



Enacting the literacy recovery curriculum in grade one:

An action research study

By

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A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of

Master of Education (Teacher Development Studies)

in the School of Education

University of KwaZulu-Natal

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January 2024

DECLARATION

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My gratitude goes to the following people:

1. God almighty whose plans are not to harm me but prosper me (Uyadumiseka unguSomandla).
2. My supervisor, Prof. Carol Bertram, for guiding me with wisdom, patience and grace. Thank you for believing in me. May the Lord God bless you every day.
3. My principal, thank you for allowing me to do my study at your school. For encouraging teacher development and growth in this profession (UTHixo akusikelele).
4. My participants, thank you for being on this journey with me. May you grow with in wisdom.
5. My RtL trainer, Mr Lushaba, for training, guiding, and supporting me on my RtL journey, God bless you.
6. My critical friend, Dr Ntombela, for being a coach, mentor and accountable partner throughout my study. May the Lord bless you and keep you.
7. My parents, Nomthandazo Ndengezi and David Ndengezi for believing in me, supporting, and praying for me in different seasons. May God keep you.
8. My siblings, Mhlonipheni, Alex, Alexia, Joseph, Khunjulwa and Phendulani Ndengezi for always believing in me and supporting me.
9. My daughter, Elizabeth Ndengezi, for motivating me to do my work every night. May you grow to learn that nothing is impossible with God.

Abstract

Grade One is a very important grade for each learner's development in the education journey. This is a foundational grade that introduces learners to reading and writing and therefore provides the necessary grounding for the upcoming grades. There has been a reading challenge among learners in the school where I am a teacher, which was exacerbated by learning time losses during COVID-19. The Department of Education designed a literacy recovery curriculum as a recovery plan in South Africa for the learning and teaching time lost due to COVID-19. I observed that the Grade 1 learners struggled to recognise letters, build words and had little to no motivation to read during the implementation of the literacy recovery curriculum. The purpose of this action research study was to improve both my teaching practice and learners' isiXhosa reading skills by systematically reflecting on my enactment of the literacy recovery curriculum in Grade 1.

The action research study employed the Reading to Learn (RtL) pedagogy as an intervention strategy in Grade 1. It was situated within a pragmatic paradigm and adopted a mixed methods approach to view the phenomenon under study. There were 100 participants from the two Grade 1 classes in my school: 50 learners in each class, one class being the control class and the other being the experimental class, with myself as both a teacher and a researcher. The experimental class was my Grade 1 class, these learners received the RtL intervention strategy while the control class was the Grade 1B class which was taught by another teacher. They did not receive the RtL intervention strategy. I used three data generation methods, namely observation of my practice using video recordings, reflective journaling, and pre-and post-testing of learners' reading competencies using the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tool. A 'critical friend' observed my lessons and provided feedback on my practice.

The EGRA tests show that the results of the RtL class improved slightly more than the results of the control class on the post-test. However, it cannot be claimed that this was only due to the RtL methodology. My teaching practice changed to support learners' literacy development in a differentiated way. I created a more supportive and engaging learning environment for my learners and I noticed that the learners in my class gained confidence and more motivation for reading.

Contents

DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
Abstract	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	x
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Introduction	1
1.2. Background to the study	1
1.3. Focus and context	3
1.4. The rationale for the study	4
1.5. Objectives of the study	6
1.6. Key research questions	7
1.7. Research design.....	7
1.8. Overview of the thesis	8
1.9. Chapter summary	9
CHAPTER TWO: Reading to Learn pedagogy and underpinning theory	10
2.1 Introduction	10
2.2. Reading to Learn Pedagogy.....	10
2.3. The Reading to Learn teaching cycle.....	11
2.4. Theories underpinning Reading to Learn	15
2.5. Reading to Learn teacher training	18
2.6. Chapter summary.....	20
CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW	21
3.1. Introduction	21
3.2. Literacy definitions	21
3.3. Reading	22
3.4. Components of reading	24
3.4.1 Decoding.....	24
3.4.2 Comprehension.....	25
3.4.3. Response.....	25
3.5. Literacy challenges in South Africa	26

3.6. Early Grade Literacy Interventions in South Africa	26
3.7. Studies done on Reading to Learn in South Africa.....	28
3.8. Chapter summary.....	30
CHAPTER FOUR : RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	31
4.1. Introduction	31
4.2. Paradigm.....	31
4.3. Action research	32
4.4. Action research cycles	33
4.4.1. Action research stage 1: Strategic planning	34
4.4.2. Action research stage 2: Taking action.....	35
4.4.3. Action research stage 3: Observation	35
4.4.4. Action research stage 4: Reflection.....	36
4.5. Strengths and limitations of action research.....	36
4.6. Mixed methods approach	37
4.7. Data generation methods	38
4.7.1 Classroom observation using video-recordings.....	39
4.7.2 Reflective journals	41
4.7.3 Testing	42
4.8.The role of a critical friend.....	44
4.9. Sampling	45
4.10. Classroom action research process	46
4.10.1 Classroom action research 1 st cycle.....	47
4.10.2 Further Action research cycles	50
4.11. Data analysis.....	50
4.12. Ethical issues	51
4.13. Trustworthiness	53
4.14. Chapter summary.....	53
CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION OF PRE-TEST RESULTS AND DATA FROM ACTION RESEARCH CYCLES	55
5.1.Introduction	55
5.2. Grade 1 learners' reading competencies	55
5.3. Pre-test results.....	56
5.3.1. Letter and sound level	56
5.3.2. Word reading and passage reading	57
5.4. Action research cycles	59

5.4.1. Action research cycle 1	60
4.5.1. Action research step 1: Planning.....	60
5.4.2. Critical friend feedback on the 1 st cycle.....	67
5.4.3. Lessons learned from AR cycle 1.....	67
5.5. Action research cycle 2.....	68
5.6.1. Action research step 1: Planning.....	68
5.6.2. Critical friend feedback on AR cycle 2.....	74
5.7. Action research cycle 3.....	74
4.7.1. Action research step 1: Planning.....	74
5.7.2 Critical friend feedback on AR cycle 3.....	83
5.8. Action research cycle 4	83
5.8.1 Action research step 1: Planning.....	83
5.8.2 Critical friend feedback.....	91
5.9. Chapter summary	91
CHAPTER SIX: PRESENTATION OF PRE- AND POST-TEST RESULTS	92
6.1. Introduction	92
6.2. Letter and sound level pre- and post-test results.....	92
6.3. Word reading pre- and post-test results	93
6.4. Passage reading pre- and post-test results.....	94
6.5. Comprehension questions, Pre-test and post test results.....	96
6.6. Chapter summary.....	96
CHAPTER SEVEN.....	98
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	98
7.1. Introduction	98
7.2. Research question 1	98
7.3. Research question 2	100
7.4. Research question 3	102
7.5. Limitations and recommendations	103
7.6. Conclusion.....	104
REFERENCES.....	105
APPENDICES.....	117
Appendix A: Department of Education approval letter	117
Appendix B: University of KwaZulu-Natal approval letter.....	119
Appendix C: Declaration of consent by school principal	120
Appendix D: Parental consent form	121

Appendix E: Learner assent form	123
Appendix F: Early Grade Reading Assessment subtasks	126
Appendix G: Reflective journal entry example.	129
Appendix H: Critical friend feedback example	134
Appendix I Turnitin report	135
Appendix J: Confirmation of editing	136

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The Reading to Learn cycle (Rose, 2005, p. 147)	12
Figure 2: An action research cycle (Pardede, 2018)	34
Figure 3: Spiral model of action research cycles (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007, p. 278)	47
Figure 4: Scan of the book that we read this lesson. Utata usele nosana. (The father is with the baby).	60
Figure 5: The story written out on a chart, with the English translation.	60
Figure 6: The cover of the book for used in Action Research Cycle 2.....	69
Figure 7: Sentence strips used and English translation.....	69
Figure 8: Spelling words used with English translation.....	70
Figure 9: Joint construction of new sentences	70
Figure 10: The 'C' sound emphasised in this lesson.	75
Figure 11: Cover of the book and English translation of the story.	75
Figure 12: Story written out in large print in isiXhosa.	76
Figure 13: Example of sentence strip and English translation.....	78
Figure 14: Class joint construction on the board.	81
Figure 15: Learners book of joint construction.	82
Figure 16: The cover of the book read in cycle 4.	83
Figure 17: Sence strip and English translation.	85
Figure 18: The sentence strip written out in large print.....	86
Figure 19: Class joint construction on the board.	89
Figure 20 Joint construction on a learners book.....	90

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Summary of the lessons video recorded in each action research cycle.	40
Table 2 Test schedule example (Faber, 2021)	44
Table 3: Letter and sound level results for RtL and non-RtL classes	57
Table 4: Word reading and passage reading level results for RtL and non-RtL classes.	58
Table 5 Comprehension questions for RtL and non-RtL classes.	59
Table 6 Action research cycle 1: Table describing the action, observation and reflection steps.	62
Table 7: Action research cycle 2: Table describing the action, observation and reflection steps.	71
Table 8: <i>Action research cycle 3: Table describing the action, observation and reflection steps.</i>	77
Table 9: Letter and sound results: Comparison of the pre-test and post-test between the RtL class and the non-RtL class.....	93
Table 10 :Word reading results: comparison of the pre-test and post-test between the RtL class and the non-RtL class.....	94
Table 11: Comparison of the pre-test and post-test passage reading results between the RtL class and the non-RtL class.....	95
Table 12: Comparison of the pre-test and post-test Comprehension question results between the RtL class and the non-RtL class	96

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AR	Action Research
BNR	Becoming a Nation of Readers
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CAR	Classroom Action Research
CWPM	Correct words per minute
DBE	Department of Basic Education
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EFAL	English First Additional Language
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
MKO	More Knowledgeable Other
NFTRALFP	National Framework for the Teaching of Reading in African Languages in the Foundation Phase
ORF	Oral Reading Fluency
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
RC	Recovery Curriculum
RtL	Reading to Learn
RtLSA	Reading to Learn South Africa
SFL	Systematic Functional Linguistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
SONA	State of the Nation Address

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Montoya (2018) characterises literacy as an important human right and vital skill for all. The evolving world demands literacy for everyone, and primary school is one of the places this skill can be developed. Thus, it is essential for all children to develop literacy skills at a young age. If they do not do so, this can lead to long-term consequences, such as the inability to cope with higher grades and tertiary-level literacy demands. Children's achievement in reading in South Africa is low compared to the rest of the world, despite attempts by the DBE [Department of Basic Education] to address the challenges (Mataka & Mgqwashu, 2022). This shows that there is a need for research focusing on interventions that address reading challenges in South Africa, and this study sought to improve my practice as a Grade 1 Foundation Phase teacher and to improve my learners' isiXhosa (Home Language) reading skills using the Reading to Learn (RtL) pedagogy.

I sought to find ways to change and enhance my practice to teach reading effectively in Grade 1, in a way that could consider the different reading levels of my learners. I employed the RtL pedagogy as an intervention strategy for my action research. This chapter outlines the background of the study, statement of the problem, focus and context of the study as well as the rationale of the study. Then, I outline the objectives and detail the research questions of the study. Finally, this chapter presents an overview of all the chapters of the dissertation and a summary of the Chapter.

1.2. Background to the study

Pretorius (2005) contends that many South African learners face challenges that harm their school performance. Roux et al., (2023) explains the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study's (PIRLS) latest results which report that about 81% of South African fourth-grade learners cannot read with comprehension. This indicates that they do not have rudimentary reading skills. The tests included in PIRLS were conducted using the learners' home languages. Pretorius and Machet (2004) argued that poor

literacy issues are not only limited to English First Additional Language (EFAL) as teachers and learners have challenges in both African languages and English.

Similar to the findings of Pretorius and Machet (2004), Oates and Surian (2020) contend that reading challenges exist in both English and African languages in South Africa and that these challenges have a negative impact on education outcomes. Their research highlights the importance of addressing reading challenges in South Africa. Both studies found that these challenges exist in English and African languages and that more support is needed to improve reading proficiency in these languages. These studies highlight the need for greater investment in reading instruction and development, and they emphasise the importance of addressing reading challenges in order to improve education outcome in South Africa.

It is important to note that educational challenges that are not remediated within the Foundation Phase present themselves in the Intermediate Phase and even in higher grades (Ntuli & Pretorius, 2005; Pretorius, 2005). Furthermore, Spaull et al., (2016) asserted that many learners complete the Foundation Phase having not mastered reading in their mother tongue. As Spaull et al., (2016) and Pretorius (2005) argue, the persistent problem of poor reading literacy among South African learners has significant consequences for academic success in higher grades.

In South Africa, learners have their home language as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) in the Foundation Phase. According to Granville et al., (1998), learners should be taught using their mother tongue as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) from Grades R–3. Research has found that using the home language as the LOLT can improve comprehension and learning outcomes (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994). Therefore, using the home language as the LOLT is critical for student success in the Foundation Phase.

Nishanthi (2020) argued that language policies should allow for mother tongue learning in order to improve the quality of education. One of the benefits of using the mother tongue as the LOLT is that it connects a child to their culture, supports cognitive development, as well as the learning of other languages. Cummins (2001) also argues that learners must develop strong literacy skills in their home language before they can transfer those skills to a second language. This suggests that it is

important to be literate in one's mother tongue in order to switch to English which is used as the LOLT from Grade Four.

In the 2019 State of the Nation Address (SONA) of the President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa voiced an expectation for basic education: by 2030, every child should be able to read with meaning by age 10. However, extensive learning time was lost in 2020 and 2021 as schools closed due to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. The advisory note for the reading panel 2023 reports on the COVID-19 disruptions and education in South Africa with two years of evidence. In the report, Ardington et al., (2021, p. 2) state that "Losses in early grade reading skills over two years, between 46% and 118% of a year of learning in no fee school samples, has exacerbated the early reading crisis". According to Hoadley (2023), over half of contact time was lost in schools across the country in 2020 due to changes to the school calendar. It also shows the learning losses that occurred in the pandemic, which presents a question of the reality of the 2030 reading expectation. Hoadley (2020) argued that to measure the impact of learning loss, we must consider the number of days of school that were lost, whether learning loss happens at a steady rate over time, and how different groups were affected in different way, particularly in term of access to remote learning and educational support at home

The "Recovery Curriculum" (RC) which refers to the adjusted, reorganized, and trimmed curriculum (DBE, 2020), was introduced by the Department of Education as a solution to attempt to cover the missed learning that occurred due to the COVID-19 lockdown and is mandated to continue for three years from the starting date which was 27th January 2021. In Grade 1, reading time is set aside for the learners to cover Shared reading, Group guided reading, Paired and independent reading. The RC allocated one more hour of group guided reading per week for home languages in Grades 1–3 in 2023. The DBE (2023) in circular S5 of 2023 states that the additional time allocation is a recovery measure due to learning losses.

1.3. Focus and context

This study focused on the literacy recovery curriculum in my Grade 1 class of 50 learners. The focus is on me implementing the isiXhosa recovery curriculum using the

RtL pedagogy as an intervention strategy to enhance my teaching practice and teach isiXhosa reading skills in my Grade One class. This action research was conducted in a Grade One class in a quintile 3 school situated in Johannesburg West district in Gauteng Province. A quintile 3 school means that the school does not charge school fees and receives funding from the Department of Education. The pseudonym chosen for the school was Funa Ulwazi Primary. This school offers four different home languages as the LOLT in the Foundation Phase: isiXhosa, isiZulu, Setswana, and Xitsonga. These languages are used at school and in the community where learners reside. English is taught as a subject, which is the FAL in the Foundation Phase, and all other subjects are taught in the mother tongue, with classes divided according to the different home languages.

1.4. The rationale for the study

There is a trend in some countries of new ways of thinking about curriculum policy, which gives teachers the authority to make changes to the curriculum in their local schools (Priestley et al., 2015). In contrast, in South Africa there is a growing focus on reducing teacher autonomy with a strong focus on curriculum coverage (Bertram et al., 2019) A reason for undertaking this study is that I wish to position myself as a teacher who is more than just an implementer of the official curriculum, but a professional who engages, facilitates, and reflects on the policy to suit the learning needs of learners. School readiness, curriculum coverage expectation from the DBE and learner reading competency are important in education. Therefore, I wanted to do research on how I experienced teaching the recovery curriculum in terms of closing the literacy gaps which deepened during the pandemic period.

In 2021, I was placed as a Grade 1 educator in a public school. This was the year after school closures and lost learning time in 2020 and my learners were behind in their reading competency. For example, some Grade 1 learners could not recognise the alphabet, which they should learn in Grade R. This created a huge challenge for me as a teacher as the RC “adjusted and trimmed curriculum” required learners to be able to read and write at their grade level, but many of my learners were operating at a lower reading level where they could not even recognize or build three-letter words.

I noticed that many learners have trouble with letter recognition, phonics and letter and sound recognition. Since Grade 1 is an important year for learning to read, I needed to find ways to help my learners with these challenges. Some of the biggest challenges are learning the sounds of letters, understanding what they read, reading fluently, and building their vocabulary. I needed to find ways to remediate the reading challenges in my Grade 1 class.

The school where I am employed uses African languages namely isiXhosa, Xitsonga, isiZulu, and Setswana as LOLT in the Foundation Phase. There are five grade 1 classes, and each one uses a different African language as LOLT. The LOLT that I use is isiXhosa and there were two isiXhosa classes in 2023. I have observed that my learners have a challenge in the recognition and understanding of decoding and comprehension of isiXhosa words. Learners showed a sound understanding and recognition of the isiXhosa sounds but did not understand the blending of letters to make words.

This situation ignited my interest to research how to help learners who are operating at a low reading level. Meeting grade-level expectations is key to ensuring that learners are ready for the next grade level (National Center for Educational Statistics, n.d.). However, in South Africa, many learners do not meet the expected reading level for their grade (Department of Basic Education, 2014). I was seeking ways in which I could help my first graders acquire good reading skills that would allow them to operate at an expected reading level for the years to come.

The National Reading Framework for the Teaching of Reading in African Languages in the Foundation Phase (DBE, 2020) acknowledges that reading methodologies for African languages differ from those used in English. The National Reading Framework for the Teaching of Reading in African Languages in the Foundation Phase (DBE, 2020) underscores the importance of tailoring reading methodologies to the unique features of each language. This aligns with the pioneering work of Land (2015), who investigated reading acquisition in indigenous languages in South Africa. To effectively measure the impact of my intervention, my study employed benchmarks from both the National Reading Framework for African Languages (DBE, 2020) and the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) (UNESCO, 2013). These benchmarks encompass key areas of literacy development such as letter knowledge, sound-letter correspondence,

and reading comprehension, providing a comprehensive and culturally appropriate means to assess the progress of my learners and inform future reading interventions.

The National Reading Framework states that although learning to read is similar in various languages, it differs according to language structures and writing systems (“orthographies”) (DBE, 2020, p. 5). African languages have a “transparent orthography”, which is a regular writing system with a consistent relationship between letters and sounds (DBE, 2020, p. 5). In contrast, the English language has an opaque orthography which is a highly irregular writing system with an inconsistent relationship between letters and sounds. This National Reading Framework emphasises the significance of considering that learning to read in an African language differs from English, and that different methodologies should be used correctly in each language. This increased my interest in finding ways to teach isiXhosa reading effectively in the first grade, to ensure learners became competent in reading in Grade 1 so that they would have the necessary basic skills to prepare them for the Grade 2 content and beyond.

