed on the recognition of letters and sounds for clear development of English HL comprehension skills. Thus, there should not be a lack of properly established phonological laws to support the development of these abilities in the early years of school, as they are considered the best predictor for reading ability.

The effects of using different teaching strategies is to address the challenge that most teachers tend to use conventional teaching methods, such as recitations or repetition of English words and their teaching techniques show very little imagination. As Aefsky (2015) and Brookfield (2017) observe, teachers seem to teach the way they were taught by reading the story and expecting to hear from learners.

6.2.4 Motivation of pronunciation and vocabulary repetition

The data from this study showed that pronunciation is a big problem. Teachers reported that learners mispronounced many words. The theme on the ‘motivation of pronunciation and vocabulary repetition’ focuses on how learners learn to read correctly and fluently – and how they find meanings of words used in the text in order to understand the text provided to them by teachers. A classroom situation which does not encourage students to read, lacks a reading culture. Chen and Modlin (2019), and Kersten (2015) (c.f.5.6.1.3) emphasize the point that learners who speak the same language must be surrounded by people who speak that language. Though, it is not an easy task, teachers should support learners with strategies for understanding, and give them as many opportunities as possible to improve their pronunciation, listening and writing skills.

Conversely, spelling errors caused by inaccurate pronunciations can be reduced by teachers, since teaching pronunciation skills plays a very important role in learners’

contexts and situations. To achieve this, teachers need to focus on pronunciation and repetition regularly, in order to improve learners' pronunciation. In this study, the participants were pleased with how they taught pronunciation. However, some of them gave a number of reasons why they were not satisfied with the strategies, which they characterised as "oratorical". According to them, instructions on pronunciation simply take too much time and that they had limited time. They opined that more resources were needed to provide guidance on pronunciation. One of the teachers felt that since pronunciation was not assessed, this discouraged teachers from spending too much time on it.

Apart from time and educational support issues, which were seen as detracting from the teaching of pronunciation, the teachers also felt uncertain about how to teach pronunciation. This resulted from the lack of teacher preparation, compounded by the lack of espoused teaching strategies by way of policy guidelines and in-service training. Klapwijk (2016) avers that, in South Africa, teachers do not only need knowledge and skills about teaching strategies, but also the specific underlying linguistic concepts and knowledge for them to teach effectively. Thus, it is envisaged that English HL comprehension skills instruction in South African primary school classrooms does not get the attention it deserves. More precisely, Klapwijk (2016) reported that some teachers were not clear about specific educational know-how and techniques, as well as critical pronunciation structures.

However, according to the results of this study, the participants found the use of flashcards was very useful in their teaching. In line with this finding, there are many studies which give credence and affirm the use of flashcards and other similar artefacts as an effective teaching strategy. In this regard, Sitompul (2013, p. 52) compared the use of flashcards against using word lists in a quasi-experimental study and reported that, although both groups improved in their vocabulary master, the group that used flashcards reported that they "could memorize the words easily, be more motivated to learn English and understand vocabulary easily." On the other hand, learners using word lists perceived this approach to be tedious. Accordingly, Sitompul (2013) recommended the use of flashcards for teaching vocabulary to young learners. Habibi (2017) reported similar results, working

with learners with disability.

In concurrence with Sitompul (2013), Aslan (2011) exalts the use of flashcards in teaching vocabulary as not only effective but also an enjoyable way to memorize vocabulary and basic grammar. According to Aslan (2011, p 347), “that is why, they have been used by language teachers for a while ... Besides, flashcards can replace the feeling of studying with that of playing a game, and when used with an appropriate English course they are extremely good at helping students build a large vocabulary.” In explaining why flashcards are particularly effective for young learners, Aslan (2011, p 347) explains that this is so because “children generally find it easier to associate images with words and this is why many of the flashcards.” In the opinion of Rahmasari (2016: 1), using flashcards in teaching vocabulary to elementary school learners “is almost without weaknesses.”

A significant concern raised by the teachers in the interviews was the need to be confident when it came to their pronunciation instruction. Klapwijk (2016) stressed the point that the purpose of pointing out these difficulties was not to scare teachers and learners but to address the difficulty of assessing successful pronunciations (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Trofimovich & Isaacs, 2017). The importance of emphasising the teaching of pronunciation is that it promotes diversity by identifying the benefits of a variety of models and standards, both native and non-native, as speaking models. The pronunciation by reverting to their phonetic transcriptions and word stresses and never ignore pronunciation as it enhances better oral communication. In this study, the findings highlighted the point that teachers felt disempowered when it came to improving pronunciation. Indeed, from classroom observations, the pronunciation and drilling I witnessed were very inconsistent and shifting across levels, skills, and teachers.

6.2.5 Using of games, puzzles, and songs to enhance comprehension skills

From the results of the study, the learners loved having fun and playing, thus teachers should choose appropriate methods of teaching strategies that cater to the nature of the learners. There was a rapid lack of interest, so the teachers inspired them by using contemporary songs as a teaching tool (Ummah, 2017). The skills learned were then

moved to learning other parts of the language. The application of song and music as a motivational tool in teaching and learning in the classroom was affirmed, leading to creative and improved language performance. Games, puzzles and songs are some of the learning materials that could be used to avoid classroom boredom. They play a special role in the teaching of learners from different language backgrounds. The inclusion of games during class time benefits both learners and teachers. In addition, teachers can achieve all the intended educational outcomes by applying games, especially when teaching vocabulary.

In this study, games play was a good way to provide extra practice to achieve early reading skills. To let learners, feel the environment of English HL culture, teachers may use artefacts, images, and movies to direct learners to perform a variety of English activities, such as English corner and role plays (Jian-ping & Li-sha, 2016). It is also important to develop language skills by encouraging young learners to practise word recognition, patterns, spelling and comprehension of letter-sounds. This means that teachers need high level texts on the knowledge of English HL, not just comprehension, but the pedagogical experience of how to teach better. In this respect, Ummah (2017) suggests that teachers create successful ways to teach games, puzzles, and phrases, such as using appropriate tricks and pleasures.

The review (cf. 5.6.1.4) supports the position that there is an association between teaching context knowledge and the comprehension skills of English HL (Kendeou & O'Brien, 2018; Gajria & Jitendra, 2016). Thus, in this study, the teachers' responses gave a clear picture of the positive impact of the activities which they engaged their learners in, as making a major contribution. Indeed, it is acknowledged that the technique of incorporating context knowledge using games, puzzles, and songs, while teaching words, helps adapt the teaching style to the comprehension skills of English HL – especially with respect to learners from diverse language background (Kendeou & O'Brien, 2018; Gajria & Jitendra, 2016) (cf. 5.6.1.4). Participants alluded to the fact that music was a powerful way to influence school learners' emotional behaviour, as they saw singing as a calming game or practice, not as an educational process.

Similarly, Kuśnierek (2016) avers that learners' recognition of funny songs, correlates with a pleasurable experience. Language and music are deeply interwoven and penetrate into the emotional atmosphere of the learner. The use of songs in a lesson provides a favourable psychological environment, reduces mental stress, activates the language-related brain hemisphere, triggers the emotional state of the learner, and promotes interest in improving learners' understanding of English HL (Iribemwangi & Mutua, 2014). Another benefit of using songs in the English HL classroom is that the concomitant provision of linguistic materials, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, or grammar, often leads to learners learning new knowledge without being directly involved.

According to Aguirre, Bustinza and Garvich (2016, p 178), "many studies have shown that using music and songs while learning a new language can be of great benefit to students in aspects such as grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary." From classroom observations, as was the case in this study, Aguirre, et al. (2016, p. 178) reported that learners were "motivated to participate and become more engaged in classroom activities when songs are used in their English classes." According to Aguirre, et al. (2016). some of the benefits of using songs in language teaching include vocabulary acquisition, retention of information, involuntary mental exercise, grammar, improving learners' pronunciation and familiarization with the target culture. Overall, it is envisaged that "songs can help to learn a new language because the student's learning process becomes unconscious" (Aguirre, et al., 2016). Similarly, Al-efeshat and Baniabdelrahman (2020, p 844) reported that learners viewed songs as helpful in learning English vocabulary, while the teachers considered it as good practice. The findings by Ma'rifat (2017, p 49) also re-affirmed this point in that learners responded positively towards the used of song in learning English vocabulary, felt happy, understood English vocabulary even better and enjoyed the teaching learning process (Ma'rifat, 2017).

However, something familiar to the South African schooling system is that teachers' choice of effective teaching approaches and materials could be constrained by extant conditions and circumstances in their schools. Thus, the fact that this study was conducted at a former Model C school may obscure some of the constraints most South African

teachers, teaching in ex-Department of Education and Training (DET) schools, experience. The ex-DET schools which provided Bantu Education and were poorly resourced and managed, still reel from the neglect of the past – such as limited basic resources and overcrowding. So, the results reported here could most probably have been different had the study been conducted in a former DET school – just as Çakir (2015, p. 69) reported that in Peru, most teachers “were reluctant to use many of the highly beneficial materials due to reasons including overcrowded classes, limited technological knowledge, lack of time for preparation, curricular time constraints, heavy workload, burnout etc.” Indeed, as Baguley (2007) reported, most teachers still felt that apartheid still affected their schools’ current ways and means of management.

In the normal course of things, the didactic aspect of music is usually the first to be grasped by many learners. Total Physical Response (TPR) is widely used by teachers because learners are hyperactive, physically active and are not able to concentrate for a long time. Astulik, et al. (2019) also agree that the physical nature of the TPR learning process makes it promise to incorporate physical activity and play into the teaching of English HL comprehension skills. So, using this strategy, which includes games and a variety of activities, young learners will be able to learn language vocabulary very quickly. They must also learn the physical skills of letter-forming and higher-level skills needed for writing letters, sentences and writing essays (Govender & Hugo, 2020). This is in line with the schema theory which emphasises the importance of the teacher’s recognition of the unique experiences and lenses which learners bring into the learning environment and consciously builds on them to drive instruction.

6.3 THEME TWO: A REFLECTION PICTURE OF ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION SKILLS REVEALED BY LEARNERS

The second research objective sought to find out how Foundation Phase teachers ensured that the assessment techniques or tools used helped the learners to read with understanding. In this regard, four assessment techniques emerged from the results of the study, namely: (a) using worksheets to assess whether the strategies used by the teachers helped learners to understand the content, (b) applying technology to assess the reading needs of learners, (c) integrating drilling and modelling into teaching strategies, and (d) immediate correction

of learners' work as the lesson progressed.

6.3.1 Using worksheets to assess whether the teaching strategies used helped learners to understand the content

Acquisition of comprehension skills is the process of gaining the basic required for learning how to read, that is, "the ability to obtain meaning from print" (Joubert, et al., 2015). Acquisition of skills required for competent reading fluency, ability to read orally with speed and accuracy, as well as vocal expression, are all essential factors needed for the comprehension skill to read fluently. When a reader is not fluent, it can be difficult to recall what was read, and to connect the ideas presented in the text to their knowledge of history. The lack of effective comprehension skills strategy is recognized as one of the important factors affecting the effectiveness of comprehension skills among learners from diverse language backgrounds.

In this study, the participants reported that they gave learners worksheets to assess if their teaching strategies helped the learners to understand the content of what they read. Zhang (2018) and Gilakjani (2016) advance the view that learners need to be familiarised with the subject of the text through a content schema; that the progress of a child in school and in life primarily depends on the ability to read and comprehend texts (Joubert, et al., 2015). Thus, teachers, especially those in the Foundation Phase, have a reflective challenge to make reading a reality for all learners.

Comprehension skills evolve from dynamic tasks, based on the description of the linguistic and cognitive processes (Nation, 2019). This reading accuracy and automaticity act as a bridge between vocabulary comprehension and understanding, thereby making vocabulary development a critical aspect of comprehension skills. If a reader finds an unknown word in print, he or she needs to have the ability to decode it for its meaning to be obtained. Learners learn about the world through reading, develop subject knowledge and build comprehension skills in English HL. So, reading allows them to apply their language and world experience in order to make sense of the texts they read. Teaching learners specifically about intention and language structures and features of various types

of text helps them understand texts and develop strong comprehension skills. The reading of texts about familiar topics is also important for learners; applying their existing understanding of the environment helps them to understand the language and learn new vocabulary.

