University of KwaZulu-Natal

AN EXPLORATION OF HOW ENGLISH FIRST LANGUAGE TEACHERS TEACH READING TO GRADE THREE LEARNERS IN MULTILINGUAL CONTEXTS

BY

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This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

MASTER IN EDUCATION DEGREE

(Curriculum Studies)

In the

Faculty of Education

at the

University of KwaZulu-Natal

May   2012

Supervisor: Dr T Msibi

DEDICATION

In memory of my late twin sister Cwalisile Bongiwe Xulu, of my beloved mother Mrs Tsheliwe Xulu with her limited education, who nonetheless never failed to encourage me to study hard, and my brilliant father, Mr Johannes Xulu, who never went to school but who encouraged me with his words of wisdom and the unconditional financial support he rendered, which made me able to complete this dissertation.

I am dedicating this dissertation to:

> - My husband Israel Msimango for his support
> - To my sister-in-law Mrs Ruby Msimango for her loyal support, for her encouragement and for being a shoulder for me to lean on.
> - To my siblings Lungile, Nkosingiphile, Nelisiwe, Ntombenhle, Bonginkosi and Sazi Xulu for being so supportive
> - To my daughter Thobeka Phumzile Msimango for being so supportive whenever I needed help, for her passion, and for offering technical assistance with the computer
> - To my daughter Londiwe Thabile Msimango for her support and encouragement and most importantly for being there for her little sister
> - To my daughter Gcinile Nothando Msimango for being understanding throughout my studies (girls this is for you, I set a good example for you).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful compilation of this dissertation was made possible through the assistance, guidance and support of the following individuals:

- I would like to thank God the Almighty for giving me strength to complete my research

- I hereby express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor Dr Thabo Msibi. You were not assigned as an academic mentor, despite that, you took on the role of mentor as well.. I am saying this because of the incredible role you played throughout the period of this research. You opened my eyes and developed me in tremendous ways. You changed my personality now so I can construct and deconstruct knowledge in an acceptable manner. The knowledge I have gained is immeasurable. This journey was not easy at all, without you I would have collapsed on my way, fortunately you were there for me. I thank you for your conscious acceptance of personal responsibility for developing someone like me. Thanks for allowing me to walk tall once in my life time, for your guidance, advice, tolerance, patience, encouragement and strictness, lastly for your unconditional support.

- I would like to thank Mr Shakti Ramson for his professional support

- I would like also to thank Mrs Nomkhosi Ndimande for her moral support throughout my studies

- I would like also to thank the principal of ‚Ducklings Primary School' (pseudonym) for his willingness and for allowing me to conduct this study in his school

- Finally, I would like to thank Mr Nkosinathi Madondo for his assistance, I thank you!!!

I, WELILE NTOMBIFUTHI MSIMANGO, declare that:

'A case study exploring how English first language teachers teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts'

is my own work and has not been submitted by me for a degree or diploma at any other universities, and that all resources I have quoted have been indicated and acknowledged.

_____   _____

Researcher   Date

_____   _____

Supervisor   Date

ABSTRACT

Reading plays a pivotal role in terms of learners' comprehension and understanding of what is taught in schools. Reading, as part of nation building, provides rapid and ready access to new information and knowledge that will help us in life-long learning (DoE, 2008, p.5). In the context of South Africa, where the legacy of apartheid can still be felt almost 20 years after its collapse, having literate learners becomes particularly important. This is more so the case considering the linguistic diversity of South Africa – many learners in multilingual schooling contexts of South Africa encounters reading difficulties as they are taught in a language foreign to their mother tongues. If learners cannot read there is a greater likelihood of poor academic achievement. It was therefore the intention of this study to explore how teachers who speak English as a first language teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts. The study examined the methodologies Grade Three teachers employed in teaching reading, as well as the support they offered to Grade Three learners generally and also specifically to those learners who may not speak English as a first language.

This study followed a qualitative approach and was interpretive in its paradigm. The study's methodology was that of a case study of three Grade Three teachers in one public primary school in Durban. Observations were conducted, so as to offer detailed descriptions of Grade Three teacher's actions, behaviours, and full range of interpersonal interactions between teachers and learners. The researcher also interviewed and observed teachers teaching reading.

The findings revealed that teachers who speak English as a first language, in a multilingual school, experience several challenges in teaching reading to Grade Three learners - such as: teachers having to ask a lot of questions because children battle with comprehension, it takes time for English second language learners to grasp phonic sounds, and teachers have to spend a lot of time helping struggling readers. Hence a sound whole-school approach around reading can greatly smooth the process of teaching. The study found teachers who were not only competent in the teaching of reading, but who also ensured that support was given to all their learners, particularly those whose mother tongue is not English. Some key factors that helped them to overcome their challenges were: the availability of reading materials, knowledge of the reading process, planning and consistency across the grade, support from school management and the

preparation of intervention strategies. The teachers also employed a variety of methods and strategies while teaching, thereby ensuring comprehension and support for the learners. The study recommends that schools should take reading seriously since it had been proven that many South African learners have poor reading abilities. This means that a whole-school approach towards reading is required. If learners are able to read well, all subjects in the school benefit.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANA	Annual National Assessment
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
DoE	Department of Education
DSSR	Dialogic Shared Storybook Reading
EFL	English first language
ESL	English second language learners
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LOTE	Language other than English
LoTL	Language of teaching and learning
SMT	School management team
SSR	Shared storybook reading

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1   Introduction

Officially, the South African democratic government promotes a policy of multilingualism. Zubeida (2001), an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape, argues that the term multilingualism is often interpreted very differently, and is used in many different contexts. For example, in education there are people who are learning an additional language voluntarily to expand their linguistic repertoire and those who are forced to learn an additional language in order to gain access to education. There are also those who have to learn that language in an environment where it is not often used, for example, the children in African townships or rural areas. All of this suggests that multilingualism has significantly impacted on schooling in South Africa. Teachers often encounter the challenge of coping with, and finding solutions to, linguistically diverse learners in diverse schooling contexts. For instance, many learners, in order to gain quality education, enrol in schools where the medium of instruction is not their mother tongue, thereby having to learn a new language. In a context such as South Africa, where English is highly valued by parents and the society at large (Mgqwashu, 2008), it is often English second language learners who encounter this difficulty in schools as they often do not understand the language and therefore cannot read.

The problems caused by learners' inability to read as a result of language have a profound impact on the entire schooling system, as reading is important for every subject at school. In the context of the Foundation Phase, where I am currently teaching, Du Plessis and Louw (2008) observe that young Foundation Phase learners in South Africa are often enrolled in multilingual schools without considering whether they will understand the language of teaching and learning or not. This challenge is further exacerbated by the fact that teachers who often teach these learners are themselves not multilingual. As Edwards (2004, p73) notes, children in the process of learning English as a second language are dependent on interpreters, or teachers, who use code-switching with the aim of trying to explain in the learner's home language. Du Plessis and Louw (2008) also acknowledge this point when they argue that learners spend many hours with their teachers, and that this has an impact on the learners' social, emotional, cognitive and English language

development. This therefore suggests a key challenge for teachers who speak English as a first language, in contexts where learners may not necessarily speak or understand English.

In this study I attempt to unpack and understand the challenges when it comes to the teaching of reading in multilingualism contexts. Specifically this study attempts to understand how teachers in multilingual contexts teach reading generally and also specifically how they support those learners who may not necessarily speak English as a first language. The study arrives in the face of disappointing research results examining the reading levels of South African learners. In 2007 a representative sample of more than 54 000 Grade Three learners from more than 2400 primary schools participated in the second cycle of systemic evaluation conducted by Department of Education. Learners were tested in the skills of literacy and numeracy. The average overall percentage score obtained by learners in literacy was 36%, and the average percentage score in numeracy was 35%. (DoE 2008: 44). These low results are concerning, and highlight the need for more to be done to improve both numeracy and literacy in South Africa. Part of the reason why learners continuously fail to achieve in literacy is their inability to read in English.

Understanding the concerns around reading, the Department of Education in 2008 introduced the „National Reading Strategy', as a strategy to improve the disappointing levels of attainment. The National Reading Strategy is aimed at reaching all learners, including those who experience barriers to learning, whether they are in mainstream or special schools. The desired outcome of the Strategy is that all learners must be able to read basic texts by the end of Grade Three (DoE, 2008: p.11).

A recent study conducted by DoE (2011) also demonstrates that learners are still struggling with reading. The Annual National Assessment (ANA) results revealed that great numbers of learners in South African primary public schools cannot read. ANA data was collected from 1800 primary schools. Through data analysis it was evident that the percentage of learners reaching „partially achieved' level of performance varied from 30% to 47%. The percentage of learners reaching the „achieved' level of performance varied from 12% to 31% which was very low. While clearly the problem of illiteracy does not rest on multilingual schools alone (it is under-resourced schools currently attaining the poorest results), it is still important to understand how reading is taught in

these multilingual contexts– not least because of the implications this would have for language and reading development and support in South Africa.

1.2   Focus and purpose of the study

The study focuses on the ways in which English first language teachers teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts. The study is located at a public primary school in Durban, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.[1] I teach in a multilingual school where the majority of teachers are English first language speakers.[2] However, the majority of learners are Black African learners who, like me, speak English as a second language. As an educational practitioner teaching English, I have observed that the Grade Three learners in general, and those learners specifically who do not speak English as a first language, perform poorly in reading. It is the intention of this study to explore the ways that EFL teachers use to teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual classrooms, given the complexity of having to teach learners of different linguistic backgrounds the same material simultaneously. The study hopes to explore the methodologies that the teachers employ in teaching reading, and the forms of support they offer young learners who have reading difficulties and to those who speak English as a second language.

In my school, I have observed that whenever my Foundation Phase English-speaking colleagues have communication problems with English second language learners, they ask me to intervene and try to explain to either to the parent or the learner in IsiZulu. The fact that I am called suggests that that teaching and learning may not be effective, as learners struggle to interact with their teachers. This indicates that the learning content may not be understood by these young learners, which has serious negative implications for proper understanding, effective teaching and successful learning. Reading plays a pivotal role in terms of comprehension and understanding of what is taught in schools. In the Foundation Phase learners must learn how to read, write, count and calculate confidently and with understanding (DoE, 2002). Literacy, numeracy and life skills are the essential building blocks upon which future learning takes place. If learners cannot read there is a greater likelihood of poor academic achievement. Van Hook

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[1] Durban is the major port city on the eastern seaboard of South Africa, in the province of KwaZulu Natal.
[2] For the purpose of this study, teachers for whom English is their first language will be referred to as EFL teachers, and where necessary, educators for whom English is a second language will be referred to as ESL teachers,

(2000) argues that if learners cannot read and understand the curriculum content, they will eventually have poor performance in all school subjects. In 2008 the Department of Education revealed that poor matriculation results were, in part, due to the low levels of students' reading skills. The Department noted that university students, even those enrolled for Languages and the Arts were not proficient in reading, in terms of international standards (DoE, 2008). This suggests that reading has to be prioritised if educational outcomes are to be attained in South Africa. It is against this backdrop that this study therefore emerges.

This study attempts to understand how teachers engage with the pedagogy of reading as well as with their learners in diverse linguistic contexts. The collapse of apartheid has seen a multitude of learners who have moved from township and rural schools, to urban schools. The effect of this has been many challenges to teachers and learners – not least because many learners do not understand English and many teachers in these schools often do not understand other languages except for English.

I focus on multilingual issues primarily as a teacher myself in such a context. Having observed the myriad of linguistic challenges that learners face, I wish to understand these challenges in the other schools. It is important to point out here that my focus is not necessarily on language. Rather it is on the ways in which reading is taught in these contexts. Further, I explore not just how reading is taught to ESL learners, but also learners who speak English as a first language. My aim therefore is to explore the teaching of reading to all learners in multilingual contexts. Given the fact that I understand the impact of language when it comes to reading, I then also look at the forms of support that teachers offer learners whose first language is not English.

In South Africa, the benefits rendered by the use of the English language make parents take an informed decision for their children to learn in schools where the language of teaching and learning is English. Recent studies revealed that the preference for English as the language medium is based on the perception of this language as a tool of success in business, post school, education, employment and global interaction (Gabela, 2007). For example, De Klerk (1995) give an example of a school principal at the end of 1992, in a small school in Boland, who felt that it was time to change the medium of instruction from Afrikaans to English. In a letter to the parents, the principal stated her reasons as follows: the importance of English as the language of

the future; English as the main language in our new South Africa; English as a universal language of negotiations, and that negotiations do not only take place at top level; and finally, the importance of English for further studies. De Klerk (1995) continues and points out that of approximately 186 letters that had gone out, 139 came back of which 137 requested English. The typical choice of parents is to let their children learn English**.** They believe that by letting their children learn English, they are putting them on the right track because they will use it not only for schooling purposes, but for living as well. Ediger (2001) points out that there is a growing numbers of countries that are moving toward making English language instruction mandatory.

It is no secret that the language of teaching and learning may have an effect on learners' understanding and also on those learners who experience reading difficulties (Anderson, 2008). In trying to deal with the language issues the Department of Education 'Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement' (CAPS) has been introduced early in 2012 in the Foundation Phase. This policy provides teachers with the teaching content of both English as Home Language and the First Additional Language which is IsiZulu in public primary schools. This policy aims to close the gap and to help English second language learners, in our context, to have at least two hours per week learning in IsiZulu (DoE, 2011). Such learners are being taught by IsiZulu speaking teachers in my school.

1.3   Rationale for the study

As noted before, I teach in a multilingual school where the majority of teachers are English first language speakers.[3] I also speak English as a second language. As an educational practitioner teaching English, I have observed that the Grade Three learners in general find learning how to read challenging, while ESL learners perform poorly in reading, largely due to language difficulties. It is the intention of this study to explore the ways that EFL teachers teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual classrooms, given the complexity of having to teach learners of different linguistic backgrounds the same material simultaneously. The study hopes to explore the methodologies that the teachers employ in teaching reading, and the forms of support they offer generally to young learners who have reading difficulties and specifically to those who speak English as a second language.

The majority of learners in my school are second language speakers whose medium of instruction in school is English, some of whom come to school with no previous knowledge of English, or without attending school readiness programmes prior to Grade1. The poor reading and literacy performance of these children is further exacerbated by three factors which I have observed and which underlie my study, viz: firstly, miscommunication between teacher and the learner; secondly, the home language of learners is not accommodated in multilingual classrooms, and thirdly, ineffective teaching and learning caused by lack of understanding of the language for learning (DoE, 2008).

Thus, this study is motivated by both personal and research imperatives. Given the lack of literature on this subject, I have found a need for this work. I argue that the nature of reading difficulties is based on the fact that learners' home language is not accommodated in multilingual classrooms; as a result there is a negative effect on the cognitive development of young learners. I also argue that the medium of instruction has an impact on poor reading performances of Grade Three learners, whom I have seen struggling with reading. The DoE (2008) supports this view by highlighting that language „mismatches' make the problem of reading worse, when the language of home and school do not match, and also the language of the resources at school (such as school books) do not match the home language of the learner. From the discussion above, one thing becomes clear from the review of literature: we do not know the strategies that teachers must adopt when teaching in multi-lingual classrooms, particularly in contexts where English may not be the first language for learners. What we do know is how reading can be taught in monolingual contexts for various language levels (DoE, 2008), however very little is known about multilingual contexts. Very little is also know about the methods needed for the teaching of young learners enrolled in English schools, who know nothing about the new language, attend with peers who speak English as a first language, and are being taught by teachers who speak English as a first language. This study is therefore a response to the dearth of literature. It seeks to ask pivotal questions in a transforming, democratic South Africa. It is this silence in the literature that this study hopes to address, and through which the critical questions for this study have been formulated. This study is therefore an attempt to understand reading holistically in South African multilingual context. It is a study motivated by a deep desire to see

my learners improve their reading levels (particularly those whose mother-tongue may not be English) and also to improve reading for all learners in South Africa.

1.4   Critical questions

From the above discussion the need for this study is apparent.   Given all these challenges, it becomes clear that the role of the teacher becomes particularly important for learners to understand reading. It is therefore for this purpose that this dissertation focuses on teachers. In order to collect the necessary data, the participants will be asked the three critical questions. In essence, asking of questions enables the participants to answer in their own words. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) point out the three reasons of using open-ended questions. Firstly, these scholars believe that participant response might contain the ‚gems' of information that otherwise might not be caught in the questionnaire. Secondly, they maintain that asking of questions put the responsibility for and ownership of the data much more firmly into participants' hands. The last rationale is that open-ended questions can catch the authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty, and candour which are the hallmarks of qualitative data. This study essentially responds to three critical questions. First, the study asks:

How do teachers who speak English as a first language teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts?

In this question the aim is to understand the actual teaching practices and strategies in a multilingual classroom. The question is left intentionally broad so as to observe and understand as much as possible of the practices which make learners learn reading better, and also those which prevents this learning to happen. The second question builds from, and is connected to, the first research question. It asks:

What methodologies do these teachers employ?

From this I wish to understand whether teachers understand their roles in the teaching of reading. This question is informed by the leading scholar of reading, Ediger (2001), who notes the

importance for teachers in multilingual contexts to vary their methods because children should be encouraged to learn to read using various reading methods. Finally, the third question asks:

What forms of support do these teachers offer to learners generally, and also specifically to learners who may not speak English as a first language?

As already established in the previous paragraphs, learning how to read is very difficult for learners regardless of their linguistic backgrounds. This questions attempts to understand whether teachers understand the need to support learners both for reading purposes and also for linguistic reasons. As noted elsewhere, many ESL learners struggle to read as a result of language difficulties.

1.5　The significance of the study

From the discussion above, one thing becomes clear from the review of literature: we do not know the strategies that teachers must adopt when teaching reading young learners in multi-lingual classrooms, particularly in contexts where English may not be the first language for learners. What we do know is how reading can be taught in monolingual contexts for various language levels (DoE, 2008), however very little is known about multilingual contexts. Very little is also know about the methods needed for the teaching of young learners enrolled in English schools, who know nothing about the new language, attend with peers who speak English as a first language, and are being taught by teachers who speak English as a first language. The study extends on literature on reading in a post-apartheid in South Africa. This study suggests possible ways in which reading can be improved not only for multilingual schools but for all schools in South Africa. Additionally this study emphasizes the importance and the willingness from teachers to be prepared to go far beyond their call of duty in accommodating and supporting learners who may need extra individual support. However, this may be possible if teachers will have enough resources, and learners being exposed with a variety of updated reading materials. This study is therefore a response to the dearth of literature. It seeks to ask pivotal questions in a transforming, democratic South Africa. It is this silence in the literature

that this study hopes to address, and through which the critical questions for this study have been formulated.

1.6 Structure of the study

This dissertation is divided into five chapters.

Chapter One provides an introduction and the background to the study. Included in this chapter is the purpose of the study, critical questions and the rationale for, as well as the significance of, the study.