Land's (2015) analysis of reading acquisition in indigenous languages in South Africa, emphasises the crucial role of teacher resources, training, and community support in addressing the challenges faced by learners. This study highlighted the importance of interventions that focus on improving literacy skills in indigenous languages and providing support to teachers in South Africa.

I selected the Reading to Learn methodology to use in my Grade 1 literacy classes. Reading to Learn is a genre-based approach (RtLSA, 2015). The RtL pedagogy has been used in many countries to support the clear, scaffolded teaching of literacy (Rose, 2008). It is characterised as a set of practices that enables teachers to help all children in their classrooms to read and write at the levels necessary for success (Mgqwashu, 2019, Mgqwashu & Makhathini, 2017; RtLSA, 2015). RtL is explained further in Chapter 2.

1.5. Objectives of the study

The study had the following objectives:

1. To examine the isiXhosa reading competencies of my Grade 1 learners using the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) pre-test and post-test.
2. To explore how Reading to Learn pedagogy changed my teaching practice.
3. To observe how my changed teaching practice supports my learners' reading competencies.

1.6. Key research questions

This study aims to seek answers to the following questions:

1. What are the isiXhosa reading competencies of my Grade 1 learners as measured using the EGRA pre-test and post-test results?
2. How does RtL pedagogy change my teaching practice?
3. In what ways does my changed teaching practice support my learners' reading competencies?

1.7. Research design

In this action research, I reflected on my practice as a teacher, and my learners' reading level motivated me to seek a solution to the reading problem. I used the RtL methodology to improve my practice of teaching isiXhosa reading in grade 1. After reading about and watching training videos of RtL pedagogy used by teachers to improve reading skills, I was motivated to use RtL as an intervention with my Grade 1 class in 2023. The aim was to determine if the methodology could improve my learners' reading skills in isiXhosa. During this training process, I learned a new approach of teaching reading in different steps. The RtL methodology will be explained in Chapter Two. By reflecting on my teaching practice, I would then find ways in which I could change or improve my practice to teach reading more effectively to my first graders.

The first step in the action research study was to determine the reading levels of both the isiXhosa LOLT Grade 1 classes in my school. I administered the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) isiXhosa test as a pre-test and post-test to both Grade 1 isiXhosa classes. My class was the experimental class which received the RtL pedagogy. The control (non-RtL) class was the other Grade 1 class, which also has

IsiXhosa as LOLT, which was taught by a different teacher. These scores are presented in Chapter 6.

Other data was generated in the study through video recordings of my practice and systematic reflections on these recordings. These methods will be further elaborated in Chapter 4.

1.8. Overview of the thesis

In the second chapter, I provide an overview and describe the theoretical framework of the Reading to Learn pedagogy, and describe the stages of the RtL cycle.

In chapter 3, I review the literature that is relevant to this study, which focuses on the components of reading, the literacy crisis in South Africa, interventions in schools, including research on studies which have used RtL.

In Chapter 4, I explain the rationale for the research design and methodology used in this study. I then discuss the approach and research paradigm used in this study. Furthermore, I provide details about my data generation methods, data collection instruments used in this study, and how data was analysed. I then explain the sampling strategy, trustworthiness as well as adherence to good ethical practices throughout my action research study.

There are two chapters which present the findings. Chapter 5 presents a description of the lesson observations of my RtL Grade 1 class in four cycles of action research, and discusses the findings based on the data generated during video recordings of my classroom practice, reflective journals, and feedback from a critical friend.

In Chapter 6, I present and discuss the data generated through the pre- and post-tests of the two Grade 1 classes in the case study primary school. I tabulate pre-test and post-test results of the experimental class and control class to present findings about how the RtL pedagogy may have supported learners' reading competencies.

Chapter 7 is the final chapter, which discusses the findings in order to answer the research questions, provides recommendations, and conclusion of this research study.

1.9. Chapter summary

This introductory chapter presented a detailed discussion of the background of this action research, statement of the problem, focus and context of the study as well as objectives of the study. I further presented an outline of the research questions that guided this study, the rationale for conducting this action research. In this chapter, I briefly introduced the methodology employed in the study. This chapter then provided an outline of the chapters to follow in the dissertation. The next chapter presents RtL methodology and the theoretical framework.

CHAPTER TWO: READING TO LEARN PEDAGOGY AND UNDERPINNING THEORY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the Learning to read:Reading to Learn pedagogy (RtL), RtL teaching cycle, RtL teacher training, theories that underpin RtL and underpinning theory of this action research study. I will start by discussing RtL and its background or origin, discuss each step of the RtL teaching cycle, RtL teacher training and the theories that underpin RtL and this action research study. With its focus on student-centred learning, Reading to Learn (RtL) pedagogy has shown great promise in promoting language proficiency in reading and writing, particularly among disadvantaged learners. RtL's theoretical foundation is influenced by key theories such as Halliday's (1985) Systemic Functional Linguistics, Bernstein's (1996) Pedagogic Discourse, and Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, and Martin's (2004) genre theory which emphasise social context, authenticity, and teacher support as key elements in language learning.

2.2. Reading to Learn Pedagogy

The RtL pedagogy was developed in Australia by David Rose to address the needs of marginalized learners, who had problems accessing learning due to low literacy development levels in that country (RtLSA, 2015). RtL has been used in many countries to assist or support the clear scaffolded teaching of literacy (Rose, 2008). Over the years, RtL has been introduced to different countries including South Africa (Mataka & Mgqwashu, 2022) . The RtL pedagogy is created to develop and enhance teachers' practices and improve learners' reading and writing through a strongly scaffolded approach.

Reading to Learn is a genre-based pedagogy (Rose, 2018). It has evolved over three decades, drawing on research in the 'Sydney school' which identified a set of highly valued genres learners were expected to write in primary school. These kinds of educational texts are termed 'knowledge genres', including varieties of stories,

chronicles (history and biography), explanations (of causes and effects), reports (that classify and describe), procedures (directing activities), arguments (about issues and position) and text responses (to literature, arts, music) (Rose, 2018). The Reading to Learn pedagogy has a set of steps that teachers use to explicitly guide learners to read texts in the curriculum, and to use what they learnt from reading in their writing (Rose & Martin, 2012).

Reading to Learn (RtL) is a method and practice of teaching literacy across the curriculum to advance literacy development (Mataka et al., 2020). RtL is a set of practices that enable teachers to help all learners in their classrooms to read and write at the levels necessary for success (Mgqwashu, 2019; Mgqwashu & Makhathini, 2017; RtLSA, 2015). Reading to Learn (RtL) was developed to assist learners in their reading and writing development, with a particular focus on helping those in disadvantaged communities. RtL embraces the idea of linguistic and socio-cultural scaffolding as a means to support learners' growth and nurture their literacy skills (Murphy, 2023). RtL pedagogy can be incorporated into any curriculum and language, it is not only limited to a specific language or subject.

Mgqwashu and Makhathini (2017) assert that "RtL is organized to aid weaker learners and thus undo classroom practices that favour the few and marginalize the majority" (p. 31). RtL is a pedagogy that focuses on teaching the whole text, then moves to sentence and word level, and then moves back to the whole text level. Thus, it embraces both the top-down and the bottom-up approaches for learning to read. Research has shown that employing it has improved reading skills for learners (see Chapter 3.7). These studies will be described in the Literature review chapter.

2.3. The Reading to Learn teaching cycle

According to Mataka et al., (2023) RtL is a strategy that considers that "the learning system should be designed to consider the learner's prior knowledge, knowledge systems and dialogue on how they want to be taught" (p. 3). This point is evident in the structure of the six-step teaching cycle, which clearly outlines the purpose of each step (See Figure 1) and the explanation of each step below.

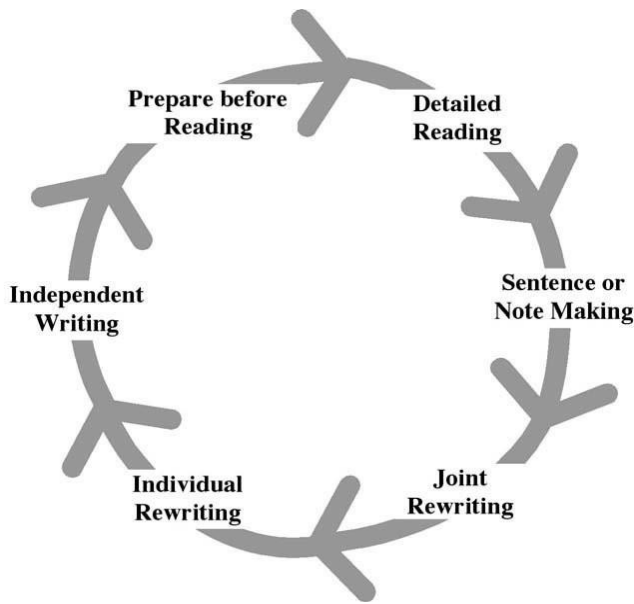


Figure 1: The Reading to Learn cycle (Rose, 2005, p. 147)

It begins with preparing for reading. In this stage, the teacher links the text to the learner's prior knowledge, including personal experiences. This is done through questions and a brief discussion on the topic of the text. For example, when we were reading the Book "The Father Is With the Baby", I asked the learners questions such as "Who has a baby at home?" "Who looks after the babies at home?" (see details in Chapter 5). This helps the learners make connections between their personal experiences and the text, which aids in their understanding. In a story like "The Father is with the Baby," this connection could be particularly powerful for learners who have experience caring for younger siblings. The educator then sums up the sequence of the text and its meaning and then reads the text to the learners. Reading to the learners is an important action that introduces the correct pronunciation of words and demonstrates the reading fluency expected. After this stage, the Foundation Phase educator reads together with learners, as is done in shared reading.

The second stage is detailed reading. During this stage, the teacher summarizes each sentence and then reads it to learners. This stage is essential for unpacking the meaning of the text and helping learners understand it fully. The teacher guides learners in identifying keywords by providing positional and cue-based prompts. Once learners find the keywords, they highlight them in the text. In Grade 1 classrooms, the teacher may simplify the process, spending more time on each sentence to ensure the learners fully understand the meaning. In this stage, the teacher affirms answers given

by learners, explaining the meaning and language structure. In this way, learners are equipped with ways to make meaning by selecting significant information in the text. The teacher might use more visual aids, like picture cards, to help learners identify the keywords. The process of highlighting words might be done as a class activity, with the teacher modelling the process and then having the learners practice on their own. In this stage, learners are equipped with ways to make meaning by selecting significant information in the text which is the 'powerhouse' of the RtL process. This stage "makes the RtL methodology distinctive" because it provides learners with a solid foundation for understanding the text (Dladla, 2022, p. 16; RtLSA, 2015). This stage is particularly important in factual texts where content and terminology are introduced. Thus, for young learners, the detailed reading stage is particularly vital as it serves as the cornerstone of their learning, building their vocabulary, comprehension, and critical thinking skills.

The third stage is sentence-making, which includes constructing sentences, spelling, and fluent writing with a lot of active participation and interaction (see Chapter 5) for the description of how I used this with my Grade 1 class. Language patterns are taught in sentence making (Rose & Acevedo, 2006). In this stage, learners have control as they personally identify and cut out words from the detailed reading passage. The words they cut are pasted on cardboard strips or fixed on the chalkboard. In Grade 1 classrooms, teachers adapt the RtL process to suit the learners' developmental stage, using techniques like self-checking and simplified word identification to reinforce learners' understanding of the written word. The focus on language patterns and interactive writing in the Sentence-Making stage also prepares learners for the fourth stage, Read to Write, where they begin to apply the language patterns and vocabulary from the previous stages to write independently (Rose & Acevedo, 2006) .

The fourth stage is a joint rewriting of the text. It is a critical component of the cycle. In this stage, learners collectively rewrite a narrative text, applying the language patterns and vocabulary they have learned in previous stages. The text is rewritten in the learners' own words, often incorporating personal experiences or familiar situations to make the content more relatable and engaging (Denhere et al., 2013).

. It allows learners to apply the language patterns and vocabulary they have learned in previous stages. This stage promotes active participation and engagement in the learning process as learners rewrite the text in their own words (Mataka et al., 2020). By taking ownership of their writing and language use, learners deepen their understanding of the text and gain a sense of agency in the learning process.

For example, in this action research, learners were encouraged to rewrite a narrative text using the same structure as the original, but substituting characters and situations with those from their own lives. This fostered a deeper understanding of the language patterns and storytelling techniques, as well as a stronger connection to the content. Learners took turns writing on the board as they engaged in writing new sentences. This activity allowed them to construct meaningful sentences using the keywords and synonyms they had noted during the Detailed Reading stage, further reinforcing their understanding of the language patterns and vocabulary.

The fifth stage is individual rewriting. In a factual text, the teacher eliminates the joint rewriting from the board and leaves only the keywords up. Here, learners individually rewrite the text using strategies they learned in joint construction. Learners write to demonstrate their comprehension of the topic, and they use the keywords noted on the board (Mgqwashu & Makhathini, 2017). When they work with a narrative text, they read the original story and the new one from joint reading, and then the whole class discusses the key basics of the story. Then, using the characters and situations that were discussed, but not used in joint construction, learners write their own stories. Some learners can write independently at this stage; however, the teacher is always there to scaffold them (Mgqwashu, 2019).

The last stage of the RtL cycle is independent writing. During individual rewriting, learners independently rewrite the text using the strategies they learned in joint construction, demonstrating their understanding of the topic by incorporating the keywords noted on the board. Here, learners work independently in creating a story as opposed to being aided by classmates and the teacher in the previous stages (Mataka et al., 2020). In the factual text, it is vital that learners are provided with topics of the same genre as practiced in detail reading (Dladla, 2022).

During this stage, learners' work can be assessed (Mgqwashu & Makhathini, 2017). In a Grade 1 classroom, the assessment of learners' work can provide valuable insight

into their reading and writing development, allowing teachers to adjust their instruction accordingly and be aware of what level learners are operating at. For example, I observed that several learners were struggling to incorporate the keywords into their writing during the independent rewriting stage. I could adjust my instruction in the following sessions to provide more support with vocabulary development, resulting in improved writing quality in the next independent writing task. (My teaching and reflections on using the methodology are provided in Chapter 5). The transition from joint writing to independent writing represents a significant shift in the RtL cycle, as learners move from a supportive, collaborative environment to one in which they apply their knowledge and skills in a more individualized setting (Mgqwashu, 2019).

2.4. Theories underpinning Reading to Learn

RtL's theoretical framework draws on several theories. Most notably, Halliday's (1985) Systemic Functional Linguistics which emphasises language as a system of social practices, where context is crucial in shaping language use. This view complements RtL's emphasis on providing authentic learning experiences in a supportive classroom environment. It also draws from Bernstein's (1996) pedagogic discourse which posits that teachers' language codes play a significant role in shaping learners' understanding and use of language. This aligns with RtL's emphasis on teacher support and guidance, as well as the role of the classroom environment in facilitating language learning. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of human learning emphasises the importance of social settings for development and learning. Learners are seen as active participants in their own learning, interacting with their surroundings and the people in their environment. This social contact is essential for the development of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978).

RtL's focus on collaborative classroom environments and authentic language use is underpinned by this theory. Collectively, these theories highlight the importance of social, authentic, and supportive contexts for effective language learning. RtL's pedagogy blends these theories in order to create a unique learning environment that enables learners to engage with language in meaningful, collaborative ways, supported by their peers and teachers. In this action research study, the focus was placed on concepts from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, exploring how social contact

and collaboration can foster effective language learning in a supportive classroom environment. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of human learning, which assumes that development and learning are rooted in social settings, where learners learn from their contact with their surroundings and the people in their surroundings (Burns & de Silva Joyce, 2005) informs this study. Vygotsky's (1978) theoretical framework argues that cognitive development and the social context of a person must come together for development to happen. In this theoretical framework, social contact is vital for the development of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978). This social contact, which Vygotsky (1978, p. 34) terms More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), is key to cognitive development emphasised by Vygotsky, aligns with Halliday's focus on language as a social practice and Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse, which highlights the critical role of teachers in shaping learners' understanding. Together, these theories underscore the importance of context, social interaction, and language codes in effective language learning.

According to Vygotsky's (1978) theory, learning is connected to social actions which means that when the child interacts with individuals who are more experienced and knowledgeable, they may learn different things from their surroundings. The more experienced individuals here may be teachers, parents, and friends. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory uses four concepts, namely Interaction, Mediation, Scaffolding, and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

Interaction is when a learner gains knowledge through engaging practically with others. For example, interacting with a teacher at school in formal and informal periods, interacting with other learners and even family members. Interaction happens in a shared experience with other individuals (Vygotsky, 1978). So, learning interactively requires collaboration or other people's help. Peeters (2019) contends that learning transpires because of interaction with people, objects, and events in the community.

Mediation is the tool that drives learners' progress, and it happens when the MKO helps the learner to gain information (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky sees teachers as those who play an important role in allowing learners to learn what they could not learn independently (Vygotsky, 1978). In this study, I recognised my position as the MKO,

and my role was to equip my learners with the skills necessary to master reading isiXhosa in the first grade.

Scaffolding is the interaction that happens between a teacher and learner, when the teacher supports the learner to do a task and gradually withdraws the support when the learner shows signs of mastering the task. Scaffolding highlights the significance of social interaction in academic development, stressing that learning initiates at the social level (Gillespie & Greenberg, 2017). Furthermore, the scaffolding cycle used in RtL, describes scaffolding as one of its elements (Denhere et al., 2013).

Rose and Martin (2012) explain that the scaffolding that occurs during the interaction between the educator and their learners in genre-based theory intervention, boosts the learners' learning and advances their achievements thereof. Christie (2013) emphasizes that "genre theory takes account of the social contexts in which texts are written, read, and interpreted, and focuses on the communicative purposes texts serve in those contexts" (p. 14). It requires learners to identify the purposes and conventions of different texts, thereby enabling students to understand the social and cultural contexts in which texts are produced and consumed (Christie 2013, p. 14).

Additionally, Christie (2013) discusses how genre theory can be applied in educational settings to help students develop their reading and writing skills. Genre theory recognises the importance of learning the ways in which knowledge is represented in different discourse communities, like academia or professional fields, and provides a framework for teaching learners how to understand, analyse and produce texts in those communities (Rose & Martin, 2012). In RtL, scaffolding supports learners in becoming more proficient and independent readers by gradually releasing responsibility to learners as they master reading skills and strategies. In the RtL context, genre theory provides a framework for understanding how different texts serve different purposes in different contexts, which is crucial for helping learners develop the literacy skills necessary for success in education and beyond.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) refers to the difference between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance or assistance

from a More Knowledgeable Other (Vygotsky, 1978). It is the gap between a learner's developmental level and their expected level, which can be determined through problem-solving with an adult (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) contends that learning happens when two or more individuals with differing degrees of abilities and knowledge interact. Like Vygotsky's (1978) idea that language is a crucial tool in assisting learners as they enter and progress through their ZPD, RtL relies on language as a tool to assist learners to learn reading and writing. Vygotsky (1978) contends that learning happens when two or more individuals with differing degrees of abilities and knowledge interact. Through the use of scaffolding and mediation, RtL utilizes language to support learners as they progress through their ZPD, allowing them to develop their reading skills in an engaging and meaningful way.

In this study, I was the more knowledgeable other (MKO), and my role was to equip my learners with the skills they need to master reading at the first-grade level. RtL was established to use social interaction in helpful situations, to aid learners in developing higher levels of "academic literacy" skills, i.e., more advanced than learners could learn on their own (Rose, 2005). In RtL, the main principle that guides the entire pedagogy is that of teachers scaffolding learners until they can do tasks independently.