6.3.2 Reading needs more techniques in the application of technology

This study's findings showed that the introduction of IT facilities in schools increased the quality of teaching of English HL comprehension skills to diverse language learners. Thus, the teachers in the study believed that, just as the use of IT was important in the daily lives of people in the 21st century, its use as a tool to facilitate learning in the school setting would also be a great idea that would enable their learners to understand the language faster. This view was also borne out by the results the study. Participants stressed that, whereas it was right and appropriate to offer worksheets to learners, the use of technology could better develop their intellect. In the end, one participant stated that the use of technology was really good for her learners. Thus, adjusting to the world of digital technology could see learners' performance improve substantially. In concurrence, Hammond, et al. (2020) aver that the use of ICT would demonstrate that teachers' effectiveness in teaching learners from different language backgrounds would be strengthened by their ability to facilitate learning and communication between learners in different ways. The use of ICT allows the teacher to vary instruction for different individuals, or groups of individuals, depending on their needs. This is possible because of the varieties of ICT tools, devices, and platforms, which can be customised according to the age, needs and convenience of targeted audiences. This calls for an exploration of all potentialities for online and virtual learning. Furthermore, using ICT and other audio-visual facilities and aids could greatly enrich the instructional process – ranging from the sophisticated to the traditional charts, letters, and pictures. Accordingly, some of the resources which could be used to facilitate listening, vocabulary and speaking skills are pictures and posters, colour charts, number charts, games, toys and picture books (Department of Basic Education, 2012).

Although in this study, classroom observations did not indicate much use of IT resources teachers were, nonetheless, interested in learning how to use different educational media and associated devices. Accordingly, teachers believed in the notion that learners should be capacitated to have the ability to use cell phones, tablets, and computers to learn. So, distance learning, through the use of technology, as well as classroom teaching supported

by the use of IT were highly recommended by the participants. They felt that IT-based reading strategies should be explored, focusing on the manner and extent to which both print and digital texts could be used to enhance the acquisition of English HL comprehension skills. From literature, Savi (2014) (cf. 5.6.1.4) argues that the learners master the language quickly and carefully when the brain and body are engaged simultaneously. However, it is important that learners are encouraged to have more interactions with each other during lessons, to guard against the usage of technology taking over and replacing human interactions in the classroom. Rokhayati (2017) agrees with Millsaps (2019) (cf.3.4.2) that teachers need to develop a good learning culture and appropriate instruction to provide learning comprehension skills strategies for learners.

6.3.3 Integrating drilling and modelling teaching strategies

As reported in chapter five, participants interacted with their learners, drilled and modelled various skills for them. In the process, reading of words and key terms were repeated and learners drilled to demonstrate to help them acquire the targeted skills and understand the lessons. To Sanjaya (2014), drilling is important to help learners get acquainted with words and specific terms, as well as draw on memory terms, although phonetic transcription and word stress are considered main pronunciation features and the basis for good pronunciation. In this study, the drilling method was used as an important part of the classroom pronunciation function, possibly because the learners depended on the instructor as the main resource during the lessons.

Thus, emphasising the importance of good pronunciation, Basuki (2016:42) argues that ... "one's speech will be fluent by mastery of pronunciation" because people will find it easy to comprehend. In other words, when the speaker pronounces poorly, people will not understand. Therefore, it is not mandatory for those who wish to speak and deliver orally to have a good mastery of grammar and vocabulary, but to have a good mastery of pronunciation. Therefore, Basuki (2016) contends that, because of this, teaching pronunciation to English HL learners can no longer be overlooked. Teachers should still use good pronunciation while teaching vocabulary, grammar and other components and skills in English HL.

Drilling is also critical in teaching stress, stress phrases and intonation (Basuki, 2018). For English First Language (EFL) learners in particular, drilling is a better and more effective method for pronunciation teaching. Indeed, research findings have shown that the introduction of the drilling approach successfully improves progressive learner achievement, in addition to serving as a gateway to learner support (Hammond, et al., 2020). The English HL comprehension skills instructional strategies based on modelling also include techniques such as asking learners to pause and guess. This strategy is based on the modelling technique that the instructor had shown; the learners are asked to practise training on guesses.

In this study, the participants were only able to drill various sounds between the phonemes (vowels, consonants, and diphthongs) and various stresses of the words during the first and second visits. This showed that the learners' pronunciation was difficult to plan for, and it, therefore, seemed to be overlooked by some teachers. This observation was also reported by Killen (2015) from his research involving different language schools. In this study, the participants stressed that it was important for educators to have a methodical ability to teach pronunciation as a successful role model. It is difficult to cope with change, especially for learners who live with parents who are non-native English speakers.

The progress of the lesson during the classroom observation was more in line with what was stated in the official documents, such as the academic teaching plan (ATP). Teachers provided guidance and often asked learners to listen to what was said. Among the approaches used for oral administration were activities, such as observing, doing, imitation, repetition, dramatization, involvement, relaxation miming, stories, songs, language games, dialog, and conversation. In short, for learners, teachers were regarded as templates for spoken language. The role of the instructor was therefore to be a half-facilitator of the learning process and a half-transmitter of information to the learners.

6.4 THEME THREE: TEACHERS SUPPORT LEARNERS BY ENCOURAGING THEM TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS DURING THE PRESENTATION OF THE LESSON

The third research objective looked at how teachers' beliefs about their teaching strategies assisted Foundation Phase learners from diverse home language backgrounds to understand English HL comprehension skills, including reading with understanding. The results indicated that the teachers applied the following techniques, in supporting learners to respond to questions as a way of establishing that they could read texts for understanding: (a) using simple and detailed questions, (b) ensuring that the classroom communication language is translated to enhance understanding, (c) asking learners to organise words on a worksheet, and (d) asking learners to identify missing word sounds. These findings are now presented and discussed.

6.4.1 Using Simple and Detailed Questions

The data from different collection instruments showed that learners' responses to questions showed a clear understanding of the concepts covered in the lessons. Teachers demonstrated that good, simple, and detailed questions helped to track the development of learning and understanding of the skills of the learners. The teachers reported spending a great deal of time setting and assessing higher-order questions. The benefit, however, was that this allowed learners to understand and provide long answers, including explanations and justifications. By providing enough time for the learners to reflect on the answers and/or suggest solutions to questions, this raised the standard to learning and assessment, resulting in the attainment of higher-order learning outcomes. The challenge was how to include and cover as many learners as possible when this approach is used. With the support of appropriate educational media, it is possible to attract and catch the attention of many learners.

6.4.2 Ensuring that the classroom communication language is translated for understanding

In all the four classes observed, the experiments performed verified what the teachers said, namely that they made an effort to build a communicative space for their

classrooms. Each classroom had simple charts and photographs, a reading corner and a reading mat that could be reached by learners on their own. The participants interpreted the meaning and essence of Complete Physical Reaction (CPR) to their learners, as one of the most important skills that must be acquired as an efficient mode of communication. A necessary component of any classroom language education is teaching and acquiring speaking skills. Spoken language provides possibilities for learning as the communicative classroom concept means that it is an essential part of the syllabus material, the results of learning and the opportunity to connect (Brevik, 2019).

From the classroom observations, the teachers used flashcards and artefacts from the classroom as the key teaching-learning tools. The walls of the classroom had charts showing the sounds, colour-charts, letters with pictures and letters of alphabet. Indeed, quite significantly, the researcher noted that the teachers motivated learners with pictures on walls. Indeed, the importance of this is highlighted by Zoch, Davis and Gray (2018, p 370) in their observation that “teacher-created charts can not only be a powerful teaching tool, but also communicate the significance of literacy.” They go further as state that “when these charts are posted, they become a part of the classroom ambiance and text environment ... these charts communicate something about the classroom and what happens in it; they can also represent literacy in different ways.” Liu (2016, p 87) also contends that the display of charts, pictures and other visual teaching materials on the walls of the classroom helps to enhance “student engagement, “time management, motivation and meeting individual students’ needs.” In concurrence, Clarke (2020, p 2) reports that visual activity schedules and augmentative and alternative communication charts in a first-grade classroom increased the amount of time that students were on-task during independent and whole group assignments.

Teachers need to encourage learners as readers by using comprehension skills approaches in their teaching, stressing that reading on screen and paper texts is a prerequisite for lifelong learning and active involvement in public life. A supportive classroom atmosphere is needed to encourage strategic reading and understand the development of English HL comprehension skills (Afflerbach, Pearson & Paris, 2017).

While skills are linked to the reader's automatic responses to text, techniques include the

reader's awareness of comprehension issues and the selection of the most appropriate method for solving problems. In addition, learners should be supported to practise communicating through communicative activities. These exercises should allow learners to communicate meanings using linguistic knowledge, skills, and techniques. This provides opportunities for learners to enhance the quality of their language and increase their successful use of skills and the chosen sections of fluency practice they have completed – such as pronunciation, grammar, text, and vocabulary (Gilakjani, 2018). Effective teaching of phonics helps teachers to express clearly and specifically the sounds they teach. It is crucial that teachers demonstrate the ability to articulate and continuously refine phonemes in words so that they can model the pronunciation of letters to illustrate how a word should combine letters correctly.

6.4.3 Organisation of words in the worksheet

Using worksheets as a strategy for organising words was one of the tools used by the teachers who participated in this study. This finding suggests that in the pre-alphabetic process, learners have not yet mastered the sequential philosophy, relying instead on visual and contextual signs to help them remember words (Nielsen, 2016.) Phonological processing abilities allow learners to recognise sounds in words, and then apply grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules to allocate a letter to the sound in their own attempt at spelling. Words organization helps learners to store and retrieve word spellings from memory, something that is particularly useful in promoting English HL spelling because of the large number of unfamiliar words that learners can learn.

A significant proportion of the research considering bilingual children's spelling growth has concentrated on moving results from learners L1 to their L2. Learning to spell depends on learners understanding the recording of sounds and letters and there is evidence that bilinguals activate both their languages during phonetic processing (Nielsen, 2016). Research has highlighted the degree to which bilingual children depend on their knowledge of the sound structure of their native language while learning to spell in English as a home language (Nielsen, 2016).

During the semi-structured interviews, the researcher noticed teachers alluding to various

types of strategies, but they did not seem to be sure which ones were appropriate for teaching English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learner coming from different language backgrounds. During the classroom observations, it was clear that the strategies mentioned by the teachers were not self-evident in their teaching practices. For this reason, within the aegis of an interpretative research process, the researcher surmised that there were uncertainties in the teachers' repertoires of teaching strategies. The teachers were calling for help.

6.4.4 Formulating and identifying missing word sounds

Findings from classroom observations agreed with the participants' responses that learners were able to understand that a word consisted of a series of distinct sounds. Thus, it is important to combine phonemic knowledge in teaching phonics. Phonics also needs to be incorporated into aspects of reading sessions and into other fields of learning. The higher the ability of learners to practise their phonics in relevant reading and writing environments, the more effective the learners will be in incorporating and communicating this information.

Letter-sound contact, without explicit guidance, is subjective and often difficult to find. Different learners can acquire or fail to understand the knowledge of phonics. Phonics teaching needs to start incrementally from as early as Grade One, in regular, fast-paced teaching sessions. In particular, it is believed that the CLT approach, if taught with greater skill, is likely to improve sound speaking abilities at different academic levels and age groups (Zhou & Xiaochun, 2015). This is further supported by Killen (2015) who argues that the arrangement of words in the worksheet and the recognition of missing sounds in a word enable learners to understand phonetics. The interactive approach is created by the teacher's ability to enable learners to link previous phonics learning by re-examining and building on saved practice in subsequent lessons, use letter combinations during teaching sessions, as well as make teaching more interactive, interesting and enjoyable with modelled and guided phonics (Alawiah, 2018 & Gilakjani, 2016).

6.5 THEME FOUR: TEACHERS FACE DIFFICULTIES WHEN PARENTS ARE NOT INTERESTED IN THE WORK OF THEIR CHILDREN

The fourth and final research objective of this study sought to find out the challenges faced by teachers of English HL comprehension skills. The results pointed to four such challenges, namely: (a) the lack, or inadequate, parental and/or guardian involvement in their children's schoolwork, (b) self-expression as a challenge to learners, and (c) school place radius for learners as a cause of poor performance. These challenges are discussed below.