Chapter Two contains a literature review relevant to the study and a theoretical framework which serves as a guideline for this study.

Chapter Three presents the methodology for this study, that is, a qualitative research design. It discusses the interpretive paradigm employed in the study, the sampling strategies adopted as well as the techniques that were used to collect data

Chapter Four will present the analysis of data collected by means of preliminary interviews; observations and semi-structured interviews.

Chapter Five presents the summary of findings analysed from collected data as well as the suggestions and recommendations for future interventions.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter provided a brief introduction and the background to the study. Secondly, the purpose of this study was explained. This was followed by a discussion of the rationale and need for such a study as well as the critical questions driving this project. Essentially I noted that the study attempted to answer three critical questions: 1) How do English first language teachers teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts? 2) What methodologies do these teachers employ? 3.) What forms of support do these teachers offer to learners generally, and

specifically to learners who may not speak English as a first language? Finally, the significance of the study is discussed.   The next section presents a review of literature as well as the theoretical framework for this study.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

In an attempt to address the research questions of how English language teachers teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts, this literature review has been divided into three sections. The first section will present an overview of what the term „reading' means, the types of reading and the current trends of reading in multilingual contexts. The second section will explore existing literature on the methodologies teachers employ in teaching reading. The third and final section will explore the literature on the importance of support in the process of reading. In section I argue that there is not enough work that has been done in terms of teaching reading, particularly in multilingual South African schooling contexts. But before I address the above sections, I wish to explore the theoretical underpinnings of this study.

2.2 Theoretical framework

My research attempts to explore how English first language teachers teach reading to Grade three learners in multilingual classrooms. For this study, I have decided to use top-down model as informed by Goodman (1968) and Frank Smith (1971) in order to frame my work. These theorists believe that top-down reading process model is appropriate for teaching reading to young learners since it encourages teachers to teach reading within a topic area and to teach reading so as to let readers become independent and can do silent reading on their own.

The literature reveals that both teachers and learners benefit from using top-down model. Pearson and Kamil (1978) point out that top-down model allows teachers to integrate reading activities in order for fluent reading to occur. Reading activities may include the employment of different reading methods such as group reading, shared reading, individual independent reading or silent reading. In addition integration of reading activities may also include the employment of phonic approach, word identification, sight words, fluency, pronunciation and immediate corrective feedback. Top-down model encourages teachers to read interesting stories from real

children's literature. This model allows teachers to support and help learners learn how to generate meaning, help learners to build fluency, teach learners decoding skills, and provide regular independent reading time. According to the top-down model a teacher's greatest instructional concern becomes helping children develop resources for making meaning on their own.

Pearson and Kamil (1978) highlight that children also benefit from the top-down model. These scholars argue that top-down model allows learners to ask for whatever information they need whenever they need it … not sooner, not later. These scholars point out that the text is usually full of semantic, syntactic, and lexical cues that allow readers to short-circuit letter or word identification processes in their quest for meaning. Top-down model allows learners reading errors to be corrected immediately by the teacher, for example, if the child reads horse instead of house. The teacher can rectify the child's error there and then. On other hand Farrel (2006) argues that top-down model is appropriate for teaching reading to young learners since it allows learners first to look at a title and headings, they then guess or predict what the text will be about based on their knowledge and experience of the topic.

In conclusion Pearson and Kamil (1978) emphasize that when reading models are put to instructional uses, that is, when we trace out their implications for teaching and learning, they share the common goal of producing readers who are proficient at using a variety of cues in identifying words and meaning from print. For the purpose of this study Goodman (1968) and Frank Smith (1971) top-down reading process model will underpin my study since is it more appropriate for both teachers who teach reading to young learners and young readers as well. Now I move on and explore what is the term reading entails.

2.3   What is reading?

Prior to engaging with the key debates in the field of reading, particularly in multilingual contexts, it is important to understand what the meaning of reading is. Various studies define "reading" in different ways. Small and Arnone (2011) bring to light that reading can be considered as both „skill and creative art,' capturing the imagination of the reader in ways that result in creative thought and expression. Children who love reading are more creative and do better in school. It becomes clear that reading is an important skill that needs to be learned and

practised at school. Small and Arnone (2011) point out that with the necessary school support, learners can learn that reading is a pleasurable activity, one to cherish and continue throughout their lives. Crystal (1987) argues that reading is "appreciating the sense of what is written: we read for meaning." Crystal continues highlighting that reading offers a productive approach to improve vocabulary and recognition of words.

Additionally, (Alyousef, 2005) on other hand sees reading as an „interactive' process between a reader and a text – a conversation between writer and reader, even though the writer is not present. This involves the reader having to read and understand labels as well as notice and write instructions. Graves, Juel and Graves (1998) support this by highlighting that reading involves interpretive skills (the reader's ability to read between the lines) in order to perceive author intention; awareness of the theme; and the use of language to create specific effects. These scholars argue that reading should not be considered to effective unless the reader is able to read for meaning, reads to remember content (studying) and reads for language learning (decoding, syntax, vocabulary, knowledge, and many more). Richek, Caldwell, Jennings and Lerner (2002) further support this by saying that reading is very important, because „society suffers when citizens cannot read adequately'. It becomes evident that reading is a multifaceted activity which requires learners to acquire a set of basic skills, such as: recognition of sight words, comprehension, and being able to decode words. Three questions arise at this point. Firstly, why do people read? Secondly, why reading is so important? Lastly, why is it necessary for young learners to learn to read?

Responding to the first question (why do people read?) the literature review reveals that there are several reasons behind activity of reading. Berardo (2006) argues that some of the reasons of doing reading may include the following: reading for survival, reading for pleasure, and reading for learning. According to Berardo (2006), reading for survival includes reading to, find out information, such as street names; advertisements, timetables and other information. This depends on the day-to-day needs of the reader and often involves an immediate response to a situation. On other hand, reading for pleasure involves having the reader read the texts for interest's sake. In contrast, reading for learning is considered to be the type of reading done in

the classroom and is goal oriented, which means that the learner may read to answer the questions, or read to complete the given written task.

I move to the second question, why is reading so important? It is important to understand the importance of reading, particularly for developing teaching contexts such as South Africa. A small study conducted by Kritzinger (1992) points out that the teaching of reading is a very highly specialized field and in view of the vital importance of this skill to the pupil's future, it suggests that the teacher should make every effort to keep abreast of the most recent developments in the teaching of reading. Hron (1985) echoed this sentiment by highlighting that reading provides us with access to information. In other words reading enables learners to gain new knowledge. Pretorius (2000) acknowledges that "reading is very important in that it is a mechanism for building, modifying and consolidating declarative and procedural knowledge structures, including general background knowledge, knowledge of language, knowledge of the convections underlying different genres of print information, as well as knowledge of reading." It is clear that through reading learners can gain the ability to access and understand print information independently and as a result gain increased personal autonomy.

Finally I deal with the last question, why is it necessary for young learners to learn to read? Children who start reading from an early age are observed to have good language skills, and they grasp the variances in phonics much better (Ezine Articles.com). Research findings of the National Institute of Child and Human Development report that reading is the single most important skill necessary for a happy, productive and successful life. A child that is an excellent reader is a confident child, has a high level of self-esteem and is able to easily make the transition from learning to read to reading to learn. Snow and Dickson (1991) point out that research in USA has found that, how well a learner reads at the end of Grade Three is a strong predictor of whether or not the learner will graduate from high school. In 2008 in South Africa the former Minister of Education (Pandor, 2008) agreed that Grade Three would be the exit grade from the Foundation Phase into the Intermediate Phase; low attainment levels in literacy and numeracy are unacceptable because they reduce the chances of success in further education. The minister stated that the ability to read with comprehension enhances opportunities of success when pursuing learning beyond the Foundation Phase, therefore in the Foundation Phase learners

must learn how to read with understanding. Having a clear understanding about what reading entails, I move on and discuss briefly what reading readiness is all about and the types of reading as well.

2.3.1 Reading readiness

Kritzinger (1992) argues that children differ with regard to the rate at which they develop physically, mentally, emotionally and socially, and in their ability to use language effectively. He contends that, it is a fact that a large percentage of children who come to school for first time have not reached the requisite level of development which will enable them to master the reading skill with ease. It is therefore important that the teacher should know what constitutes reading readiness and what steps to take to bring his pupils up to a level where he can safely begin with his reading programme. However, in many instances reading readiness has been neglected in the first language and it becomes the task of the second language teacher to fill the gap (Kritzinger, 1992). In South Africa reading readiness is neglected. Some of the contributing factors for neglecting reading readiness may include the following: it has been observed that language „mismatches' in South African schools make things worse and the language of the resources found in schools such as: reading books and textbooks do not match the home language of the learner (DoE, 2008). This means that it become the responsibility of the teacher to do whatever it takes in order to prepare young learners ready to learn how to read. Now I present the types of reading.

2.3.2 Types of reading

The literature review reveals that there are two types of reading, namely: intensive and extensive reading. Brown (2007) points out that intensive reading is usually a classroom-oriented activity in which learners focus on the linguistic (that is language structure; grammar) or semantic (meaning the connotation of words, symbols, signs, and what they stand for) details of a passage under the guidance of the teacher. In intensive reading learners read a text in details with specific learning aims. In most cases learners are given a text or a page to read in order to explore the meaning. Intensive reading activities that usually take place in the classroom may include skimming a text for specific information (which refers to reading rapidly for main points), or

being asked to give a true/ false answer, or carrying out filling the blanks activities. Intensive reading may also include scanning a text (which refers to reading rapidly to find a specific piece of information), for example, to answer questions.

On other hand Lemmer (2001) maintains that extensive reading is generally considered to be reading for pleasure, reading self-directed material that is easy. In addition, Day and Bamford (1998) identified several benefits of extensive reading. These benefits include the following: extensive reading increases learners' reading ability, motivates learners, improve learners' vocabulary including listening, speaking and spelling abilities as well. Richards and Schmidt (2002) conclude by stating that extensive reading means reading in quantity and in order to gain a general understanding of what is in the text. In extensive reading learners read a large amount of texts as compared to intensive reading. The pedagogical value attributed to extensive reading is based on the assumption that exposing learners to large quantities of meaningful and interesting second language material will, in the long run, have a beneficial effect on the learners' command of the second language (Hafiz and Tudor 1989). Richards and Schmidt (2002) point out that extensive reading is intended to develop good reading habits, to build knowledge of vocabulary and to encourage a liking for reading. A well motivated and trained teacher can support learners by choosing suitable reading materials for his or her class that would instil the love of reading. This can also allow learners to develop the fundamental reading skills, such as fluency, comprehension and proficiency.

The advantages of extensive reading as mentioned by Hedge (2003) are:

- Through extensive reading learners can build their language competence
- They can progress in their reading ability
- They can acquire cultural knowledge
- They may develop confidence and motivation to carry on learning
- Lastly, they can become more independent in their studies.

In short the literature reveal that intensive and extensive reading can be both used in the classroom setting in order to expose learners in several reading materials that can allow them to read for enjoyment and for achieving classroom reading outcomes. Having discussed the types of

reading, now I move on to explore what the literature states about the underlying principle behind the reading focus time.

2.3.3   Reading focus time

As we know, some of the education policies implemented in South African schools are being borrowed from other international countries; likewise the concept of the reading focus time has been borrowed from England since it found there to work well in helping teachers take reading seriously and to make use of stipulated times to improve learners' reading performances. The purpose of the reading focus time (that is a period set aside within the class for reading) is to give structure to the way in which pupils are taught in primary schools. Reading focus time gives details of what should be taught during reading focus time (Burnham & Jones, 2007). The reading focus time is in accordance with the DoE (2008), which notes that it is important that teachers should know how much time has been set aside for reading, especially in Foundation Phase. Reading focus time is a curriculum framework which spells out what needs to be done by what time during reading periods; this schedule has been designed by the Department of Education with the aim to help South African teachers in making use of this hour in order to spend enough time to teach reading within the stipulated time. According to the DoE (2008) the reading focus time should be used by teachers to actively engage learners in reading or instructional groups, as can be seen on the following diagram.

Table: 1 One Hour Reading Focus Time

The Reading Focus Time   (Adapted from DoE 2008, p.3)

Reading focus time therefore ha s been int roduced to help teachers to e nsure that the y are teaching basic literacy skills and reinforcing these skills regularly, aiming at improving reading (DoE, 2008). The Department of Education recommends that teachers should dedicate one hour of the school day to the reading focus time, in order to he lp learners to de velop their reading skills in a variety of sit uations. F or e xample, the w hole c lass session (15 mi nutes) should address shared text using a reading book; the word level or sentence level (15 minutes) session should be focused on word work or sentence work, which concentrates on aspects of language that come up in the shared r eading. Furthermore, 30 mi nutes should b e shar ed with teacher guided reading, independent and group reading. The teacher should have enough time to guide and he lp learners while reading, a nd should be wor king with small groups, especially to help

learners who are experiencing reading problems. Teachers have to plan ahead reading materials appropriate for each group according to learners reading abilities. Now I move on to examine how reading in multilingual contexts is taught.

2.3.4   Reading in multilingual contexts

It is also essential to explore what literature says about reading in multilingual classrooms. It was very difficult to locate research studies on this subject as very little currently exists. Anderson (2008) reveals that the South African English first language teachers face the challenge of coping with learners who may not speak English as first language. This scholar argues that in multilingual classrooms many children learn to read and write in English as a second language, this makes it more difficult for them to acquire literacy skills in the early stages of formal education. This means that the time young English second language learners come to school, they have no English language, and it is difficult to catch up in life since English is a new language to them. In addition Heugh, Siegrühn and Plüddemann (1995) point out that the cognitive development of the child who speaks a language other than English (LOTE) is abruptly disconnected because the natural cognition development in the primary language ends when this language is taken out of the learning environment.

Anderson (2008) argues that reading and writing are an extension of language already known to the child. This is fine if learners are using the first language even at school. It becomes problematic in multilingual contexts where the learner's language is neglected and he or she is forced to use English as a second language. English second language learners find it difficult to listen to English because the phonological system, sound sequences, as well as tone melodies such as high, low, rising and falling tones may differ from the first language. When it comes to reading, the ESL learners also encounter difficulties when they use the three-cue system, namely: phonic; syntax and semantic. ESL learners fail to read and to guess what strange words might be, because of lack of vocabulary and the content of the text may not be in their frame of reference (culturally) and find it difficult to comprehend (Rost, 2001). Landsberg (2005) support this by saying ESL learners find it difficult to break up words into syllables and mispronounce words, for example, „the' that is read as „de'. Because of the reading errors their comprehension is poor.

Now I move on to examine the literature and find out how teachers teach reading to young learners.

2.3.5   How to teach reading

I would like first to remind the reader about the purpose of this study. The intention of this study was to explore the methods English first language teachers employ to teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts. Therefore, it was of paramount important to find out what does literature say about the teaching of reading to young learners in multilingual contexts. Research has revealed that four-fifths of successful reading instruction depends on the teacher and only one-fifth depends on the method (Kritzinger, 1992). Kritzinger (1992) further indicates that the teacher's expertise and enthusiasm are among the most important factors that contribute to the successful teaching of reading. The example that the teacher sets when he/she reads interesting stories and poems to his/her class, as well as the way in which she/he systematically teaches difficult ideas and words, is most important. No perfect method has yet been discovered but each method has its followers. Some of the methods of teaching reading found in the literature may include: shared reading; word attack skills; group guided reading; and paired or independent reading. I now move to discuss each of these in the next paragraphs.

2.3.5.1   Shared reading

Shared Storybook Reading (SSR) involves an adult reading aloud to a child or group of children. Sulzby (1994); Whitehurst, Falco, Lonigan, Fischel, DeBaryshe, Valdez-Menchasa, and Caulfied (1988) state that there are two forms of SSR: monologic and dialogic shared story reading. These scholars argue that monologic is a verbatim reading of the text with no pausing for questions or verbal interaction between adult and child, whereas dialogic shared storybook reading (DSSR) represents a more explicit approach and consists of verbatim (word for word) reading with intermittent adult-child interaction to label, comment or question. For the purpose of this study I will address only DSSR here. Ruhl (2005) argues that DSSR's effectiveness in school settings, compares to SSR, is likely due to the many vocabulary development methods. Such methods include a teacher- interacting with learners in many ways, for example, exposing learners to high-quality oral language and specifically targeted vocabulary; demonstrating word learning

strategies; providing opportunity for meaningful vocabulary use; and linking new information to prior experience (Baumann, Kame'enui, a& Ash 2003; Carlsie, 1993; Stahl & Nagy, 2000). The DSSR is based on Vygotsky„s theory (1978) since it features a social interaction component through which children acquire the necessary vocabulary that leads to improved reading outcomes.

The DoE (2008) points out that the shared reading method works well in multilingual classes. Through shared reading, learners become highly motivated: they learn more sight words; they read with greater comprehension and are better able to repeat single language structures. They use different teaching techniques to ensure that the shared reading activity benefits learners. These strategies may include questioning and prompting learners (before, during and after reading) to relate story events to their lives, encouraging learners to retell the story and reflecting or predicting what may happen next and enhancing opportunities to interact with new vocabulary (Ruhl, 2005).

2.3.5.2 Word-attack skills

The Department of Education (2008) support word-attack skills as a strategy to teach reading. According to Halvorson (1992) word-attack skills are the ability to convert graphic symbols into intelligible language, such as: seeing the component parts of words, to recognise syllable patterns, blending parts to form new words, or recognising capital letters and to know how to use them. Several strategies may be used to teach learners word-attack skills. For example, the DoE recommends that teachers should use a simple „five-finger' strategy which will assist learners in using a range of word-attack skills. The DoE indicates that it is the responsibility of the teacher to train learners so that learners may use this strategy confidently, efficiently and effectively. Word-attack skills permit teachers to use a variety of activities such as the "Bingo game" (whereby children can compete and take turns by picking any word and reading it aloud; the one who manages to identify the word first will, shouts "Bingo"). The teachers may use the targeted words such as: spelling words; high frequency words; purposely new words selected from the story book to support learners to increase their vocabulary (DoE, 2008).

2.3.5.3　　　　Group guided reading

Guided reading involves working with learners as they read a text, modelling good strategies, involving them in deep critical thinking, doing cross-textual work, observing their reading behaviour, and helping them to develop comprehension (Blachowicz & Olge, 2001). These authors reveal that during this time children read and look at a variety of cues to help them decode the text. For instance, using phonic and word identification strategies, learning new words or encouraging self-correction of their own reading mistakes are just a few examples of this approach. Avalos, Plasenca, Chavez, and Rasco (2007) maintain that group reading provides teachers the opportunity to teach learners the skills and comprehension strategies they need, thus facilitating the acquisition of reading proficiency. In addition the DoE suggests the following: first teachers need a set of graded readers according to the level of difficulty, secondly they should organize the learners in ability groups, lastly they should work with each group once a week for 15 minutes while other groups are engaged, doing other activities related to the text that have been pre-planned by the teacher in advance. The reading books chosen for guided reading should provide learners with a reasonable challenge but also present an opportunity for potential success.