Vygotsky's concepts of interaction, scaffolding and mediation allowed me to reflect on my own teaching by closely observing my learners' progress and tailoring my scaffolding strategies accordingly. Specifically, I utilized cooperative learning activities and gradual release of responsibility, as inspired by Vygotsky's insights. By reflecting on my interactions with learners, I gained insight into which scaffolding techniques were most effective and adapted my practice as needed.

2.5. Reading to Learn teacher training

RtL has been found to enhance teacher practices to teach EFAL in South Africa (Mawela, 2018). RtLSA (2015) argues that teachers who are skilled in this technique, have enhanced their professional practice and their learners' reading and writing skills have improved (Mgqwashu & Makhathini, 2017; Rose, 2005, 2011).

Given the lack of teacher training in developing countries (Pryor et al., 2012), RtL provides training for teachers in South Africa. This training is informed by Vygotsky's

sociocultural theory, emphasizing collaboration and interaction in learning (Mataka et al., 2023). To gain initial insight into the RtL framework, I participated in an online training program led by a RtL expert, over a period of 5 days. As part of the training, I also watched videos of teachers implementing the RtL pedagogy, giving me valuable insight into the strategies and techniques used in real-world classrooms. This combination of online training and video observation, in addition to later guidance from an RtL-experienced teacher, my critical friend, provided me with the knowledge and understanding necessary to confidently embark on my action research study and apply RtL principles in my own classroom.

This combination of theory, practice, and research-based reflection creates a robust training environment. During the training, I found that the opportunities for reflection and feedback were invaluable in developing my understanding of the RtL framework, as well as in identifying areas for improvement in my own teaching practice. As a participant in the RtL training course, I found the experience to be both enlightening and challenging. The trainers provided valuable insights into the RtL framework and how it could be applied in the classroom, and I particularly appreciated the emphasis on collaborative learning. However, I also found the practical application of the framework to be difficult at times, particularly in terms of balancing the structured lessons with the need for flexibility and student-centered learning. While the training provided valuable insights into the RtL framework, I found the practical application of the six-step cycle challenging at times. The Joint rewriting stage, in particular, proved difficult to balance with fostering independence in my learners (see Table 6, joint construction stage). In the classroom, I struggled to correctly instruct this stage and required multiple practice sessions before I felt comfortable implementing it effectively. However, despite these initial challenges, the overall training program provided me with valuable strategies and insights that I was able to apply to my classroom practice, helping to improve my learners' reading skills.

Overall, the RtL training provided me with valuable insights and strategies that I was able to implement in my Grade One classroom. By reflecting on my teaching practice, collaborating with colleagues, and using relevant texts, I was able to create a more engaging and supportive learning environment for my learners, resulting in improved isiXhosa reading skills.

2.6. Chapter summary

This chapter has explored the background, components, and underpinnings of the Reading to Learn (RtL) pedagogy, including the RtL teaching cycle, teacher training, and relevant theories which were Halliday's (1985) Systemic Functional Linguistics, Bernstein's (1996) Pedagogic Discourse, and Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, and Martin's (2004) genre theory. Overall, the RtL pedagogy has shown promise as an effective approach to language learning and literacy development in disadvantaged classrooms.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a literature review relevant to this study. First, I define and discuss the broad concept of literacy, including various definitions and components of reading as described by different scholars. I also examine the literacy challenges documented at the school level, particularly in South Africa, and discuss a number of interventions aimed at improving early-grade reading. Additionally, I present empirical studies of RtL pedagogy in the South African context and highlight the positive impact it has had on learners and teachers across grades.

3.2. Literacy definitions

There are different understandings of what literacy is. Keefe and Copeland (2011) asserted that “despite the fact there is general agreement that literacy is a human right, there is no general agreement about the definition” (p. 93). According to UNESCO (2017), literacy is the ability to use reading, writing, and communication skills to achieve goals, develop knowledge, and participate fully in society. Montoya (2018) further emphasises that literacy is the capacity to read and write in a way that allows for comprehension and effective use of written communication, including digital literacy. Sefton-Green and Rowsell (2014) adds that new literacies involve a blending of physical and virtual worlds, highlighting the importance of understanding literacy as a dynamic and evolving concept. In summary, literacy encompasses traditional and new literacies, as well as the ability to use reading, writing, and communication skills in a variety of contexts (Sefton-Green and Rowsell, 2014). It is a complex and multifaceted concept that is constantly changing and adapting to new technologies and social environments.

The focus in my study is Grade 1 learners’ acquisition of reading and writing skills in isiXhosa. According to Montoya (2018), literacy can be defined as the capacity to read and write in a way that allows people to comprehend and use written communication effectively, in all formats, whether printed or electronic, and including digital literacy.

3.3. Reading

This study focused on one aspect of literacy, which is reading. The United States' Project Becoming a Nation of Readers (BNR) authors in 1985 defined reading as “the process of constructing meaning from written texts” and emphasised that “it is a complex skill requiring the coordination of a number of interrelated sources of information” (Anderson et al., 1985, p. 7). The authors of this report recommended some principles that should direct the process of effective reading: Reading is a constructive process and an unceasingly developing skill that needs readers' motivation. It must be fluent and strategic; the reader must be able to use a variety of strategies to construct the meaning of the text. The BNR Project authors' definition of reading is grounded on the knowledge and beliefs that reading is a constructive process during which the reader constructs meaning from the written text which stems from the reader's ability to decode.

According to Currin and Pretorius (2010), reading is the capability to decode, understand and make meaning of any type of written text, where the building of meaning is improved by the understanding of the specific purpose of reading a particular text. Currin and Pretorius (2010) acknowledge that reading is a complex process that requires different aspects to develop, with the addition of the social context as one of the critical aspects involved in reading development. The social context provides for young children's early exposure to print, and supports cognitive-linguistic processes such as decoding, comprehension, and response (Currin and Pretorius, 2010).

Additionally, Simon (2021) defines reading as “a complex cognitive and a set of sociocultural practices” (p. 2). This definition links to Currin and Pretorius' (2010) definition, which acknowledges the importance of the social context in the reading process. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of learning also supports the idea that literacy is not just about decoding text, but also about making meaning from the text within a specific social and cultural context. This means that the process of reading is shaped by the reader's own experiences and understandings, as well as the cultural context in which they are reading. In the case of my learners, this means that their reading skills and strategies will be influenced by their own cultural and linguistic

backgrounds, as well as the reading materials and practices they are exposed to in Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of learning also supports learning that occurs in social settings which includes scaffolded learning.

Frankel et al., (2016) argue that the BNR definition had to be extended because it did not consider the social and cultural context of reading. In other words, the BNR definition only focused on the individual reader and their ability to decode text, without considering the ways in which reading is shaped by the reader's cultural background and social interactions. By extending the definition to include context, Frankel et al., (2016) aim to capture the full complexity of the reading process, which includes not just decoding text, but also making meaning from it, engaging with it socially and culturally, and using it to construct new knowledge. This expanded definition of literacy better reflects the reality of how people read and use reading in their daily lives. Frankel et al., (2016) define literacy as “the process of using reading, writing, and oral language to extract, construct, integrate, and critique meaning through interaction and involvement of socially situated practices” (p. 7).

These definitions reflect that reading should be taught carefully and intentionally in any context to produce competent readers. The DBE (2020) states that reading is not an innate skill, but a skill that must be taught intentionally. Learners need teachers who have the knowledge of teaching reading. The definitions above also indicate that reading is a responsibility of the reader. According to Olifant et al., (2020), reading involves more than just decoding text. It also requires the reader's emotional and intellectual engagement with the text. This means that the reader must be curious, motivated, and able to think critically about what they are reading. These attitudes are important, even for young readers such as first graders. For example, a first grader who is curious and engaged with a storybook is more likely to become a lifelong reader. Therefore, it is crucial to encourage these attitudes in young readers from an early age (Olifant et al., 2020).

Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) argue that for teachers to effectively support children's reading skills in Grades R–4, they need to understand the components of reading and how they are related. According to Funda Wande (n.d.), an organization that promotes reading for meaning and Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016), there are three overarching

components of reading: decoding, comprehension, and response. Below, I will explain each component in more detail, and highlight how they are related.

3.4. Components of reading

3.4.1 Decoding

The National Framework for the Teaching of Reading in African Languages in the Foundation Phase (DBE, 2020) defines decoding as “knowing how the sounds (phonemes) of a language are presented by letters (graphemes) in written form or script, and then using this knowledge to read words and sentences accurately and fluently in written language (printed texts)” (p. 16). Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) outline the subcomponents of decoding that predict early reading success that a reading teacher needs to know. These sub-components are:

- Phonological and phonemic awareness
- Alphabetic knowledge and phonics
- Word recognition
- Oral reading fluency

Phonological and phonemic awareness is being conscious of the sounds in a language (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). It involves hearing the sounds at the beginning of words and syllables that are in each word, as well as words that rhyme (Pretorius & Klapwijk 2016). It is also the capability to combine or remove the sounds within the words (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). Funda Wandé (n.d) state that phonological awareness is an “umbrella term” that covers different aspects. They further describe phonemic awareness as the capability to identify single sounds in words and to manipulate them (Funda Wandé, n.d).

Alphabetic knowledge is the knowledge of letter-sound relationships (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). It is important to note that alphabetic knowledge differs in all languages. It is understanding what sound is made by each letter of the alphabet, Alphabetic knowledge involves understanding the letter-sound relationships, such as recognizing that the letter 'A' in the word Apile (isiXhosa) represents the /a/ sound.

Basic phonic knowledge or alphabetic knowledge (letter-sound knowledge) and vocabulary building are foundational skills, vital for fast-tracking learners' early literacy

development (Spaull et al., 2020). These components should be instilled early in the reading process to accelerate effective reading in the early years.

Word recognition fluency is defined as the pace at which a learner can correctly read audibly and how natural they sound (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) leads to reading with understanding which is why we read in the first place, any text we read, we read with the intention of understanding (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). When a learner develops word recognition fluency it increases automaticity. According to the DBE (2020) in the National Reading Framework “when one processes information in the mind without consciously thinking about it, then it can be said that the process happens automatically” (p. 17).

3.4.2 Comprehension

Ardington et al., (2021) contend that “whatever we read, the intent in doing so is to understand the information in the text and construct meaning from it” (p. 2). Comprehension itself means understanding, thus the reading process in this stage is not only about identifying and recognizing words and sounds but about understanding the meaning of words. Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) argue that reading is a multi-layered procedure for comprehending linked text. Funda Wandé (n.d) states that comprehension includes “understanding sentences, paragraphs, and longer texts” as well as connecting new information with prior information (p. 6), and that in the first grade, comprehension can be developed by asking questions before, during, and after reading

3.4.3. Response

According to Funda Wandé (n.d) the response involves being motivated to read, as motivated by reading role models and an environment that promotes reading. It is experiencing achievement in reading so that a person is poised in their capabilities as a reader. The response Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) argue that teachers ought to be vigorous readers and should be well-informed about children’s books. It may promote enthusiasm for learners when they see good reading role models, modelling reading with enthusiasm.

3.5. Literacy challenges in South Africa

Literacy challenges in South Africa present a significant hurdle for many learners, resulting in poor school performance and a lack of mastery in their mother tongue language. For more information on literacy challenges in South Africa, (see Section 1.2).

Teachers have a very important role in literacy development (Venketsamy & Sibanda, 2021). Venketsamy and Sibanda (2021) argue that teachers have the responsibility to find and utilize divergent methods to develop learners' literacy skills. Pryor et al., (2012) contend that numerous teachers from developing countries have little to no training in teaching literacy and are often under-educated in general. According to the National Reading Strategy (Department of Education, 2008), many teachers in South Africa do not have explicit training in teaching literacy, which then makes it challenging to help learners overcome reading difficulties. Teachers must become fluent in innovative methods for teaching literacy, as this can help bridge the gap between the reading skills learners have when they enter the classroom and the skills they need to succeed in school. The use of effective instructional practices can make a significant difference in the literacy development of young learners (Venketsamy & Sibanda, 2021).

The reading literacy challenges that are not remediated in the Foundation Phase have far-reaching consequences for learners' academic success in higher grades, as evidenced by the reading achievement shown by the PIRLS 2016 and 2021 conducted in South Africa (see Section 1.2). These results indicate that poor reading skills have persistent, long-term effects on learners' literacy and overall academic achievement.

3.6. Early Grade Literacy Interventions in South Africa

In South Africa, numerous interventions have been implemented to improve early grade literacy. Among the various early grade literacy interventions implemented in South Africa, some notable examples include:

1. The DBE Read-a-Story-Every-Day Program, launched in 2012, which promotes daily reading of storybooks in all grades R to 3 classrooms across the country (DBE, 2012).
2. Fundza Literacy Trust, established in 2010, which distributes books and reading resources to schools, libraries, and youth centers to promote a culture of reading.
3. Changing the Grammar of Schooling in South Africa: The Case of DBE Workbooks (2016), a research project that examined the effectiveness of Department of Basic Education (DBE) workbooks in grades 1-3 classrooms (McKay & Spaul, 2022). This project, conducted in 2016, found that the DBE workbooks significantly improved learners' early grade literacy skills, particularly in low-performing schools.
4. Professional Development to Strengthen Early Grade Reading: Lessons from the Primary School Reading Improvement Programme (PSRIP). This is another initiative that has had a positive impact on early grade literacy in South Africa which aimed to improve the quality of literacy instruction in underperforming primary schools. The PSRIP, launched in 2015, used professional development (PD) to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge to effectively teach reading, writing, and language to their learners (Chetty & Groome, 2022).
5. Molteno's Vula Bula, an intervention developed by the Molteno Institute for Language and Literacy (as cited in Mojapelo, 2021), focuses on building early grade reading skills in English-second-language learners.
6. Another intervention that has been implemented in South Africa to address early grade literacy is the Reading to Learn (RtL) pedagogy, which has been in use for several years in various contexts across the country (Mataka et al., 2023).

Overall, early grade literacy interventions in South Africa have taken many forms (McKay & Spaul, 2016; Chetty & Groome, 2022; DBE, 2012; Mataka et al., 2023). Although each intervention has its own merits, what stands out is the importance of high-quality, relevant instructional materials, teacher training, classroom-based support, and a focus on fostering a culture of reading (DBE, 2012; Mataka et al., 2023). These common themes highlight the need for a multi-faceted, holistic approach to improving early grade literacy. While the effectiveness of each intervention is varied,

studies have generally found that high-quality, relevant instructional materials, teacher training, classroom-based support, and fostering a culture of reading have a positive impact on early grade literacy (DBE, 2012; Mataka et al., 2023).

Reading to Learn has been another literacy intervention in South African schools. In the next section, I describe studies done on this methodology.

3.7. Studies done on Reading to Learn in South Africa.

Since this study focuses on RtL, I outline various empirical studies conducted in South Africa over the past 20 years, starting from the most recent research and working chronologically backwards. This enables me to trace the development of RtL methodology in the South African context and highlights the impact this approach has had on learners and teachers across grade levels, from Foundation Phase to secondary school to tertiary level.

Ntombela (2023) conducted a self-study where she used the RtL methodology to teach isiZulu reading in her Grade 3 class in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The research findings showed that her interaction with learners changed, and that learners' in her class showed a notable improvement in reading fluency and comprehension. These findings reveal that both the teacher and the learners showed positive gains from using the RtL methodology.

In the same year in a different study, Dube (2023) investigated the efficacy of RtL pedagogy in the Foundation Phase, providing valuable insight into its impact on early literacy development. The findings suggested that RtL significantly enhanced learners' reading and writing skills in the Foundation Phase. Dube's study revealed that learners' mastery of foundational literacy skills was significantly improved when RtL pedagogy was implemented, highlighting the potential of this approach in laying a strong foundation for literacy development in young learners. Together, these studies illustrate the potential of RtL pedagogy in effectively supporting literacy development across Foundation Phase grades, which is especially relevant to the focus of this study.

In a Grade 4 study, Dladla (2022) examined the effects of RtL on learners' reading comprehension in life skills. Dladla (2022) found that RtL increased learner

participation, with more students raising their hands and answering questions. Furthermore, the intervention was associated with improvements in post-test reading comprehension, and the RtL teacher reported that the pedagogy enhanced her teaching practice, particularly through scaffolding techniques.

Mataka et al., (2020) conducted an interventionist study in a Grade R classroom in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. The study focused on using story books as learning tools through the learning experience of Grade R learners and explored the extent to which scaffolding in RtL affects the development of emergent literacy skills. The findings revealed that RtL pedagogy helps to develop emergent literacy skills in Grade R learners. Observation and learner work samples served as sources of data.

In another study, Mataka and Mgqwashu (2022) reported on the positive effect RtL has on literacy development of Grade 10 EFAL learners from a township school in South Africa. The aim of the study was to investigate how RtL impacts reading and writing of a unit of learners whose teaching was informed by RtL principles. The findings showed that learners' reading skills were poor before the inception of the RtL intervention, but there was a significant improvement post-RtL intervention. Learner examination marks were used as a source of data.

Furthurmore, Mawela (2018) conducted a study investigating the role of RtL pedagogy in enhancing EFAL teachers' classroom practice in Grade 4. The findings revealed that RtL improved and enhanced teachers' pedagogic practice in the teaching of reading and writing, leading to improvement in learners' reading and writing skills. Dube (2023) also explored the effectiveness of RtL pedagogy in the Foundation Phase, finding positive effects on learners' reading and writing skills. Similar to Dube (2023), Ntombela's (2023) self-study also revealed positive effects of RtL pedagogy on reading fluency and comprehension, emphasizing the consistent improvement in learners' reading skills that RtL brings across Foundation Phase grade levels. These findings, taken together, suggest that RtL is a promising pedagogical approach across the South African education system. This is relevant to my study as it underscores the importance of teacher training and pedagogical support in facilitating successful implementation of RtL.

The RtL intervention was implemented with three Grade 11 classes in two South African high schools in the Western Cape targeting learners who were struggling with

English academic literacy. Millin and Millin (2017) explored the effectiveness of RtL in improving academic writing for academically weaker learners and found that RtL had a positive impact on both the writing skills and academic success of these learners, particularly for learners who started with weaker English writing skills. It has also been used at the tertiary level with a group of B.Comm access learners. The study found that there was improvement in the learners' academic literacy levels at the end of a year-long intervention (Wildsmith-Cromarty & Steinke, 2014).

While the previous studies demonstrate the positive impact of RtL on learners' reading competencies across grade levels, this study sought to further investigate the effects of RtL in the specific context of isiXhosa-speaking Grade1 learners. Specifically, this study aimed to seek answers to objectives and research questions as outlined in Chapter 1.5 and 1.6. This study sought to contribute to the existing literature by providing a more detailed understanding of how RtL pedagogy can support the development of early grade literacy skills, particularly in an isiXhosa-speaking context. By addressing these specific questions, this study aims to provide valuable insights into how RtL pedagogy can be effectively implemented and supported to enhance early grade literacy skills.

3.8. Chapter summary

This chapter provided a thorough overview of the relevant literature on literacy, discussed reading definitions and components of reading, early grade reading challenges, and studies on the use of RtL pedagogy, which has demonstrated positive impacts in South African schools. The next chapter will describe the research design and methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR : RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology and design employed in this study, focusing on the research paradigm, approach, research methodology, and the strengths and limitations of action research. The instruments, sampling strategies, data analysis, ethical considerations and trustworthiness of this study will also be addressed.