6.5.1 Lack or Inadequate Parental/Guardian involvement in Learners' school work

A major finding from the participants in this study was that there was a lack of, or inadequate, parental / guardian involvement in learners' schoolwork. This finding pointed to the strength of the relationship between parental participation and academic achievement and learner performance. The participatory parental roles were indirectly noted from the participants' responses to the effect that attentiveness of parents to, and their involvement in, their children's educational activities at home and in school was notably absent. In the opinion of the teachers, parental involvement in learners' schoolwork is a central factor in the learners' social background in school, in the sense that parents influence educational attitudes and values of their children – consciously or inadvertently. Thus, for the learners to reap the full benefits of their education, they must have parental support.

There is significant empirical evidence in all fields of learning that involving parents in the education of their children has a positive impact on their learning outcomes (Mwoma, 2017) (cf.5.9.4.1). Parental engagement in these ways requires a significant contribution of time and money towards the learning of their children. In this study, the participants opined that the development of teacher-parent groups in schools was a good way to enhance teaching and learning English in Grade One. The teachers indicated that when parents did not provide the appropriate help to children in the early grades, they (teachers) did not know what to do and how to do it. The teachers' belief was that a strong engagement between parents and their children's education, at home, was an important

ingredient in the learners' academic success. They seriously believed that was a major concern that parents, and guardians were not assisting their children at home because the need for parental engagement is clearly articulated in literature; that such engagement would assist teachers of English HL comprehension skills with requisite strategies to overcome the obstacles associated with teaching learners from diverse language backgrounds.

Typically, parental involvement is commonly characterized as parents' actions, beliefs, attitudes and activities that encourage the academic growth, learning capacity and educational results of their child (Department of Education and Training [Australian Government], 2015c; Povey, Campbella, Willis, Hayne, Western, Bennett, Antrobus & Pedde, 2020). The benefits of learners having such parental participation in their work, strengthens learner attitudes towards education, positive behaviour, increased school attendance, decreased dropout rates and better learning outcomes (Mahuro & Hungu, 2016 & Mwarari, Githui, & Mwenje, 2020). Therefore, the non-participation of parents and guardians in the schoolwork of their children creates a gap. However, often-times, parents and guardians feel discouraged and shut out of school participation, particularly on topics that parents feel confused and disempowered by legislators, have no room for dialogue and lack sufficient knowledge of their educational positions. Hence, the information collected in this study showed that learners experiencing parental involvement in their schooling substantially increase their educational expectations compared with those not subjected to the intervention package for parental involvement.

According to the findings, there was evidence that parental involvement in the schooling of their children went a long way in defining and moulding the educational results of their schooling. This suggests that parental engagement plays a key role in inspiring learners to raise their academic results. Although some teachers assume that the poor backgrounds of some learners prevent them from doing homework and other home-based educational activities, it is essentially just a conjecture. If such teachers used proper learning and teaching strategies, such pre-conceived educational outcomes would not be supported by empirical evidence because good education has the capability of allowing learners to succeed, regardless of the circumstances of their home background. Nonetheless, learning should not be left totally to the learner-teacher partnership alone but should be extended

to include active parental participation among other educational stakeholders in order to optimize benefits for learners in the education system (Marima, 2016) (cf. 5.9.4.2). In this study, the teachers felt that in order to make learners, from a variety of language backgrounds, to understand, there was a need to go down to their (learners') level of understanding. This is more so, particularly with respect to learners who are struggling to understand English HL comprehension skills because they lack basic English skills. Lastly, there is a view that parents whose assistance may be most important to children are parents of immigrants and minorities, with limited education, and lack the awareness and skills needed to support their children.

6.5.2 Self-expression as a challenge to learners

Findings on this theme suggest that learners whose home language varies from that used in class, face difficulties in attaining English HL comprehension (Franklin & McLaren, 2015). Nowadays, in this modern world, to succeed in any society, it is necessary for every learner to learn and communicate in different languages. Donohoo (2017) points out that the high- efficient teacher is able to meet the needs of those learners who need more assistance. Furthermore, if taught well, language is an activity that could make Grade One learners enjoy an enhancement of reading performance as part of the habits of engagement (Yumbya & Githinji, 2019). The challenge of self-expression is an element that affects out-of-school learners and their ability to perform in society. In this study, it was found that a lack of opportunities to practise reading outside school could have adversely affected the learners' performance and perception with regard to English HL comprehension. Certainly, practising reading at home is a vital factor that encourages learners to enhance their reading comprehension ability by acquiring new words and giving them more knowledge and learning experience.

Odima (2015) posits that there is a need for parents to speak both their native and foreign languages at home. A child whose first language has been learned and who has had long conversations in that particular language can transfer those abilities to English or any other foreign language. If parents cannot communicate effectively in English and limit the use of their native language, they will not be able to communicate easily with their children. Children also need to communicate with their parents. Thus, all languages for parents and

children should be practised at home in order to develop the ability to speak in both of them.

Nonetheless, it must be pointed out that, fortunately, the drawbacks that arise at the beginning of the process are not permanent, insofar as children's exposure to a bilingual world is concerned. However, given that the school that participated in this study had the requisite resources for teaching English HL comprehension skills, the onus is on the school to optimally use those resources for the benefit of the children. Certainly, given the importance of the English language, not only for success in other school subjects, but for many other communicative purposes worldwide, it is critical that ways are found not to let the children down.

6.5.3 School place radius for learners to attend cause of poor performance

The participants demonstrated in the findings that the location of the learner was of great concern. Teachers have sufficient time to assist learners with extra time but learners who stay too far from school could not easily benefit from extra lessons at the end of the day's school hours. This was further exacerbated by English not being the learners' home language and, therefore, not spoken at their homes. Therefore, it remained very difficult to support a child with English homework had to be done at home, where there was no help from the parents or guardians. Therefore, this created a breakdown in the home-school learning cycle.

From theory, learners who are in the ZPD find it difficult to express themselves meaningfully (Vygotsky, 1978) since they are unable to decode meanings conveyed in English by themselves. Cooperative learning and the ZPD proximal growth zone can be used to help learners move through the challenging phase which includes accommodating and assimilating new skills and knowledge into their own practice (Sarwanti, 2016). Learners need help from those who understand the language better to help them decode the meaning of the concepts and knowledge in English comprehension. Vygotsky (1978) opines that learning is a social mechanism that is strengthened through active participation. Consequently, second and foreign language pedagogy has been influenced by socio-cultural theory, because teachers can pass higher order meta-cognitive reading

techniques to their learners through scaffolding, modelling, and thinking aloud approaches that are based on the principle of this theory.

In this study, the impact of English HL comprehension skills, as a challenge, was also felt by the participating Grade One English teachers. They decried the poor language skills of the learners and the loss of reading skills induced by ineffective strategies, suggesting that most of their learners, as children coming from diverse language backgrounds, were unable to use English HL as a tool for learning in the classroom. Parental engagement is a central element in learning, particularly with respect to language, because parents' cultural beliefs and values influence learner behaviours, self-esteem, and self-confidence (Clapper, 2015).

6.6 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY: THEORETICAL, METHODOLOGICAL AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO PRACTICE

As indicated in Section 2.3 the Schema Theoretical Framework was used as the theoretical basis for this study, and data were collected by way of a semi-structured interview, classroom observations and document analysis. Ngabut (2015) (cf.2.3) contends that the schema theory clarifies how readers use prior knowledge to comprehend a new concept. Similarly, Kafipour (2017) maintains that schema theory offers the requisite background knowledge that plays an important role relevant to the teaching of English HL comprehension skills, even to learners from diverse language backgrounds. Zang (2015) (cf.2.3) concurs that the schema theory can be used as a guide to learners by way of comprehending a text from a worldwide point of view. Patnaik and Davidson (2018) also affirm their support for the schema theory by suggesting that a text of previously acquired knowledge could be used to give directions on how to construct new meaning.

The advantages of previous knowledge for a specific area that can briefly be understood and analysed by Grade One teachers have been highlighted by a number of authors (e.g. Xiao, et al., 2016 – [cf.2.3]; Al Asmari & Javid, 2018; Xue, 2019). More often than not, the learner uses background knowledge to interact with the text that follows. Accordingly, the learner typically comprehends the text from the point of view of their existing knowledge, but in an interactive manner. Unfortunately, most teachers still concentrate on

teaching of words, sentences, grammar, and sentence translation (Xue, 2019; Nwabudike, et al., 2018). Thus, this means that most teachers ignore training learners in elements from which they would profit most, in favour of skills that do not promote the attainment of the espoused English HL comprehension skills. In the process, the learners experience serious learning hardships, whereas the application of the schema theory to the teaching and learning of English HL comprehension skills would support learners by activating their existing schemata so that they are enabled to construct new knowledge and have a clear understanding of the language (Xue, 2019; Al Asmari & Javid, 2018; Patnaik & Davidson, 2018; Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018) (cf. 2.4). Cook (1989; in Xue, 2019: 16) believes that “schema is the reflection of distinctive scenarios in the brain” which makes people perceive areas of resemblance between what they already know and the new information which they are tasked to understand. The picture of resemblance enables people to connect new concepts with previous experience. A schema is a memory structure that can rearrange ideas meaningfully, agreeing with the existing structure or modifying it to accommodate new skills or ways of understanding – such understanding sounds and/or letters.

To some authors, the schema theory is a practical resource for teaching English HL comprehension skills, especially to Foundation Phase learners from various language backgrounds (Patrick, 2019; Nwabudike, et al., 2018; Farangi, Saadi & Yafeng, 2017; Alfaki, 2014) (cf.2.6). Study participants have been active in closely linking pre-reading tasks, while reading and post-reading are being developed during the lesson, in class.

On the other hand, Adedokun, Attah and Nwabudike (2018) argue that the common limitation of the schema theory is that for the background knowledge of learners to interact with the extant English HL comprehension skills, the learners should have the ability to decipher how their prior experience with the world is essential to logically connect with the new text. Furthermore, Adedokun, et al. (2018) advance the view that the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners should not be restricted to the traditional alphabetic, phonic, look and say – and the syllabic methods that are frequently used by language teachers. Yafeng (2017) contends that the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learners from diverse language backgrounds should consist of intensive drills in phonics and alphabets. Thus, they recommend that

teaching strategies include practical activities that will help the learners to overcome the doubts of English Comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds.

Patnaik and Davidson (2018) point out that there is no knowledgeable investigation that lacks a language schema of new vocabulary, otherwise this could lead to dissatisfaction in understanding compound sentences of the text in English HL comprehensions. Adedokun, et al. (2018) aver that content schemata during reading comprehension play an exceptional role in understanding English HL comprehension skills that positively harvest better results in understanding a text. This implies that English HL teachers should enable their learners to construct their own knowledgeable opinions about the text. This points to the importance of aiming to develop appropriate language schema in the learners, without which the learner can scarcely identify particular information to activate the advanced level of the mind and understand the text (Xue, 2019; Zhang, 2018; Patnaik & Davidson, 2018) (cf. 2.4). In concurrence, Zhang (2018) and Yafeng (2017), as well as Zhao (2015) (cf.2.4) recommend that rich background knowledge can reward the learner with the expertise of English HL comprehension skills.

Data generated from voice transcriptions of semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis affirmed the assertion made by Paul and Christopher (2017) (cf. 2.3) that the schema theory helps the learner to relate to new information with the benefit of background knowledge. The schema theory seems to be appropriate in promoting reading comprehension by activating background knowledge. Similarly, Patrick (2019), Adedokun, et al. (2018) (cf.2.6) affirm that the application of the schema theory, in a practical way, could significantly enhance the teaching and learning of English HL comprehension skills.

To Paul and Christopher (2017) (cf.2.3) the schema theory helps the learners to understand effects and experiences, and to describe things in verbal form. For their part, Patnaik and Davidson (2018), and Zang (2015) (cf.2.3) posit that the schema theory can be used to guide learners to comprehend a text from a global point of view; that with the schema theory, the learners can identify their abilities and struggles with regard to learning English HL comprehension skills. Xiao, et al. (2016), as well as Al Asmari and Javid (2018)

(cf.2.3), affirm the need for the schema theory in a specific area of language and that different types of schemata are needed to enhance the English HL comprehension skills of Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds.