2.3.5.4　　　　Paired or independent reading

The distinction between independent and paired reading is that in paired reading children read together in two's with one supporting the other or take turns to read. Independent reading provides opportunities for children to read books on their own. According to the Department of Education, paired and independent reading provides a way of giving children reading practice and encouraging reading for enjoyment. Independent reading is a purposeful planned activity, which encourages learners to choose any book they wish to read. The teacher, as a facilitator, ensures that the selected reading materials are suitable for each individual, according to their abilities. The advantage of this strategy is that it allows learners to choose texts that they can read with a high degree of success. The research has demonstrated that teachers and learners benefit from this method in different ways. According to Blachowicz and Olge (2001) independent reading can take the form of a readers' workshop, sustained silent reading, books chosen as part of an integrated unit, or a variety of other structures. This method permits teachers

to listen to each individual learner while reading, while also monitoring learners' progress. The teachers can also have „conferences' with each child each week on his or her personal reading.

2.4   Approaches to reading instruction for learners struggling with reading

A review of literature highlights that South African young learners face challenges when it comes to reading. According to the DoE (2008), some learners in South African schools are struggling with reading. There is a strong belief that there are many reasons associated with this problem. The DoE (2008) acknowledges that there is a number of factors that contribute ton learners' reading difficulties, such as:

- Many homes have no books

- Some classrooms have no books

- Those classes which do have sets of readers, often have them at the wrong level

- Books in African languages are scarce

- Children do not have the opportunity to read in their home language

- University students are not proficient in reading, in terms of international standards.

- Poor Matric results are in part due to the low levels of learners' reading skills.

Supporting this sentiment, the Systemic Evaluation conducted in 2001 and 2004 revealed that large numbers of South African children simply do not read. As I have indicated in chapter one, I have observed Grade Three learners in my school struggling with reading. There is clear evidence that learners are struggling with reading in South Africa. This was echoed by the recent studies conducted by DoE and international bodies. They reveal that learners in South African schools performed poorly when tested for their ability to read at age-appropriate levels. The literature review reveals that there are several approaches to reading instruction that can be used to help learners who are struggling with reading. Some of these reading approaches may include but are not limited to, the whole language approach, the phonics approach, daily or weekly word lists approach and the cloze method. Now I move on to discuss each of these appropriate reading

instruction approaches that can be used to lessen the situation and that promise to give struggling learners a second chance to learn to read. The reason behind the use of these reading approaches is clear – they have been tried, tested and approved by the experts and most importantly is available in the literature.

2.4.1 The whole language approach

The whole language approach has been proven to be of use in helping struggling learners to master reading skills. Acuna-Reyes (1994) argues that the whole language approach allows learners to learn oral, verbal, reading and writing skills at the same time. It involves a willingness to apply all areas of language alternately and simultaneously. For example, reading, telling and writing can be done simultaneously, and also mastering the language as a whole. This scholar insists that the whole language approach centres on the learner in totality by focusing on all language skills in totality. In supporting this, Wren (2003) stated that the focus on the use on the whole language approach is based on the reading materials: a young child in a whole language classroom is provided with simple, predictable and repetitive text. The text is already familiar to the child, making it that much easier to understand. The emphasis in a whole language classroom is not placed on reading precision and accuracy, but on comprehension and appreciation. Children are not expected to read the text verbatim, but they are allowed to insert and substitute words as long as the story still makes sense, and as long as the child understands the gist of the story.

2.4.2 Phonics approach

Another method found in the literature, that can be used to help struggling readers, is the phonics approach. Research studies reveal that the employment of this method can lead learners to read. Harwell (1995) concedes that the phonics approach seems to work well with most learners, but it depends on the extent to which each learner receives individual instruction in sounding and reading the words. In addition, the DoE (2008) points out that the phonics approach helps learners with reading difficulties to be able to decode unfamiliar words into units, that is, syllables and letters. Furthermore, it teaches learners the relationship between the letters of

written language and the individual sounds of spoken language. In a phonics classroom great emphasis is placed on reading precision, and learners are encouraged to read the words exactly as they appear on the page (Wren, 2003). Children are explicitly taught "rules" about the way words are written and spelt, and they are taught spelling-sound relationships. In conclusion Wren (2003) argues that the goal of the phonics teacher, then, is to instil in learners the phonics rules and the common spelling-sound relationships, and to teach learners to apply this knowledge in sounding-out each word they encounter, making the assumption that comprehension and appreciation will be a natural consequence of accuracy.

2.4.3   Daily or weekly word lists approach

The teaching of reading to struggling readers requires the employment of different reading approaches such as daily or weekly word lists approach. According to Baker (2000) the Word Lists Approach is not based on the random memorization of words, but is closely tied to reading instruction. It aims at developing learner's abilities in phonics, word recognition and vocabulary. Learners are given Word Lists everyday or weekly. As soon learners know the words the teacher gives them the new lists. Baker (2000) argues that in one class it can happen that learners study different lists, since it depends on their abilities. This means that the amount of words a learner learns in a day or week depends on the learners' individual abilities: not all learners will learn the same amount of words in one week.

2.4.4   Cloze method

The cloze method has also been suggested as an important method that can be used to help struggling readers to learn in a more supportive and helpful way. Culhane (1970) points out that the cloze method is an automatic word deletion process whereby words are removed from a printed passage. The focus is on learners to be able to predict the exact missing word and replace it. In making up predictions learners depend upon prior knowledge; general understanding of material; context clues; and knowledge of word usage. This means that the cloze method exposes learners to a variety of reading activities and this can help them to learn in a more meaningful

way. Having discussed the approaches to reading instruction that promise to be helpful to teachers of reading, now I move on to explore the literature with the aim of finding out what the literature states about the importance of supporting learners with reading problems.

2.5   Importance of supporting learners struggling with reading

Sundbye and McCoy (1997) highlight that teachers of reading play an important role in monitoring learners' reading performance. If the teacher notices that some learners in class are experiencing reading problems, then the teacher should assess the learner using different methods to ascertain where the problem lies. These scholars argue that it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to support struggling learners. They continue stressing that the teacher needs to be knowledgeable and must know the appropriate techniques to use in an attempt to deal with learners' problem. They believe that the techniques that teachers use in helping the struggling reader should meet the specific criteria and must be used according to the identified needs of the learner. These scholars insist that firstly, the teacher should ensure that the techniques must be helpful in working with the struggling readers; secondly, the techniques must be proven to be useful or have been validated by a research base available in the literature. Sundbye and McCoy (1997) outline the steps which they suggest that can be followed in an attempt to help the struggling reader as follows: the first step is to identify learners that are struggling with reading. Next, the learner can be given a story book, with the teacher collecting data by observing the learner while reading. Third, the method of instruction can be selected to match the needs of the learner, with the learner's strengths and weaknesses in reading. The last step is to create the learner performance record, in which the; learners' daily progress needs to be put. The report may be shared with learners to show them that they are achieving the stated goals and objectives. In addition, Pretorius and Mokhweshana (2009) on other hand point out supporting learners with reading difficulties would be not enough without reconsidering the following: that learners need access to books; they need opportunities to read; they need to be motivated to read and finally, they need knowledgeable teachers to help them learn to read. Now I discuss the reasons why learners should be encouraged to read books.

2.6   Motivating learners to read

Blachowicz and Olge (2001) contend that when young learners are not interested, do not see the purpose, or are unable to read, they may quickly become de-motivated. They maintain that it is the duty of the teacher to be aware of this and to ensure that reading material is at the right level for his class, is enjoyable and also it makes sense to the child. Similarly, Alyousef (2005) points out that it is the teacher's responsibility to motivate learners by selecting the appropriate materials, especially for those early stages of learning to read. The meaningful conceptual content in reading instruction increases motivation for reading and text comprehension. The purpose of reading is closely connected to learner's motivation for reading. Turner and Paris (1999) suggest that teachers should talk to their learners about different purposes for reading, so that learners can become aware of what to focus on as they read; teachers on other hand should make use of authentic texts to promote purposeful reading.

As I have indicated ,the intention of this study is to explore how English first language teachers teach reading to young learners. It is therefore crucial to find out the basic principles in the teaching of reading which are employed by teachers and are available in the literature, and this will be discussed in the next paragraph.

2.7   Basic principles in teaching reading

Knowing the basic principles of how children learn to read can help the teacher to plan reading activities appropriately. The teacher should have some idea of the basic principles by which children learn to read in order to support their development of reading in the learning environment (Burnham & Jones, 2007). Children are taught a range of strategies (as can be seen in Table 4 below), such as: phonic cues, grammatical knowledge, picture cues, word recognition and contextual cues, to enable them to make sense of what they are reading.

Table: 2   Basic principles of how children learn to read

Basic principles of how children learn to read (Depicted from Burnham & Jones, 2007)

Van Duzer (1999) states that good readers in most cases are expected to understand what they are reading. This can be done by paying more attention to the basic principle of how children learn to read in order to teach reading successfully. It has been proven that the text should contain words, pictures and grammatical structures familiar to the learners (Burnham & Jones (2007). In texts where vocabulary is not familiar, teachers can introduce key vocabulary in pre-

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reading activities that focus on language awareness, such as, finding synonyms and antonyms as well as finding new words for more clarification. The pre-reading activities that introduce the text should encourage learners to use their background knowledge. In addition, Burnham and Jones (2007) point out that child learn through thinking about the setting of the text and the kinds of words which may be used as a result. Learners use contextual cues when they encounter unfamiliar words to figure out the meaning of the unknown word. I am presenting these basic principles in anticipation of the discussion on the steps teachers take in teaching reading. These steps of teaching reading will be discussed next.

2.8   Steps in teaching reading

Since the teaching of reading is a lesson on its own, it is therefore crucial to look at the steps that teachers are advised to follow (plans) in the existing literature. According to Thirumalia (2002) the steps in reading take place in a logical sequence (as can be seen in Table 2 below), firstly the teacher introduces the topic, secondly the pupil reads the book, then the teacher provides comprehension tasks, and lastly review and related exercises take place.

Table: 3   Steps in teaching reading

Step 1
Introduction

Step 2
The Reading

Step 3
Comprehension

Step 4
Review & Related exercises
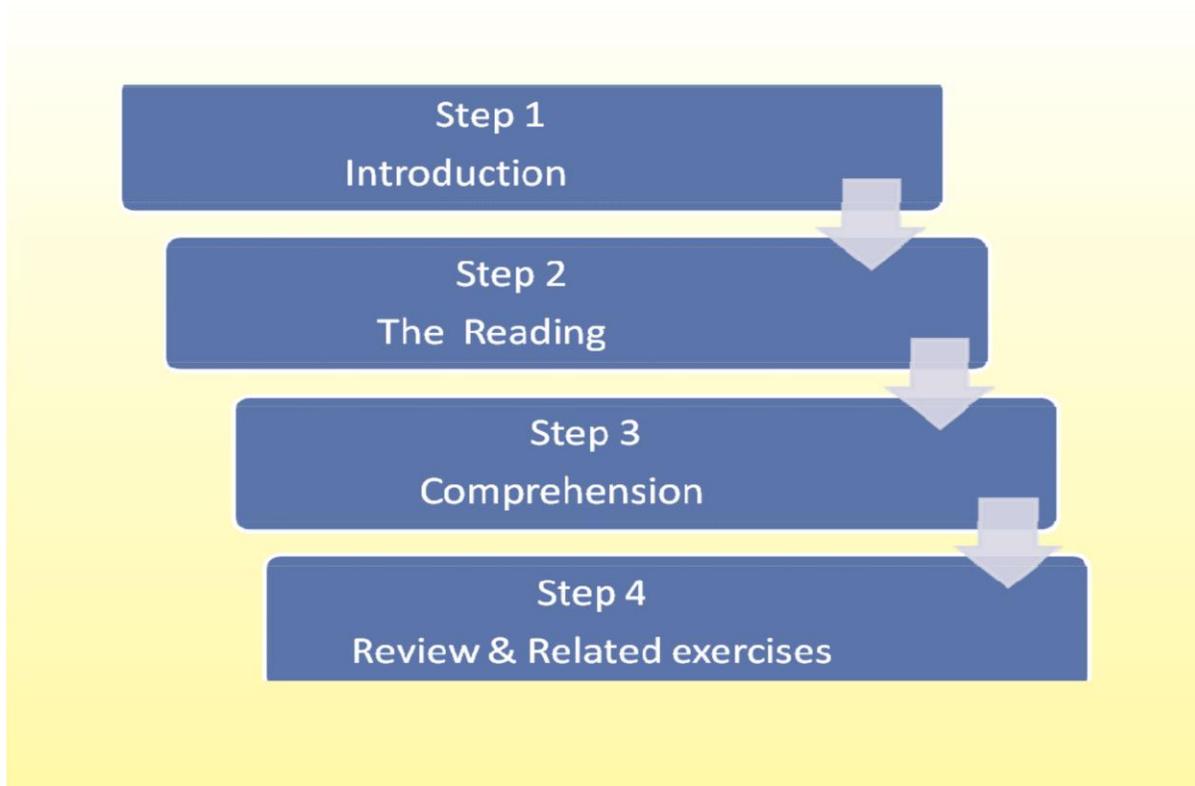
The four steps in a Reading Lesson (Adapted from Thirumalia 2002, p.101)

Thirumalia (2002) points out that first, the teacher needs to introduce the story to the learners using different activities, such as asking learners questions about what do they think the story is about by just looking at the printed cover page, maybe telling them a story similar to the one they are going to read. The first step can be used also to motivate learners and instilling that willingness to listen attentively to the story. The second step according to Thirumalia (2002) is about reading process, whereby the teacher and learners take turns to read a story. The third step is about finding out whether learners are following or not. The teacher's role is to ensure that learners understand what they are reading. The last step is about reviewing the book and giving learners some written or oral exercises to consolidate what they have read. Now I discuss the various activities used by teachers in teaching reading successfully.

2.9   Activities used in teaching reading

Drucker (2008) points out that activities used in teaching reading can be viewed in three consecutive stages, namely: before reading, next during reading, and finally after reading. The DoE (2008) makes it known that there is no single method that can successfully teach all children to read. This means that a variety or a combination of reading methods, reading strategies and reading activities play an important role in helping teachers teach reading effectively. In the literature I found a few research studies that reported on the reading activities, specifically Drucker, 2003; Barnett, 1988; Ur, 1996 and Vaezi, 2001. These scholars point out that the reading process includes reading activities such as before reading, during reading and after reading activity. These reading activities are discussed in the next paragraph.

2.9.1   Before reading

Drucker (2003) suggests the following procedure that teachers can execute before the reading process takes place. This scholar recommends that teachers may relate the passage that learners are going to read to something that is familiar to them, or provide a brief discussion question that will engage the learners. By so doing learners can use their prior knowledge discussing what they know about the topic or what they think the topic will be about. Furthermore, Drucker (2003) also recommends that teachers may provide an overview of the section they are about to read, or introduce the characters, and describe the plot (up to, but not including) the climax, direct the learners to read the story and look for particular information.

2.9.2   During reading

The main aim of during reading stage is to develop learner's ability in tackling texts by developing their linguistic and schematic knowledge. Ur (1996) and Vaezi (2001) recommend the following activities that can be employed while learners read: readers should be able to make predictions and be able to integrate prior knowledge, so that the schemata that have been activated in the pre-reading section should be called upon to facilitate comprehension. They move on to state that readers should not be encouraged to define and understand every single unknown word in a text, but instead should learn to make use of context to guess the meaning of unknown words.

2.9.3 After reading

Post-reading activities should at all time depend on the purpose of reading and the type of information extracted from the text. Barnett (1988) states that post reading exercises are meant to check learners' comprehension and then lead learners to a deeper analysis of the text. This scholar adds that post reading can take the form of various activities, such as discussing the text orally, summarizing it, answering questions orally or in written form, linking the content of the text to learners own experiences or opinions, and remembering new words and their meanings when seeing them again in other contexts. Having discussed a variety of reading activities employed by teachers in the teaching of reading and in the ways they assist learners to understand what they are learning, I move on to examine the literature and to find out when and how is remedial reading can be undertaken.

2.10 Remedial reading

Van Rooyen and Prinsloo (2003) assert that children learn to use cognitive skills through interaction with their parents and teachers. Where such interaction has not occurred, the child often struggles to develop these skills independently, and is then at a disadvantage in achieving his or her full potential. The lack of cognitive skills may mean that remedial work is required. Kritzinger (1992) echoes this sentiment by pointing out that backwardness in reading, if it is neglected, leads to feelings of inferiority and eventually to anti-social behaviour and maladjustment. For this reason, remedial reading must form an integral part of every school's work programme. This scholar further highlights the main aim of remedial work. He stresses that the aim is to try to remedy what has already gone wrong.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter has covered the theoretical frameworks within which the study is located. Secondly, the definitions and types of reading were explored. Thirdly, the different reading methods and different reading approaches suitable for teaching reading to struggling readers were reviewed. Reading activities and steps that need to be followed in teaching reading were also examined. The next chapter will look at the methodology and research design for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

The previous chapter presented the literature review exploring both local and international literature on the teaching of reading in multilingual contexts. This chapter begins by discussing the qualitative research design features of this study, the interpretive paradigm (which the study was located in), as well as the methodology and the appropriate instruments used to collect data in order to explore the ways which English first language teachers teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts. Furthermore, a table depicting the data collection plan and data analysis strategy is presented. Lastly, ethical issues guiding the study are also discussed.

3.2   Qualitative research design

The researcher followed a qualitative approach in conducting this study. The study was located in the interpretive paradigm. McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p.315) point out that qualitative research design describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions. In addition, Morse and Richards (2003) emphasize that the voice of people (participants) should be heard because the voice not only provides data to be analysed, but also contributes to the research questions and the way data is analysed. I used the qualitative approach to collect data in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons (participants) in their settings. The focus was therefore, on how teachers view and understand the world, and construct meaning out of their experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p.50).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.3) define qualitative research as a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It was therefore the intention of this study to go where people live and observe them in order to collect rich information that would enable me to answer the research questions. In this study the situated activity was on the exploration of how English first language teachers teach reading to Grade Three learners and the world was Grade Three classrooms. I played an important role as an observer in developing an understanding of the ways and methodologies the English first language teachers employed in teaching reading to Grade Three

learners, and to ascertain the forms of support they offered to learners. The starting point was to observe and interviewed them in their natural setting, adopting qualitative research methods.