4.2. Paradigm

A paradigm is a viewpoint that helps people to make sense of the world (Thuzini, 2011). According to Thuzini (2011), there are multiple lenses through which researchers might perceive the world: interpretivist, positivist, pragmatic as well as the critical paradigm. A paradigm is also a way of looking at the world and creating frames of reference, for putting together findings and making sense of them (Cohen et al., 2018). Additionally, Creswell and Creswell (2017) as well as Cohen et al., (2018), maintain that it is critical for each study to establish its research paradigm, as a person's perspective on the world shapes their research approach.

Action research is practical research aimed at changing the situation in a classroom. It places the teacher at the centre of the research as both the practitioner and the enquirer (McNiff & Whitehead). It does not fit easily into the traditional research paradigms, and thus I have adopted a pragmatic paradigm. The underpinning principles of pragmatism is that of problem-solving as a human activity (Morgan, 2014).

4.3. Action research

The methodology I chose for my study is action research. Action research is a systematic approach that teachers use to improve their schools, teaching, and learners' learning (Mills, 2011). By bringing together action, reflection, theory, and practice, it allows teachers to find practical solutions to pressing issues that can lead to individual and community growth and well-being.

Furthermore, Burns (2005) contends that action research is a task related to the idea of reflective teaching. This establishes the idea of action research as a practice or research that reflects on a situation and finds ways in which the situation can be improved or developed. Action research can be used to access information or gain knowledge we did not have, to improve learning and to advance our practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). Action research aims to advance learning for improving practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). Bertram and Christiansen (2014) emphasise the central purpose of action research as being the improvement of educational practice. They underscore the focus on identifying ways to enhance teaching and learning in real-world classroom settings, rather than on solely investigating or producing knowledge about educational phenomena. Thus, action research is a practical process that seeks to empower researchers to find context-based solutions to the challenges they experience. This is done through a systematic action research cycle, which I will describe shortly.

Action research has different features that separates it from other research methodologies. Firstly, Pardede (2018) states that all action research has a practical focus and is participant-driven. This means that there must be a practical focus area that is a challenge for for which the researcher can find an intervention and implement it practically or employ it in their classroom. It also means that the researcher becomes a subject in the study. Secondly, action research focuses on the researcher's own practice (Burns, 2010). This means that action research enables teachers to seek ways to enhance their classroom practice. Thirdly, Pardede (2018) contends that action research has a dynamic process that allows for multiple cycles to be conducted as it allows teachers to reflect after each cycle to check if something did not work out and how to revise it. Fourthly, action research requires a researcher to have a detailed

plan of action and intervention is what determines the success of action research. Lastly, McNiff and Whitehead (2009) contend that action research allows teachers to contribute to the body of existing knowledge by providing an in-depth description of what works in a particular context.

I chose action research because it allowed me to work collaboratively with my learners to improve their isiXhosa reading skills. I used the RtL pedagogy to work collaboratively with my learners to improve their isiXhosa reading skills (see Chapter 5 for the detailed descriptions of my action research cycles). By reflecting on these lessons with a critical friend, I was able to modify my teaching strategies and improve my practice of using the RtL pedagogy.

I believe this methodology was appropriate for my study because it allowed me to put myself at the center of the research (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009) focusing on transforming my own teaching practice. This approach enabled me to learn and implement RtL strategies that led to measurable improvements in my learners' isiXhosa reading skills.

Furthermore, since reading is a challenge in my classroom, it aligned with action research as this was a real-life problem in my classroom context, that required action and reflection until the intended improvement was achieved (Whitehead & McNiff, 2016). Similarly, action research's cyclical process enabled me as the researcher to reflect on, evaluate and refine my plan to try again in a different cycle to get better results. These cycles would allow me to find strategies for different and complex concerns that arose, as these do not always have the same solution.

4.4. Action research cycles

Following the four-step action research cycle outlined by Bertram and Christiansen (2014), I began with strategic planning, where I developed a detailed plan for improving the isiXhosa reading skills of my learners. This plan included specific RtL strategies (as described in Chapter 2) as well as methods for data collection and analysis. Next, I took action and implemented the plan in my classroom. This included using the RtL stages outlined in the plan and carefully observing the learners'

engagement with the isiXhosa reading materials. I also kept detailed records of my reflections on the teaching process, which were captured in my reflective journal.

The specific steps of the action research process are discussed in more detail in the following section, demonstrating the iterative and reflective nature of the methodology as it was employed in my study. To illustrate the iterative nature of the action research process, Figure 2 (adapted from Pardede, 2018) presents a graphical representation of the action research cycle. Each step in the cycle is further detailed in the following subsections.

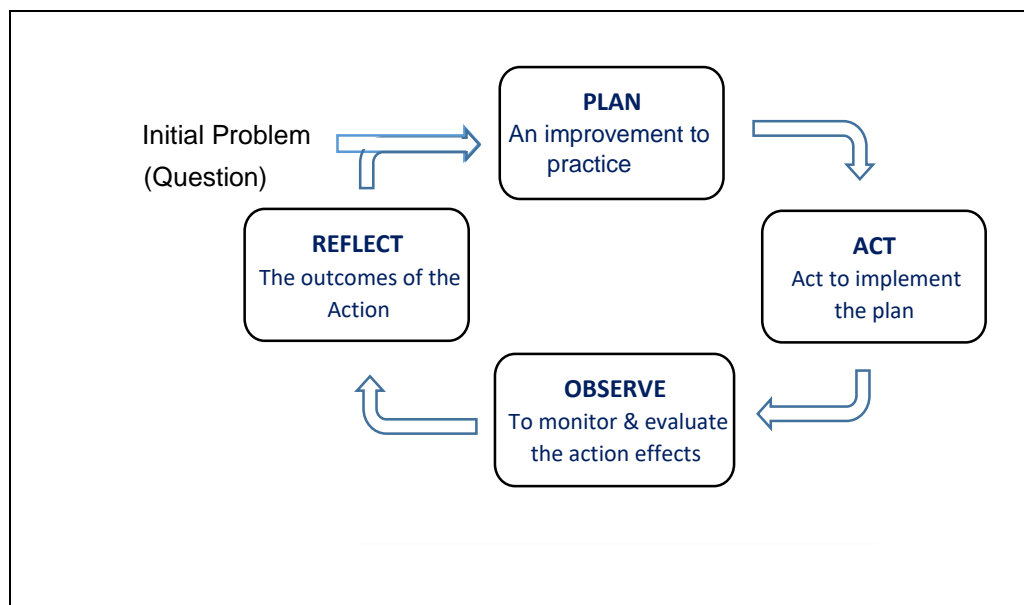


Figure 2: An action research cycle (Pardede, 2018)

4.4.1. Action research stage 1: Strategic planning

The first step of the action research cycle is “strategic planning”. Hein (2009) argues that action research is triggered by a problem. For action research to commence there has to be a problem that the researcher is interested in and wants to explore. The problem triggered then leads to strategic planning, which looks for different ways in which the problem can be solved. In my study, the issue that ignited my interest of pursuing action research was the reading challenges in my grade 1 classroom. I sought ways in which I could improve my practice to help learners in my class acquire good reading skills. Reading literature has shown different strategies that have been

used in the education context, and this guided me to the strategies I could use to teach reading and improve my practice, strategies such as Reading to Learn (RtL).

The planning stage for me included being trained in the RtL strategy that I was going to use as an intervention in my study. In the planning stage, I also organised lesson plans following the RtL cycle. These lessons are outlined in chapter 5. I developed RtL materials to use in the classroom, and prepared the EGRA testing material for the pre-test and post-test assessment process which included different sub-tasks (see Appendix F).

4.4.2. Action research stage 2: Taking action

The second step of the action research cycle is “taking action”. This means implementing the organized intervention that was previously designed (Mistar et al., 2010). In my study I used the RtL intervention to teach reading, scaffolding my learners until they could reach independence in reading. This second step is where all the planned material such as big books for shared reading, story aids, and lesson plans are utilised to implement the strategy that I adopted to remedy the reading problem. As in the case with action research, the RtL method has its cyclical stages that include reflection and revisiting as needed in each context.

4.4.3. Action research stage 3: Observation

In the third step, the researcher collects data on whether the intervention strategy used is having any impact or not. According to Latief (2010), collecting or observing data is aimed at identifying how the intervention can advance learners’ performance and reflecting on how the intervention is changing the teacher’s practice. Mistar et al., (2010) contend that in the observation stage, the researcher must define the process of collecting data which includes the instruments used in data collection. In my study, I used three types of data collection methods. Firstly, I administered an EGRA test to assess my learner’s reading levels before the intervention. I administered a post-test assessment to examine the effectiveness of the intervention strategy. Secondly, I observed my practice in class by analysing the video-recorded reading lessons. Thirdly, I wrote reflective journals, which have a daily record of self-reflection on each reading activity in my classroom. I provide more detail on these methods in a later section of this chapter.

4.4.4. Action research stage 4: Reflection

The fourth and last step of the action research cycle is a reflection on the process and includes making decisions for the next cycle of action research. Fadhilawati (2016) asserts that the fourth stage of the research cycle is an important part of action research because it is the stage that leads to the researcher's decision about conducting another cycle. Furthermore, because action research has a cyclic nature, the researcher should pay attention and evaluate all stages as the action research process does not follow a linear approach (Pardede, 2018). In real-life contexts, the recursive nature of action research allows researchers to adjust interventions based on encountered issues and to refine the process until desired improvements are achieved.

4.5. Strengths and limitations of action research

A key advantage of action research is the ability for researchers to remain connected to their study's environment, rather than observing it from a distance (Koshy et al., 2010). By embracing this perspective, I was able to develop a close understanding of my learners' educational context, leading to a more targeted intervention to improve their isiXhosa reading skills. Hein (2009) maintains that teachers can research new ways to improve their classroom practice and advance learner performance. When teachers investigate their practice, they engage in professional learning.

Additionally, Hein (2009) asserts that action research allows teachers the freedom to decide what strategies and interventions are most effective for improving student performance. This autonomy is essential for successful action research, as it enables teachers to tailor their approach based on the specific needs of their classroom. In my study, I sought to embrace this autonomy by assuming the dual roles of both teacher and researcher, allowing me to create a context-specific strategy for improving my learners' isiXhosa reading skills.

Furthermore, Pardede (2018) contends that action research is worthwhile because it can be incorporated into regular learning and teaching as a strategy. Action research does not distract the scheduled learning periods in the classroom because the intervention can be used during normal learning and teaching. Reading is already scheduled for teaching in my classroom, making the integration of the Reading to

Learn intervention into my action research study was a natural fit. I was able to analyse and refine my teaching practices while simultaneously providing my learners with targeted support to improve their isiXhosa reading skills. Moreover, action research links to the nature of teaching and assessing in schools, which encourages teachers to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching and what they can do to change the way they teach.

Regarding its limitations, one of the weaknesses of action research is its focus on local contexts which means that it can be hard to apply its findings to other settings (Miller et al., 2003). This focus on local contexts means that action research limited to a specific classroom or school, which can impact the generalisability of its findings. In my study, the intervention was conducted solely with learners in my classroom, thus the findings cannot be generalised beyond the study context. Furthermore, action research is conducted by individuals in contexts that are typically familiar to them, which can lead to subjective interpretations and analysis of data. This subjectivity can potentially impact the validity and reliability of the research findings. In my study, I acknowledged this limitation by keeping a reflexive journal and engaging in ongoing discussions with my critical friend to help ensure that my interpretations of the data were as objective as possible.

4.6. Mixed methods approach

There are different approaches to generating data needed to respond to research questions. These approaches are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. This study used the mixed methods approach because I wanted to identify and classify the learners' different reading operating levels as EGRA sub-tasks required, which required quantitative data (see Appendix F). I also wanted to generate qualitative data to record my teaching practices, and reflections as a researcher and a participant.

A mixed methods approach is research that includes the features of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Cohen et al., 2018). The mixed methods approach provides a broader comprehension of the phenomena under study, as it enabled me to integrate the strengths of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative methods allowed

me to identify patterns and trends related to reading outcomes, while qualitative methods provided insights into my teaching practices and the learners' experiences of RtL. By combining these approaches, I could gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

The qualitative approach is particularly well-suited to the action research methodology because it allows for a deep exploration of the complexities and nuances of the reading process as experienced by the learners (Yilmaz, 2013). The video recordings provided insights into the learners' engagement and my practice with isiXhosa reading activities, while the reflective journals documented my own thoughts and observations on the reading process. Together with the pre-test and post-test assessments, these data sources enabled me to identify specific areas for improvement without the need for interviews, as the video recordings and reflective journals already provided a rich source of qualitative data. By carefully analyzing these sources, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of my own teaching practices and how they impacted the learners' engagement with isiXhosa reading activities.

4.7. Data generation methods

Data generation is a process of collecting data that will enable the researcher to answer the research questions. In this study, both qualitative and quantitative data were generated through video recorded lesson observations, reflective journaling, and EGRA tests. To ensure triangulation in the data collection, a procedure that enhances validity and reliability (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009), I utilized multiple sources of information and conducted peer debriefing with a critical friend, who reviewed my video recordings of classroom interactions.

1) Video recorded lesson observations: This provided visual data on classroom interactions, student engagement, and my teaching practices during isiXhosa reading lessons.

2) Reflective journaling: This method provided insights into my own thoughts, feelings, and perceptions during the study. (see Appendix G)

3) EGRA Tests: These provided quantitative data on student performance and progress throughout the study (See Appendix F).

4.7.1 Classroom observation using video-recordings

Observation means that the researcher goes to the site of the study, which may be a school, a classroom, a staffroom or a community meeting space and observes what is actually taking place there (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 84). In my study, observation was used to generate data on my daily teaching practice, my learners' isiXhosa reading competency, the implementation of the curriculum, and the development of my teaching methods in the classroom environment with real learners. Video recordings were used to capture the classroom setting and interactions, enabling me to view the events from multiple angles and perspectives, overcoming the limitations of a single observer's vantage point (Cohen et al., 2018). These recordings were made with the full knowledge and consent of parents/guardians of learners, in compliance with POPI Act requirements. The video recordings were viewed exclusively by myself and my critical friend, and have been securely deleted from all devices. The use of recordings was solely for the purpose of facilitating qualitative data analysis and did not pose any threat to the learners' privacy or confidentiality.

The video data was securely stored in accordance with data protection regulations, with restricted access. As the observed participant, I was able to provide detailed accounts of the context, practice, and perceptions of the study, without relying on secondary reports from others (Holliday & Teddlie, 2012).

I had the assistance of a colleague who took videos of all my lessons, and I later observed these recordings and documented my reflections in my reflective journals. Through this process, I was able to analyse my teaching methods, identify areas for improvement, and document the impact of these changes on my learners' reading abilities. The video recordings provided me with a rich source of data, allowing me to reflect on my own teaching practice and develop strategies to better support my learners' learning. Overall, classroom observation using video recordings allowed me to gather detailed data on my teaching practice, my learners' progress, and the curriculum implementation, providing invaluable insights into my teaching methods and the impact they had on student learning. This method was crucial in helping me evaluate and refine my teaching practice, ultimately contributing to the primary focus

of the study: improving my teaching practice and my learners' isiXhosa reading skills through the implementation of the RtL intervention.

The advantage of using video recorded lessons as a data collection tool is that it is a powerful way to access primary data. The recorded lessons show my actual practice instead of my perceptions about it which is important as Bertram and Christiansen (2014, p. 94) state that “ it is well documented that teachers teach in different ways to how they say they teach”.

A limitation of video recording is that my assistant's presence did alter the dynamics of the classroom. Her role as a videographer, together with the occasional comments and questions, introduced an element of 'intrusion' (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014) that could potentially influence the responses of learners and myself. This study's limitations were further compounded by the fact that I was both the researcher and the participant, potentially introducing biases. While I endeavoured to maintain objectivity, there is a risk that the knowledge that I was being observed and recorded may have influenced my teaching practices and the learners' responses.

I found it challenging to observe and analyse multiple aspects of the classroom simultaneously. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) highlight the limitation of observation that the observer can only focus on certain aspects at any given time. Although I aimed to focus on both my teaching practice and my learners' responses, there may have been important interactions that I overlooked or misinterpreted during the observation process, despite having video recordings to review.

The following table (Table 1) provides a summary of the lessons that were video-recorded for this study.

Table 1: Summary of the lessons video recorded in each action research cycle.

	Topic of lesson	Dates
Action research Cycle 1	Utata usele nosana	22 May-25 May 2023
Action research Cycle 2	Izinto ezenziwa ngabantwana	24 July-27 July 2023
Action research Cycle 3	Abantwana bayacoca	07 August-10 August 2023
Action research Cycle 4	Ilokhwe eluhlaza	21 August- 24 August 2023

4.7.2 Reflective journals

The second data generation method that this study uses is reflective journals. Mruck and Breuer (2003) highlight reflective journals as a tool for recording the researcher's experiences and actions, and in this study, I used them to document my daily thoughts, analysis, and reflections about the reading lessons I conducted in my class. According to Maarof (2007), teachers must regularly set aside time for reflecting on their classroom practice, which I have endeavoured to do through my reflective journaling. This reflective journaling has been integrated into Chapter 5, providing a comprehensive and ongoing account of my development as a teacher and the impact of this study.

The reflective journaling process was conducted on a daily basis, immediately following each lesson (see Appendix G). This enabled me to capture my thoughts, emotions, and experiences while they were still fresh in my mind. Reflective journaling allowed me to explore my teaching practice from multiple perspectives, including my relationships with learners, the impact of specific teaching strategies, and my own personal growth and development as an educator. The reflective journaling process also enabled me to capture the learners' responses to the reading instruction and identify areas where further support or intervention might be required, ultimately informing the evolution of my teaching practices.

Together, the observations and reflective journaling provided a multi-dimensional view of the classroom dynamics, allowing for a deeper understanding of the impact of the reading instruction and the ongoing development of my practice. While some details may have slipped my mind, reviewing the video recordings after each lesson helped refresh my memory and ensure that the journaling captured the most significant aspects of the classroom dynamics and the learners' responses. In combination, the observation and reflective journaling methods offered a thorough examination of the classroom dynamics, as well as a rich understanding of the impact of the reading instruction and the development of my teaching practices. This dual approach

provided a robust foundation for the data analysis stage of the study (See Appendix G for an example of my reflection journal entry).

4.7.3 Testing

The third data generation method that I used to use in my study is testing. Testing is a method that is usually employed in experimental research (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). In this study, two Grade 1 classes, the experimental class and control class, participated in the pre-test and post-test assessments. The experimental class was my Grade 1A class with 50 learners who received the RtL intervention strategy, and this is the class that I taught. The control class was the Grade 1B class which did not receive the RtL intervention strategy in their learning and teaching. This is a quasi-experimental design because the learners were not randomly assigned to the control or experimental class. The classes are not exactly equivalent, but they are similar (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

The use of tests provides valuable insight into learners' individual strengths and weaknesses, helping teachers plan lessons accordingly (Cohen et al., 2018). The researcher tests learners to measure their competency in the area that is under study. This is done before the remediation is introduced or administered, and this stage of the test is called a pre-test. For example, in reading, pre-tests are used to determine the level of learners before the intervention and a post-test determines their competency after the intervention. I decided to use testing as a data generation method because this would provide quantitative, objective results which would indicate the reading level or competency of the learners in the control and the experimental class at the start of the research study and again at the end of the study, allowing for comparisons to be made.