With respect to originality, the original contributions of this research are embedded in the context within which the study was carried out, namely an urban school setting where many learners came from different non-native English language backgrounds, but all placed in one class to learn English HL skills. Typically, learners placed in an English HL class would be native speakers of the English language. The second contextual element that made the study unique was that all the teachers who participated in the study as teachers of English HL were, themselves, also non-native English speakers. These two elements, although unlikely, actually reflected the realities of urban schools in South Africa. So, it is of on-going importance and research interest to examine closely and systematically how the challenges associated with this situation are being addressed by the teachers and whether or not the various strategies and approaches they employ are satisfactory and effective. So, while the results cannot be generalized to other situations, as is typically the case with case studies, they have nonetheless provided greater insight into the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learner from different language backgrounds. Certainly, the study holds some external validity for teachers, curriculum specialists and administrators who may be faced with similar circumstances – and therein lies the unique contribution of the study. Further elaboration follows below:

6.6.1 Contribution to Theory

As far as the researcher is aware this is the first study, or perhaps one of a few, that have combined the schema theory and Vygotsky's ZPD as one conceptual lens through which to study of English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds, taught by teachers who are not, themselves, English HL speakers. Therefore, the researcher would like to see future researchers faced with this challenge to apply this 'compound' lens and build a research tradition which will extend the current boundaries of these individual theoretical perspectives. Indeed, insofar as this study is concerned, the models depicted in both Figures 3.2 and 3.3 as important contributions to the theory. With respect to the latter, the research believes that the application of this model to the study of English HL

comprehension skills, in the context of learners coming from a multiplicity of linguistic backgrounds, is of particular significance.

6.6.2 Contributions to Methodology

Methodologically, this study has followed the qualitative research tradition, with Case Study as the preferred research design. Although there are differences of opinion concerning various terminologies, such as research paradigm, research approach, research design, research method, the research has followed a very clear line which simplifies these terminologies. In particular, the researcher has addressed the controversies concerning these terminologies by relying on literature which refers to “qualitative research” as a “research paradigm” rather than a “research design” or “approach.” This view is supported by Creswell (2014:34) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) who refer to a plurality of ‘qualitative research designs.’ Furthermore, Creswell, Hanson, Clark and Morales (2007: 239) aver that research designs under the qualitative research paradigm include narrative research, case study, grounded theory, phenomenology, and participatory action research. Similarly, Driessnack, Sousa and Mendes (2007) cite qualitative research designs as including phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and narrative inquiry. Thus, it may be said that there is no one Qualitative Research Design – rather, this is a research paradigm with multiple research designs.

6.6.2.1 Contributions to Practice

The results of this study have shown that teachers' understanding of their role as facilitators of knowledge has been disturbed by old-fashioned forms of teaching in the sense that explicit and direct instruction dominated their classroom interactions, as they tried their best to demonstrate various concepts to the learners. The involvement of the learners in the lesson activities mainly happened with respect to pronunciations, encouragement, drilling, modelling and repetition of what the teacher said – such as through reiterations of words and answering questions. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that there were additional hands-on games, play- activities and interactions among the learners, something strongly promoted by the schema theory of teaching learners from diverse

language backgrounds. All the teachers made commendable efforts to use teaching aids to promote learning, and learners were attentive to the guidance offered by the teachers.

The involvement of learners in more multifaceted operations helped them to develop problem-solving skills. One interesting thing about the three Grade One teachers interviewed and observed as they taught English HL in their classrooms was that they all knew their learners by name and appeared to have a good understanding of their capacities and capabilities. This was demonstrated when learners were given individual tasks to do. The 'struggling ones' were given special attention, as the teachers went around giving individual attention to the learners. The positive thing about this was that all the learners who had difficulties with specific tasks had the opportunity to have a one-on-one session with the teacher, as the classroom numbers were ideal for the teachers to offer this level of supervisory attention to the learners.

Furthermore, flexibility was also exercised by the teachers – which was really good because this is one quality that is required of Grade One teachers for them to assist learners from diverse language backgrounds to acquire English HL comprehension skills. The teachers interviewed indicated that their enthusiasm for the subject was what helped them cope under the demanding conditions under which they operated. These teachers conducted various workshops for themselves as self-assistance strategies because the specified in-service training was hindered by lack of time and money. Thus, the teachers had become pro- active to encourage each other in the performance of their duties. They accepted the fact that, while they might have equivalent teaching qualifications, they had distinct strengths in understanding particular concepts. The researcher found this to be commendable, indeed, and strongly recommends it to other teachers in similar circumstances. A significant characteristic of the schema theory that drove this study was the cooperation between learners themselves and teachers in their workrooms.

Therefore, in a nutshell, the main contribution of this study to practice is reflected in the four themes which emerged out of the findings reported above, namely (a) teachers' use of phonological awareness to introduce lessons, (b) the importance of exposing learners to reflective images, (c) teachers' need to employ interactive strategies, and (d) the involvement of parents and guardians to attain intended learning outcomes. In effect, this

represents a model for teaching English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

6.7 REFLECTIONS ON MY PERSONAL JOURNEY

On reflection, it is evident that this chapter has adequately captured the results and major findings of this study. These findings adequately answer the research questions framed for this study and reveal areas of concern, such as policy gaps, the lack of on-going professional support and the lack of parental engagement / involvement. These are issues which require further attention. One contentious issue which emerged was that, acknowledging the importance of a child's home language in the development of another language, one finds that the decision to teach non-native speakers as if they were native speakers of a particular language could be catastrophic – notwithstanding that this is even contrary to the policy which states that Foundation Phase learners should be taught in their home language. The reason for this policy is that by the time a child enters pre-school, he/she has acquired sufficient home language skills to proceed with learning – both the language and in the language as the LoLT. However, for different learners, the level of proficiency may differ owing to the varying language support offered by parents” (Moodley, 2013: 26).

On the other hand, if a learner is not proficient in the language that is taken to be his or her HL (English), what are the implications of putting such a learner in an English HL class? That is the core issue that must be debated in South Africa because many learners find themselves in this situation. In many cases, as was the case in this study, these learners are being taught by teachers who are not sufficiently qualified to teach English HL. As Wong-Fillmore (1991, in Moodley, 2013, p. 26) reported, even for HL speakers, one should not assume that learners entering the school system have sufficient HL skills when they enter the class. In Wong-Fillmore's study it was reported that “most learners were unable to speak confidently and teachers in most cases could not understand what learners were communicating to them in the classroom” (Moodley, 2013, p. 26).

This was a very important personal journey for me to travel, although it is difficult not to

see it also as a professional journey. Being a non-HL speaker of English and being expected to teach the language as a HL, as well as train pre-service teachers to teach the language as a HL, is conceptually dissonant. The situation goes back to policy, and the often-reported tensions between policy and praxis. In most cases teachers find themselves in these rather strange situations and they end up extending themselves for the purpose of keeping their employment – or, simply, to remain employable. This is more so in situations, as was the case in this study, where there is no on-going professional support for teachers who find themselves in these situations. Thus, my personal, albeit professional, journey has not been concluded by the findings of this study. In fact, the results have just revealed and highlighted the challenges of teaching English HL comprehension skills when you have not mastered those skills yourself, as the teacher. Accordingly, it is my hope that some of the issues needing attention will be addressed soon, including policy inconsistencies / dissonance, lack of parental involvement and professional support.

6.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Since this was a case study of only one urban school in the King Cetshwayo District of KwaZulu-Natal, the research was limited in its scope. Consequently, the major findings of the research may only be generalised to similar or other educational contexts at the utmost discretion of the reader. However, although on a smaller scale on how teachers used methods to teach English HL comprehension skills in Grade One, the study has managed to demonstrate the reason for their behaviour involving different language backgrounds. In addition, the study offered some recommendations on how to improve English HL teaching in the Foundation Phase. However, going forward, a study that will lead to a deeper understanding of the teaching of English HL comprehension skills at the Foundation Phase is still required, using the findings of this study as a springboard. Such a study could, for instance, focus on applying relevant techniques for teaching Grade One learners who come from diverse of language backgrounds. The study could also explore various ways in which parents who are non-native English speakers could assist their children to do their homework and, hopefully, improve their level of attainment of English HL comprehension skills. So far, ways in which children receive out-of-school help with

their work include the engagement of older siblings or acquaintances, as well as from private tutors. However, parents facing hard economic straits would normally not be in a position to pay for extra tuition. Therefore, further questions emerge from the findings of this study pertaining to the ways in which such children can receive help from their schools? Can schools, themselves, go an extra mile to compensate for parental non-involvement in their learners' academic work? Is there a role for the business sector in assisting students from low-income families by providing extra tuition and other opportunities? Thus, in future studies it may be important to unpack and explore the notion of parental involvement in a more nuanced way because it is common cause that (a) most parents do not have the academic background to play the role schools demand of them, and (b) most of them are not physically available to play such a role, even if they had the required academic competencies. So, it is futile, insensitive, ludicrous, unrealistic, and meaningless to keep calling for parental involvement when it is not feasible for such a call to be answered – based on what we already know about the circumstances of the parents. Of course, where parental involvement is possible, ways must be found to encourage it to happen, given that such involvement could have a direct positive effect on the advancement of education for the learners (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017).

Another limitation of this study was that only Grade One learners were selected, and not the other Grades in the Foundation Phase. So, this limited the scope of the study. This was done to make the analysis manageable and focused to avoid loss of concentration on Grade One if extended to all the Foundation Phase groups. Though, this could have led to larger data collection and broader analysis, the researcher surmised that concentrating on only the Grade One class would allow her to collect rich information that would provide valuable guidance to help key stakeholders enhance the teaching of Grade One English HL comprehension skills to learners from different language backgrounds.

6.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the major findings of this study. The major findings from the semi-structured interviews with the four participating teachers and from and classroom observations revealed that teaching English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learner was a very difficult activity, and teachers must continuously navigate

between working as learning facilitators and as information transmitters. The key challenging issues were (a) very little parental support for learners, (b) minimal support for teachers from the provincial Department of Education with regard to CPTD, and (c) a weak policy and strategic framework from the DBE with respect to the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse home language backgrounds in the Foundation Phase was concerned. The focused resolve, determination, commitment and resourcefulness of the participating teachers in teaching the best way they could was a critical ingredient for their success. Participants agreed that there was a lot to be done to develop the teaching of English HL comprehension skills in their learners, however, their improvisation and application of ICT resources, where possible, were effective mitigators against failure. Indeed, the teachers decried the learning gap due to non-participation of parents and guardians in the learners' schoolwork.

The next, and final, chapter provides a summary of the whole study, conclusions and recommendations taken from the findings, as well as possible actions that could be taken to further this area of research and to improve classroom practice.

CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary, conclusion, and recommendation of the study.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of the study – its objectives, a brief synopsis of the literature review and conceptual framework, the methodology, results, and findings, as well as conclusion and recommendations.

7.2 SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to explore how teachers in the Foundation Phase teach English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds. This aim gave way to the following four research objectives:

- To explore the strategies employed by Foundation Phase teachers to teach English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds.
- To assess how Foundation Phase teachers, ensure that all learners can read with understanding while teaching English Home Language comprehension skills.
- To establish how teachers' beliefs and applied teaching strategies assisted Foundation Phase learners from diverse home language backgrounds to learn English Home Language comprehension skills, including reading with understanding.
- To find out the challenges Foundation Phase teachers encounter in the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds.

The literature review highlighted current trends concerning the teaching and learning of English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from different language backgrounds, particularly at Grade One level. The surveyed literature revealed various strategies related to the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to diverse backgrounds of learners, as well as their ferocity and effectiveness. Overall, the strategies surveyed originated from the schema theory and how this theory prepared teachers for the effective teaching of English HL comprehension skills. The centrality of a learner's previous knowledge and experience defined the construct of a schema – and one's schema

is central to one's ability to understand any new text. However, the literature review revealed that, in the case of English HL comprehension skills, the teachers themselves lacked a good linguistic command and understanding of the language, given that they, like their learners, were also non-native speakers of the English language. Thus, there was a paucity of appropriate teaching methods and skills to effectively enhance the teaching of English HL comprehension, so that learners could read English language texts with understanding. The literature pointed to the need to evolve a constructivist teaching / learning approach to be followed both at home and school in order to promote the acquisition of English HL comprehension skills by learners from diverse language contexts. In this regard, teachers need to include theoretical representations of concepts, material literacy, and cognitive process theories of comprehension in the minds of learners (Gilakjani, 2016).