Kincheloe (1991, p. 143) highlights the importance of a qualitative research enquiry, arguing that qualitative researchers maintain that many natural properties cannot be expressed in quantitative terms – indeed, they will lose their reality if expressed simply in terms of frequency. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) echo this sentiment by stating that the qualitative approach can examine complex questions that can be impossible with quantitative methods. Research studies reveal that the quantitative approach seeks causal determination, prediction, and generalization of findings. Strauss and Corbin (1990) add that quantitative inquiry consists of any kind of research that produces findings arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. Therefore the qualitative approach was particularly best suited for this study since it allowed me to collect, explain and find meaning in social behaviour (Merriam, 1998).

Qualitative approaches aims at building an understanding of people's "lived" experiences, discovering how people interpret the world around them and how this influences their actions. Nieuwenhuis (2007, p. 70) notes that qualitative research attempts to collect rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon with the intention of developing an understanding of what is being observed or studied. Conducting research using the qualitative approach permitted me to collect rich information from the right participants. Using this approach also provided me with better understanding about the ways English first language teachers use to teach reading to Grade Three learners, and the kinds of support they provide.

Kirk and Miller (1986) point out the benefits of using qualitative inquiry, namely: a qualitative approach has the ability to interact with the research subjects in their own language and on their own terms; it allows the researcher the flexibility to probe initial participant responses, that is, to ask „why' and „how' encouraging participants to elaborate on their answers. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) support this by highlighting that qualitative research produces more in-depth, comprehensive information; it uses open-ended questions and the probing gives participants the opportunity to respond in their own words, rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses. Moreover this approach uses subjective information and, at times, participant observation to describe the context, or natural setting of the variables under consideration.

Therefore, qualitative methods were used as they were appropriate for this study. Now I present the paradigm which was judged to be appropriate for this study.

3.3   Interpretive paradigm

As indicated above, this study was located within the interpretive paradigm. Henning (2005) argues that the interpretive paradigm seeks to understand social members' definitions and understanding of situations. Nieuwenhuis (2007) supports this by stating that „the focus of interpretation [is] on people's subjective experiences, on how people construct the social world by sharing meaning, and how they interact with or relate to each other.' Hussey and Hussey (1997) point out that the interpretive paradigm assumes that by placing English first language teachers in their social contexts, there is a greater opportunity to understand the perceptions they have of their own actions. Nieuwenhuis (2007) argues that through uncovering how meanings are constructed, researchers can gain insights into the meaning imparted and thereby improve the comprehension of the whole. In short, the interpretive paradigm was best suitable for this study as it offered many opportunities of interpreting, analysing and reflecting on collected data from Grade Three teachers in their natural setting.

3.4   Methodology

In this study I used only the methods that were appropriate and were likely to yield the required information. Case studies were therefore used as a methodology in order to attain the desired data. Murray and Beglar (2009) define case studies as an intensive, in-depth study of a specific individual or specific context or situation. Case studies have the potential to illuminate a „case' in great depth and to place that case in a „real' context. In this study I used case study methodology because it was the best and most suited methodology for generating qualitative data in a natural setting. I used a case study to focus on the methodologies and kinds of support English first language teachers offered to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts. Cohen, Marion and Morrison (2007) view „case study' as a „specific instance' that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle. The „single instance' is of a bounded system. They note that case studies provide a unique example of real people in real situations. This study focused on the „specific instance' of a multilingual primary school, with its „specific participants' who were

Grade Three teachers who speak English as a first language and teach reading to Grade Three learners, while the „bounded system' consists of Grade Three English classrooms.

Nieuwenhuis (2007, p.75) highlighted some of the benefits of using case studies, as follows: case studies allow participants to speak for themselves, and interact with each other in a specific situation. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) support by stating that case studies can be undertaken by a single researcher without needing a full research team; they offer a multi-perspective analysis in which the researcher considers not just the voice and perspective of one or two participants in a situation, but also views of other relevant groups of actors and the interaction between them. For the purpose of this study three English first language teachers who were teaching reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts were purposely chosen.

A critical reading on case study reveals that criticism is frequently levelled against the dependence of case study methodology on a single case, and it therefore claimed that case study research is incapable of providing a generalising conclusion (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). This skilful scholar acknowledges that but asserts that this not the purpose or intent of case study research. Rather case study is aimed at gaining greater insight and understanding of the dynamics of a specific situation. As far as this study is concerned, case study methodology has been chosen because it allowed me to collect as much data in order to answer my research questions. It allowed me also to explore and gain an in-depth insight on how teachers who speak English as a first language teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts.

3.5   The research site

McMillan and Schumacher (2007, p.342) note that choosing a research site involves a negotiation process in order to obtain freedom of access to a site which is suitable for the research problems, and feasible for the researcher's resources of time, mobility, and skills. I managed to locate a research site at one of the multilingual public primary schools in Durban, in KwaZulu-Natal. I have named this school "Ducklings Primary School".   The next diagram shows a map of Durban, in which „Ducklings Primary School' is situated.

"Figure 1: Map of Durban"
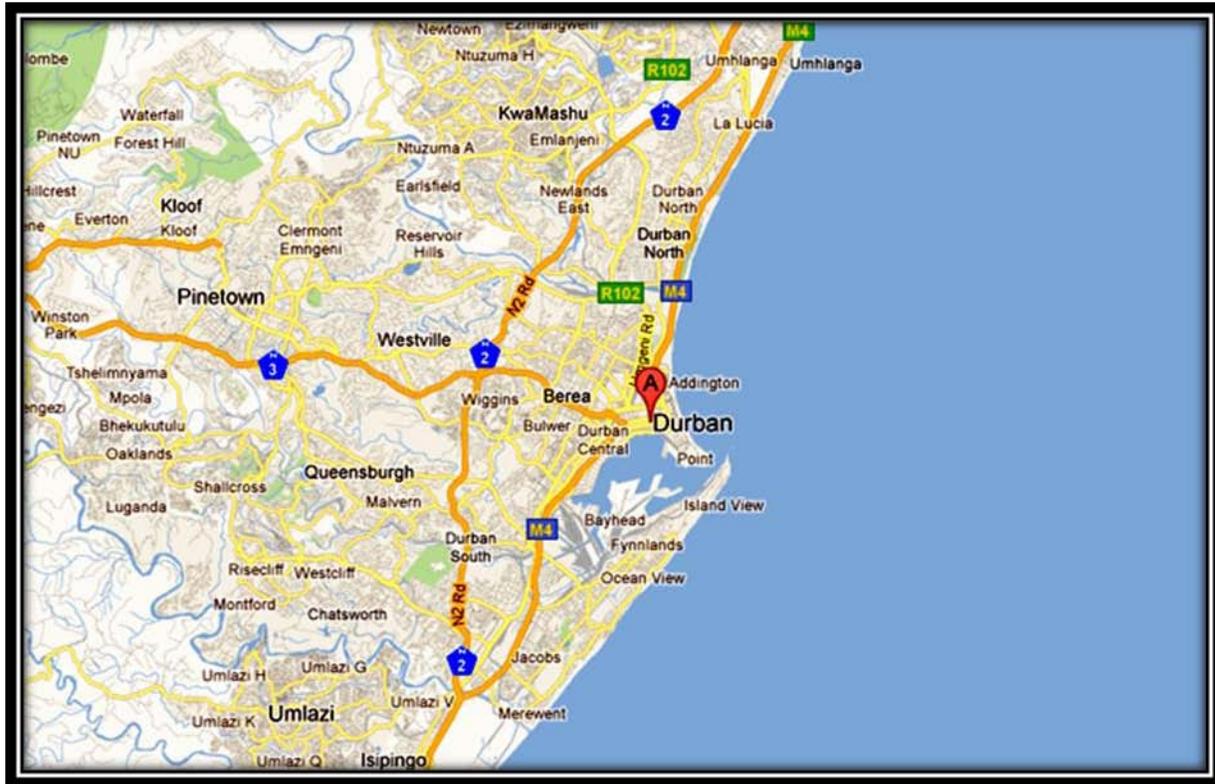
MAP OF DURBAN

The school context choice was driven by the need to collect relevant information to answer the critical research questions. The schooling population of this school consists of White, Indian, Coloured, and Black African learners. The majority of teachers speak English as a first language, and the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOTL) is English as from Grade R to Grade seven.

It was the intention of this study to explore the ways in which English first language teachers teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts. „Duckling Primary School' has a stable staff, where most of the staff has been at the school for more than twenty years. The school was built in 1936 with a capacity to school of 120 learners. It was a school for the White learners during the apartheid time. In 1992 the school was open to all other cultural / population groups (non-white learners were enrolled for first time in the history of South Africa). The

school has twenty-eight teachers, twelve White, one Coloured, one Black, and fourteen Indian teachers. The school has three remedial or special classrooms for learners who experience learning difficulties.

The „Duckling Primary School' (pseudonym) is an Ex- Model C school, meaning that it was a school for white learners during apartheid era. As much as the school accommodate young learners from around the area, however the school received some learners from the nearby squatter camps and the informal settlements as well. The school has many underprivileged kids who do not pay a lot of school fees because of their socio-economic background.

3.6   Sampling

Morrison (1993) argues that the quality of a piece of research stands or falls not only by appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation, but also by the suitability of sampling strategy that has been adopted.   Nieuwenhuis (2007) echoes this by highlighting that qualitative research usually involves smaller sizes than quantitative research studies. Nieuwenhuis further argues that sampling in qualitative research is flexible and often continues until no new themes emerge from the data collection process. This allows the researcher to carry on looking for other participants, for instance, if the selected participants withdraw from the study.   Sampling decisions are therefore made for the specific purpose of obtaining the richest possible source of information to answer the research questions. In this study, purposive sampling (sometimes called purposeful, judgment or judgmental sampling) was utilized (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006).

3.6.1   Purposeful sampling

Cohen et al. (2007) assert that in purposive sampling, researchers purposely handpick the cases to be included in the sample. Researchers build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs. The sample will consist of „knowledgeable people' who are in a position to give in-depth information.   Similarly, Babbie and Mouton (1999) support this by stating that purposive sampling is most often used in qualitative research because participants are likely to be informative about the research problem. Purposive   sampling was used and the individuals were

selected because they have experienced the central phenomenon, that is, teaching of reading to young learners.

In this case teachers who speak English as a first language were chosen on the basis of their experience in teaching reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual classrooms. The participants were selected according to a list of specific criteria established, viz.: (1) teachers had to be Grade Three teachers; (2) the teachers had to be teaching reading in multilingual classrooms. Purposive sampling offered the possibility of also adding new participants to the study, had the need come up during the research process. For example if some of the participants withdrew or participants do not provide the anticipated data, I would have been able to add additional participants. Fortunately this was not required. Below is some brief information on the teachers who participated in this study:

Table 4: Teachers' background

Participant	Gender	Post level of the teacher	Teaching experience (teaching Grade Three in multilingual classroom)	Teaching experience (general)	Qualifications
Mrs Joy	Female	Level 1	8 years	11 years	4 year Education Diploma
Mrs Cat	Female	Level 1	1½ year	3 years 6 months	Bachelor of Arts and PGCE
Mrs Jelly	Female	Level 1	3 months	9 months	B.Ed Foundation Phase Degree

For this study, three participants were selected. The choice of having a small sample was driven by the need to get rich, detailed data from the participants. The three participants all taught in one school. As indicated above, they were selected as all three taught in Grade Three and had English as their first language. Duckling Primary school has 3 Grade Three classes. The choice to select the specific teachers who participated in the study was informed by a set of pre-planned requirements that needed to be met by the participants. It was just a co-incidence that the principal and the participants were familiar with processes of research studies, and most importantly the meaning of being a voluntary participant. I met the principal twice before the commencement of the study. I also met with the participants as well. I explained everything pertaining to the reason behind the study. All the participants in the end agreed to participate, with all of them signing consent forms and committing themselves throughout the entire research process. I named the three participants as Mrs Joy, Mrs Jelly and Mrs Cat (pseudonyms). The reason behind the use of pseudonyms is clear. I had indicated that to all three participants that their real names would not be mentioned. Therefore, false names were used instead of their names. Mrs Joy is a young lady, between 25 and 30 years of age. She had trained for teaching for four years and obtained a Teaching Diploma. She mentioned that teaching of reading to young learners was part of her training. She also pointed out that she had learnt and acquired a lot of knowledge on different types of reading methods and strategies, how reading should be assessed, what needs to be done in order to help struggling readers. She had taught for 11 years and eight months teaching reading to grade three learners in multilingual classrooms. Mrs Cat was a young lady of 24 years old. She had a Bachelor of Arts Degree and the Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE). She indicated that she was trained on how to teach reading effectively. She revealed that she loves reading and she is so passionate about it. She had been teaching for 3 years and six months and been teaching reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts for 1 year and 6 months. The last participant was Mrs Jelly. She was also a young lady of 22 years old. She had a Bachelor Degree specialising in Foundation Phase teaching. Like other participants, she was trained on how to teach reading. She had teaching experience of nine months but had taught grade three learners for 3 months. Given the findings to be discussed in the next chapter, it would s

eem, in retrospect, that selecting more teachers from different schools may have enhanced the study by providing a more comparative dimension. Having said this however, I argue that the focus on one school, with teachers teaching in the same grade, also proved beneficial as it highlighted the importance of a whole-school, organised approach (to be discussed in Chapter Four), which would not have been discovered with a contextually 'thin', but more „varied' approach.

3.6.2   Strategy for data collection

This study used two research methods to collect data, which were observations and interviews. During the first stage I observed each English first language teacher in her natural setting, i.e. a Grade Three classroom, and then I interviewed one by one of these teachers in a quiet place. The next diagram present the data collection plan which served as guidelines, I followed while I was collecting the required information.

Table5: Data Collection Plan

Questions for developing a data collection plan	A Data Collection Plan
Why data was collected?	To explore how English L1 teachers teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts; to find out the methodologies and the forms of support teachers offer to Grade Three learners generally and specifically to the learners who may not speak English as a first language.
What was the research strategy?	Observations and interviews were two strategies used to collect data
Who (or what) were the sources of the data?	Grade Three English L1 teachers

How many of the data were collected?	Three Foundation Phase English L1 teachers were observed and interviewed at a primary school
Where was data collected?	Three Foundation Phase L1 teachers were observed and interviewed at a primary school in Durban
How often were data collected?	Each teacher was observed once while teaching reading to Grade Three learners. Each teacher was also interviewed once in the boardroom to find out about the strategies she employed to teach reading as well as the kind of support she offered to learners who had reading difficulties in her multilingual classroom
How data was collected?	Data was collected through observations and semi-structured interviews which were audio-taped
Justify this plan for data collection. (Why was this the best way of collecting data for these critical questions?	Observation method was a powerful tool for gaining insight into the ways teachers used to teach reading. Semi-structured interviews also provided more insight into the meaning and significance of what was happening in multilingual classrooms, the ways teachers used to teach reading, methods, and the kind of support they provide learners. Both tools were useful to give the researcher the opportunity to hear out teachers' voices. Three teachers participated in this study.

Data Collection Plan.   Adapted from Vithal and Jansen (2002, p.22)

3.7   Observation

Observation is one of the qualitative research methods which can be used for documenting classroom interactions. Nieuwenhuis (2007) notes that observation is an everyday activity whereby we use our senses (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting) to gather bits of data. Similarly, Langley (1988) views observation as an activity that involves watching other people in order to discover particular information about their behaviour. I used observations because they enabled me to gain a deeper insight and the understanding of the phenomenon being observed, that was how English first language teachers teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual classrooms.

Robson (2002) supports this by saying that „what people do may differ from what they say and say they do,' therefore observation provides a reality check. Cooper and Schindler (2001) bring to light that observation enables the researcher to look fresh at everyday behaviour that otherwise might be taken for granted or unnoticed. As far as this study was concerned, the observations were limited to only 3 Grade Three English first language teachers who were teaching reading to learners in multilingual classrooms.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) pointed out the benefits of using observation as follows: observations allow the researcher to watch participants' behaviours and interactions directly; they allow the researcher to take note of the specific evidence of what happened in its natural context, observations supplement other data collection methods, they verify data from other sources, and finally observation methods are powerful tools for gaining insight into situations. The time slots for observations were forty minutes per teacher. Teachers were observed in nine different reading lessons at different periods. Observations of reading lessons were done to gain a deep insight of how English first language teachers teach reading. Essentially I wanted to collect the information about what is actually happening in the reading lessons of multilingual classrooms, the methods teachers use in teaching reading and most importantly the kind of support they offered to Grade Three learners generally, and specifically to those learners who may not speak English as a first language. Observations   were   therefore conducted because they were appropriate for this study.

3.8 Interviews

Cannell and Kahn (1968) define the research interview as a „two-person conversation' by the interviewer and interviewee for the purpose of obtaining research-relevant information. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) support this by stating that research interviews allow both parties to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and express feelings about how they regard situations from their own point of view. Interviews involve the gathering of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals.

Interviews have a variety of forms which may include face-to-face interview, individual interview, and group interview. The main aim of conducting interviews is to obtain rich descriptive information which cannot be undertaken using other methods such as observation or questionnaires.

3.8.1 Types of interviews

According to Lankshear and Knobel (2004, p. 201) there are three types of interviews that are being used specifically as research tools to collect qualitative research data. The three types of interviews are: structured interview, unstructured interview and semi-structured interview.

3.8.1.1 Structured interviews

Nieuwenhuis (2007) points out that a structured interview consists of questions that have been created prior to the interview and often have limited sets of response categories. The structured interviews are planned and prearranged interactions between two or more people, where one person is responsible for asking questions pertaining to a particular theme or topic of formal interest and the other (or others) are responsible for responding to these questions (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). This type of interview restricts the researcher to use a pre-set list of questions and should be asked in a fixed order (meaning that there should be no deviations from the list). The structured interviews are best suited to research requiring data from many people. As far as this study was concerned the structured interview was unsuitable, since it does not allow probing and clarification of answers.

3.8.1.2 Unstructured interviews

Unstructured interviews have no pre-planned lists of questions, unlike structured interviews. Lankshear and Knobel (2004) highlight that when researchers use unstructured interviews they begin the interview with a topic to be discussed in mind, but let interviewees determine the direction of the interview and the ground to be covered in the discussion. In line with this, Wilkson and Birmingham (2003) pointed that areas of interest are established by the researcher though the discussion of issues guided by interviewee. This allows some control over the interview for both interviewer and interviewee. Advocates of unstructured interviews claim that this approach actually minimizes research bias by allowing questions to spring „naturally' from the discussion (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004).