I selected to use the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) which has been used extensively in literacy research (Steinke, 2019), I considered the tool's use and limitations to ensure its suitability for my research question. Steinke's work specifically emphasises the importance of understanding the subtests and adapting the assessment to different contexts. This body of work informed my use of the EGRA in my study, and guided my approach to interpreting the results. Dubeck and Gove

(2015) state that the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) serves to provide a reliable and valid baseline of early reading acquisition. EGRA is a diagnostic test that assesses Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) subcomponents of the Home and EFAL languages (Faber, 2021). All South African Foundation Phase teachers are encouraged to use it as a diagnostic test. Additionally, research by Pretorius & Klapwijk (2016) has highlighted the effectiveness of the EGRA in providing a baseline of early reading acquisition. They state that the goal of EGRA is to evaluate foundational reading skills in the early grades so that identified reading challenges may be provided with remediation in the curriculum.

I verified the availability of the EGRA in isiXhosa. The isiXhosa version of the EGRA test was provided by the district Foundation Phase subject advisor to all primary schools in the area, including my school (see Appendix F).

In my study, I aligned the EGRA subtests with the stages of reading development proposed by Gove and Wetterberg (2011). This allowed for the accurate assessment of learners' reading levels before and after the intervention, enabling a more comprehensive evaluation of the intervention's impact. The EGRA subtasks aligned with the stages of reading development as proposed by Gove and Wetterberg (2011), ensuring that all learners were accommodated according to their reading level and providing insight into each learner's specific reading stage.

To collect baseline data on the learners' reading levels, I administered the EGRA in isiXhosa to both the experimental (Grade 1A) and control classes (Grade 1B) in mid-April 2023 (pre-test) and late November 2023 (post-test). There was a seven month gap between the two tests.

To ensure consistent and efficient testing, I tested each learner orally on all EGRA sub-components, including letter names, letter sounds, word reading, passage reading and comprehension. The testing took approximately 3–4 minutes per learner. Appendix F provides an example of the sub-tasks used to collect reading data and determine competency levels. Testing took place in the mornings before school, during the normal reading time, break time, and after school for learners waiting for transport. I began with my own class and then tested the control class with the assistance of my colleague.

The time-intensive nature of testing each learner individually, which took three weeks to complete the pre-test phase, was a limitation of the test. However, the one-on-one testing allowed for an accurate assessment of each learner’s reading level, ensuring the integrity of the data. Appendix F shows the EGRA sub-tasks used for the test and Table 2 below illustrates the test schedule used to collect the data for both classes.

Instructions: use a slash (/) to indicate what the learner is capable of

Table 2 Test schedule example (Faber, 2021)

Learner’s name	Letter names	Letter sounding	Word reading	Passage reading	Reading comprehension
Benchmark	40	40	40	40	5
Maximum mark	40	40	80	53	5
Learner 1					
Learner 2					

Table 2 presents the EGRA test schedule, adapted from Faber (2021). It is important to note that while the maximum scores for each section are based on Faber’s recommendations, the word count for passage reading varies depending on the language. For this study, the isiXhosa version used a passage reading section with 53 words, rather than the 70 words shown in Table 2, See Appendix F (Passage reading) for the isiXhosa word count.

4.8.The role of a critical friend

A critical friend is defined as a “trusted person who is asked to join an action research project based on the qualities of knowledge, experience and skills” (Mat Noor & Shafee, 2020, p.6). For this study, I invited an experienced teacher who trains teachers using RtL pedagogy. She had knowledge and experience of the RtL pedagogy. My critical friend started teaching in 1992 in the Foundation Phase and has taught from Grades 1-3 in an isiZulu home language school. She started using RtL in 2012 in all Foundation Phase grades that she taught, and she continues to use the pedagogy to

date. Her role was very important as she would give constructive support and provide critical feedback on the data collected through the video-recorded RtL lessons (See Appendix H) an example of my critical friend's feedback on my RtL lesson.

I used feedback from my critical friend to analyse the process of my action research and teaching practice. In my reflective journal, I recorded how I did each step of the RtL cycle at each stage, how I felt that learners engaged with the lesson and what I felt were my own errors, such as content that I left out in the lesson. Writing in my reflective journal allowed me to reflect on my experiences from the lessons I conducted and therefore led me to understand how I could alter my activities. My reflective journal notes and my learning from my critical friend are described in Chapter 5.

4.9. Sampling

Sampling is a process of choosing the population that participates in the study, which could be a school, teachers, learners, and contexts (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). For example, in my school context, it is commonly known that we have an existing reading challenge among our learners, however, as an action researcher I could not collect data from all classes in my school. I chose to collect data from both Grade 1 isiXhosa classes, one of which is the class that I teach.

The researcher must be clear about the strategy they are going to use in their sampling. There are different strategies of sampling in research and in my study, I employed purposive sampling which is used in action research. According to Taherdoost (2016, p. 23), "purposive or judgement sampling is a strategy in which particular settings, persons or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that cannot be obtained from other choices". This is where the researcher chooses participants to include in the sample. For example, in my study I had to have myself as a participant, my 50 Grade 1A (experimental class) learners and the 50 Grade 1B learners from the other class in my school (control class) as a target for my study as the purpose was to improve isiXhosa reading competencies in Grade 1 by changing my practice, so this sample would serve the purpose of the study. The Grade 1B learners were taught by a different teacher and were required to sign consent as assent forms for ethical considerations. These classes both took part in the pre-test and post-test assessment as a control group who did not receive the RtL

teaching methodology but received the usual teaching and learning methods in use at the school.

Consequently, my participants were recruited in the two Grade 1 isiXhosa classrooms, and I asked for consent from parents since my learners are minors (see Appendix D). All the participants were made aware that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw any time should they feel the need to (see Appendix E).

4.10. Classroom action research process

Classroom action research (CAR) requires teachers to be determined to develop their enquiry in as few cycles as practicable (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). The study took place between April and November 2023 with each cycle comprising: Identifying and analysing an area of my teaching practice where improvement was needed, Planning and implementing an intervention strategy to address this problem, Evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention strategy, Reflecting on the findings and deciding on further action. In the sections that follow, I will provide a detailed account of each cycle, including the specific actions taken, the data gathered, and the findings derived from the research. The aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of my CAR process and its impact on the learners' reading capabilities in Grade 1 isiXhosa classes. This study followed four cycles of action research as shown in Figure 2.

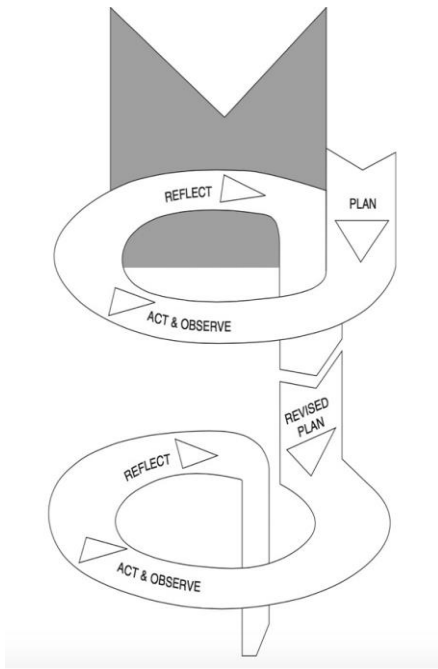


Figure 3: Spiral model of action research cycles (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007, p. 278)

It was made up of four action research cycles, during which I applied the RtL stages of teaching reading. The stages that make up the RtL cycle comprise 1. Preparing for reading, 2. Detailed reading, 3. Sentence construction, 4. Spelling, 5. Sentence making, and 2. Joint construction. The RtL stages were done in the action research cycle. The RtL cycle works similarly to the CAR process in that it enables the researcher to reflect and revise the plan as well as improving it. Based on Kemmis and McTaggart's spiral model, each CAR cycle in this study is made up of four stages, namely: (1) planning, (2) action, (3) observation and (4) reflection. The purpose of this CAR was to improve my teaching practice by adopting the RtL intervention. I hoped that the action research would enhance my learners' reading abilities. Below is a description of what was done in each stage of the CAR.

4.10.1 Classroom action research 1st cycle

1. Planning

In the planning stage, I prepared the lesson for the first cycle. Preparing included selecting an appropriate isiXhosa text, making the teaching aids for the 1st cycle (see descriptions in Chapter 5 for examples of the sentence strips in (Figure 7), spelling word cards, and charts in Chapter 5).

2. Action

Taking action included implementing the RtL scaffolding interaction cycle. The RtL cycle was implemented over four days and not in one day, as it had to have time allocated for the cycle to be completed. Below is a description of each stage and the time taken to complete it indicated in brackets.

RtL stage 1: Preparing for reading (10 minutes)

This is the first stage of the Rt2L cycle, and it is where the teacher gives some “background knowledge” of the text to help learners comprehend the text in general terms (RtLSA, 2015). This is done through discussions and questions; it encourages learners to engage and relate with the text before it is read in detail. In doing so, it gives them a general understanding that they can link to their prior knowledge and personal life experiences. The teacher gives an “oral step by step summary” of what will happen in the text (RtLSA, 2015). As the teacher, I explained difficult words and concepts during this stage and provide synonyms when necessary to help my learners understand the text. I also read aloud to my learners (Rose, 2005).

RtL stage 2: Detailed reading (20 minutes)

During this stage the teacher summarises each sentence and paraphrases it to convey its meaning to the learners. The teacher then reads the text together with learners a few times, pointing at words so that learners can see the words they are reading. This stage allows all learners to read the text with full understanding and correctness and gives the basis for the third stage (Rose, 2015). Learners are asked cues which they answer, and are affirmed when responding. This encourages learners to engage in the reading process.

RtL stage 3: Sentence making (60 minutes)

Here the teacher writes selected sentences on cardboard strips from the detailed reading passage. Learners read the sentences pointing at words as they read them. Then the teacher uses cues for learners to identify and cut out words from the sentence strips. The learners then jumble up the sentence and reorder them to the original structure. The words from cut up sentences are used to make syllables’ patterns and letters, practicing pronunciation, spelling, and writing of words using the

system of looking, covering, writing, and checking, then writing again until they are correct. They start with the pattern and then the whole word.

RtL Stage 4: Joint rewriting (60 minutes)

During this stage the teacher guides the class through joint reading of the detailed reading passage (RtLSA, 2015). The teacher then guides the learners to brainstorm how they can change each sentence following the provided pattern and using alternative characters, situations, and events. Learners share their ideas, and the teacher writes them on the chart. This process involves all learners, and the teacher writes what learners have come agree on from their brainstorming. Learners then take turns to write new sentences on the board with the help of the teacher and their peers (RtLSA, 2015).

RtL Stage 5: Individual rewriting (60 minutes)

During this stage, learners practice the task they did in joint rewriting, the difference is that they do it on their own.

RtL Stage 6: Independent writing

In this stage, learners write daily after the RtL intervention. Learners write independently in this stage using what they have learnt during the intervention and their piece of writing can be assessed (RtLSA, 2015).

3. Observation

In this study I was both a participant and a researcher, therefore I observed the learners while video recordings were taken during the lessons and also watched the same videos to observe my lessons using the RtL method and how my learners reacted to this new approach. I received feedback from my critical friends, who watched my recorded lessons. Receiving feedback aided in the revised lesson planning as the feedback was detailed and was done in each step of my RtL cycles.

4. Reflection

Reflection is a very important stage in action research because it allows the researcher to look back and learn what they can change, revise and redo. This stage of the research cycle is critical because it is the stage that leads to the researcher's decision on whether to conduct another cycle (Fadhilawati, 2016). The RtL strategy works like

the action research model in that it has stages that can be revisited if necessary. In this study, I reflected on my practice through watching the video recorded lessons in my class, using the reflective journal, and seeking feedback from my critical friend.

My CAR cycle 1 included two RtL lessons. After the action research cycle 1, I realised that some learners were struggling with writing new sentences following the note taking and joint construction pattern, thus the AR cycle 2 was necessary for me to revise the stages. After my reflection journal notes, observation of the video recorded lessons and my critical friend's feedback, I also realized that I had not done the sentence making and joint construction stage properly during instruction time, therefore I revised my lesson plan and made changes accordingly. The cycle 1s reflection led me to revise the plan and move to the next cycle, as shown in Figure 2.

4.10.2 Further Action research cycles

The second cycle happened as a result of reflecting on the 1st cycle, which highlighted that a second cycle was necessary to refine the lesson planning and to improve my practice of sentence making. The revised plan in the second cycle led to the third and fourth cycle which consisted of 10 weeks which ran from July to September 2023. The same RtL stages and CAR cycle were repeated. The fourth cycle ended in September 2023 with the administration of a post-test for the two Grade 1 classes. The post-test was administered the same way as the pre-test. However, the time frame was shorter for the post-test as we only spent two weeks administering the post test. The Grade 1B control class teacher assisted me with her class's post-test administration.

4.11. Data analysis

Data analysis is essential to credible qualitative research (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).. In this action research study, I used the EGRA as a pre-test to measure the reading level of my learners before starting with the RtL intervention and a post-test after the RtL intervention (see Appendix F). Analysis of the quantitative data was done using descriptive statistics.

The qualitative data were the recorded lessons, my written reflections and my conversations with my critical friend. I did not transcribe the recorded lessons as this would have been too time-consuming. It was sufficient to watch them and make notes

of my scaffolding practices and the learners' responses. My critical friend also watched the lessons and provided oral feedback through Whatsapp voice notes and telephone conversations. I made notes and used these reflection to plan the following action research cycle (see Appendix F).

4.12. Ethical issues

In all research there are ethical considerations that should to be adhered to. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014, p. 65) "ethics has to do with behaviour that is considered right or wrong". In other words, ethics is about what is acceptable and unacceptable. Ethics are considered to ensure that research is beneficial and not harmful to the participants. They are particularly significant in research that includes people and animals (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). There are three ethical principles, according to Durrheim and Wassenaar (2002), and they are as follows: autonomy, non-maleficence, and beneficence.

According to Cohen et al., (2018, p. 122), "the principle of informed consent concerns autonomy and it rises from the participant's right to freedom and self-determination". Therefore, autonomy can be defined as the right to choose to participate or not to participate in the study. What this means ethically is that the researcher must inform the participants what the research is about, request them to take part but clearly explain that it is a voluntary decision and that if and when they would like to withdraw, they are free to do so.

Additionally, I asked for consent from parents and guardians and explicitly explained that if a learner or the parent of a learner in my class or the control class did not wish to take part in the action research, they would not be penalised in any way. They could also withdraw from the study at any time. The consent form and learner assent forms (see Appendices D and E) were provided to all parents or guardians of learners in Grade 1A (experimental class) and Grade 1B (control class). All parents provided consent for their children to take part and none withdrew from the study (see Appendix D and E). This indicated the parents' support and willingness to improve their children's reading.

Non-maleficence means "do no harm" (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 66). This means that participants should not be harmed because of the study, with harm being

emotional, social or physical. It also means that participants' identities and confidentiality should be treated with respect. To ensure the protection of learners' identities and privacy, all classroom recordings will be securely deleted upon the completion of the study. The recordings were only viewed by me and my critical friend and were not made public.

This means that participants know what is to be published and they approve of the process. No learners were named in the study and the name of the school was changed for ethical reasons.

Bertram and Christiansen (2014, p. 67) suggest that “the research should be of benefit, either directly to the research participants, or more broadly to other researchers or society at large”. Beneficence is therefore how the research profits the participants. My study aimed to support my development as a teacher, as the aim was to improve my practice in teaching reading in Grade 1. My professional development will benefit my Grade 1 learners in forthcoming years.

A quasi-experimental approach requires one class of learners to receive the intervention and one other class not to receive the intervention. My hope was that my colleague would be willing to learn from the RtL strategies and start using these in her class too. A quasi-experimental approach requires one class of learners to receive the intervention and one other class not to receive the intervention. My hope was that my colleague would be willing to learn from the RtL strategies and start using these in her class too. This design raises an ethical concern about the control group, as it may not receive the same potential benefits as the experimental group (Cohen et al., 2018). To address this concern, I ensured transparency with the parents of learners in the control class, explaining the design and offering future support for their children's learning (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Furthermore, I intended to disseminate the study's benefits to my colleague, the educational community, and beyond, thereby extending the impact of this intervention beyond the confines of my study. Overall, the ethical considerations underpinning my research were central to my methodology and design, with the welfare and rights of the participants remaining at the forefront of my study.

4.13. Trustworthiness

In my study I strengthened dependability by keeping a paper trail and documentation of all the study steps and making it available for transparency to my critical friend, my supervisor and parents, who were allowed to view the paper trail upon request. Triangulation was used in this study through the engagement with one critical friend who is an RtL facilitator, video recording of my reading lessons, reflective journalling, and testing. McNiff and Whitehead (2009) describe triangulation as a procedure “in which the data is looked at from a range of perspectives” (p. 179). In order to enhance the quality of the research and of my reflections, my critical friend provided feedback and comments on my practice. She watched my lesson videos and gave feedback on each lesson, which I used as a guide for my next lessons and CAR cycles. The comments from the critical friend strengthened the trustworthiness of the research. The voice notes and emails from my critical friend were transcribed and attached to the critical friend section at the end of each action research cycle’s description (See an example in Chapter 5.4.2). These original documents were kept in a secure folder for reference, providing a comprehensive paper trail of my research process.

My positionality in the study was important as the research took place in my classroom, and as the class teacher, I was both a participant and a researcher. This had the potential to cause some power-related issues where the learners felt compelled to take part in my study. To mitigate any potential power-related issues, I assured my learners that participation in the study was voluntary and that no one would be treated negatively for not taking part, nor would they suffer any consequences for withdrawing. I made these assurances known to the learners throughout the research process to foster an environment of transparency and openness.

4.14. Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the methodology and design of the study. This study generated both qualitative and quantitative data. It was situated within the critical paradigm as it sought ways to bring about change in my teaching practice and my learners’ isiXhosa reading competencies in Grade One. This chapter also unpacked the data generation methods used in the study, which included classroom observations using videos,

reflective journals, and testing. Feedback from critical friends deepened my reflections. Sampling strategies and size was discussed in this chapter, a brief description of data analysis was presented. Lastly, ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness were clarified. The next chapter discusses the results of the CAR cycles.

CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION OF PRE-TEST RESULTS AND DATA FROM ACTION RESEARCH CYCLES

5.1.Introduction

The previous chapter described the research design and methodology employed in this study. I needed to have a clear understanding of the research problem and I did this by generating data through a reading pre-test using the EGRA tool, and video-recorded lessons to observe my teaching practice. This chapter presents and discusses the data generated through the pre-test of two Grade 1 classes at my primary school. This chapter also presents a description of each lesson and each lesson's analysis is presented drawing on data from my reflective journal, and critical friend feedback.

5.2. Grade 1 learners' reading competencies

In April 2023, 100 Grade 1 learners participated in an oral pre-test to establish their reading skills and operational level. I used the isiXhosa EGRA sub-tests as a pre-test to measure learners' reading competencies (see Appendix F). The CAPS document states that learners enter school having acquired a lot of vocabulary in their home language and can speak it fluently (DBE, 2011). While the CAPS document posits that learners enter school with a strong grasp of their home language, this assumption has been challenged by some researchers who highlight the negative impact of poverty and limited exposure to the home language on early language development (Hoffman & Li, 2017). The oral vocabulary that learners acquire in their home language becomes a foundation that teachers build on at school in teaching reading to the first graders. Some learners come to Grade 1 with the knowledge of alphabets as well as sounds, some come able to read words while others come with no reading knowledge at all. The EGRA pre-test placed each learner at a reading level by assessing their letter-to-sound, word, and passage reading skills, including comprehension questions (Ralaingita & Wetterberg, 2011).