One strategy suggested in the literature is that, at the start of the lesson, teachers need to trigger their learners' schemata. For this to succeed, the teacher must plan the ways in which he or she will trigger or stimulate the learners' schemata. There are several strategies that the teacher can use to help build and activate their learners' schemata (Patnaik & Davidson, 2018). The schema theory does not make the role of a teacher insignificant. Instead, it sees the Foundation Phase teacher as playing the 'leadership' role in the classroom, as the one who guides and directs learning practices by creating a favourable atmosphere for learners from diverse language backgrounds to follow and comprehend the lesson. In addition, the teacher is required to provide guidance to meet the multiple understandings of the learners in their teaching of English HL comprehension skills to the learners with diverse language backgrounds. This involves application of the TPR, CLT, immersion, audio-lingual and bilingual approaches – as well as other types of tools other than print materials. The philosophy of the schema theory also values classroom learners' collaboration. The strengths and significance of the schema theory for teaching the interpretation of English HL comprehension skills in English were also highlighted in the literature. Hence, the researcher used this as a lens to underpin how teachers teach Grade One learners from different language backgrounds.

Furthermore, some important issues emerged from the literature review with respect to the

challenges in the teaching and learning of English HL comprehension skills:

- That English HL comprehension abilities are an interpretation that cuts across disciplines and the educational language aspect is embedded in the awareness of a schema context.
- That English HL comprehension skills are advanced further by using prior knowledge and information to understand and learn from text, which is related to the notion of schema context knowledge.
- That for teachers of English HL comprehension skills for history knowledge, the use of body answer is methodically driven from general to specific ones in the minds of the learners.
- That in teaching English HL to learners from diverse language backgrounds, the role of linguistic, material, formal and cultural contexts are very important in the comprehension of the spoken language.
- That English HL comprehension skills are best acquired and demonstrated through daily exposure and practice activities.

Methodologically, this study involved one urban primary school located in the town of Empangeni, King Cetshwayo District in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. Three data collection approaches were used, namely semi-structured interviews with four Grade One teachers, direct classroom observations of these four teachers as they taught English HL comprehension skills, and document analysis of school documents related to English HL teaching to Grade One learner from diverse language backgrounds.

The major findings of this study are reflected in the following themes that emerged from the study. These themes emerged from a careful analysis of the collected data from the three data collection tools: (a) that teachers used phonological awareness in the introduction of their lessons, (b) that learners needed to be (and were) exposed to reflective images of English HL comprehension skills, (c) that teachers needed to employ strategies which enabled active interactions with learners and, in particular, encourage learners to respond to questions during the lesson, and (d) that the involvement of parents and guardians is vital for learners to attain the espoused learning outcomes in English HL comprehension skills. These four major findings correspond to the four research questions

upon which this study was framed. The four main themes or findings are diagrammatically laid out in Figure 7.1.

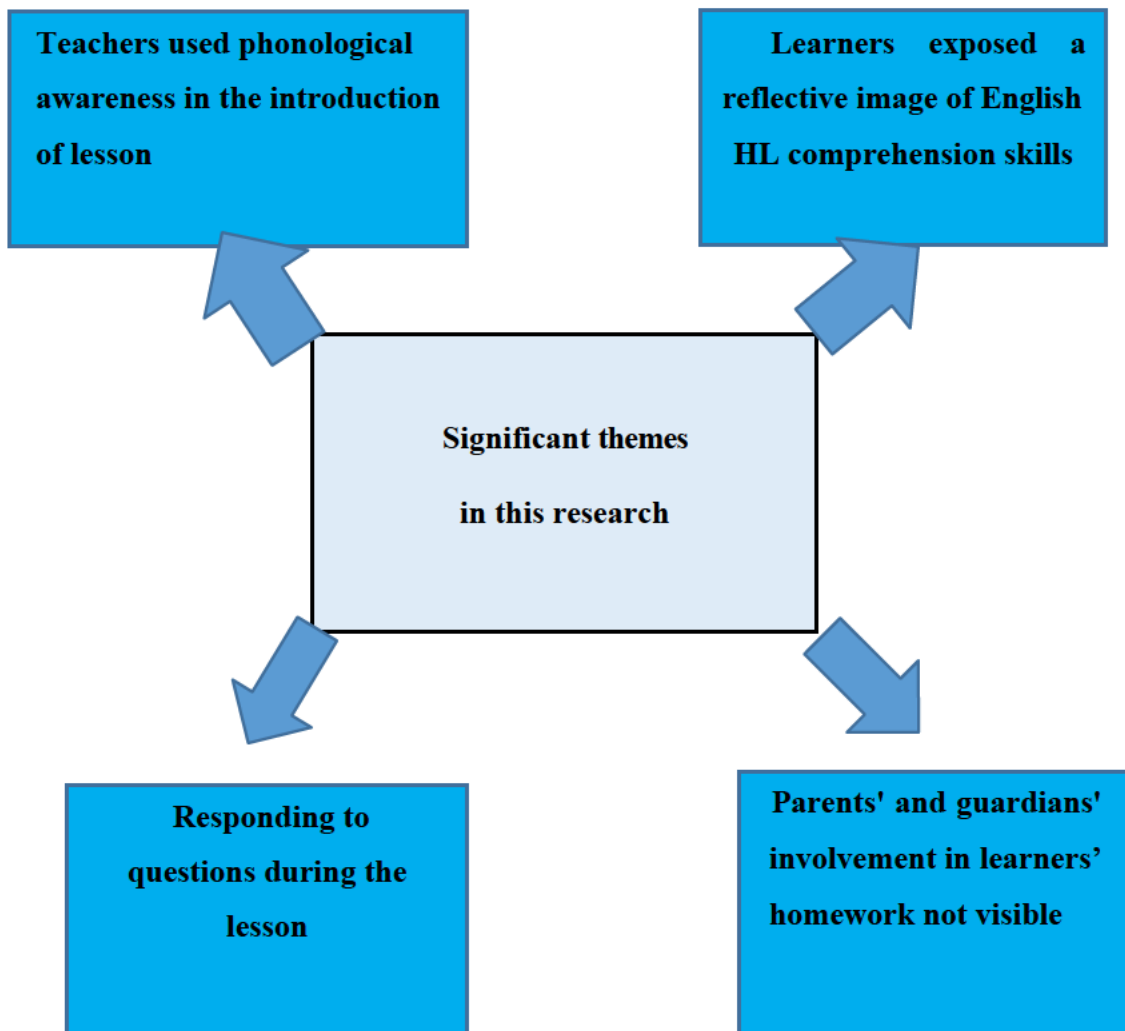


Fig. 7.1: Four themes that resulted from the research

Theme One: Teachers used phonological awareness in the introduction of lesson

The results of this study showed that teachers understood the need to teach English HL comprehension skills by encouraging learners' active participation in their lessons. This finding emerged from the information collected from semi-structured interviews, document analysis and the classroom observations that were conducted. However, classroom observations showed that the teaching of English HL comprehension skills was largely conducted in a traditional way of using stories, pictures, and sight words, as a way of engaging the learners actively in class. Accordingly, teachers were able to incorporate various techniques in applying these various strategies. Quite evidently, the

learners appeared to be inspired to specifically learn the different components of the English HL skills in a firm manner under the various conditions which promoted active learner participation. This promoted the awareness of the various instructional strategies which could be used in the classroom. Consequently, the learners were engaged in a lot of work using conventional approaches, with the active involvement of teachers dedicated to helping learners.

In addition, the teachers made concerted attempts to use the learners' prior knowledge and understanding in their teaching of English HL comprehension skills. The common strategy they used was the question-answer approach, which also promoted learners' active participation in the lessons. Equally importantly, however, the researcher observed that learners were interested in learning new concepts and terms to improve their English HL comprehension skills. Teachers were also keen to speak about their experiences outside the school setting when the researcher probed further. The teachers were quite concerned about encouraging learners to practise various aspects of the English HL in order to improve their skills, especially by participating more in oral activities in class. In particular, learners were involved in oral activities that required singing, games and working with puzzles. It is envisaged that, with time, these teaching and learning strategies will lead to educational approaches that are more successful.

Teachers made commendable efforts to teaching pronunciation through repetition and by consistently rewarding learners who made good efforts to respond to oral questions. From the researchers' point of view, teachers were keen to help learners in their attempts to gain knowledge of English HL. However, more variety could still have been included in the teaching methods and strategies that were used, beyond what I saw as an overemphasis on pronunciation and repetition activities at the expense of other skills. Thus, the teachers' classroom practices appeared not to have been explicitly aligned to the schema perspective, which promotes a bottom-up, top-down, and interactive learning model for learners, especially at the Foundation Phase level.

Theme Two: Learners exposed to a reflective image of English HL comprehension skills

With regard to learners' exposure to a reflective image of English HL comprehension skills, the results revealed that the school did not indicate a clear hypothesis to pursue. The teachers' recommendation of methods that could be put in place to enhance the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to the learners from different language backgrounds was another theme that emerged from the report. These techniques included the use of ICT software, drilling and modelling, and timely or immediate correction of learners' work during lessons. It was argued that the to use ICT in the classroom would provide the learners with a clear understanding of what was being taught. The teachers also took the view that with the help of an IsiZulu teacher to translate words into the learners' home language, this could assist to enhance their understanding of the English HL texts.

Theme Three: Responding to questions during the lessons

The study established another significant finding that teachers faced a lot of challenges in Grade One English HL, and these challenges impaired communication in the classrooms – particularly with respect to recognizing missing sounds and organizing these words on worksheets. Overall, the results also pointed to a paucity of established mentoring systems on the part of the participating Grade One teachers. Further, the research also revealed a need for school administration to adequately support English HL comprehension skills to learners of different language backgrounds, by providing the necessary teaching tools for both teachers and learners.

Theme Four: The lack of parents' and guardians' involvement in learners' homework

The results of this study showed that teachers had different rationales for teaching English HL comprehension skills in English and this, in part, explained why they required a lot of support in teaching the learners in their classrooms coming from different language backgrounds. The teachers expressed the need for support, including from the Department of Basic Education as well as regular involvement of parents and guardians.

7.3 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it may be stated that the aims and objectives of this research have been satisfactorily addressed. The use of Bartlett's schema theory alongside Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and Scaffolding assisted the researcher to explain the participants' experiences in teaching English HL comprehensive skills to Grade One learner. Furthermore, appropriate methodologies were used to collect data. From the results, a few challenges emerged which require the attention of education officials, namely (a) very little parental support for learners, (b) minimal support for teachers from the provincial Department of Education with regard to CPTD, and (c) a weak policy and strategic framework from the DBE with respect to the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse home language backgrounds in the Foundation Phase was concerned. The focused resolve, determination, commitment and resourceful of the participating teachers in teaching the best way they could was a critical ingredient for their success.

More specifically, the researcher opines that the results of this study could assist teachers who are directly involved in teaching English HL comprehensive skills to Grade One learner from diverse language backgrounds to navigate the challenges that they face more successfully. The results could also assist the DBE to support teachers, especially with respect to enabling policies and materials that can enhance the teaching of English HL to learners at the Foundation Phase level. A deferred dream will remain a step, setting up a solid literacy base for life-long learning. Accordingly, the researcher hopes that from the recommendations advanced below, appropriate actions will be taken by the attendant stakeholders to improve the teaching of English HL comprehension skills in the province of KwaZulu Natal and, possibly, in the country at large.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings of this study, the researcher has come up with the following recommendations, directed at different stakeholders within the education sector:

7.4.1 Recommendations for schools

- That schools provide preparation / orientation programmes for teachers who are assigned to them, particularly in handling learners from a diversity of language backgrounds. This suggestion is focused on the fact that the teachers are qualified academically but, more often than not, lack relevant strategies and skills to teach in a diversity of language backgrounds. In addition, they are usually not put in diverse language contexts at schools during teaching practice.
- That Foundation Phase classrooms be provided with an easy-to-access ICT facility to assist learners from a range of language backgrounds to attain the espoused concepts in English HL. This will assist all learners to improve their vocabulary and also keep fast learners busy while teachers attend to the slower learners.
- The study also suggests that the school should provide time in the timetable for English HL to assist learners from different language backgrounds; learners should be permitted to spend more time (time-on-task) on learning skills, as prescribed in CAPS.
- That regular contact be established between parents and guardians, on one hand, and teachers, on another, where this is possible, to ensure that there is support for learners outside school hours, particularly with respect to homework. Close interactions between teachers and parents have been found to bridge the gap between home and school, thereby ensuring that both settings provide the learner with the required support. This will also help parents realize the value of parental participation in helping learners at the Foundation Phase level, as learners' daily progress would be tracked by both the teacher and the parent, and early remediation could be provided – if necessary.