3.8.1.3   Semi-structured interviews

Lankshear and Knobel (2004, p.201) argue that semi-structured interviews consist of pre-prepared questions, as a guide only, and follow up on relevant comments made by the interviewee. Semi-structured interviews retain the „virtues' or „good qualities' of both structured and unstructured approaches to interviews. For this reason, this was the method used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to generate relevant information from the participants. The main aim of the study was explained to the principal of „Ducklings Primary School' and to the participants as well. As far as the purpose of this study is concerned, during the interview process I was so fortunate to use a board room which was much quieter than classrooms.. Pre-planned and well constructed questions were organized. The lists of questions were printed out beforehand and were ready to be used during the interview period. The interviews were limited to only 3 Grade Three English first language teachers who were teaching reading to learners in multilingual classrooms. Laing (1967, p.66) points out some of the benefits of using semi-structured interviews, such as these: interviews have a higher response rate because respondents become more involved, can handle more difficult and open-ended questions, allow more detailed questions to be asked, and enable participants to use multi-sensory channels, such as verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard**.** They enable participants to

express how they regard situations from their own point of view. I therefore designed the interview schedule which served as a guideline for collecting data. The schedule had two sets of questions: the first set of questions focussed on the school, the teachers, their qualifications, their experiences, as well as their challenges they encounter in teaching reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts. I have attached a copy of the interview schedule as appendix K-M.

3.9 Reliability

In qualitative research reliability can be regarded as a fit between what researcher's record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting, that is, a degree of accuracy and comprehensiveness of coverage (Bogdan & Bigklen, 1992). Brock-Utne (1996) argues that qualitative research strives to record the multiple interpretations of, intention in and meanings given to situations. The notion of reliability is therefore presented as dependability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) claim that dependability involves member checks (respondent validation), debriefing by peers, prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observations in the field and identifying of an acceptable process of conducting the inquiry so that the results are consistent with the data. According to Marlow (1993) reliability is determined by obtaining two or more measure of the same thing and seen how closely they are. In order to ensure reliability and validity of the data collected, qualitative observations were conducted in conjunction with semi-structured interviews in order to compare data yielded from the three teachers who speak English as a first language and teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual classrooms.

3.10 Validity

The multi-method approach was utilized to ensure the validity of data generation. Denzin (1989) acknowledges that using multi-methods allows for the prevention of personal bias. The researcher establishes credibility by using different methods of data collection and data analysis, in order to determine if there are any discrepancies in the findings (Maree, 2007). This is why I opted to collect data using observations and interviews. I was concerned with the accuracy and the completeness of data that was yielded from the research participants, so I combined the information collected during observations and from the individual interviews. The data collected

from these different sources points to the same conclusions. This ensured confidence in my findings.

3.11   Data analysis

The main aim of analysing data is to interpret and make sense of what was in the data (Nieuwenhuis, 2006). Data was analysed in accordance with the model proposed by Seidel (1998). This model contains three linked essential elements: *noticing, collecting and reflecting or thinking about.* Nieuwenhuis (2006) notes that these elements are interlinked and cyclical. He notes that „while the researcher is reflecting on the data, she may notice and identify some specific gaps that need more additional data to be collected.' After I had collected data by means of observation, the next step was to summarise what I had seen and heard while I was in the research site. I noticed that there was still a gap in the data that I had collected through observations, I made a note of that and I tried to address this gap during the individual interviews. The next step was to collect data through semi-structured interviews. After this, I was satisfied with the generated information. I then began to form clearer understandings of the data and I organised information so that I could locate the important findings in order to code the data.

After data was analysed, I checked for common themes in what was observed during the observations and also from the interviews with the teachers. These themes were then used to inform the findings for the study. I then divided the data into parts (segments, incidents, or units), that is, smaller pieces of data containing some descriptive meanings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 368), in line with the suggestions of these authors. These scholars point out that the researcher should develop an organising system by following these steps:

The first step is to get a sense of the whole: I read each part of data and I wrote ideas about the data as I was reading. *The second step is to generate codes from the data*: I then read and „figured out', for instance, what the data was all about, what the participants were doing or talking about. *The next step is to compare codes for duplication*: I wrote a list of the emerging

themes as was influenced by the research questions, such as teacher' understanding and experiences of teaching reading. The comparison of codes was done in order to select major codes, important codes and the left over codes which might be relevant at a later stage.

Finally, the last step is to continue to refine the coding system: I continued to refined the coding system by checking the number of codes which were essential in order to analyse, interpret, and reflect on data (to key issues being identified, which was generated themes).   These steps (suggested by McMillan and Schumacher, 2007) were adopted in this study in order to arrive at key findings. These findings are discussed in Chapter Four.

3.12   Ethical issues

I was guided by the University's ethics policies. Because of the careful attention that this study paid to the issue of ethics, full ethical clearance approval was granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal (see appendix A). A letter to the Department of Education requesting to conduct research was also written (see appendix B). In addition, the permission to conduct research was approved by the Department of Education (see appendix C). The ethical approval was based on the acknowledgement that I was responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of the subjects who participated in the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Therefore I was aware of what was expected of me in terms of confidentiality of collected information. I interacted with all the participants in a face to face situation, and the study was carried out in the research participants' natural setting; it meant that I entered the private world of research participants. I maintained all the information, observations, and interviews with utmost confidentiality.

Cohen et al. (2007) highlighted that the two ways of protecting participant's right to privacy are through the promise of anonymity and confidentiality. These scholars insist that a participant is considered anonymous when the researcher or another person cannot identify the participant from the information provided. In order to ensure the participants' protection, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and were given and asked to sign the consent forms before the study commenced. Participants were told that no real name of the school and teachers would be mentioned in this dissertation. A letter requesting permission to conduct research in „Ducklings Primary School' is presented as appendix D and the consent form signed

by the principal is attached in this thesis (see appendix E), as well as consent forms signed by the participants (see appendix F).

I therefore ensured that the participants did not experience physical or emotional distress as a result of participating in the study. Confidentiality was another way of protecting the participant's right to privacy. Cohen et al (2007) point out that even though the researchers know who has provided the information or are able to identify participants from the information given, they must in no way make the connection known publicly. Participants were given the choice of either participating or not participating and were told that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, 101). Mindful of this, data in this study was treated with confidentiality and presented only for the research purposes. I emphasised that anonymity as well as privacy would be maintained at all times. I also explained that data gathered during interviews would be stored safely at the university for a period of five years, and it would be used for the research only.

3.13   Limitations of this study

It is a prerequisite for every research to declare the limitations that may raise questions regarding the credibility of the study. The main limitation of this study is the fact that it was conducted only in a part of KwaZulu-Natal. The sample was restricted to three teachers of the same selected site who met the criteria for conducting this study. Therefore, the research findings and conclusions cannot be transferred to any other schools. In retrospect it would have assisted perhaps to conduct the study in three different sites so as to compare practices across different sites. Additionally it is important to point out the uniqueness of the context studied. Many schools do not exhibit the same strategies and efficiencies as those of „Ducklings Primary School.' This work can therefore not be easily generalised. It is for this reason that this study has refrained from making declarative statements about what multilingual/ multiracial schools are like. Rather, the study focussed on telling the „Ducklings Primary' story. Having said this however, this work presents powerful findings which can greatly assist teachers in any type of school in improving the reading abilities of their learners in varied contexts, depending of course on contextual realities.

3.14 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the main aspects of the research design and the methodology used in this study. The research instruments and data collection plan were also discussed, together with the rationale for the choices made. An explanation was provided on how „data was analysed' and how ethical considerations were provided. The next chapter will present the analysis of the data that was collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1   Introduction

This qualitative case study explored how English first language teachers teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts, the methodologies they employ to teach reading, as well as the forms of support they offer to Grade Three learners generally, and, specifically, to those learners who may not speak English as a first language. It is very important to note that the research study was not conducted in the researcher's school, so as to prevent bias in the study. I was granted permission to conduct the study by the principal of „Ducklings Primary School' (pseudonym). All teachers in this school speak English as a first language and there is only one Black African teacher who teaches IsiZulu. The majority of learners are Black African learners who speak English as a second language.

This chapter presents and discusses data which was generated through observing (see Appendix G) and interviewing three Grade Three teachers in their natural setting (see Appendix K-M). Three lessons were observed from each class and three interviews were conducted. Using different qualitative research techniques such as observations and interviews permitted me to compare the collected data. In the findings discussion that follows, verbatim quotations of the words of the teachers are used.

As I indicated in the previous chapter, I employed the model of Seidel (1998) to analyse data. This model contains three linked elements, namely noticing, collecting and reflecting on data collected. The findings discussed in this chapter reflect data from the observations and semi-structured interviews conducted.

4.2   Research findings

I designed this study based on my experience as a teacher of reading in a multi-racial school. My experience and observations at my school led me to believe that many second language speakers of English were being disadvantaged in multi-racial schools. I expected to find similar

patterns and practices to those in my school. Surprisingly, the findings were the complete opposite. Engaging in this work allowed me to observe and discover how reading should really be taught for it to be successful. While indeed my research design did not include an evaluation of the successes of teaching reading and pedagogical practices in schools, this work gave me an opportunity to observe what constitutes good teaching of reading. I found teachers that were not only confident in their reading teaching abilities, but were also supported by the entire school in the execution of their tasks. Six key themes emerged in the data analysis process. These themes were as follows: variety in the methods employed, comprehension of teachers' role, complexities of teaching reading in multilingual classroom, strategic coping with the challenges in multilingual classrooms, prioritisation of the child in the reading process, and finally the whole school approach to reading. In the ensuing discussion I discuss each of these themes, drawing from both observations and interviews. The themes highlight the importance of teachers in knowing their roles in the teaching of reading, as well as crafting learner-appropriate and contextualised methodologies in the teaching of reading.

4.2.1 Theme 1: Variety in the methods employed

A key theme that emerged both in observation as well as in interview sessions with the teachers was that of the importance of using varied teaching methodologies in the teaching of reading. The teachers in my study employed various teaching methods including the phonic approach, word lists approach and word recognition so as to ensure successful reading lessons. This finding of varied methods was corroborated by the teachers during interview sessions. Asked why teachers seemed to use different reading methods Mrs Jelly noted:

> *Well there are many different approaches, I think you would know the phonic approach and the language experience approach and all of those sorts of things. I feel that basically using bits and pieces becomes the best. Sometimes the reading books are very phonics based and then you can use phonic approach but sometimes they are more based on learning vocabulary through application or the sentences that the words are in, so there you can't really use the phonic approach, so basically I use the combination of all different approaches for teaching reading*

In addition Mrs Joy also commented about why she used different reading methods. She noted:

I think a combination of all methods because honestly you can't say that this is the best method and you need to only use that because there is elements of every single method of teaching reading that you can draw from depending on the learner, depending on the situation and depending on the book itself

From the above quotes it became clear that teachers used their knowledge and their experience in selecting and employing the different reading methods in teaching reading successfully. The argument here is that the use of varied teaching methods greatly enhanced the reading experiences of the learners. During the observation I noted how attentive the learners were as a result of the methods that the teachers were using in the class. In all the three classes observed, the learners seemed keen to engage in the reading process and also in participating. This corroborated the teachers' claims that the use of these methods was useful for the teaching of reading.

It was made clear, from the point of view of the teachers, that they are not using one method in equipping learners with reading skills. I therefore argue that, depending on the learners' contextual background in terms of vocabulary, different methods can be used to help them with reading. Through non-participant observations for example it became clear that Mrs Cat also used different reading methods such as the phonics approach, word list approach and the Look-and-Say method. Look-and-Say method or word identification method is another word that describes the word recognition method. It emerged that using different methods of teaching reading seemed to work well in the class as learners did use one or more methods at the same time depending on the context or the book they were reading. These methods used to teach reading were not arbitrary, but seemed to have been chosen for specific purposes. Mrs Cat for example asked learners to use phonics approach to break difficult words into small units so that they can reads word following each phonic sound. She also encouraged her learners to try to read words as they see them, that is, using the word recognition method. After reading, learners were given a set of word lists in advance to prepare for the next book they were going to read. Learners were told to read the words at home with understanding. These methods were in line with those suggested by the DoE (2010) and a leading scholar of reading, Ediger (2001). Ediger

(2001) states that children must be encouraged to learn to read using various methods and materials. She argues that with each method some children can succeed but others can experience difficulty. She then points out that no approach is so clearly better than the others that it can be used exclusively. The DoE (2008) echoes this sentiment and agrees that there is no single method that can successfully teach all children to read. I now wish to discuss three reading methods that were employed the most by the teachers during my observations so as to highlight how each was used during the reading lessons observed.

- **Phonic approach**

Joubert` (2008) argues that „phonics instruction' teaches learners the relationship between the letters of written language and the individual sounds of spoken languages. She moves on to state that the phonics approach teaches children to use these relationships to make, read and write words. According to the teachers interviewed, the phonic approach and alphabet method were their first stepping stone which they employed in teaching reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts. The alphabet method works the same as the phonics approach because in both methods learners are taught letters and the picture of that sound or letter simultaneously, but differ in the fact that the alphabet method requires the learners to know the alphabet before they can start reading. Additionally in the phonics approach learners are expected to master the skill of decoding the words. Teachers used the phonic approach to teach learners how to decode words into smaller parts because some of English words are formed using different phonic sounds, for example: „jam' can be broken into three letters „j-a-m.' According to Joubert (2008) decoding is a term used to define the readers' ability to apply his or her knowledge of letter sound relationships to correctly pronounce written words. Harwell (1995) on the other hand maintains that the phonic approach works well with most learners, but this depends on the extent to which each learner receives individual instruction in sounding and reading the words. All the Grade Three learners, including English first and second language speakers, used the phonic approach when they read in their reading groups. Wren (2003) highlights that in the phonic approach children are explicitly taught "rules" about how the way words are written and spelled, and they are also taught spelling-sound relationships. The phonic approach appeared to be the most used method among teachers. This was evident in the way the learners reacted in their

lessons observed. It was clear that learners had mastered phonics skills and they did not have a problem of applying where it was needed during reading process. If teachers found that learners were stuck and could not read a word they reminded learners to break it, learners would then read each single sound trying to figure out how word should be read. This was consistent in all the three classes observed.

Joubert (2008) points out that high frequency words are used in reading as well as those words that learners find problematic. For that reason teachers were vigilant and paid close attention while each individual learner read a page to ensure that the learners read all words including the sight words.

In relation to this Mrs Cat noted that:

> *We want to get them use the building blocks that we give because we can't teach them every single word that has ever been invented, we have to give them the tools to breakdown or build-up words so that they can read them and we also have to give them the tools to make the meaning easier to grasp.*

 In other words she was recommending the phonetic approach as one of the methods of teaching reading and also acknowledging that the phonics method cannot be used in isolation to the other methods since some of the English words are not phonetic. Now I further discuss the word list approach employed by teachers to teach reading to Grade Three learners.

- **Word lists approach**

According to the DoE (2010) word list is a section of the reading programme where the teacher directs a group of learners who are on the same reading level to master or practice a specific reading skill or technique. The word lists approach or word study was also found to be another method employed by the teachers. The teachers gave second language learners word lists which they prepared for them in advance or as soon as they become aware that learners were having difficulties in reading some sight words. These were given to learners to read and practise at

home before the actual reading lesson took place in class. Teachers chose all new words from each reading book, explained and pronounced the unfamiliar words to learners. For example, I observed a similar practice among all three teachers concerning word study. Firstly, learners were given word study for spelling purposes. Secondly, word lists were given to English second language learners to learn at home and to increase their knowledge. Thirdly, through interviews teachers pointed out that they gave learners words and asked them to make sentences. Lastly, learners were also given specific word lists to use them to complete creative writing depending on the topic.

Further, it appeared that the teachers observed put an extra effort by organising additional word list for individual struggling learners. This was particularly useful to English second language learners. These words were specially designed to suit the needs of these learners. As Mrs Jelly noted:

> *We have spelling words, and phonics words that goes home once a week and they write it out three times a week and I would have other words as well like when I look at their creative writing and things like that I can see where they are struggling, I can see which phonics they have not grasped so I would maybe the following week take the words that I can see are dominant and give them that list as well.*

In supporting this Mrs Cat reports that:

> *The one individual reader which I got by herself and not in a group, she's learnt the words. So I haven't taken her back a level but she can't read as many pages because it takes her a bit longer. So basically I go to her level and keep moving her forward slowly.*

From the above information it is clear that Mrs Cat used her expertise to help the individual learner with the words the learner would feel comfortable with. Similarly, Mrs Joy pointed out that:

> *We need to be persistent with English second language learners. We give them a smaller amount and help them to work on pronunciation, understanding and fluency.*

It emerged that Grade Three learners at „Ducklings Primary School' are supported in a meaningful way. The fact that teachers observed were trained to teach reading and used varied teaching approaches benefited learners tremendously. Teachers also used their knowledge and expertise in an attempt to let each learner learn to read and be able to reach their potential regardless of learners reading difficulties. I will then discuss the word recognition as one of the valuable methods used by teachers who speak English as a first language.

- **Word recognition**

Another method employed by the teachers was the word recognition approach. According to Joubert (2008) word recognition reading method also known as the „look-and-say' method is a reading method that focuses on the whole and not on the parts of the word. The learner is guided to recognise and read words as they see them. Word identification was one of the valuable methods used by teachers to teach reading. Through the observations I found that during the reading process learners were reminded and encouraged to try to read the words as they saw them (sight words), for example I observed Mrs Jelly asking a learner to look at the list of sight words given to the learner in order to help the learner to recognise the same word as he saw it. The child looked at the word and recalled how the word should be read. The sight words are those words readers recognise automatically (on sight). The Department of Education (2008) argues that learners do not need to decode words phonetically or think about them. The DoE also points out that not all the English words can be broken into small parts, words like: little,

the, by, to, for, you, was, because, me, cannot be spelt out phonetically, they have to be recognized by sight. In line with this sentiment teachers followed suit.

As indicated above, teachers compiled new words to help learners learn English words recognition. It was therefore clear that they compiled high frequency words in the form of word list because learners would frequently find them in their reading books. Compiled lists enabled learners to find it much easier to read those words since most of them were found in learners' reading books.

Based on the discussion above, it is fair to conclude that the teachers employed varied teaching approaches so as to support all the readers in their classrooms. Additionally, it became apparent that the approaches adopted by the teachers were in line with the requirements of the Department of Basic Education. Finally, there appeared to be great uniformity among the Grade Three teachers that the prioritisation of reading became apparent in the school. It was clear that the teachers' performances were not adopted as a „show' for the researcher, but rather common practice at the school. For example the learners all demonstrated familiarity with the approaches, and all the three lessons observed were consistent among all the three teachers. This consistency among teachers was also evident in the strategies adopted, a theme I now move to discuss.

Reading Strategies:

Teachers interchanged reading methods and the reading strategies. As indicated above, teachers used different methods with the aim of enhancing learning, to make reading more enjoyable, and to avoid boredom from learners. Teachers employed different reading strategies such as: shared reading, group reading, read aloud and independent reading. Motivating the unmotivated learner was also one of the strategies which were employed by teachers. From the observations, I noted that the teachers have a broad knowledge of reading strategies and they were able to employ them at the right time. They used these strategies because they knew that learners were not the same – they learn in different ways, for example some learners learn better during group reading, others learn better during read aloud and some during independent reading. I asked the teachers about the value of using these strategies in order to ascertain the reason behind the consistent employment of the different reading strategies that I observed.   Mrs Joy noted:

Well all children are different and they comprehend things differently, some children are visual learners, some are auditory so it depends on a child.