The learners had to identify and read the letters, sounds, and words in isiXhosa as this is the LOLT in the first grade at my school. The order in which EGRA is set follows the requirements of CAPS (DBE, 2011), which states tasks must be set using low-order questions (recognising letters and their sounds), middle-order questions (recognising and reading words) as well as high-order questions (reading the passage). The pre-test data was then used to provide data that would answer part of the first research question: What are the isiXhosa reading competencies of my Grade 1 learners, as measured in the EGRA pre-test and post-test results?

The next sub-section focuses on the analysis of the pre-test results.

5.3. Pre-test results

The EGRA test was administered to two isiXhosa Grade 1 classes, namely Grade 1A and Grade 1B. As I teach the Grade 1A class, this class became the RtL class (experimental class) of the study and Grade 1B became a non-RtL class (control class). The following sub-sections show the reading competencies results according to the EGRA test tool.

5.3.1. Letter and sound level

The total number of marks for the letter and sound sub-test is 40. The learners were categorised into levels depending on the number of sounds that they could identify. Those who scored between (0–13 Marks) were categorised into Level 1; Level 2 means achieving 14–27 Marks and Level 3 (28–40 Marks).

Table 3 shows that a similar number of learners in both classes were at level 3 of the letter and sound level. The learners in the two classes differed in the percentage of learners who were at level 2. The control class had 38% of learners at level 2, while the experimental class had only 22% of learners at level 2. There were more learners (40%) at level 1 in the experimental class than in the control class (22%). Thus, overall, at the pre-test, the control class learners showed a better grasp of letters and sounds.

Table 3: Letter and sound level results for RtL and non-RtL classes

PRE-TEST	RtL CLASS (experimental)	NON-RtL CLASS (control)
Total number of learners	50	50
Total test marks	40	40
Letter & sound level		
Level 1 (0–13 Marks)	20/50 (40%)	11/50 (22%)
Level 2 (14-27 Marks)	11/50 (22%)	19/50 (38%)
Level 3 (28-40 Marks)	19/50 (38%)	20/50 (40%)

5.3.2. Word reading and passage reading

In relation to reading words and then passages, the EGRA tool was used to find the levels of the learners in both the RtL and non-RtL classes.

In Table 3, the word reading pre-test results show that 84% of learners were at level 1 in the RtL class, while the non-RtL class had 76% of learners at level 1. A slightly higher number in the RtL class were at this level. In level 2, there were 6% of learners in the RtL class while there were 14% in the non-RtL class. Level 2 had an 8% difference between the two classes, with more learners in the non-RtL class at level 2. At level 3, the RtL and non-RtL classes had the same number and percentage of learners (10%).

Table 4: Word reading and passage reading level results for RtL and non-RtL classes.

PRE-TEST	RtL CLASS (experimental)	NON-RtL CLASS (control)
Total number of learners	50	50
Word reading test marks	80	80
Level 1 (0–27 Marks)	42/50 (84%)	38/50 (76%)
Level 2 (28-54 Marks)	3/50 (6%)	7/50 (14%)
Level 3 (55-80 Marks)	5/50 (10%)	5/50 (10%)
Passage reading total marks	53	53
Level 1 (0–18 Marks)	46/50 (92%)	48/50 (96%)
Level 2 (19–36 Marks)	1/50 (2%)	2/50 (4%)
Level 3 (37–53 Marks)	3/50 (6%)	0%

The passage reading results in Table 4 show that 92% of learners read at level 1 in the RtL class, while 96% of learners read at level 1 in the non-RtL class. At level 2, 2% of learners ranked in this category in the RtL class while 4% of learners were identified in the non-RtL class. At level 3, 6% were in the RtL class while 0% were in the non-RtL class. These results will be compared to the post-test results in Chapter 6.

Table 4: Passage reading level results for RtL and non-RtL classes

The pre-test results make it clear that almost all the Grade 1 learners in the school were operating at Level 1 for passage reading, which means they could not understand the meaning of the sentences. While word reading was slightly better, still three-quarters of the learners were at level 1, which means that they could only recognise up to 27 of the 80 words they were given. For the letter and sound test, only 39 of the 100 Grade 1s could recognise 28 - 40 of the letters. The test results show that 33 out of 100 Grade 1 learners were not able to read beyond letter and sound level 1. These results supported my sense that the Grade 1 learners did not

have sufficient letter and word recognition knowledge three months into their Grade 1 year.

Table 5 Comprehension questions for RtL and non-RtL classes.

PRE-TEST	RtL CLASS 1A (experimental)	NON-RtL CLASS 1B (control)
Total number of learners	50	50
Comprehension question marks	5	5
Level 1 (0-1 Marks)	45/50 (90%)	49/50 (98%)
Level 2 (2-3 Marks)	5/50 (10%)	1/50 (2%)
Level 3 (4-5 Marks)	0/50 (0%)	0/50 (0%)

In table 5, the comprehension question pre-test results demonstrate a small difference in performance between the RtL class and the non-RtL class. Neither class had any learners who achieved 4-5 marks. The RtL class had 90% of learners scoring between 0 and 1 marks, while only 10% scored between 2 and 3 marks. This suggests that they are struggling to understand the material. Similarly, the non-RtL class had 98% of learners scoring between 0 and 1 marks and only 2% scoring between 2 and 3 marks. These pre-test results highlight a pressing need to address comprehension issues.

5.4. Action research cycles

This section presents a detailed description and analysis of the classroom observation data through the action research cycles of the RtL class.

5.4.1. Action research cycle 1

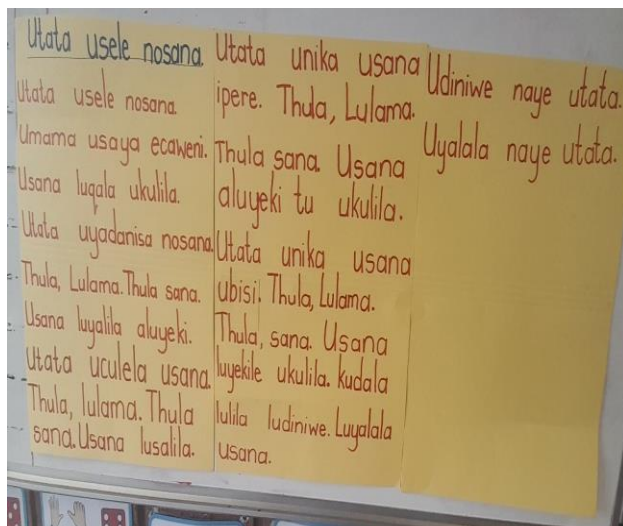
4.5.1. Action research step 1: Planning

This lesson's purpose was for learners to understand, enjoy, and acquire basic reading skills with the introduction of a new word "Thula" (Keep quiet). The selected story was to allow learners to read for enjoyment. I selected an isiXhosa story appropriate for Grade 1 learners entitled "Utata usele nosana." (The father is with the baby). I planned the RtL cycle to be completed in four lessons, however, it took five days. I used



Figure 4 Scan of the book that we read this lesson. Utata usele nosana. (The father is with the baby).

sentence strips, spelling words and a chart for sentence making. Preparing included handwriting the story on a big chart so that the words were bigger and clearer for the whole class. We used the book for picture reading for the 1st RtL stage, see Figure 4 below.



English translation: title: The father is left with the baby.

The father is left with the baby. The mother has gone to church. The baby is starting to cry. The father is dancing with the baby. Keep quiet Lulama, keep quiet baby. The baby continues to cry. The father is singing for the baby, keep quiet Lulama, keep quiet baby. The father gives a baby a pear. Keep quiet Lulama, keep quiet baby. The baby does not stop crying. The father gives the baby some milk. Keep quiet Lulama, keep quiet baby. The baby has stopped crying. The baby cried for a long time; it is tired. The baby is falling asleep. The father is also tired. The father is also sleeping.

Figure 5: The story written out on a chart, with the English translation.

In Table 6, 7, 8 and 9, I present a description of the action, observation and reflection steps of Action Research cycle 1. The left-hand column provides a description of my practice (from the recorded lessons), and the right-hand column provides my reflections on the lesson and the reflections of my critical friend.

Table 6 Action research cycle 1: Table describing the action, observation and reflection steps.

Action Research Step 2 & 3: Action and Observation	Action Research Step 4: Reflection
Text: Utata usele nosana. (The father is with the baby).	
<p>9:00 to 9:30 (30 minutes) Monday – 22/05/ 2023</p> <p>RtL stage 1: Preparing for reading.</p> <p>I sat learners on the carpet and first discussed the people who look after children at home. I asked learners to share the different people that look after them, and they gave answers. I then asked “Ngoobani abantu abasala neentsana ekhaya?” (Who looks after babies at home?). I affirmed learners who gave answers. Then I linked their answers to give them the background to our story, using phrases like “Just like we have people who look after us at home, our story today is about a dad who looks after a baby while mommy has gone to church”. After providing the background of the story, I did picture reading which was discussing what was happening in each picture, this included showing learners the characters in the story and introducing their names.</p>	<p>The 1st and 2nd RtL stages were done on the same day. This part of the lesson went very well. Learners actively participated and gave answers orally, this part of the lesson showed me that even the weaker learners were excited to share their experiences as questions were asked that linked to their experiences. This particularly made me feel happy as I saw my learners getting excited to participate with enthusiasm, even those who usually display shyness, and they all seemed excited especially when affirmed. At this stage they were actively involved, and all wanting to talk and share their views.</p> <p>Managing 50 learners during this stage meant inviting them to the carpet and making space for everyone to sit and be a part of the story. I sat on a chair and read with them. I observed that learners enjoyed moving away from desks and coming to learn in a different and cosier space; they were excited to sit on the</p>

<p>RtL stage 2: Detailed reading</p> <p>I summarised and read sentence by sentence and then read the whole story together with learners. I asked learners cues like “Ekugqibeleni kwesivakalisi kukho igama elisixelela ukuba uyephi umama” (At the end of the sentence there is a word that tell us where the mother went...), learners answered “Ecaweni” (To church).</p> <p>Next, I asked “Ekuqaleni kwesivakalisi kukho igama elisixelela ukuba ngubani odanisa nosana” (At the beginning of the sentence there is a word that tells us who is dancing with the baby...), learners answered “Utata” (The father). Then “Ekuqaleni kwesivakalisi sesihlanu kukho igama elisixelela ukuba utheni utata xa usana lulila” (At the beginning of the 5th sentence, there is a word that tells us what the father said to the crying baby), then learners answered “Thula” (Keep quiet).</p> <p>This allowed learners to comprehend the text better.</p>	<p>carpet. I did not experience any problems during this stage, learners’ attention to the detailed reading was captured. They all read and followed the reading strategy.</p> <p>While reading on the carpet with learners was not formally part of RtL pedagogy, I adopted this style to create a more personal and engaging reading experience for learners. This strategy enabled me to obtain closer contact, allowing for reinforcement and support as we read and discussed the story together.</p> <p>The detailed reading together went well, learners engaged with the text as I pointed, and we both read.</p> <p>When I watched the recording of my reading lesson that recorded each RtL step in my practice, I noticed that I got a bit overexcited in these first two stages, to an extent where I dragged it out and spent a longer period on it than planned.</p>

<p>9:00 to 10:00 (1 hour) Tuesday – 23/05/2023</p> <p>9:00 to 9:30 (30 minutes) Wednesday – 24/5/ 2023</p> <p>RtL stage 3: Sentence making.</p> <p>In this stage, I selected one sentence for learners to read from the sentence strips “utata usele nosana” (The father is with the baby). Learners read this sentence, pointing at each word. Here I assisted learners who could not read the sentence on their own, by holding their hand pointing and reading out loud with them until they were able to do so on their own. I put learners in pairs, each pair got one sentence strip to work with and I instructed them to then cut each word from the sentence, telling them which word to cut. Taking turns, learners jumbled the words and then put them in the right order again.</p>	<p>This part of the RtL cycle took very long, 90 minutes in total. The lesson overlapped to the next day which covered spelling and sentence writing. Learners were keen to participate. However, I noticed that a lot of learners were struggling during sentence making. After watching the recording of my lesson, I observed that I had not given them the cues to identify the words to be cut out and instead told them which words to cut out, which confused some learners. This showed me that I did not do this step completely the right way. I also noticed that I struggled with how to support all 50 learners at once as I went to each learner who needed help. My assistant who was also taking videos of the lesson helped in reiterating instructions and managing the class as I struggled to manage the whole class and assist learners at the same time at this stage. Many of my weak learners were excited to take part but I was overwhelmed with the number that needed me to get close and help them all at once. In this process, I observed that learners who could do it on their own ended up losing focus as I was helping certain other individuals. Some learners interacted with others during sentence making and some did not, I learned that I needed to find another way to engage all of them and keep them focused.</p>
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Spelling

I selected the following four words “usana, usele, utata, umama”, broke them down to syllables, clapped the syllables with learners, and then asked learners to write those words on their whiteboards.

-usana= u/sa/na

-usele= u/se/le

-utata= u/ta/ta

-umama= u/ma/ma

English translation

1. Usana – The baby
2. Usele – Is left.
3. Utata – father
4. Umama – mother

They wrote these words three times on their whiteboards.

Learners practised spelling and pronunciation by looking at the word, covering it, writing, checking, and writing it again.

- Learners engaged enthusiastically with the pronunciation and spelling, self-correcting as they covered and wrote, and checked again. One learner said, “Imnandi le game, Miss Ndengezi”. (This game is fun, Miss Ndengezi.)

<p>Sentence writing</p> <p>We read the sentence strips again and learners wrote the whole sentence on their whiteboards.</p>	<p>-This was a challenging part for my learners as they struggled to write the whole sentence on their own. After watching the recording, I observed that I skipped the part where I was meant to remove key words and get learners to fill the missing words in a sentence.</p>
<p>30 minutes 9:00- 9:30 (30 mins) Thursday – 25/5/2023</p> <p>RtL stage 4: Joint construction</p> <p>We read the text again but I struggled to execute Joint construction with the learners, so I did not continue with this stage.</p>	<p>This part did not work, trying to get learners to understand the brainstorming process to come up with our own story was just chaotic. A good number of my learners did not understand my instruction, and upon reflecting on the recording I observed that as this was my first lesson using the RtL, I was unable to do joint construction practically with my learners. I felt bad and frustrated as I felt that my inability to instruct and guide this part well was causing confusion for my learners. I recognized that I needed to learn more about the entire RtL cycle and especially joint construction. So, I requested my RtL trainer and my critical friend to guide me, and I also watched videos of teachers using RtL pedagogy.</p>

5.4.2. Critical friend feedback on the 1st cycle

My critical friend was an experienced foundation phase teacher who had practiced RtL for many years, provided valuable feedback and support throughout my RtL implementation. Our discussions were virtual, as she was in KZN and I was in Gauteng. During our discussions, my critical friend shared insights based on her own experience and recommended additional resources, including the work of Taylor et al., (2017), which provided me with further guidance in implementing the RtL framework in my classroom.

After my critical friend watched my recorded lessons, she gave me feedback such as follows. She applauded my good use of synonyms and learner affirmation and participation in this lesson. She also raised several aspects that needed correction in the lesson. Firstly, she emphasised that the text chosen must link to the curriculum components, for example, the text must link to the phonics, language use, writing and vocabulary, and punctuation of the week in Grade 1. She also noted that in sentence making, I should not just tell learners which words to cut out, but give them cues, in order for them to identify the words. Lastly, she advised that I should stand in front of the class and engage all learners and scaffold as needed (See Appendix H). Through these discussions with my critical friend, I gained a deeper understanding of RtL and its potential in the classroom.

5.4.3. Lessons learned from AR cycle 1

Based on the feedback from my critical friend, I planned several improvements in the second cycle. These improvements included a greater focus on sentence-making and joint construction, more effective classroom management, and ensuring that my stories linked to all language components. I also planned to make the intervention strategy more realistic and feasible for my classroom context, with a special focus on lesson timing.

5.5. Action research cycle 2

5.6.1. Action research step 1: Planning

My reflection and critical friend feedback on the AR cycle 1 showed that I needed to revise the RtL stage 3 and RtL stage 4. The videos showed that at stage 3, I skipped giving learners cues in sentence making, and learners displayed confusion and struggled in this part of the RtL cycle. I also encountered a challenge with assisting learners as my class had 50 learners and many of them needed close help from me during this sentence making; this therefore taught me that I needed to find a better way to engage all learners and scaffold them accordingly while I do not leave any of them bored and unfocused.

Stages 3 and 4 took too long in the AR cycle 1 and upon reflecting, I realised that I needed to plan and time my lessons so that the period of my intervention strategy (RtL) is realistic for my classroom context considering that there are other learning areas to attend to each day. The RtL stage 4 in the cycle 1 did not work at all and thus needed to be revised. My critical friend's feedback guided me to planning it out in more detail. I felt that I needed more practice on the entire RtL practice, which I did after Cycle 1. To prepare for cycles 2, 3, and 4, I scheduled virtual practice sessions with my critical friend using Zoom. During these sessions, I would present the lesson as if I were in the classroom, and she would observe and provide feedback. These practice runs allowed me to estimate the lesson time and adjust my pacing, ensuring that the intervention strategy was realistic for my classroom context. Through this process, I gained valuable insight from my critical friend, which I then incorporated into my teaching. In summary, the key lessons from the CAR Cycle 1 are planning in detail and following that plan, as well as practising presenting a lesson before taking it to class.

Thus, for CAR Cycle 2, I planned to have a clear purpose for the lesson and it was for Grade 1 isiXhosa learners to understand, the "B" sound, identify it, sound it correctly, build words and sentences using the "b" sound and read short and long sentences fluently. I selected an isiXhosa text appropriate for Grade 1 learners, entitled "Izinto ezenziwa ngabantwana" (Things children do). I planned all RtL stages for the three lessons. I used sentence strips, spelling words and a chart for sentence making. I

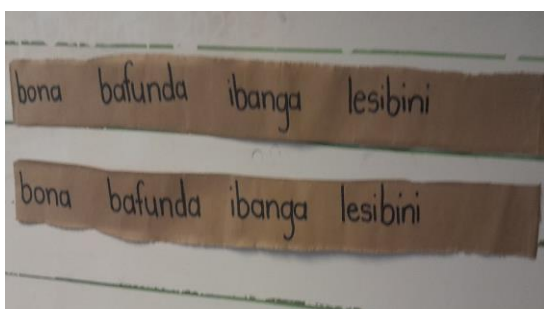
followed the above CAR cycle stages and implemented the RtL scaffolding cycle to revise the plan for the second cycle and others that follow.

Below are figures of the resources used in the cycle 2 lesson. Figure 6 is the cover of the book used in Action research cycle 2 with the English translation of the title of the story. Figure 7 is an example of a sence strips used and their English translation. Figure 8 is an example of spelling words used and their English translation and figure 9 is joint construction of new sentences.



English translation
Things children do.

Figure 6: The cover of the book used in Action Research Cycle 2.



English translation
They are doing grade 2.

Figure 7: Sentence strips used and English translation.