7.4.2 Recommendations for Teachers

- That teachers use various techniques to accommodate diverse learning needs in the teaching of English HL to learners from different language backgrounds. Teacher awareness about the importance of using different teaching strategies holds prospects for classroom experiences that enhance higher learner achievement.
- That teachers develop and regularly apply effective and differentiated teaching techniques in their classrooms appropriate for enhancing English HL comprehension

skills.

- That teachers make all possible effort to promote learners' development of English HL comprehension skills and other techniques through the use of images, games, puzzles, songs and flashcards. This could be achieved by involving parents to help their children with homework and support them where practical skills are needed.
- That teachers assigned to teach at the Foundation Phase level be orientated to understand the requirements and prescripts of CAPS so that they can find it easy to implement the applicable strategies. The researcher noticed that the teachers lacked the appropriate methods to be applied to the teaching of learners coming from diverse language backgrounds.

7.4.3 Recommendations for the Department of Basic Education and Higher Education

- That the DBE and the Department of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation (DHESI) undertake workshops to equip teachers with basic techniques for teaching English HL to learners from a variety of language backgrounds. If teachers are better prepared to teach these essential skills, which are the backbone of lifelong learning, this will further improve the education system.
- That CAPS provide a clearer policy direction on the teaching of Grade One English HL comprehension skills, including ways to integrate modern educational tools such as the use of digital technology and other twenty-first-century learning devices. The outcome of this study showed that technology integration would ensure differentiated teaching and increase the motivation of both learners and teachers.
- That Government consider organising and running CPTD programmes to capacitate teachers who have specialized in early childhood education to keep abreast with the latest developments on how to best teach English HL comprehension skills. It appeared from the findings that the participating teachers may not have been adequately and appropriately trained to handle young learners from diverse language backgrounds to help them learn English HL comprehension skills. They appeared to have a limited repertoire of strategies to fall back on. Yet, it is in the first grade that most children identify themselves as having a good or a poor understanding of schoolwork. Priority should also be given to the teaching of comprehension skills of other home languages,

considering that learners transfer skills from their own home languages to other languages.

7.4.4 Recommendations on Teachers' Workshops

In order to encourage teachers to teach Grade One classes well, it is also proposed that Faculties of Education from different universities be connected to schools. This will give them the experience of interacting with many teachers of languages, some of whom have different experiences with languages. Under the guidance of the class teacher and the lecturers, their experience of teaching Grade One will help the prospective teachers learn best practices from both the class teacher and the lecturers.

7.4.5 Recommendations for further research

This research focused on the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to Grade One learner in one urban school. Future studies could consider the following research directions:

- To widen the scope of the research to include a wider group of schools in order to have a much richer database of information from which more empirical studies could be carried out. Certainly, obtaining teachers' opinions and perceptions from larger pool would provide a better understanding of the way English HL is being taught to learners from diverse language backgrounds in the country.
- This research study followed the purposeful design and sampling of the case study and used three instruments for data collection semi- structured interviews, classroom observations, and review of documents. It is recommended that an analysis should be carried out using other research designs such as mixed methods and parametric sampling procedures. This will provide a broader and deeper insight into the subject of the report.
- The researcher suggests that the issue of teaching English HL from a diverse language context could be studied from the viewpoint of parents who should be the first language teachers. The researcher asserts that in the sense of diverse language contexts, exploring the role of parents in supporting their children with schoolwork in English HL could be an interesting piece of research.

- The researcher also suggests that a longitudinal study, focusing on teachers' relevant perspectives about teaching English HL to learners from diverse language backgrounds, be conducted covering all Foundation Phase grades to provide a better understanding of the teaching of English HL.
- A future study could look more specifically into the issue of how teachers could leverage learners' multiple home languages, which are different from the classroom home language, to teach the latter most effectively.

The above recommendations are based on the results of this study that aimed to investigate the methods teachers used in teaching Grade One English HL comprehension skills. The researcher believes that these recommendations could help substantially in improving learners' acquisition of the espoused abilities and skills related to English HL. This validity of this claim comes from the fact that the recommendations came from the teachers, themselves – that is, the actual implementers of the curriculum. Thus, following these recommendations could significantly enhance the achievement of English HL comprehension skills by these Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds.

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APPENDIX A

Request for official approval to conduct research at a King Cetshwayo District School

Researcher	Study Leader
Mtshali Zanele P.O. Box 7857 Empangeni Station 3910	Prof. J.N. Mashiya 12 College of Humanities School of Educational Psychology (ECE) University of KwaZulu-Natal 4000
Contacts: 082 716 0187 / 073 548 0202	Contacts: 031 260 4276
E-mail: mtshaliz@unizulu.ac.za	Email: mashiyaj@ukzn.ac.za

Date:

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Request for Permission to Conduct Research at a King Cetshwayo District School

Please accept my request to conduct this research study in King Cetshwayo District school. Teaching English Home Language comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds. I am a registered student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal for a Ph.D. Degree.

This study is about is how to explore teachers teaching comprehension skills at Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds. Diverse language background is an issue of concern that is affecting Grade One learners in higher grades. The implementation of the strategy in its current form in teaching English Home language comprehension skills in diverse Grade One classroom poses a challenge because it needs to be implemented uniformly in all Foundation Phase learners.

Participants in this study will participate voluntarily and their basic human rights will be respected and protected at all times. Confidentiality, non-disclosure of personal information and identity of participants will be maintained at all times. The participants will be informed about the processes involved in the research study and they will be allowed to make inputs. Participants have the right to withdraw their participation at any stage when they feel uncomfortable. Participants are also free on commenting on issues they are uncomfortable with. All the activities will take place at a certain time of school. Participants will choose convenient times that will suit them. I, therefore, request your permission to undertake this research in King Cetshwayo District School.

I hope my request will receive your favourable consideration.

Yours thankfully

.....
Zanele Mtshali
(Researcher)

APPENDIX B

Permission to conduct research in the KZN DoE institutions



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Tel: 033 392 1063

Ref.:2/4/8/1746

Mrs ZE Mtshali
PO Box 7857
Empangeni Station
3910

Dear Mrs Mtshali

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"TEACHING ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION SKILLS TO FOUNDATION PHASE LEARNERS FROM DIVERSE LANGUAGE BACKGROUNDS"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 11 March 2019 to 01 August 2021.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

King Cetshwayo District


Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 13 March 2019

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Postal Address: Private Bag X9137 • Pietermaritzburg • 3200 • Republic of South Africa
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..Championing Quality Education - Creating and Securing a Brighter Future

APPENDIX C
Request to Conduct Research at a Particular School

Researcher	Study Leader
Mtshali Zanele P.O. Box 7857 Empangeni Station 3910	Prof. J.N. Mashiya 12 College of Humanities School of Educational Psychology (ECE) University of KwaZulu-Natal 4000
Contacts: 082 716 0187 / 073 548 0202	Contacts: 031 260 4276
E-mail: mtshaliz@unizulu.ac.za E-mail: zanelemtshali1961@gmail.com	Email: mashiyaj@ukzn.ac.za

Date:

Dear Participant

Please accept my request to conduct this research study. **Teaching English Home Language Comprehension Skills to Foundation Phase Learners from Diverse Language Backgrounds** at your school.

This study is about to explore how teachers teach English Language comprehension skills at Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds. Diverse language background is an issue of concern in the world that is affecting Grade One learners in higher level. The implementation of comprehension skills in its current form in teaching English Home language comprehension skills in diverse Grade 1 classroom points a challenge because it needs to be implemented uniformly in all Foundation Phase learners.

Your participants in this study is voluntary and your basic human rights will be respected and protected at all times. Confidentiality, non-disclosure of personal information and identity of participants will be maintained at all times. You will be informed about the processes involved in the research study and be allowed to make inputs. You have a right to withdraw your participation at any stage when you feel uncomfortable. You are also free not to comment on issues you are uncomfortable with. Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and

there are no financial benefits involved. If you are willing to be interviewed, observed and allow documents review, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview and observation to be audio-recorded by the following equipment:

	willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		

Your participation will add great value to this study.

Yours thankfully

.....
Zanele Mtshali (Mrs)

YOU MAY ALSO CONTACT THE RESEARCH OFFICE THROUGH:

Ms Phumelele Ximba
University Research Office - Research Ethics Office

P/Bag X54001
Durban, 4000
Tel.No.031 260 3587

Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za
Email: HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

APPENDIX D

Request to conduct research from the Heads of Department

Date:

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Head of Department

Please accept my request to conduct this research study. **Teaching English Home Language Comprehension Skills to Foundation Phase Learners from Diverse Language Backgrounds.**

This study is about to explore how teachers teach English Home Language comprehension skills at Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds. Diverse language background is an issue of concern in the world that is affecting Grade One learners in higher level. The implementation of comprehension skills in its current form in teaching English Home language comprehension skills in diverse Grade 1 classroom points a challenge because it needs to be implemented uniformly in all Foundation Phase learners.

Your participants in this study is voluntary and your basic human rights will be respected and protected at all times. Confidentiality, non-disclosure of personal information and identity of participants will be maintained at all times. You will be informed about the processes involved in the research study and be allowed to make inputs. You have a right to withdraw your participation at any stage when you feel uncomfortable. You are also free not to comment on issues you are uncomfortable with. Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved. If you are willing to be interviewed, observed and allow documents view, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview and observation to be audio-recorded by the following equipment:

	willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		

Your participation will add great value to this study.

Yours thankfully

.....
Zanele Mtshali

YOU MAY ALSO CONTACT THE RESEARCH OFFICE THROUGH:

Ms Phumelele Ximba

University Research Office - Research Ethics Office P/Bag X54001
Durban, 4000

Tel.No.031 260 3587

Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Email: HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Letter for the participants

Date:

INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Participants

Please accept my request to conduct this research study. **Teaching English Home Language Comprehension Skills to Foundation Phase Learners from Diverse Language Backgrounds.**

This study is about to explore how teachers teach English Language comprehension skills at Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds. Diverse language background is an issue of concern in the world that is affecting Grade One learners in higher level. The implementation of comprehension skills in its current form in teaching English Home language comprehension skills in diverse Grade 1 classroom points a challenge because it needs to be implemented uniformly in all Foundation Phase learners.

Your participants in this study is voluntary and your basic human rights will be respected and protected at all times. Confidentiality, non-disclosure of personal information and identity of participants will be maintained at all times. You will be informed about the processes involved in the research study and be allowed to make inputs. You have a right to withdraw your participation at any stage when you feel uncomfortable. You are also free not to comment on issues you are uncomfortable with. Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved. If you are willing to be interviewed, observed and allow documents review, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview and observation to be audio-recorded by the following equipment:

	willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		

Your participation will add great value to this study.

Yours thankfully

.....
Zanele Mtshali

YOU MAY ALSO CONTACT THE RESEARCH OFFICE THROUGH:

Ms Phumelele Ximba

University Research Office - Research Ethics Office P/Bag X54001
Durban, 4000

Tel.No.031 260 3587

Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Email: HssecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

APPENDIX F

Declaration by the participants

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANTS

I (full names of participants) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of the document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire and this decision will not affect me negatively. I understand that every effort will be made to keep my personal information confidential. I also understand that efforts will be made provide me feedback of the results of the completed research project.

.....
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....
DATE

Additional consent to audio recording:

In addition to the above, for the purpose of data capture, I hereby consent to the audio recording of this interview. I understand that no personal identification information will be disclosed in any form whatsoever. I also understand that all recordings and manuscripts will be kept secure and destroyed after all data capture and analysis has been completed.

.....
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANTS

.....
DATE

APPENDIX F

Ethical Clearance Certificate



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

31 October 2019

Ms Zanele Ellen Mtshali (217080053)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Mtshali,

Protocol reference number: HSS/O430/O19D

Project title: Teaching English Home Language Comprehension Skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 25 April 2019 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has 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.