Similarly Mrs Cat notes:

Like we said these government books are a great example of that. You can't just have one because if they get used to that one method what's going to happen when they see another one…..they are going to freak out completely, you have to have different …..Like I said you have to think outside the box, you have to think in different ways and when you think in different ways you go Ah, I can't believe I didn't think of that before… so listening to reading and doing reading in different ways…also its more exciting for them, it's mixing it up.

In addition, Mrs Jelly also commented that:

Well, the different reading strategies brings different elements to the reading, it's exciting for the children to have different activities or strategies that the teachers use and children will use, so it's just spices it up and causes difference.

From the above perspectives it became clear that teachers employed various reading strategies in order to expand learners' learning opportunities and to accommodate the diversity of learners in their multilingual contexts. They noted that their intention was to teach learners with the reading strategies appropriate to the level of their learners. Mrs Joy for example commented that children comprehend differently, for that reason using different reading strategies benefitted most learners as compared to one strategy. Mrs Cat also highlighted that the reason they employed different reading strategies was because they were preparing them for the 2012 Department of Education testing. She further mentioned that they were using books supplied by government because they have a lot of examples of different activities needed to be completed by learners. According to Mrs Cat employment of reading strategies would equip learners with right skills they needed to master. I now discuss each of these reading strategies in the following paragraphs.

- **Shared reading**

The DoE (2008) explains that in shared reading, teachers and learners read a common text. The difference between shared reading and group reading is that shared reading is a whole class activity whereas in group reading learners read in small groups. This was evident in all Grade Three classes. Mrs Cat pointed out that:

> *In shared reading we usually do it when learners finish their work. They come, sit on the carpet or read to their friends or just sit and read by themselves. We got lots of books on the shelves and things so when they finished and I know they finished they can take a book.*

From the above information it became clear that learners were provided opportunities to select the books they want to read to their friends. During the observation sessions I noted that teachers and learners had discussions about the main idea of the story, talked about the role played by each character, explained the sequence of events and discussed why things happened the way they did. This allowed learners to share their opinions and the moral lesson about the story. Wessels and van den Berg (1998) argue that when young children experience shared reading, they become aware of the print relationship, that is, between the print and the story. They then realise that the pictures illustrate the story and make sense of it. I found that learners were free to express themselves and relate to the teachers what the story was about and used their prior knowledge to discuss their ideas.

- **Group reading**

Another key method that the teachers were using was that of grouping learners. It emerged that the teachers grouped the Grade Three learners according to their reading abilities, which showed that they acknowledged the cognitive development of each individual learner. It appeared that in group reading learners were grouped to read together the same text aloud (see appendix I). Some scholars recommend this by stating that group reading is particularly valuable for shy learners or those with language difficulties (du Plessis, Conley & du Plessis, 2009). These writers insist that an important advantage of small-group reading is that every learner is

involved. They believe that some learners are often sit back and leave everything to the more active ones. Since teachers were English first language speakers, and had second language learners in their classrooms, I found that they employed group reading strategy as a plan of action for teaching reading in order to help learners achieve reading outcomes and reach their potentials. As Mrs Joy noted:

> *I've grouped my children according to their ability ok, some of my children although they are in Grade Three but they are not able to read a Grade Three level book, so we are still using books from grade two and grade one because they've got to build that foundation and get the basics before we move them on ....so for me to give them a Grade Three book, they will have no clue what they are doing so I'd rather give them a book at their level and build their knowledge slowly.*

Similarly Mrs Cat noted:

> *I have seven reading groups and two individual readers so that doesn't really count as another group.*

Mrs Jelly also commented that:

> *I've got seven groups and two individual readers.*

From the above narratives it was evident that teachers have smaller numbers of learners in each group purposefully. They also indicated that not all learners qualify to be grouped with others, meaning that they do have individual readers as well (see appendix J). They noted that through group reading they want to create opportunities for all learners to practice reading. Research has shown that learners learn best when they are actively involved in the process (Davis, 1993). According to Davis (1993) learners working in small groups tend to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional formats regardless of subject matter.

Piaget (1977) maintained that reading is acquired through a series of stages including the mastery of a set of specific reading skills. He believed that reading stages have a definite structure and generally follow a hierarchical progression. It was this awareness of child's cognitive development stages that English first language teachers considered and used, in selecting books that were appropriate to their children's level of development.

The classroom set up in the school visited also confirmed the importance of group reading (see appendix H). All the classes of the teachers were arranged into groups, six groups were made and a few individual readers in each class. Wessels and van den Berg (1998) assert that the benefit of having group reading is that it encourages the learners to help one another, gives an opportunity to all learners to read aloud, and most importantly learners feel less threatened in a small group compared to when they read for the whole class. Kritzinger (1992) is of the same opinion as Wessels and van den Berg. He points out that in group reading the learners are all active, they are less self-conscious in their groups, and the group allows them to learn from each other. He goes on to state that learners learn to co-operate and a sense of responsibility is engendered. They also learn to communicate with one another through the second language (English) because they discuss the book.

- **Reading aloud**

Through observations I found that the participants employed two types of teaching reading, that is: read aloud by each individual learner or a group of learners and silent reading done by each learner independently. Kritzinger (1992) highlights the fact that many teachers use the reading aloud method as the chief means of improving the spoken English of their learners. Joubert (2008, p.95) supports this by pointing out that reading aloud helps to expand the learners' vocabulary, it broadens their general knowledge and fosters a desire to read for themselves as demonstrated by the adult. This study found that the teachers used the reading aloud method in teaching reading to ensure that they paid close attention to each individual learner and to listen how learners read, including their speed of reading, fluency, uses of punctuation, comprehension,

word identification and reading tone in order to support them and record down the reading skills learners were lacking. Teachers continually corrected learners whenever they noticed that they made some errors. This strategy helped them to identify where learners' reading problems lie. Now I discuss the independent reading strategy which was also used by teachers to teach reading as well.

- **Independent reading**

Independent reading is a purposeful reading activity planned by the teacher. I found that in all Grade Three classrooms the teachers allowed learners to read and complete written tasks independently, using Rainbow Literacy workbooks. These workbooks have been supplied by the Department of Education. They contain a number of activities which are challenging and allow learners to gain different knowledge from a single activity. Since reading takes a lot of time, it was found that teachers instructed learners to do independent reading and work on independent tasks.

Activities such as phonic work, comprehension, sight words, creative writing, rhyming words and the steps learners need to follow to write their own short stories, were on these workbooks. I observed that these workbooks also consisted of different language aspects, such as: present and past tense, prepositions, capital letters, nouns, and adjectives to name the few. As Mrs Jelly noted:

> *Now we've got these new Department learners workbooks. We are supposed to train learners for when they'll be doing government testing next year (2012) on how they ask questions. The wording is very different from what we use; it's much higher order thinking, so we have to train to think that way.*

This was corroborated by Mrs Cat who noted that:

Well, the whole day is basically reading. It is not specified that now they have to do reading because from time they come in they have got to read instructions on the board, they have got to follow instructions, they have got to be able to read and comprehend when they write down their homework.

Supporting this Mrs Joy pointed out that:

They usually just bring the book …this is the book that I read …this is what it's about….this is what I thought was funny or I didn't like this…..

It became clear that the teachers placed the importance of knowing how to read as very crucial to young learners: in the lessons observed reading did not end by reading to the teacher only, but learners had to do independent reading by reading on their own without depending to the teacher in order to complete written tasks. It was apparent that teachers employed independent reading to train learners for government testing (as they state above), and to create opportunities for learners to express themselves about what they had individually and silently read from the book without getting assistance.   Reading was also encouraged as an activity for enjoyment, something that most teachers in South African schools do not emphasise when encouraging young learners to read.   It was clear that knowing how to read independently encouraged autonomy to young learners and it enabled them to read on their own, without having to be told by their teachers. Another strategy which worked well for teachers was that of allowing learners to take reading books home. This strategy is discussed in detail next.

- **Taking reading books home**

Another key strategy that teachers employed in the teaching of reading was that of giving learners reading books to read at home. Through observations and interviews it was clear that this strategy works well for both teachers and learners. Teachers were able to organise more reading books for learners, and learners on other hand were also waiting eagerly to be given new books as they were quite aware which book should follow by looking at the back of cover page. Allowing learners to take reading books home improved learners' reading abilities as it gave

them access to additional reading outside the classroom and this created more opportunities for learners to practice reading at home (see appendix N). Teachers swap learners' reading books following a „list' which contains all „Ducklings Primary' Foundation Phase reading books in a chronological sequence. Using a list allowed teachers to know exactly which book should be given to the learner after completing a particular book. When I asked the teachers how the learners' reading performances were before they were not given readers to take home, Mrs Joy noted:

Well in Grade Three they've always been given readers home from the first day of the school. In grade one, they start after about a few weeks.

Similarly Mrs Cat commented that:

We've been so fortunate to the extent that we've always sent readers home, erm… if they do not return a book they don't take a reader home and you can see the difference that they are battling a little bit further.

In addition Mrs Jelly noted:
I've always heard that they always had the books and the parental support from home.

From the above narratives it became clear that allowing learners to take books home was a school custom. Mrs Joy highlighted the fact that Grade Three learners were given readers on the first day of school. Mrs Cat agreed with Mrs Joy that they were so lucky to be allowed to give learners reading books. She pointed out that they did not give the learner a reader if she / he didn't return a reading book. However, the learner would be given another chance to practise reading at home and instructed to bring the book the next day. Furthermore, Mrs Jelly a new teacher at school commented that she heard that learners were given readers home. She then

pointed out that by so doing learners were also offered support by their parents while reading at home.

From the above explanation it is clear that Grade Three learners at „Ducklings Primary School' are being supported in a meaningful way and that teachers are very strategic and innovative in promoting reading. Vygotsky (1978) acknowledges that children engage in constructing shared meanings through interacting with people in their particular social relations. By taking books home, learners interact with their parents by answering questions, discussing the book, predicting what the story is all about, relating the story to their own experiences and judging the lesson learnt from the story. Vygotsky maintained that in order to bring about cognitive development, the role of teachers and parents as mediators in the process of teaching and learning cannot be overemphasized. Vygotsky sees the role played by both teachers and parents as of utmost important in learners learning to read since teachers and parents listen, praise and correct learners' reading mistakes. Another strategy which worked well for teachers was that of motivating the unmotivated learner. This strategy will be discussed next.

- **Motivating the unmotivated learner**

Wessels and van den Berg (1998, p. 251) argue that young learners learning to read will not become readers unless they are given many opportunities for purposeful voluntary reading, the reading material is relevant enough to reward this effort, reading gives them emotional, rather than intellectual satisfaction, and they have a good reason for doing reading.

Teachers had the same opinion that motivating learners bear some fruits for them. They highlighted the following techniques they use to win learners and to instil the willingness to read: they encourage continuous positive reinforcement; they keep on reminding learners that they can do it, when learners read well or improve their reading ability, they reward them with colourful, shining stars, they praise them when they read well or for every effort they demonstrated and they keep on telling learners that they are capable and have ability to read without fail.. Therefore motivation can work as a strategy to improve reading. Now I move on to discuss the next theme.

4.2.2   Theme 2:   Comprehension of teachers' role

The first theme of this chapter has explored the various methods and strategies the teachers employed in the teaching of reading to their Grade Three classes.   The employment of these strategies suggests that the teachers investigated had an understanding of their roles as reading teachers, as well as the processes involved in the teaching of reading.   This is often a key challenge in many reading classrooms across the country. The DoE (2008) acknowledges that many teachers in Foundation Phase have not been explicitly trained to teach reading, that is why they find it difficult to help learners with reading difficulties. The DoE moves on to point out that many teachers have resorted to rote teaching as the only option, and tend to be satisfied with rote learning by their learners.

I was therefore very impressed to observe and speak to teachers who seemed to have great clarity about their work. It was clear from the data collected from the nine observations that the confidence and knowledge of their roles as teachers greatly benefited learners in learning how to read: most learners for example read with confidence and seemed comfortable in participating in reading. Reading seemed not to be an infrequent thing, but appeared to have been normalised by all the Grade Three teaches. This was quite surprising as the classes were constituted of second language speakers. I argue here that this demonstrated the importance of the role played by the teacher in teaching reading.   Clark and Silberstein (1977) suggest that it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to train learners to determine their own goals and strategies for a particular reading, and to encourage them to take risks, to guess and to ignore their impulses to be always correct (cited in Silberstein, 1993). The importance of the role of teachers was further highlighted in the interviews conducted with teachers. Mrs Cat when asked about the role of the teacher in reading she noted:

> *We are there to support them and guide them up to be the best they can be, without us they'll be fine …they'll be able to do it but with us there, they'll just get taller and stronger.*

Similarly Mrs Joy noted:

The role of the teacher in reading is to encourage and make sure they are reading the correct words and they have understanding of breaking up the words so they can become readers on their own.

Mrs Jelly backed up what Mrs Cat and Mrs Joy articulated in the following manner:

The role of the teacher is more of a facilitator, she will sit back and help learners more who needs it and only when they are struggling will she step in and become involved in the actual reading process.

From the above captions it became clear that Mrs Cat believed that her role was to offer support to young learners and guide them until they reach their full potential (reading with ease). Mrs Joy believed that her role was to encourage learners, ensuring that they are reading the correct words, and also to teach them phonic skills in order to enable them to break up words whenever they encounter unfamiliar words. In addition, Mrs Jelly put it clear that her role was more than a facilitator. She would listen to learners in anticipation of offering help only if the need arose.

In demonstrating the comprehension of their roles, the teachers in this study were highly aware of how to teach reading, what to observe from learners, for example, they observed learners' fluency, their comprehension skills, and their ability of self-correction as well, thus supporting learners in the process.

4.2.3   Theme 3:   Complexities of teaching reading in multilingual classroom

While the teachers evidently did an impressive job in teaching reading, they also noted the difficulty of teaching reading in multilingual classrooms. As indicated before, all the three teachers are first language speakers of English, and therefore have no knowledge of the learners' home languages since the majority of learners at Ducklings Primary speak English as a second language.   Much of their challenges came from the language itself and the fact that learners, when coming to English settings, found it difficult to communicate with their teachers, meaning they did not have the language competence to cope. This made it particularly difficult when coming to the teaching of reading.

Apart from this, there were other contextual issues compounding the problem such as learners coming from homes where there was no reading material, parents finding it difficult to support their children because of the language used in school, and the number of learners in each class. Teachers agreed that the class size was a major contributing factor on the challenges they met in teaching reading.

In view of the fact that the majority of learners in „Ducklings Primary' speak English as a second language, teachers spent more time on teaching them reading than those learners who may speak English as their first language. Teachers noted that everything the learners do at school requires reading. Teachers indicated that a high number of learners in class make it difficult for them to teach reading as they were supposed. Reynolds, Davie, and Phillips (1989) argue that more effective schools have smaller sizes and lower pupil-teacher ratios. Reynolds et al (1989) point out that more learners in class make it difficult for teachers to give individual attention to learners. This was evident through interviews with the Grade Three teachers. As Mrs Joy explained:

> *Class size does have an effect on teaching reading because the larger the classes you've got, you have to pay attention to what the children are saying but then you've also got the rest of the class that is a larger group and they take opportunities to misbehave. So I feel that a larger class… because the previous school that I taught in I had smaller class so I did have ability to work with the group. It was very few learners left behind. So a large class does influence it because of the distraction and disruption of the majority compared to the reading group on the floor.*

This was also corroborated by Mrs Cat who noted that:

> *I don't get much one-on-one time. I've got a class of thirty-two so my time is split basically amongst thirty-two children whereas if the classes were smaller they would have more individual care and attention.*

In addition Mrs Jelly noted:

Some schools have got sixty learners and some got fifty, I mean I'm fortunate I've got thirty-two which is still a manageable amount but in other schools with sixty I can't see how they are going to be able to give those kids the individual attention to assist them.

From the above captions it became clear that the number of learners in class contributes to the challenges faced by teachers in the process of teaching reading. Mrs Joy highlighted that when she put a group in front to read aloud, the rest misbehave and caused disruption. Talking from her own experience, she mentioned that in her previous school teaching reading was much better and learners were manageable because the class size was smaller than „Ducklings Primary.' Mrs Cat echoed what Mrs Joy had stated about the class size. Mrs Cat further mentioned that because of the high number of learners in her class she did not get much one-on-one time. She suggested that if her class had smaller number of learners she would be able to pay more attention to each individual reader. Mrs Jelly acknowledged that the number of learners in her class was much better as compared to schools in township and rural areas where they had fifty or more learners in each class. She wondered how teachers taught reading in such situations. It became visible that the large number of learners in class had a bad impact on both learners and teachers. Other learning areas suffer because teachers spent more time on teaching reading.

 Mrs Jelly commented briefly about other challenges she met in teaching reading to Grade Three language learners in multilingual contexts:

Well I find that learners who are not English home language speakers do have difficulty with pronunciation of certain words; the emphasis might be on a different place in a word than what English home language speakers would have because I find that in Afrikaners and IsiZulu speakers…. They don't have the same pronunciation of words which is a little bit more difficult because you've got to know not only to teach them what the word means but how to actually say the word properly.

When Mrs Cat was asked about the same question, she explained that:

One of the biggest problems is that English second language learners don't grasp sounds easily. If they don't know the sounds they can't construct and deconstruct words, like today they keep on saying a" instead of "e" or for instance, one boy used today the word "basket" instead of "bucket''. It's bad because when they read they assume things as well , because the eye only sees the front and the last letter , so if they see the word „horse' sometimes they'll say 'house' because they are guessing and that's most difficult thing about reading.

It was evident through interviews that teachers who speak English as first language in multilingual contexts do not have a single problem, but many problems, in view of the fact that in each class they had different ethnic groups: for instance they had English speakers, Afrikaans speakers and IsiZulu speakers. Teachers highlighted that teaching reading to these learners is problematic and challenging because of the language barrier. English second language learners found difficulty in pronouncing English words. It therefore became the responsibility of the teacher to teach them how words should be pronounced. Wessels (2010) suggests that when an English second language learner mispronounces a word or makes a grammatical error, the teacher should correct the learner by repeating the utterance correctly because teachers are speech role models.

Apart from the challenges listed above, the teachers also noted the following issues as key challenges they met in multilingual context:

- Teachers have to ask a lot of questions because children battle with comprehension.
- Parents who do not speak and understand English find it difficult to support their children and this causes a problem to teachers as well.
- It takes time for English second language learners to grasp phonic sounds and that led learners to a state where they find difficulties to decode unfamiliar words.
- English second language learners mispronounce some English words which causes teachers to be more vigilant and pay a close attention when they read which they do not do to English first language learners.
- Some Grade Three learners lack the prerequisite of awareness of sounds and symbols.