<u>English translation</u>
They
Studying
Grade
The second
You count.
Busi



Figure 8: Spelling words used with English translation

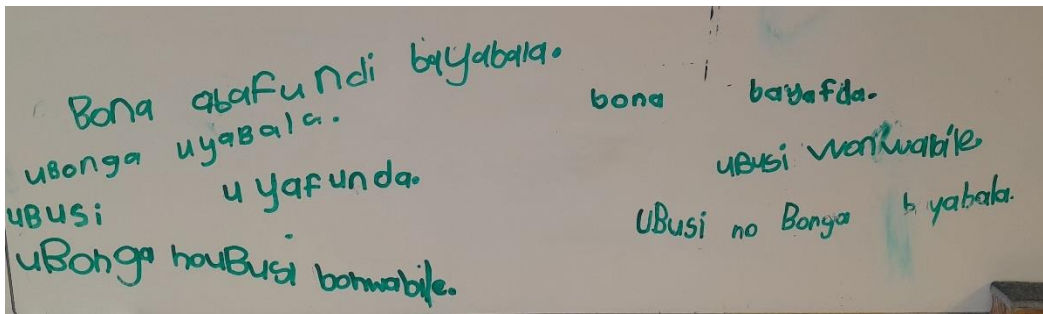


Figure 9: Joint construction of new sentences.

Table 7: Action research cycle 2: Table describing the action, observation and reflection steps.

Action Research Step 2 & 3: Action and Observation	Action Research Step 4: Reflection
Text: Izinto ezenziwa ngabantwana (Things children do)	
<p>9:00 to 9:30 (30 minutes) Monday – 24/07/2023</p> <p>RtL stage 1: Preparing for reading.</p> <p>I sat learners on the carpet and asked them what we were doing at that time, they answered with answers such as “We are seated on the carpet and the teacher is about to read us a story”. We then discussed things that they generally do at school, learners gave answers, and I used positive reinforcement a lot when learners responded. I linked the discussion and their answers to the introduction of the text using sentences like “Just like we sit on the carpet and read and listen to a story in class, the story is about children and what they do in class and in general”. After providing the background of the story, I did picture reading discussion of what was happening in each picture, I then introduced the characters that were in the story “Learners and the teacher”.</p> <p>RtL stage 2: Detailed reading</p>	<p>The 1st and 2nd RtL stages were done on the same day. Learners were participating and gave answers orally. After watching cycle 1 video, I observed that this stage followed the allocated time (30 minutes), and I did not get carried away. I stuck to time and moved on to the detailed reading, which allowed us to use time wisely. It went well.</p>

<p>I summarised and read the story sentence by sentence and then read together with learners. I asked learners questions like “ekugqibeleni kwesivakalisi kukho igama elisixelela ukuba uyephi umama” (At the end of the sentence there is a word that tell us where the mother went). Next, we see...” “Then”. This allowed learners to comprehend the text better.</p>	<p>-The detailed reading together went well, learners engaged with the text as I pointed, and we all read aloud.</p>
<p>30 minutes 9:00 to 9:30 (30 mins) Thursday – 27/07/2023 RtL stage 4: Joint construction We read the text again and I asked each group to discuss among themselves and to come up with sentences following the pattern of the read text. Fig. 9 shows sentences that learners formulated in groups and one learner from each group wrote on the board.</p>	<p>- This part went better than the first time. However, after watching my recorded lesson and reading my RtL lesson plan, I observed that I did not I let the class brainstorm ideas and change the text together, allowing a volunteer to be the scribe while the class tells him or her what to write on the board. Instead, I instructed learners to come up with one sentence per group and choose one learner to write the sentence on the board. I noticed that this caused exclusion of certain learners. There was confusion as when each learner from a group went to write on the board, we lost the attention of some learners from other groups. I felt that it was because they were excluded in each</p>

	<p>sentence and maybe interested in their sentence only. This caused frustration for me as I had to focus on many places at once, which was to help the sentence building and manage discipline of learners who were losing focus. I only realised when I watched the recorded lesson. After this reflection I observed that my second attempt of joint construction went better than the 1st attempt but still needed improvement on my side. I realised that I needed more practice in doing joint construction. I watched more videos and planned my RtL lesson and presented it to my critical friend a few days before I delivered it to my learners.</p>
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5.6.2. Critical friend feedback on AR cycle 2

My critical friend watched the video recordings of my teaching, and she sent voice notes giving me feedback on the lesson. Then she called me to discuss her observations of my recorded RtL lesson. She complimented the incorporation of all curriculum components in the lesson, like the emphasis of the “b” sound, which was the sound of the week. She pointed out that the text was a good choice and it related to the content of the week. She noted that sentence-making had improved and that I had used cues to guide learners. She advised me to increase the font of the text that was read with learners and make it bigger so that learners could see the words I was pointing at during detailed reading.

My critical friend noted that I needed to practice joint construction the right way. She gave me more explanations on the joint construction stage over the phone and sent me videos to watch before planning the next cycle. I watched the videos of joint construction and followed them and her notes to plan the next cycle. The key learning area was to clearly write what exactly I was going to say and do first and follow the lesson plan for the next cycle in joint construction.

The CAR cycle 2 taught me to change my lesson planning strategy and make it clearer for cycle 3, mentioning everything I was going to do and say in the joint construction. In order not to forget the structure and detail during the lesson, I highlighted specific sentences to use when presenting each stage. From my reflections and critical friend’s feedback, I revised my lesson and prepared another RtL lesson using a different text.

5.7. Action research cycle 3

4.7.1. Action research step 1: Planning

My previous reading lesson showed me that I needed to refine my joint construction stage instruction. Planning for another RtL cycle included RtL training and practice, with the training given by my critical friend who trains teachers using RtL. Planning also included choosing a text, writing the story/ text on a big chart in a large font, preparing sentence strips, spelling word and a revised RtL lesson plan for the text

“Abantwana bayacoca” (Children are cleaning). The purpose of this lesson was to teach and emphasise the “C” sound and use it in a text as well as to teach correct letter formation and spelling of words that have the “c” sound.

Below are figures of the resources used in the cycle 3 lesson. Figure 10 is the “C” sound emphasised in the lesson, while figure 11 is the cover of the book used and the English translation of the story. Lastly, Figure 12 is story written out in large print in isiXhosa.



The ‘C’ sound emphasised in this lesson.

Figure 10: The ‘C’ sound emphasised in this lesson.



English translation

Children are cleaning.

Cikizwa and Celiwe want to clean. What do you want to clean? Asked their mother. We can clean our room or the church, answered Cikizwa. Cikizwa is cleaning the church. Celiwe is cleaning their bedroom. You can come clean too, said Celiwe to their mother. Very good, you have cleaned well, said their mother.

Figure 11: Cover of the book and English translation of the story.

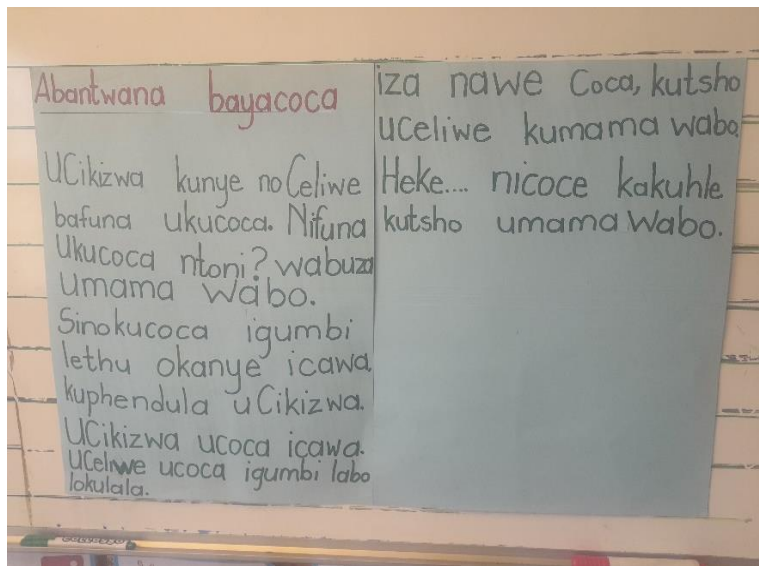


Figure 12: Story written out in large print in isiXhosa.

Table 8: Action research cycle 3: Table describing the action, observation and reflection steps.

Action Research Step 2 & 3: Action and Observation	Action Research Step 4: Reflection
Text: Abantwana bayacoca (Children are cleaning)	
<p>9:00 to 9:30 (30 minutes) Monday- 07/08/ 2023</p> <p>RtL stage 1: Preparing for reading.</p> <p>I sat learners on the carpet asked them “Who keeps our classroom clean and whose responsibility is it to keep our space clean?” and learners gave answers. I linked their answers and discussions to give background and introduction of the story, introduced the characters in the story “Cikizwa”. I discussed each picture with learners, talking about what was happening in each picture in the story. This gave learners an understanding of what was happening in each page and picture of the story.</p> <p>RtL stage 2: Detailed reading</p> <p>Here I summarised and read sentence by sentence and then read together with learners. I asked learners cues like “Ekugqibeleni kwesivakalisi kukho igama elisixelela ukuba uyephi umama” (At the end of the sentence there is a word that tell us where the mother went), “Next we see...” “Then”. This allowed learners to comprehend the text better. Below is the text we read.</p>	<p>The 1st and 2nd RtL stages were done on the same day. Learners were participating and gave answers orally. Learners were confident to share their answers. It went well.</p> <p>The detailed reading went well, learners seemed to have become used to the RtL cycle and engaged with the text enthusiastically as I pointed, and we all read. I observed the emphasis of the sound “c” and learners identifying it in different words.</p>

9:00 to 9:30 (30 minutes) Tuesday – 08/08/2023

9:00 to 9:30 (30 minutes) Wednesday – 09/08/2023

RtL stage 3: Sentence making.

I selected one sentence for learners to read from the sentence strips. I gave one sentence strip to a pair of learners to read together and take turns to point the words and the sentence was “UCikizwa ucoca icawa” (Cikizwa is cleaning the church).



English translation.

Cikizwa is cleaning
the church.

Figure 13: Example of sentence strip and English translation.

Learners read this sentence pointing at each word. Here I assisted learners who could not read the sentence on their own, by holding

- I enjoyed this part. Learners understood and identified answers based on the cues, this lesson was fun, learners excitedly identified the words they were asked to find and cut. Learners in pairs took turns to build sentences, and I noticed some of the advance learners helping the weaker learners in ordering sentences again, this promoted interaction and working in pairs. I walked around the classroom scaffolding learners who needed my help. Some learners struggled to identify the words independently, so I provided one-on-one support by holding their hand and guiding them until they could do it on their own.

their hand pointing and reading out loud with them until they were able to do so on their own. Here I used the strategy of standing in front of the whole class and gave learners cues such as “at the beginning of the sentence there is a word tells us the name of the person who is cleaning”, and “next we see a word that tells us what they are doing, then we see a word that tells what they are cleaning”. Each word they identified was cut out from the sentence. Taking turns, learners jumbled the words and put sentences in the right order again.

Spelling

I selected following four words “coca, Cikizwa, icawa, siyacoca”, broke them down to syllables, clapped their syllables with learners, and then asked learners to write those words on their whiteboards. These words were written three times on their whiteboards. Learners practiced spelling and pronunciation by looking at the word, covering it, writing, checking, and writing it again.

- This part went well, learners learned to segment and blend the “C” words, both orally and written. I observed one learner who had been struggling with writing and reading slowly learning to do both at the same time. I found this very interesting and exciting as when he learnt to write the spelling words, he also could read them, it was good to observe.

-Coca= co/ca
-Cikizwa= Ci/ki/zwa/
-icawa= i/ca/wa/
-siyacoca= si/ya/co/ca/

English translation

Clean
Cikizwa
Church
We are cleaning.

Sentence writing

We read the sentence strips again and then on my board I had the sentence and hid some words away, read the sentence and asked learners to say the missing words. They showed me the missing word from their cut words, then built the sentence on the board. Learners then wrote the whole sentence on their white boards.

We filled in missing words and wrote the whole sentence here, learners enjoyed identifying and showing the class and me the words that were missing in the sentences. This was a confidence booster for learners as positive reinforcement was given to everyone who found the word and held it up. According to Rumfola (2017), positive reinforcement is an essential tool for promoting positive behaviours in students. It's believed that by providing praise, rewards, and recognition for desired behaviours, students are more likely to repeat those behaviours in the future, thus this was adopted in this study to encourage participation and engagement in my study.

30 minutes 9:00 to 9:30 (30 mins) Thursday – 10/08/2023

RtL stage 4: Joint construction

We read the text again and the class brainstormed ideas and a scribe volunteered to write on the board with the input of the whole class. We changed the title of the story and characters as well as what they were doing, following the original text pattern. Below is the joint reconstruction text that was brainstormed by the class. The class changed the text to the following at this stage.

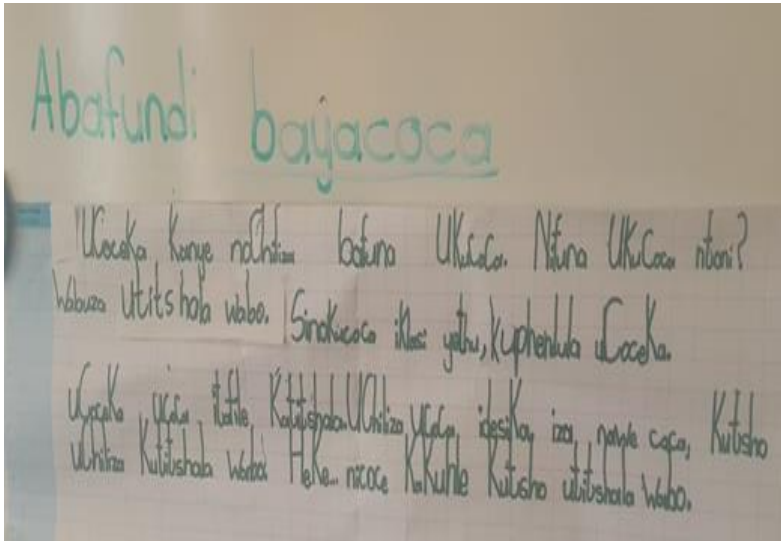


Figure 14: Class joint construction on the board.

- This part went well. I felt more confident instructing joint construction, learners participated in this stage. The scribe sometimes wrote the words wrong, and the class picked it up and helped to correct the spelling of words, they orally spelled and sounded out words to the scribe. This showed me that all learners were actively involved in the joint construction stage.

Abafundi bayacaca
Ucaca kanye nabanizabafuna
Ukucaca lituna Ukucaca rioni!
Wabuzo Ukutshadwabo. Sinducaca
kiasi yothukuphenula ukucaca ukucaca
Ucaca itatile katicshala Unilizo
Ucaca ibesko iza nawe cacaca
kutsho unilizo kutitshadwabo
Here... nicocce kakune kutsho ukutshadwabo
wabo.

Figure 15: Learners book of joint construction.

5.7.2 Critical friend feedback on AR cycle 3

My critical friend gave positive feedback such as an improvement in delivering the joint construction and how I engaged with the whole class during the RtL reading lesson and on all RtL stages. I wanted to improve my text and use a longer example text to see if my learners would cope with more than one sentence.

In summary, CAR Cycle 3 taught me that an organized, detailed RtL lesson plan facilitates smoother delivery of the reading lesson. Moreover, it became apparent that learners can indeed progress with adequate support. As such, I opted to design a new reading lesson using a more elaborate text and a longer sentence strip (see Figure 18), to provide a greater challenge.

5.8. Action research cycle 4

5.8.1 Action research step 1: Planning

In this stage, I planned the reading lesson for the 4th action research cycle. My intention was to increase the number of sentences read and to make it longer to see if learners would manage to understand reading and writing a paragraph. Planning included choosing a text and the title was “ilokhwe eluhlaza” (The green dress). I wrote and cut out sentence strips and prepared whiteboards and charts for joint rewriting as well as sentence writing. Figure 16 is the cover of the book read in cycle 4.



Figure 16: The cover of the book read in cycle 4.

Action Research Step 2 & 3: Action and Observation	Action Research Step 4: Reflection
Text: Ilokhwe eluhlaza (The green dress)	
<p>9:00 to 9:30 (30 minutes) Monday – 21/08/2023</p> <p>RtL stage 1: Preparing for reading.</p> <p>I sat learners on the carpet asked their favourite colours, we then distinguished between primary colours and secondary colours. I allowed learners to mention the primary colours and secondary colours. I said, “Raise your hand if you have a yellow piece of clothing”, I changed colours to accommodate everyone. Then I said, just like we have different coloured clothes, our story today is about a girl who had a green dress. I introduced the name of the girl “Zinzi” and other characters who were in the story (Sam, Spothi, mother and father). I did a picture walk with them, which was discussing what was happening in each picture. We used a big book for our text.</p>	<p>- The 1st and 2nd RtL stages were done on the same day. All learners participated actively in the discussion, raising their hands to share their thoughts in our discussion. At this point, my learners were comfortable sharing their ideas as they had become used to the idea that there is no wrong answer in our discussions. They seemed confident to speak.</p>

RtL stage 2: Detailed reading

I summarised and read sentence by sentence and then read together with learners. I asked learners questions like “ekuqaleni kwesivakalisi kukho igama elisixelela ukuba ngubani intombazana kwelibali (At the beginning of the sentence there’s a word that tell us who the girl was in the story...”, “Next we see...” “Then”. This allowed learners to comprehend the text better.



English translation of sentence strip.

Zinzi and Sam live with their mother, father, and their dog Spothi. One day Zinzi lost her dress.

Figure 17: Sence strip and English translation.

- The detailed reading went well, learners engaged well with the text as I pointed, and we all read aloud.

9:00 to 9:30 (30 minutes) Tuesday – 22/08/2023

9:00 to 9:30 (30 minutes) Wednesday – 23/08/2023

RtL stage 3: Sentence making

In this stage, I selected one paragraph made up of two sentences for learners to read in pairs from the sentence strips: “uZinzi kunye noSam bahlala nomama wabo, utata kunye nenja yabo uSpothi. Ngenye imini uZinzi walahlekelwa yilokhwe yakhe” (Zinzi and Sam live with their mother, father, and their dog Spothi. One day Zinzi lost her dress).

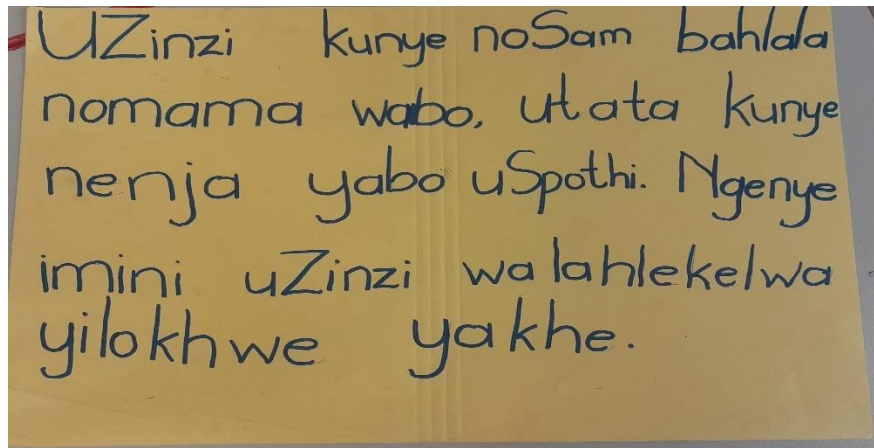


Figure 18: The sentence strip written out in large print.