This approval is valid for one year from 31 October 2019.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Urmilla Bob
University Dean of Research

/ms

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX G

Teachers' Interview Schedule

This form is intended to gather information on the expertise and experience of teachers, particularly with respect to teaching English HL in Grade 1.

Section A: Biographic Information

1. What is your position in the school?

Foundation Phase teacher..... Teacher: Senior Teacher

2. Gender Female: Male.....

3. Age (In Years): 22-30..... 31-39..... 40-49..... 50-60.....

4. Experience as a teacher

0-5 years..... 5-10 years..... 11-20 years----- 21-30 years 31-40

5. What is your highest qualification?

.....

6. Are you employed as permanent or temporary teacher?

.....

Section B: Interview Lead Questions

1. What are the strategies used to enhance the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to learners from diverse language background in the Foundation Phase?

1.1. What is your perception about the importance of teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds?

1.2. Are you satisfied regarding the teaching methodologies in teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds?

1.3. What type of teaching method do you prefer to practice in teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds?

1.4. What sort of approaches do you think will encourage learners to interact in teaching English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from

diverse language backgrounds?

2. How do teachers' beliefs about their strategies assist Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds to learn English Home Language comprehension skills, including reading with understanding?
 - 2.1. How would you describe the learner's response and their reading of English Home Language comprehension skills?
 - 2.2. How active are your learners in the reading of English Home Language comprehension skills?
 - 2.3. Do you prefer to correct learners' errors while reading or delay them until the end of the lesson? Why?
3. What are challenges faced by teachers in teaching English Home Language comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds?
 - 3.1. Do your learners prefer to remain silent or to be engaged and involved in speaking in class?
 - 3.2. Is there a communicative interaction in the language in class when you communicate with your learners? How and why?
4. What is the understanding of teachers in teaching English Home Language comprehension skills to learners from diverse language backgrounds in the Foundation Phase?
 - 4.1. How are you familiar with the previous knowledge (Schema theory)?
 - 4.2. What errors may your learners make when they respond to you in the teaching of English HL comprehension skills to Foundation Phase learners from diverse language backgrounds?
 - 4.3. What do you do to help your learners speak in English in class? Why?

APPENDIX H

Classroom Observation Guide

• The Sitting arrangement	A number of learners:	Lesson:
• Text and Material	Level of learners:	Gender of learners:
	Date:	Length of the lesson:
	Age of Group:	

- What is the warm-up activity to interact with the learners and introduce them to the lesson if there is one and described it? How long does it take? Format and user-friendliness.
- Description of the teachers in the classroom (responses, comments, dealing with individual learners)?
- How comfortable do the learners seem to be with the teacher?
- What evidence is there to support this practice used in class?
- What activities are used in class?
- Does the teacher use the pre-knowledge (Schema) in teaching the English Home Language?
- How competent are the learners in communication in the using of (pre-knowledge) Schema Theory?
- What are the language classroom aspects occurring (language anxiety with fear of negative evaluation and speaking in English Home Language, self-confidence, and motivation)?
- How does the teacher accommodate the learner's challenges?
- Is the teacher practicing error correction with his learners due to learners' mistakes in class?

APPENDIX I

Document Analysis Guide

This is the form of supporting evidence to the information which the researcher receives from the respondents. These are the documents that I will request from each participant:

- The school language policies
- Teacher lesson plans
- Learners' workbooks
- The mark sheets

While looking at these documents referring to the below information, whether the aspects are touched to include the below perceptions:

- Aims/objectives of the lesson.
- Coverage, breadth, and specification.
- Weighting, emphasis, and depth.
- Sequence and progression.
- Coherence content to be followed.
- Specification of pedagogic approaches, guidance, and integration.

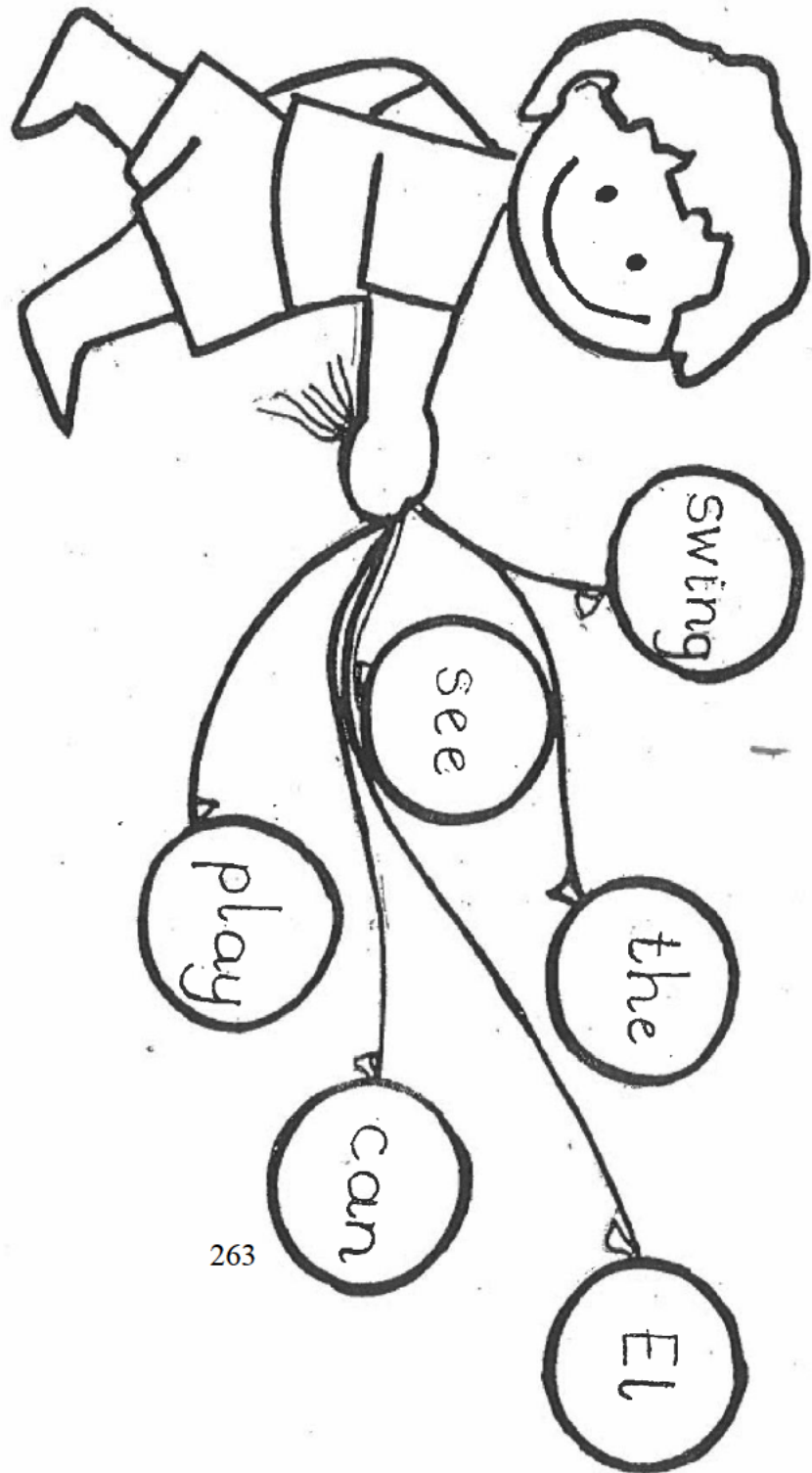
APPENDIX J

Planned Structure for School Visits

	Itinerary
Teachers (four teachers) - 2 months to accommodate the school activities. Each teacher will get 3 visits in those two months.	1 st Visit – Familiarization of observation 2 nd Visit – Lesson observation for 2 lessons 3 rd Visit – Post-Observation and interview; collection of documents and artefacts
	CONTENT TOPICS: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organization planning. Class teaching Implementation and challenges (key points)

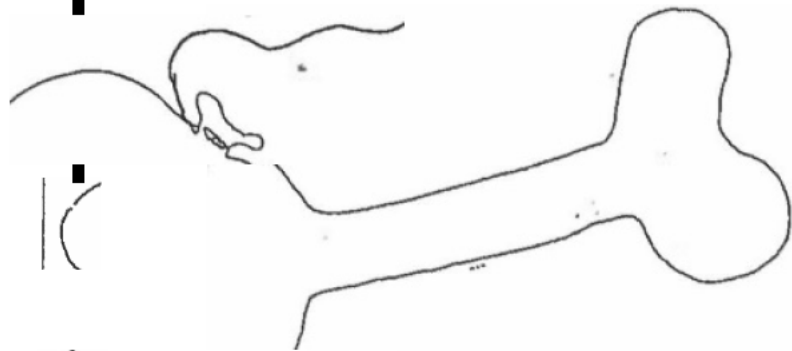
APPENDIX K

Learners' worksheets used by teachers to teach English HL



263

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swing
see
the
can
EI



bone

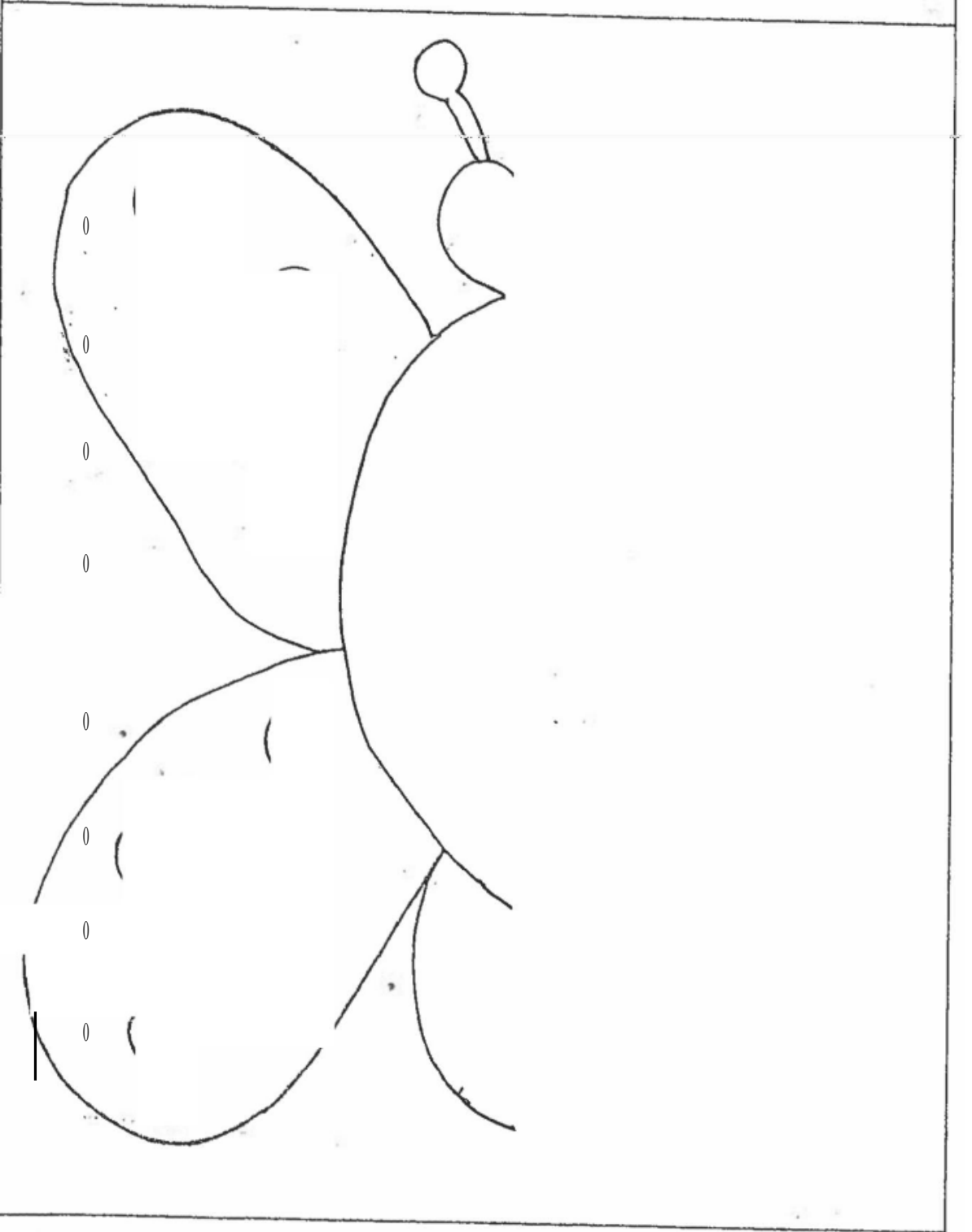
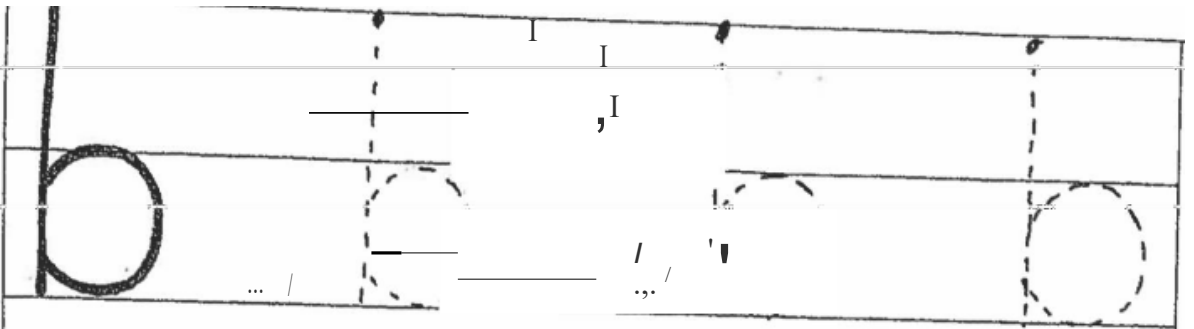
balloon