- Learning to read is not easy for some English second language learners.

- Word identification is very slow for some learners.

- The amount of paper work that gets put on teachers is too much while they need more interaction with the learners.

- Teachers have to spend a lot of time helping struggling readers.

- Some English second language learners do not quite understand certain vocabulary words.

- Teachers have to offer a second chance to struggling learners to learn how to read.

The challenges teachers encounter on a daily basis made them use their knowledge and devise plans on how to overcome them with the aim of trying to expand opportunities for young learners. I now discuss these plans in the next theme.

4.2.4   Theme 4: Strategic coping with the challenges in multilingual classrooms

Apart from the complexities of teaching reading in multilingual classroom, another major theme that emerged was that of strategic coping with the challenges teachers encountered in teaching reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts. English first language teachers were asked about how they cope with the challenges they face with in their multilingual classrooms.

Mrs Cat pointed out that:

> *"We got lots of things in place actually, we used to…. I don't know whether Mrs Joy told you… we do group reading by class so we took all of the Grade Threes and we put them into groups and then we would take certain groups a day so that I would hear certain pupils from Mrs Joy's class and Mrs Jelly's class and we could sit at our meeting and say that „thechild is not doing well, we need to move them back a bit or that child is too good for that group we need to move them forward.' So we can sit and talk about the pros and the cons … where they can improve …where we can improve to make their reading better.*

From the above narrative it became clear that collaboration among teachers is a working strategy which they used in order to cope with the difficulties in teaching reading. As a team, they go an extra mile in listening to the learners whom they are not teaching in order to assist each other in ensuring that each learner was in the right group. They also took it as their responsibility to comment about each learner and they made themselves available so that they would share their ideas about what they observed. Moreover, the teachers sought to establish strategies to help each other to cope with the challenges. This worked particularly well. As Mrs Jelly observed when I asked her how she coped with the challenges she came across when teaching reading to Grade Three learners, she explained:

> *Well the weaker learners I do have in much smaller groups, like I have got two girls who are quite weak so they have been put in a group together and then I have got individual readers and there I spend more time with them working on comprehension, working on pronunciation, working on understanding as well.*

As can be observed in the above discussion, the teachers had the same views in terms of how they handled the challenges they met in teaching reading. It became clear that their aim was to keep an eye on each individual learner and render help where needed. This is discussed in the next paragraph.

4.2.5   Theme 5: Prioritisation of child in the reading process

Another key theme that emerged in this work was the prioritisation of the learners in the reading process. Teachers had a collective approach towards reading and in supporting each individual learner. This meant that all the Grade Three teachers met regularly to discuss the needs for support and also develop strategies for this support. It was evident that this collective approach benefitted learners as most learners were able to read confidently and fluently. Speaking about this collective response towards teaching reading, Mrs Cat noted:

> *When someone is absent from our team, that class won't do reading for that day and we don't like that. So we do picnic reading, we go out onto the field*

and we put them in their groups and we'll go around group to group and everyone reads a page and they love that mainly because it's outside.

The above excerpt from Mrs Cat's interview demonstrates the level of commitment, devotion and care these teachers have toward their learners. Firstly, it is clear that the teachers work collectively together. This is evident in Mrs Cat's use of „team' in defining her colleagues. Additionally, teachers are able to strategically engage learners in activities that they enjoyed during the reading process. Here, it is clear that the child comes first.

Apart from the point stressed above, the teachers demonstrated their commitment to their learners by doing the following:

- They adjusted themselves to the levels of young learners in order to make learners feel free to communicate their ideas and let them know that books are fun.

- They created a conducive environment that allowed learners to learn to read (for example: wall charts hung in each of the classroom, word lists were given to learners, and spelling lists which learners wrote on every Friday).

- They took weaker readers and taught them at their level.

- They created a friendly environment that encourages learners to feel free to share their ideas about characters or about the story.

- They made it a point that each day they collected new books for each learner.

- They let each learner read each day.

- They checked and wrote on the homework book for each individual learner which book the learner has to read at home.

The above strategies highlight just how important the teacher's role is in supporting and assisting the learners; all the teachers highlighted these approaches, once again highlighting the collective approach the teachers adopted. That the learners came first was clear in the reading discourse that prevailed in the school and also in the impressing reading levels of the learners as already mentioned. I found, through interviews, that teachers were not alone in the promotion of reading. The role played by the school management was also highlighted by the teachers. The whole school approach will be presented next.

4.2.6   Theme 6:   Whole school approach to reading

It became clear that the whole school approach played an imperative role in teaching of reading to young learners. In ‚Ducklings Primary School' reading materials were found in different places. The first place was in the school Media Centre, the second place was in the Fun Reading Room and the last place was in the grade classrooms, that was, the library corners. While of course many schools in South Africa do not have media centres, the contextual privileges at the school allowed learners an opportunity to engage with wide-ranging reading materials to support them with their reading. Mrs Jelly emphasised this point by noting that:

> *[we have a very] organized library; it starts from Foundation phase, and there are different stickers on each book. So Grade Three learners know what level of reading it is. My kids are on the yellow stars at the moment and they go up accordingly. At the moment because we are half way through the year, the librarian will say "Can your kids cope with that?" I'll look at my top reading groups and say "Actually they'll be fine with that" so they can read bigger, thicker books with bigger words because they'll understand and their comprehension is good. However, I have the high fliers and I don't want to hold them back, if they are capable of reading it then by all means they go for it.*

Through the interviews it was evident that teachers work hand-in-hand with the school librarian in order to select the best relevant books for all Grade Three learners, including books for the weaker children. For example Mrs Jelly indicated that Grade Three learners were allowed taking two books that cover the whole week and they also allowed them to take two books from the Fun Reading Room. They read these books for fun and for enjoyment. Teachers noted that fun reading books supplemented classroom graded readers. This means that learners came into contact with other writing, printing and illustration styles. The learners were also exposed to a wider range of different reading vocabulary and became more interested to read new books.

It became clear that surrounding learners with reading books enhanced reading development. Due to the resourced nature of the school, Grade Three learners were provided with plenty of different reading books of all kinds. This greatly assisted the teaching of reading in the school. This exposure allowed learners who speak English as a second language to gain confidence and acquire more knowledge as they could obtain additional books from various avenues within the school. This suggests that the teaching of reading is simply not impacted by teaching alone. There are many contextual factors which play a significant role as to whether learners obtain good reading lessons or not, the availability of reading materials being among the key factors.

As noted above, the study found a collective and comprehensive approach towards reading in the school: the school had developed an integrated system that supported and promoted reading across the school. All the teachers pointed to this approach as being the key in the promotion of reading for learners, especially those whose first language may not have been English. This was particularly impressive as all the teachers and senior management worked together in promoting reading. The teachers stressed for example that the principal went an extra mile in ensuring that they had enough reading books, especially for the Foundation Phase learners. The principal was also said to have made the decision that all Grade Three learners are to be given a chance to read books and scheduled time for reading in the school time-table.

In response to the kind of support teachers received from the School Management Team the three participants responded as follows: Mrs Joy for example noted that:

> *I've got a fantastic Management Team which always encourages me. If I am unsure about something they will guide me into the areas that I need to work on.*

Mrs Jelly agreed with Mrs Joy about the kind of support they got from the management. She noted:

> *Erm… just that if there are learners who are having difficulties and really are struggling that the management would be there to assist me especially as a new teacher in the school to guide me on the correct path and steps to go in or in order to assist the learner.*

These teachers were excited to talk about the kind of support they receive from the School Management Team (SMT). Teachers indicated that whenever they had problems, the SMT was always more than ready to offer help where possible. Mrs Joy and Mrs Jelly agreed that the school management play an important role by providing the mutual support whenever they needed help. Mrs Jelly highlighted that as a new teacher she found it helpful to be assisted by the management for the benefit of the learner. Mrs Cat also had the same feeling about the kind of support they received from the management. She pointed out that even small problems she brought to the attention of the management, the management would take seriously, and they came up with solutions.

Haddad, Carnoy, Rinaldi and Regel (1990) point out that "well managed, effective schools share several characteristics such as: they display an orderly environment, emphasise academic achievement, set high expectations for learner achievement, and are run by teachers and principals who expend an enormous amount of effort to produce effective teaching and encourage pupils to learn, no matter what their family background or gender". These characteristics Haddad et al (1990) mention apply also to the effectiveness of „Ducklings Primary School. The school vision was shared by all stakeholders, thus making the teaching of reading an easier process by the teachers.

4.3   Conclusion

In this chapter, six themes generated from data were analysed. These themes were as follows: firstly, a variety in the methods and strategies employed, secondly the comprehension of teachers' role, thirdly the complexities of teaching reading in multilingual classrooms, then teachers' strategic coping with the challenges, furthermore, the prioritisation of child in the reading process and lastly the whole school approach to reading. It emerged that teachers at „Ducklings Primary' employed a variety of teaching reading methods. All three teachers took reading seriously, however it became visible that teaching reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual classrooms was challenging. Even though teachers met complexities, they work as a

team with the school management; teachers shared their ideas and used their expertise in order to deal with challenges. It became clear through observations that teachers were well-organised, dedicated, and well-prepared to support Grade Three learners generally and those learners who may not speak English as a first language. Teachers were aware that some learners need extra assistance. This led them to have reading activities adapted to expand opportunities for struggling learners to succeed and achieved reading outcomes.

It was evident that in all three classes observed learners desks were arranged in such a way that it allows learners to move freely without any obstruction; learners were seated in groups which allow them to learn from each other. The number of learners in each class was thirty-two. According to the English first language thirty-two learners were much better and were more manageable as compared to classes with high numbers of learners. Each classroom layout was vibrant and multi-coloured. Different charts were hanged on each wall, such as: reading charts, reading star charts, chart with sight words, reading groups charts, birthday charts, letters of the alphabet charts and many more.

It was also evident that the availability of different reading materials played a significant role in teaching of reading successfully compared to my school where reading books are limited in such a way that there are no prescribed reading books allocated for grade one learners, only grade two's and three's had Graded readers. Grade one learners in my school were exposed to different reading materials only when they visited the school library; however someone has to read to them since they are unable to read on their own. This is a far cry compared to what I observed in „Ducklings Primary.' My observations at Duckling Primary School have wide ranging implications for the improvement of reading not only in multilingual contexts, but also in other South African schools. I discuss these implications in the next chapter, which summarises the findings and provides the reader with the recommendation for the further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Introduction

The intention of this study was to research how English first language teachers teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts. I wanted to explore the methodologies the teachers employed in the teaching of reading, as well as general practices. In addition, I intended to ascertain the kind of support they offered to Grade Three learners generally and specifically to those who may not speak English as a first language. In this chapter I highlight key insights that this study has contributed to the study of reading. I begin with an outline of the research questions, aligning them to the findings of the study. Here I present each question together with the findings. I do this so as to show how each of the research questions were addressed in this study. This discussion is followed a discussion on the implications of the study. Here I present the recommendations as well as suggestions for future research.

5.2   Discussion of findings

There were essentially three research questions that this study sought to answer. These research questions were motivated by an interest in understanding the processes that teachers engage with when teaching reading. As a teacher of reading in a multilingual classroom, I was also concerned with the poor levels of reading by learners and the role that language plays in determining the reading levels of second language learners. As stated before, it is often English second language learners who are sitting in reading remedial classes. This was of great concern to me. I went into this study expecting similar patterns as that in my school, but was surprised at the findings after conducting the research. The findings show that reading levels of learners can only be attained if the school and teachers value reading and have vast knowledge of how to teach and also support learners. Below I show how each research question was addressed by the findings in the previous chapter. The aim here is to highlight the contributions that this study has made to the study of reading.

Research Question 1: How do English first language teachers teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual classrooms?

As I had indicated in chapter four, teachers encountered different challenges when teaching reading to learners with varied linguistic backgrounds. However, given the strategic prioritisation of reading in the school, which largely entailed working as a team, teachers were able to be successful regardless of these challenges. Through interviews, teachers revealed that they had meetings where they discussed the pros and cons of teaching reading. Teachers also revealed that during their meetings they discussed how they would deal with the challenges they met in their multilingual classrooms. Through observations it became visible that teachers took it as a school norm to teach reading every day, and gave each learner a chance to read daily. According to the teachers interviewed, reading is a vital skill upon which all formal education depends. They believed that if learners struggled with reading they would have learning difficulties with other subjects as well.

It was evident that teachers committed themselves to improving learners' reading performances. Huberman (1993) argues that teacher commitment has been identified as one of the most critical factors for the future success of education and schools. It emerged that teachers' passion for teaching reading made them work as a group. Nias (1996) sees this type of passion as the maintenance of professional knowledge and ongoing professional learning. According to Nias (1996) committed teachers are pro-active in their professional development and in many cases they are willing to share with and learn from their colleagues. For these teachers sharing ideas helped them to gained more insight about what they can do to teach reading successfully. The DoE (2008) recommends that the District Officials should build groups of teachers at a cluster level who have acquired strong instructional knowledge in reading as well as coaching and mentoring. The reality is that the District Officials did not visit schools in order to implement this. In other words „Ducklings Primary School' went an extra mile in allowing teachers to work as a team in order to share their ideas and expertise for the benefit of the individual struggling reader. But this does not end there; teachers themselves have a clear understanding that they have to share their ideas, to seek advice from senior management on how to deal with their challenges,

and most importantly to learn new ways on how to improve learners' reading levels. They knew that their thinking will benefit the learners in many ways.

On other hand the teachers' experiences whose first language is not English would have much better experience. Since English second language learners are faced with two challenges. First, they have to learn using English as a second language. Second, they have to learn a new language (English) itself with other learners who speak English as a first language at the same time. In South African schools teachers are allowed to code switch if learners proved that they do not understand the learning content. The literature defines code switching as the use of more than one language in the course of a single communication episode (Heller, 1988). In other words code switching can benefit English second learners in many ways. English second language teachers may be able to explain the teaching content in two languages, that is, in learners' home language and in English. Learners on other hand can understand and learn reading much better as compared to listening to teachers who may not know or understand learners' language.

Research question 2: What methodologies do these teachers employ to teach reading?

The question of methodologies was quite enthralling to me. This is because for the first time I observed teachers keeping not only to the departmental requirements in terms of teaching reading, but also initiating creative approaches so as to enhance and excite learners. As noted in Chapter Four, there were similarities across all the three classes observed when it came to methodologies employed. While many may view this as a worrying as it suggests a lack of spontaneous creative teaching by the individual teachers, I argue that the collegiality, collaboration and the team-approach discussed above accounted for this. This means that all learners, regardless of the class, were exposed to good quality teaching.

I found that all three teachers employed various methods and different strategies in the teaching of reading. The reading methods which were employed by teachers included the phonics approach, word lists, and the word recognition method amongst others. Teachers used the phonics approach as their first stepping stone, because they believed that teaching learners the phonics skills would help them to break down the words into small units and enabled them to

reread the difficult words. Teachers mentioned that by using phonics approach they were providing learners with the right tools they would use whenever they encounter unfamiliar phonetic words. The teachers mentioned that they used the word lists approach to help learners learn the words. They compiled words in order to help learners learn the words, for example when they discovered that learners were having difficulties with some words, they would then put together those words as lists and give them to learners to learn. Sometimes they selected difficult words from learners' reading books and compiled them purposely so that learners would practise them before the actual reading lesson took place the following day. I found that teachers also compiled high frequency words which are not phonetic but were found in learners' reading books. The teachers were well organised and had extensive knowledge of different appropriate methods of teaching reading. The word recognition approach was also used by teachers. Teachers used this method to enable learners to read words as they saw them.

In addition to varied methods, the teachers also used different reading strategies. These strategies were as follows: group reading, shared reading and independent reading. Teachers were able to use various reading strategies. Furthermore, they then decided which strategy to adopt based on the needs of the learners.

In group reading I found that the teachers grouped learners according to their reading levels. Each group read the same book. It was evident that in shared reading teachers asked learners questions based on the story, they asked learners to share their feelings about the story or predict about what would happen at the end of the story. Learners were then given a chance to read simultaneously sharing the last paragraph of the book. It was clear that the learners enjoyed this very much

Apart from the above strategies, teachers also used independent reading as a teaching strategy. Teachers used this strategy to empower learners to do silent reading on their own, with understanding what they were reading. Learners were asked to read silently and complete written tasks without the assistance of the teacher. I observed that during the reading lessons in all three classes, learners took reading seriously. They were all quite focussed on what their teachers told them to do. Learners were reminded to feel free come to the teacher if they encounter difficulties, but few learners wanted some more explanations from their teachers. Some learners were able to

cope well without asking for any help. I observed that where it required learners to cut out and paste pictures, learners did it peacefully and independently, as noted in Chapter Four. The silence and autonomy demonstrated by Grade Three learners left me with unanswered question. Is it because learners knew that they were going to get some incentives after doing reading? Learners were not behaving like young learners, but one would think that it was adult learners in class. Through interviews teachers mentioned that most learners enjoyed reading; only a few individual readers who do not enjoy reading and this is because of their reading difficulties. This suggests that the methodologies and strategies adopted by the teachers in the teaching of reading were efficient, and contributed significantly in improving the reading levels of learners. Learners therefore had fun in the process of reading as this encourages them to read more. This was clearly evident in this study.

Research question 3: What kind of support do Grade Three teachers offer to learners generally and specifically to those learners who may not speak English as a first language?

Teachers interviewed for this project proved to have extensive knowledge of teaching reading to Grade Three learners, and the knowledge of how to support learners who lacked reading skills. Teachers mentioned that in order to support learners, they started by assessing them so as to find out which learners were struggling with reading and also which reading skills the learners were struggling with. For instance, they wanted to discover whether it was the phonic skills, word recognition skills or the comprehension skills that the learners were struggling with. Screening learners helped them to identify and record learners' reading levels. Teachers revealed that as soon as they became aware of the learners' educational need, they then designed a new reading programme for the struggling learners including those English second language learners who may need more assistance. This means support was offered both on linguistic and ability levels. Additionally, support was tailored to the need of the specific child; the „one size fits all' approach was strongly challenged by the teachers. Through interviews I found that the teachers planned in advance a set of words that learners were having problems with. They also compiled high frequency words and asked learners to learn them as sight words. In addition, teachers provided opportunities for all learners to reach their full academic potential and achieved reading lesson outcomes by patiently listening to them and recording their progress as well.

What became clear in this study too was the importance of resources in the process of supporting reading in the school and learners in the classroom. For instance the school had a media centre, there for the advancement of reading. The teachers accompanied their learners to the media centre in order to guide them while choosing new fun reading books. I emphasise fun here as the teachers impressed the importance for learners to choose books that they enjoyed. The teachers also guided the learners so as to ensure that learners chose appropriate books as they would be able to read on their own.

The teachers also mentioned that they liaised with the school librarian to find out about new released books relevant to their learners' reading levels, including fun reading books for struggling as well as fluent, skilful readers. This again impressed the importance of having appropriate resources (material and personnel) and a whole-school approach for the advancement of reading. Of course this suggests something profound about the reasons for the failure of so many children in less-resourced schools (such as mine).

Additionally, I found that the learners were all treated the same in terms of support they were getting from their teachers. This is not to suggest that learners were not treated as individuals, to the contrary, as noted above, the needs of individual learners were catered for. However, given the diversity (be it racial, gender or linguistic) in the schools, the teachers ensured that all learners were supported therefore challenging the racial and gendered discourse that has been noted to exist in many South African multilingual / multiracial schools (Landsberg, 2005). It became visible that teachers paid more attention to struggling learners than to other learners who are doing well (regardless of their race, language or gender). Teachers took an extra mile by organising specific learning programmes for individual struggling readers. Through making comparisons with my experience as a teacher, I found that in „Ducklings Primary School' struggling readers received the kind of support which some learners in other schools would not get, including in my school. In this school teachers planned individual learning programme in such a way that they gave them a small amount of work to allow learners to learn to read bit by bit. They also designed special spelling words for struggling learners which they write on every Fridays which would not found in other schools. It became clear why reading levels in

„Ducklings Primary' were so good. Teacher support, teacher competency and a whole school approach assisted in ensuring that all learners were supported according to their needs.

5.2.1 Implications and Recommendations

The above findings suggest that the literacy levels of South African learners can be achieved if a conscious effort is made. The study has wide ranging implications not only for multilingual schools (schools often more resourced), but for poor schools too. The implications for this work are wide-ranging, involving various players including the government, the teachers, the school (colleagues and management) and learners. Based on the findings therefore, the study recommends the following:

- The government needs to resource schools by providing them with books and libraries. It is important for learners to read independently, and this can only be done if they have access to books. Such provision should be in the form of material and human resource support. It is important for schools to have remedial teachers.

- Schools should allow learners to take class reading and fun reading books home in order to expand opportunities for learners to practice reading at home and to become better readers and to improve reading ability as well.

- Schools should take reading seriously since it had been proven that many South African learners have poor reading abilities. This means that a whole-school approach towards reading is required. If learners are able to read well, all subjects in the school benefit.

- Booksellers should be invited in schools to showcase new reading materials

- Teachers teaching reading should be competent, and should have knowledge on how to teach reading.

- Young struggling readers needs to be supported in many ways. Teachers should try by all means to expand learning opportunities by providing specially designed learning programmes that meet the educational needs of each individual learner. This might be

time-consuming, however supporting learners is of utmost important in order to increase their reading performances and to increase the love of reading.

5.3   FURTHER STUDY

Conducting this study opened my eyes to a lot of issues concerning reading. As indicated above, one of the key limitations in my work was the fact that it focussed on one school. Based on the data collected, I wish to propose the following areas for future research.

- How do English second language teachers teach reading to learners? This will allow for a comparative dimension, thus assisting in the development of context-specific interventions.

- Exploring the experiences of Grade Three learners with regards to reading difficulties?

- Exploring reading practices in South African classrooms, with a larger sample being the focus.

5.4   LESSONS TO BE LEARNT FROM THIS STUDY

As a researcher it was really wonderful for me to see the effort teachers put in trying to help the struggling learners and to learn some of the things that do not happen in my school. I learned that working with other teachers in the same grade can lead to teachers producing good results. I also learned that the availability of colourful reading materials and creating a conducive atmosphere was a cornerstone for learners helping them learn to read. These key lessons I have already implemented in my classroom.

In terms of executing research I learnt that things don't quite work as intended. I did not collect the anticipated data on the days I had planned because of the busy schedule at the research site. The principal was very busy in such a way that I nearly lost hope that I will be able to conduct my study there and the meeting was postponed for quite few weeks. I had to wait for the principal to have a meeting with all Grade Three teachers in order to inform them about the intention of the study. I had planned that I would start by preliminary interviews, surprisingly

when I was in research site it became clear that I would not have time to do it, instead I asked all my questions while I was conducting semi-structured interviews and interviewed teachers during their free periods.

5.5   Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the ways in which teachers who speak English as a first language employ to teach reading to Grade Three learners in their multilingual contexts. The findings of this study suggest that teachers use different reading methods which have been tried, tested and approved by existing research. I found that teachers took teaching of reading seriously which greatly enhanced the reading levels of their learners. In this study I also found that teachers interviewed viewed reading as the most fundamental skill that learners needed to acquire in order to do their daily tasks without relying on someone to read to them. Teachers believed that reading encourages social interaction between themselves and their young learners. They pointed out that knowing how to read is important because all what learners do in class requires reading; that was a reason behind the enhanced effort they put in ensuring that each individual learner learnt to read. Teachers were striving to let every child become an independent reader, so that they could read without the assistance of the teacher, thus allowing learners to do written tasks independently.

This study therefore managed to contribute to knowledge by highlighting how schools can best teach reading. While this was not the initial intention of the study, the choice of ‚Ducklings Primary' proved most useful in highlighting the importance of a team work in the school. Teachers demonstrated that it was not only the availability of reading materials which made a difference, but that knowledge and competence in the teaching of reading too was important. Ducklings Primary School presents a beacon of hope, an example that all schools would do well in emulating.

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APPENDIX: A

**UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

Research Office, Govan Mbeki Centre
Westville Campus
Private Bag x54001
DURBAN, 4000
Tel No: +27 31 260 3587
Fax No: +27 31 260 4609
mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

4 August 2011

**Mrs M Welile   (206523936)
School of Education Studies
Faculty of Education
Edgewood Campus**

Dear Mrs Welile

**PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0685/011M
PROJECT TITLE: An exploration of how English First Language teachers teach reading to Grade three learners in multilingual classrooms: A case of a Durban Primary School**

In response to your application dated 2 August 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application 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 school/department for a period of 5 years.

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

Yours faithfully

..../...
**Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

cc. Supervisor: Mr M Thabo
cc. Ms T Mnisi, Faculty Research Office, Edgewood Campus

**1910 - 2010
100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood   ■ Howard College   · Medical School   ■ Pietermaritzburg   ■ Westville

APPENDIX: B   A LETTER TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

TOPIC: AN EXPLORATION ON HOW TEACHERS WHO SPEAK ENGLISH AS A FIRST LANGUAGE TEACH READING TO GRADE THREE LEARNERS IN MULTILINGUAL CONTEXTS

<div align="right">

Box 481863

Qualbert

Durban

4078

</div>

The Education Office

Department of Education

Durban District

Durban

4000

Re: Request for permission to conduct research: Durban District

Dear Sir/ Madam

I WN Msimango, 206523936, am presently studying for Masters in Education in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus under the guidance of Mr Thabo Msibi.

I request permission to observe and interview Grade Three Teachers who speak English as a first language to Grade Three learners in multilingual classrooms in the Durban District. The study will focus on how teachers who speak English as a first language teach reading to Grade Three learners in multilingual contexts. This is going to be a case study of three educators in one public primary school.

Confidentiality

I will treat all the information, observations, and interviews with utmost confidentiality. No personal details of any respondent will be mentioned in the findings of the research.   I will try

my best to conduct my study as efficiently as possible in an orderly manner, with the understanding in mind that the general functioning of the school will not be disturbed in anyway.

Supervisor's   Contact Details

Mr T Msibi

School of Education

Faculty of education

Edgewood Campus

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Msibi@ukzn.ac.za

(031) _____

I thank you in advance in anticipation of a favourable response.

Yours Sincerely

Welile N. Msimango

Home   Tel   No.   (031)   4648968

Work   Tel   No.   (031)   7076510

Cell   No.   083   492   8523

206523936@ukzn.ac.za

13A   Jubilee   Crescent

Escombe

4093

APPENDIX: C   PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH   (DoE)

kzn education

Department:
Education
KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar   Tel: 033 341 8610   Ref.: 2/4/8/41

Welile Ntombifuthi Msimango
Box 481863
Qualbert
Durban
4078

Dear Ms Msimango

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZNDoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **An exploration on how English first language teachers teach reading to grade three learners in multilingual contexts,** in the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The research and interviews will be limited to the following Schools and Institutions:

Regards,

Dr SZ Mbokazi

Acting Head of Department: Education

1/7/11
Date

...dedicated to service and performance
beyond the call of duty.

APPENDIX: D   **A LETTER OF REQUEST**   **(Principal)**

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood   Campus

3605

2011

The Principal

Ducklings Primary School   (Pseudonym)

Sea View

4093

Re: Letter of Request

I, Welile Ntombifuthi Msimango, 206523936, student at the UKZN Edgewood Campus. I request to conduct a study among Grade Three English first language teachers who teach reading to Grade Three learners whose first language is English and those whose first language is not English at your institution.

I will do my best to conduct my study as efficiently as possible in an orderly manner, with a clear understanding that the general functioning of the school will not be jeopardize in anyway. Data will be collected by means of observations and semi-structured tape recorded interviews.

Confidentiality

I will treat all the information, observations, and interviews with utmost confidentiality. Participants will be given consent forms to sign. They will be told about the nature of the study to be conducted. Participants will be told about their right to withdraw at any time, should they so wish.

It would be appreciated if you could kindly afford me the opportunity to conduct my study at your institution.

Yours Sincerely

Welile Ntombifuthi Msimango

13A   Jubilee Crescent

Escombe

4093

Home Tel   031- 464 8968

Work   Tel   031- 7076510

Cell   No.   083 492 8523

206523936@ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX: E

CONSENT LETTER   (SIGNED BY THE PRINCIPAL)

WN Msimango   [Researcher]

I hereby grant you the opportunity to use my institution for your research. I am aware that the participation of teachers in your research is voluntary and if they may feel uncomfortable in anytime, they may kindly withdraw. Furthermore I understand the quantify of confidentiality such as privacy will be noted at all times. I will ensure that the functionality of the school will not be compromised in any way. Permission has been granted.

Principal (print name)   : _____

Signature   : _____

Date   : _____

Name of the school   : _____

School   stamp   :
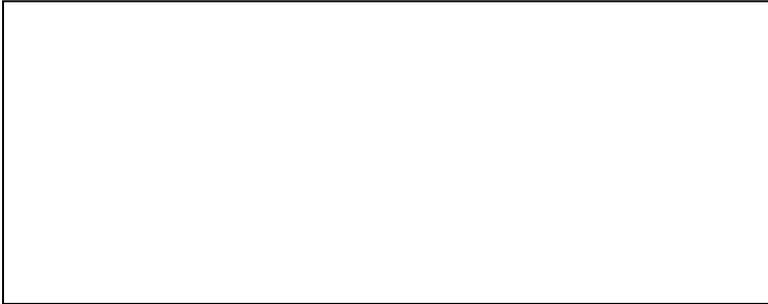
APPENDIX: F

CONSENT FORMS   (SIGNED BY PARTICIPANTS)

I, _____(full names of the participant,)

Hereby agree that I understand the nature of the research project. I accord to participate in

the study. I understand that I have a right to withdraw from the study at any time, should I

so desire.

Signature of Participant   _____

Date   :   _____

APPENDIX: G

<table>
<tr><td colspan="1"><div align="center">Observations

Venue: Grade Three classrooms</div></td></tr>
</table>

Classroom profile	Mrs Joy	Mrs Cat	Mrs Jelly
Seating arrangement			
Number of learners in each class			
Arrangement of learners' desks			

Library corner	Mrs Joy	Mrs Cat	Mrs Jelly
Reading materials			
Learning support materials			

Teaching strategies	Mrs Joy	Mrs Cat	Mrs Jelly
Read Aloud			
Group guided reading			
Independent reading			
Shared reading			

Intervention programs	Mrs Joy	Mrs Cat	Mrs Jelly
Special programme for struggling readers			
Special programme for individual struggling reader			

APPENDIX: H

CLASSROOM LAYOUT

Chalkboard

Library Corner

2 / 2 / 2	2 / 2 / 2	2 / 2
Learners	Learners	Learners
2 / 2 / 2	2 / 2 / 2	2 / 2
Learners	Learners	Learners

1. Days of the week
2. Months of the year
3. Shapes
4. Birthday Chart
5. Letter of the alphabet
6. Reading groups

Door

APPENDIX: I

(READING BAG)
1. Class Reading Book
2. Two Fun Reading Books
3. Homework Book

GROUP READING
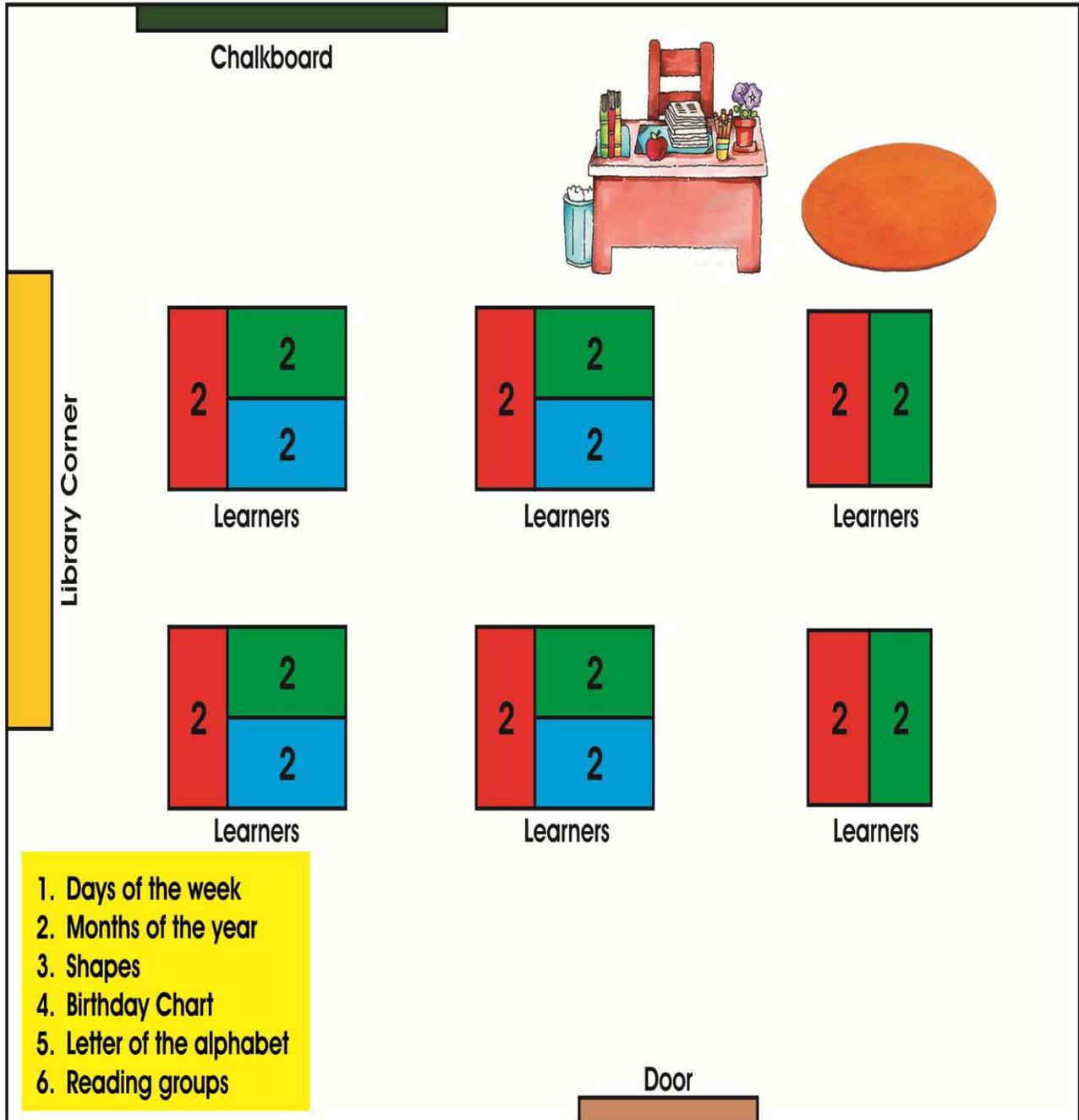
(READING BAG)

1. Specially designed "Word List"
2. Specially designed "Spelling List"
3. Appropriate book for struggling individual reader
4. One fun reading book
5. Homework book

INDIVIDUAL READER

APPENDIX: K-M **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

- Thank participant for being prepared to participate in the study
- All interviews were conducted in the Board Room
- All participants were asked the following questions

Tell me, how do you teach reading? The purpose of asking this question was to find out the ways English first language teachers used to teach reading to Grade Three learners.

T**he following open-ended questions were asked as well**

1. How do you define term reading?

2. What are the aims or objectives of teaching reading?

3. What are reading lesson outcomes?

4. Why reading is so important?

5. How does reading affect poor readers?

6. What is the role of the teacher in reading?

7. What is the role of the reader in reading?

8. What are the best ways of teaching reading in multilingual contexts?

9. How many reading groups do you have in your class?

10. Is there any relationship between reading and writing? Explain

11. What do you emphasize to learners before reading?

12. What do learners do after a reading lesson?

13. How do you conclude a reading lesson?

14. How do you asses reading and measure progress?

What methodologies do you employ in teaching reading? This question was asked to establish the reading methodologies teachers employed to teach reading.

The following open ended questions were asked as well

1. What are some measures or strategies would you take to improve reading?

2. What methodologies do you think are suitable for improving comprehension?

3. Which methods do you recommend for improving vocabulary?

4. Which methods do you recommend for increasing speed of reading?

5. How reading develops at school?

6. How does social context influence learners learning?

7. What beliefs do you hold about teaching reading successfully?

8. How children learn to read?

Tell me about the learners who are experiencing reading difficulties in your class and how do you support them? This question was asked to ascertain the forms of support teachers offered to learners who were struggling with reading.

The following open ended questions were asked as well

1. Do you have special programs in place to help struggling readers?

2. Does the class size have an effect on teaching reading?

3. As an educator how do you define the term „support'?

4. What does it mean to support a struggling reader?

5. What is the value of supporting a struggling reader?

6. What forms of support do you offer to learners generally, and who have reading difficulties and specifically to those who may not speak English as a first language?

7. What are the symptoms of learners who have reading difficulties?

8. What do you think are the ways that DoE can support teachers with in multilingual contexts?

9. What kind of support do you expect from SMT?

10. What kind of support do you expect from the parents?

11. Do you have incentives which you give or reward readers when they improve reading?

12. How do you motivate the unmotivated reader?

13. What techniques do you used to encourage learners to read at home?

Thank you very much for your help with this research.

APPENDIX: N   Reading Quote

READING

Kids not only need to read a lot but they need lots of books they can read right at their fingertips. They also need access to books that entice them, attract them to reading. Schools...can make it easy and un-risky for children to take books home for the evening or weekend by worrying less about losing books to children and more about losing children to illiteracy. What Really Matters for Struggling Readers: Designing Research-Based Programs

Richard L. Allington