III



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4

The story of bat and ball

Bat and ball belonged to Billy and... always went together in a blue bag.

One day Billy went to the beach with his friend Bobby. It was a beautiful day with lots of birds in the sky. Billy looked in his bag and took out his beloved bat and ball. Bobby shouted, "I want to bat firstly"

"No," said Billy, "they belong to me, so I will bat first".

"Not fair," said Bobby, "then I won't play," and he walked off in a huff.

Billy looked around, there was no one else to play with. It wasn't much fun on his own.

Oh dear, perhaps he should have let Bobby bat first after all.

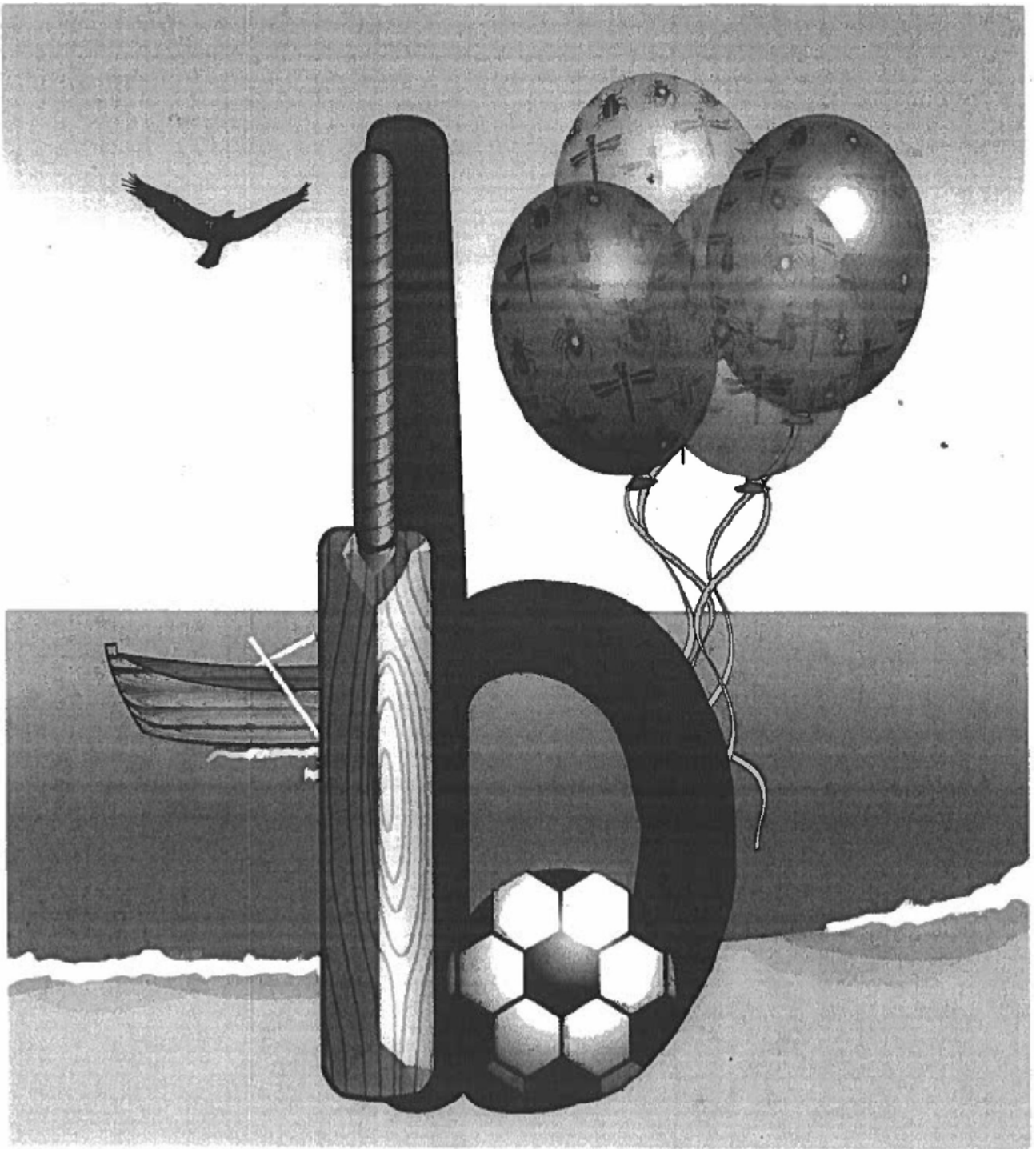
He went to find his friend. "There you are," he said kindly. Bobby also looked a bit sad.

"I have been thinking," he said. "Let's each bowl six balls to each other and take turns. You bowl first".

Soon the boys were having a wonderful time with bat and ball and both boys played the game fairly.

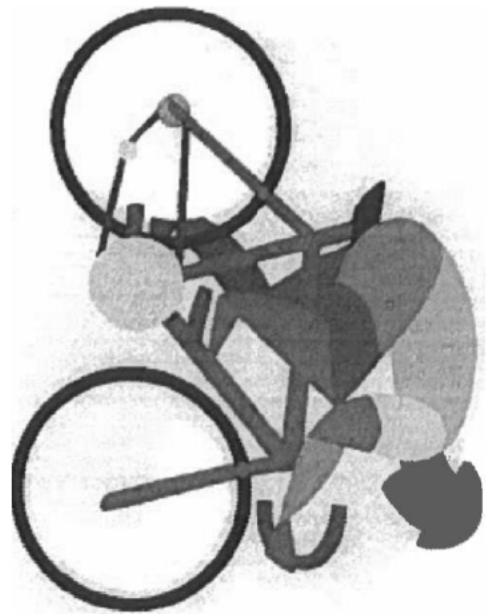
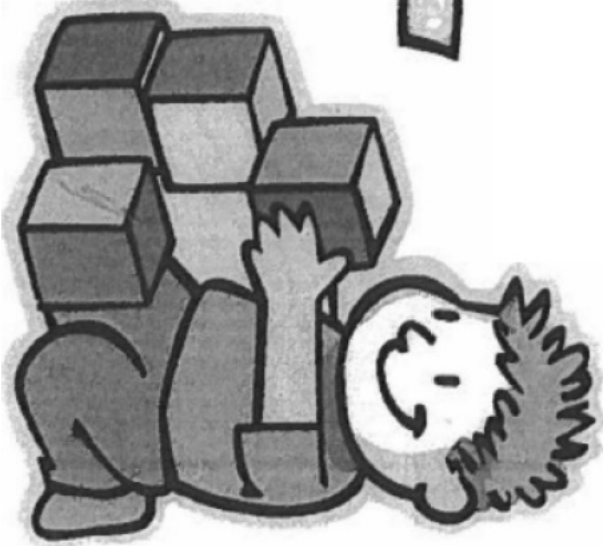
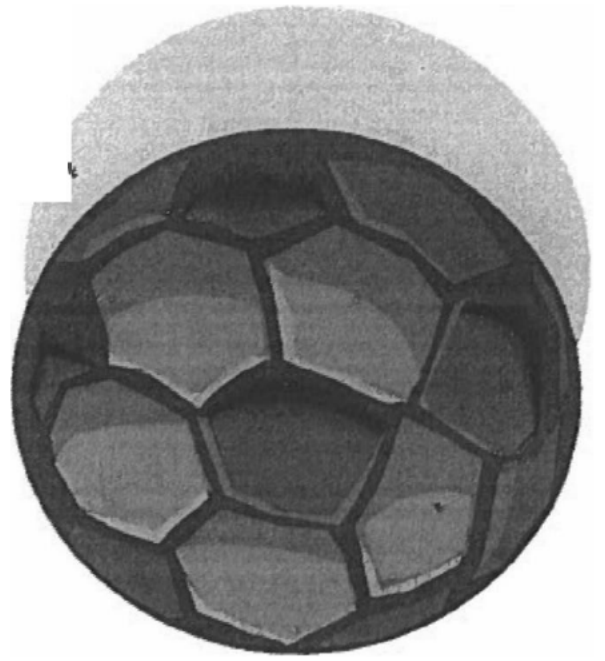
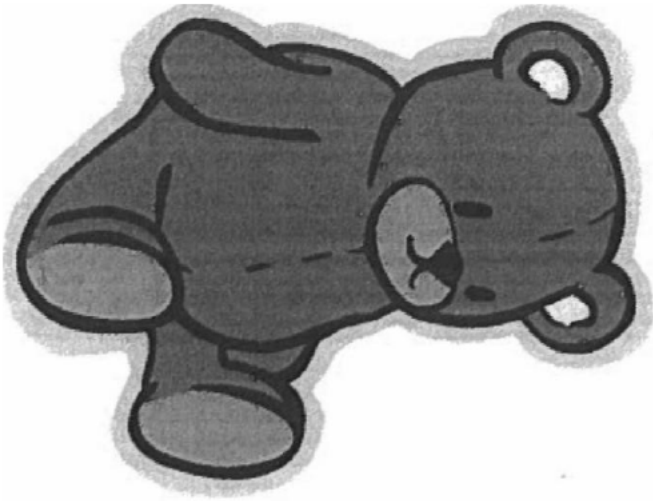
Fact file:

Bat and ball is used to play a game called cricket. Other bats have different shapes, for example baseball is played with a rounded bat. In cricket the bowlers take turns to bowl six balls, which is called an over.



J,

Ba, ta, 11, dball



APPENDIX L
Proof of Language Editing

Prof. Sitwala N. **Imenda**
14 Meerensee Mews
64 Krewelkring Street
MEERENSEE 3901
Richards Bay
SOUTH AFRICA
imendask@yahoo.com

30 December 2020

CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

This is to certify that the following document has been language edited:

TEACHING ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION SKILLS TO
FOUNDATION PHASE LEARNERS FROM DIVERSE LANGUAGE BACKGROUNDS.

Nature of document: Doctoral Thesis

Author: Zanele E. Mtshali

Date of statement: 30 December 2020



Sitwala N. Imenda, Ed.D.
SENIOR PROFESSOR (Retired)

Mobile: 0828883606

APPENDIX M

Turn-it-in Report

TEACHING ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION SKILLS TO FOUNDATION PHASE LEARNERS FROM DIVERSE LANGUAGE BACKGROUNDS

ORIGINALITY REPORT

8% SIMILARITY INDEX	8% INTERNET SOURCES	3% PUBLICATIONS	% STUDENT PAPERS
-------------------------------	-------------------------------	---------------------------	----------------------------

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	repository.up.ac.za Internet Source	1%
2	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	1%
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