Learners read this paragraph pointing at each word. I assisted learners who could not read the sentence on their own, by holding their hand pointing and reading out loud with them until they were able to do so on their own. I used the strategy of giving learners cues to the whole class and then walked around to work

-This part went interestingly well considering the length of the text. Initially, I was a bit worried that this was a longer passage to work with, but it went well, learners identified all the words and they read, jumbled, and built the passage to the right order again. Learners worked with one strip per pair, and they worked well together. The text was longer and took the whole desk to be jumbled and built back together. This went well.

with each group while other pairs in groups managed on their own. I used cues such as “at the beginning of the sentence there is a word tells us the name of the girl child”. “Next we see a word that shows us that there is someone else mentioned in the same sentence, then we see a word that tells the name of the boy in the story”. I gave learners these cues for each word they identified, they cut out from the sentence. Taking turns, learners jumbled and put sentences in the right order again.

Spelling I selected the following four words “bahlala, yilokhwe, nomama, kunye”. We broke down the words to syllables, clapped their syllables with learners, and then learners write those words on their whiteboards. These words were written three times on their whiteboards. Learners practised spelling and pronunciation by looking at the word, covering it, writing, checking, and writing it again.

- Bahlala= ba/hla/la
- yilokhwe= yi/lo/khwe
- nomama= no/ma/ma
- kunye= ku/nye

<u>English translation</u>
They live.
It is a dress.
With their mother
And

- This part went well, and learners wrote words, self-correcting and pronouncing the words.

<p>Sentence writing</p> <p>We read the sentence strips again and then on my board I had the sentence and hid some words away, read the sentence and asked learners to say the missing words and show me the missing word from their cut words, then build the sentence on the board. Learners then wrote the whole sentence on their white boards.</p>	<p>- We filled in missing words and wrote the whole sentence here, learners enjoyed identifying and showing the class and me and the class the word that were missing in the sentences. Learners enjoyed identifying words from the words in front of them, each time they identified a missing word, I gave positive reinforcement, and this encouraged them to want to identify and flag the words. After watching my recorded lesson, I noticed that most of my learners engaged with this lesson.</p>
<p>30 minutes 9:00 to 9:30 (30 mins) Thursday – 24/08/2023</p> <p>RtL stage 4: Joint construction</p> <p>We read the text again and I asked each group to discuss among themselves and to come up with sentences following the pattern of the read text. The class brainstormed ideas, and a scribe</p>	<p>- Joint construction went well. After watching the recorded lesson, I observed that my instruction of joint construction improved positively, learners followed instructions and brainstormed creative ideas to change the title of the story and sentences in it. All 50 learners took part, and no one seemed to be bored. I was standing in front of the whole class and talking to all my learners, walking around to collect ideas and give high fives where necessary.</p>

volunteered to write on the board with my and the class's help.

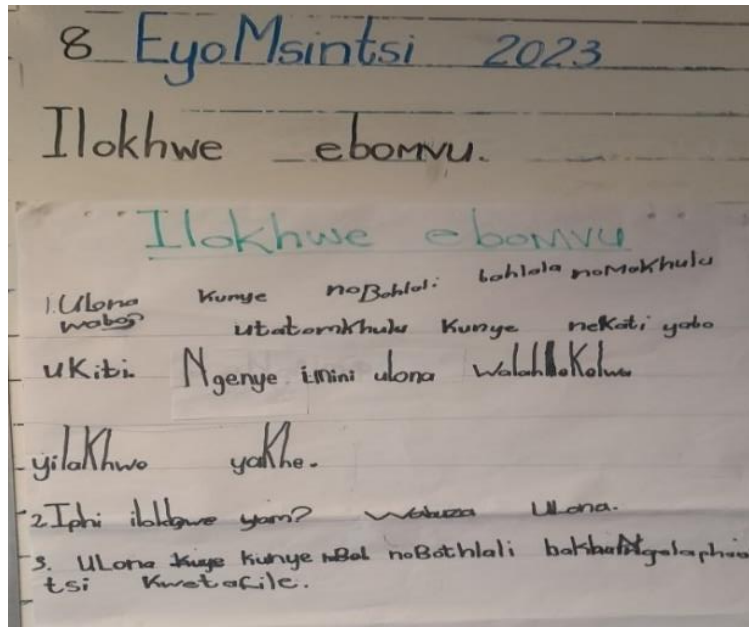


Figure 19: Class joint construction on the board

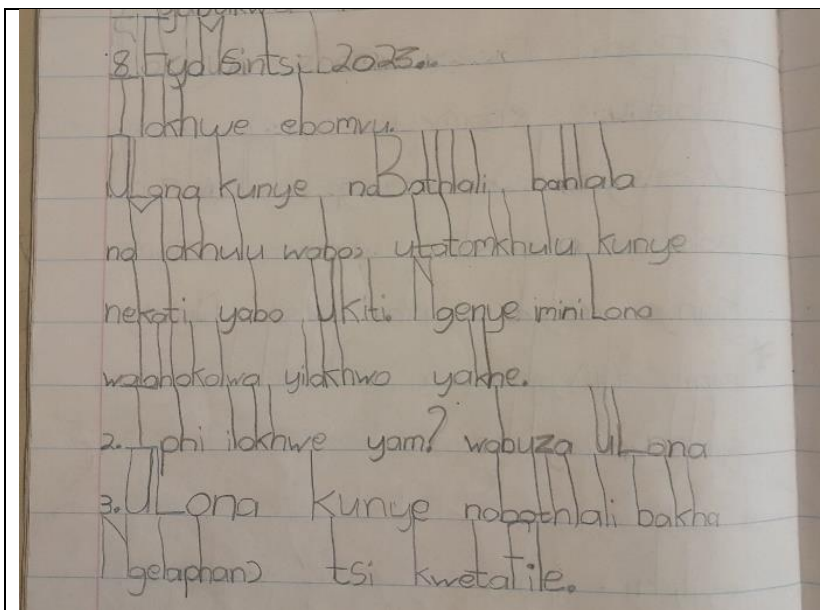


Figure 20 Joint construction in a learner's book.

5.8.2 Critical friend feedback

My critical friend observed my recorded lesson and commented that my instruction had improved, and that this session was well done. She commented on each RtL stage, pointing out how I had improved and how learners engaged with the text.

5.9. Chapter summary

This chapter explored the research problem by unpacking data generated in the pre-test, video recorded lessons, reflective journal, and feedback from my critical friend. The chapter also presented a description of the four CAR cycles and my lesson analysis and reflection. The next chapter will compare the pre-test and post-test results for the experimental and control classes.

CHAPTER SIX: PRESENTATION OF PRE- AND POST-TEST RESULTS

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented the pre-test results and a description of the four action research cycles. This chapter presents the test results for both the RtL and the non-RtL classes. The following tables show the pre-test and post-test results of the RtL class (Grade 1A) and the non-RtL class (Grade 1B), based on assessments using the EGRA tool.

6.2. Letter and sound level pre- and post-test results

The pre- and post-test data for both classes is presented in the table below, showing the number of learners at each level for the letter and sound level. The data from Table 3 (Chapter 5) is reported here again for easy reference, with the post-test data added and further context is given regarding changes in each group after the intervention.

Table 9: Letter and sound results: Comparison of the pre-test and post-test between the RtL class and the non-RtL class.

	PRE-TEST RtL CLASS 1A (experimental)	POST- TEST RtL CLASS 1A (experimental)	Change	PRE- TEST NON-RtL CLASS 1B (control)	POST- TEST NON-RtL CLASS 1B (control)	Change
Total number of learners	50	50		50	50	
Total test marks	40	40		40	40	
Level 1 (0–13 Marks)	20/50 (40%)	0/50 (0%)	-40%	11/50 (22%)	3/50 (6%)	-16%
Level 2 (14–27 Marks)	11/50 (22%)	21/50 (42%)	+ 20%	19/50 (38%)	20/50 (40%)	+2%
Level 3 (28–40 Marks)	19/50 (38%)	29/50 (58%)	+20%	20/50 (40%)	27/50 (54%)	+14%

The learners at level 1 correctly sounded up to 13 letters of the alphabet; at level 2 they could sound out up to 27 letters of the alphabet and at level 3, up to 40 letters. The RtL class started off at a collectively lower level as 20 children were at level 1 in the pre-test compared to only 11 at level 1 in the control class. However, the post-test showed that the RtL class improved more. Improvement is seen when the learners move from Level 1 to Level 2 and 3. All the learners who were at level 1 moved to level 2 or level 3 in the post-test scores over a period of seven months.

The shaded columns of Table 10 present the control group's pre-test and post-test results. There was also a shift of learners from Level 1 to level 3. The post-test shows that both groups were similarly matched compared to the pre-test, where the RtL class was much weaker.

6.3. Word reading pre- and post-test results

The pre- and post-test data for both classes is shown in the table below, giving the number of learners at each level for the word reading level. The data from chapter 5

is reported here again for easy reference, with the post-test data added and further context is given regarding changes in each group after the intervention.

Table 10 :Word reading results: comparison of the pre-test and post-test between the RtL class and the non-RtL class

	PRE-TEST RtL CLASS 1A (experimental)	POST TEST RtL CLASS 1A (experimental)	Change	PRE-TEST NON-RtL CLASS 1B (control)	POST TEST NON-RtL CLASS 1B (control)	Change
Total number of learners	50	50		50	50	
Total test marks	80	80		80	80	
Level 1 (0–26 Marks)	42/50 (84%)	32/50 (64%)	-20%	38/50 (76%)	41/50 (82%)	+6%
Level 2 (27–52 Marks)	3/50 (6%)	8/50 (16%)	+ 10%	7/50 (14%)	4/50 (8%)	-6%
Level 3 (53–80 Marks)	5/50 (10%)	10/50 (20%)	+10%	5/50 (10%)	5/50 (10%)	+0%

The learners at level 1 correctly read up to 26 words; at level 2 they could read up to 52 words and at level 3 up to 80 words. The RtL class started at a slightly lower level as 42 learners were at level 1 in the pre-test, compared to 38 learners in the control class. However, the post-test results (seven months later) show that there was a noticeable improvement in the RtL class' level, where 20% of learners moved from level 1 to level 2 and 3 in the post-test scores (See Table 11). In contrast, the control class showed no increase of learners moving to level 2 and 3.

6.4. Passage reading pre- and post-test results

With regard to passage reading skills, the pre- and post-test data for both classes, collected through the use of the EGRA tool, is shown in the table below. The data from chapter 5 is reported here again for easy reference, with the post-test data added to

Table 12. An additional column records the changes in each group after the intervention.

Table 11: Comparison of the pre-test and post-test passage reading results between the RtL class and the non-RtL class.

	PRE-TEST RtL CLASS 1A (experimental)	POST-TEST RtL CLASS 1A (experimental)	Change	PRE-TEST NON-RtL CLASS 1B (control)	POST- TEST NON-RtL CLASS 1B (control)	Change
Total number of learners	50	50		50	50	
Total test marks	53	53		53	53	
Level 1 (0–18 Marks)	46/50 (92%)	39/50 (78%)	-14%	48/50 (96%)	47/50 (94%)	-2%
Level 2 (19–36 Marks)	1/50 (2%)	5/50 (10%)	+8%	2/50 (4%)	3/50 (6%)	+2%
Level 3 (37–53 Marks)	3/50 (6%)	6/50 (12%)	+6%	0%	0%	-

With regard to passage reading, the learners at level 1 correctly read up to 18 words; at level 2 they could read up to 36 words and level 3 up to 53 words.

A total of 46 learners in the RtL class read at level 1 in the pre-test compared to 48 in the control class. The control group were slightly weaker at passage reading, as fewer were reading at Level 2 and none at Level 3. However, the post-test results show that 8% of learners (4 learners) moved to Level 2, and 6% of learners (3 learners) moved to Level 3 in the RtL class. In comparison, only 1 learner moved to Level 2 in the control class. Most of the control class stayed at the same Level one in both tests.

6.5. Comprehension questions, Pre-test and post test results.

Table 12: Comparison of the pre-test and post-test **Comprehension question** results between the RtL class and the non-RtL class

	PRE-TEST RtL CLASS 1A (experimental)	POST- TEST RtL CLASS 1A (experimental)	Change	PRE-TEST NON-RtL CLASS 1B (control)	POST- TEST NON-RtL CLASS 1B (control)	Change
Total number of learners	50	50		50	50	
Total test marks	5	5		5	5	
Level 1 (0–1 Marks)	45 (90%)	40 (80%)	-10%	49 (98%)	47 (94%)	-4%
Level 2 (2-3 Marks)	5 (10%)	6 (12%)	+2%	1 (2%)	3 (6%)	+4%
Level 3 (4-5 Marks)	0 (0%)	4 (8%)	+8%	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0

Table 13 shows a slight improvement in the experimental RtL class, with five fewer learners scoring at Level 1 and one more at Level 2, and 4 more learners scoring at Level 3. The 10% drop indicated in the table reflects the decrease in the percentage of learners scoring at Level 1 (0–1 Marks) in the post-test for the experimental class (RtL Class 1A). This means that there was a corresponding increase in learners scoring at Levels 2 and 3 (2-3 Marks and 4-5 Marks), suggesting that some learners showed improvement in their comprehension levels. The post-test results for the control class showed only minor changes in comprehension levels, with a drop of 2 learners in Level 1 and an increase of 2 learners at Level 2. The changes were very slight for both classes thus it is not possible to conclude that the intervention impacted comprehension levels.

6.6. Chapter summary

This chapter presented the comparison of pre-test and post-test results from the RtL experimental group and the non-RtL control group. The test results showed learners' reading scores before and after the experimental group was taught using the RtL intervention strategy.

It can be noted from the above tables that more learners in the RtL experimental group moved to level 2 and 3 compared to the control group class. Learners' word reading and passage reading levels increased slightly more in the RtL experimental class than the control group. There were very minor changes in reading comprehension for both classes. However, it cannot be claimed that the RtL methodology alone helped to improve learner's isiXhosa reading abilities in Grade 1A. Firstly, the intervention was relatively brief (7 months), which may have limited the potential for significant improvement. Secondly, the two groups were not randomly selected but were purposely selected to serve as a comparison, which could have influenced the results. In addition, other variables such as instructional methods of the teacher in the control class, classroom environment, and individual learner differences may have also affected the results.

The final chapter, which follows, provides the conclusions to the study and offers recommendations based on these.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Introduction

This chapter summarises the overall findings and shows how the data presented in Chapter Four and Chapter Five addressed the research questions of this study. I also outline the recommendations based on the study, as well as the limitations. Through this action research study, I aimed to reflect on enacting a literacy recovery curriculum in Grade 1 and use RtL pedagogy as an intervention strategy.

The research questions that this study sought to address were:

RQ1: What are the isiXhosa reading competencies of my Grade 1 learners as measured in the pre-test and post-test?

RQ2: How does RtL change my teaching practice?

RQ3: In what ways does my changed teaching practice support my learners' reading competencies?

7.2. Research question 1

In this sub-section, I discuss the research question: What are the isiXhosa reading competencies of my Grade 1 learners as measured in the EGRA pre-test and post-test?

Chapter 6 presented the pre-test and post-test results. In the pre-test, 40% of grade 1A (experimental class) learners were at level 1 (0-13 marks), 22% at level 2 (14-27 marks), and 38% at level 3 (28-40 marks) in the letter and sound levels (See Table 10, Chapter 6). This shows that in the pre-test, most of the class correctly sounded up to thirteen letters. However, in the post-test, there was a 20% improvement in levels 2 and 3, which shows that all learners at level 1 improved to levels 2 or 3, post-RtL intervention (see Table 10) .

In contrast, the non-RtL class achieved slightly higher in the pre-test, where 22% of learners were at level 1(0-13 marks), 38% at level 2 (14-27 marks), and 40% at level 3 (28-40 marks). The post-test results showed a 16% difference in level 1(0-13 marks), 2% improvement in level 2(14-27 marks), and 14% improvement in level 3 (28-40 marks) with the control group. The improvement in the non-RtL class was lower than the RtL class.

Similarly, a 20% increase of learners at levels 2 and 3 was noted in word reading in the RtL class. In the control class, there was no increase in learners at levels 2 and 3 (see Table 11, Chapter 6).

The post-test results for the passage reading for the RtL class showed a 14% decrease in learners at Level 1 (0-18 marks), which lead to a 8% improvement in Level 2 (19-36 marks), and 6% improvement in Level 3 (37-53 marks) (See Table 12, Chapter 6). This decrease at Level 1(0-18 marks) actually represents a significant improvement in the learners' passage reading abilities, as 14% of learners who were initially scoring at Level 1(0-18 marks) in the pre-test moved up to Level 2 (19-36 marks) or 3 (37-53 marks). In contrast, the post-test results for the non-RtL control class showed only a 2% increase in learners at Level 2 (19-36 marks), with no increase of learners scoring at Level 3 (37-53 marks). These differences suggest that the RtL methodology had a positive impact on learners' reading competencies in the experimental class, particularly in word reading and passage reading. While the improvements were small, they indicate that the RtL methodology had some impact.

However, a direct causal link to the RtL methodology for this shift could only be made if the two classes were randomly selected and their background variables were exactly the same. The two Grade 1 classes were not randomly selected and there may be other factors that influenced the test results, such as the literacy support that they received at home. The fact that both classes were taught by different teachers could also have played a role. I as the RtL class teacher received specific training in the RtL methodology, while the non-RtL class teacher had 18 years of teaching experience but no RtL training. My practice was further supported by a critical friend who was an RtL expert, providing coaching, guidance, and feedback. As an action research study, I only observed and reflected on my own practice of RtL and did not study the teaching practice of the other Grade 1 teacher (who taught the control class).

In addition to the potential influence of different teachers, other factors may have also influenced the test results. Learners' literacy support at home could have played a role in their performance, as those who received more support might have improved more regardless of the intervention. Moreover, learners' motivation and engagement could have impacted their performance in the post-test, with more motivated and engaged learners potentially scoring better.

7.3. Research question 2

This sub-section deals with a discussion on the research question: How does RtL change my teaching practice?

My reading lessons prior to learning the RtL approach were mainly guided by the phonics approach, where I started with the alphabet, and built up to words and sentences. I taught all my learners using the same approach. This included giving learners reading charts to read every day and to take home. I did group guided reading and shared reading with my learners. However, my learners were not motivated to read. They struggled to build words, especially the weaker learners. I selected texts to read with learners according to their reading levels. I did not have a step-by-step lesson plan for teaching reading except for selecting the books to read, grouping learners, and reading with them. Using RtL, I noticed that my lesson planning skills improved, and my learners enthusiastically engaged with different texts. The RtL scaffolding strategy included all learners, promoted interaction between learners and the teacher, and promoted an inclusive reading culture. While RtL was overall a beneficial approach, there were some challenges I encountered during its implementation, as discussed in Chapter 5.5 (Action research cycle 2). To address these challenges, I adapted my teaching practice by planning and practicing my lessons with my critical friend and constantly watching videos of other teachers using RtL. However, this required ongoing monitoring of learner progress and a willingness to adjust my approach in response to their needs.

RtL equipped me, as the teacher, with planning skills to prepare reading lessons intentionally in a way that included all learners in my class, and to reflect on each lesson (see Appendix G). I was provided with scaffolding skills that assisted us to have meaningful reading lessons. Weaker learners were practically involved and developed

an eagerness for reading sessions, which was not the case pre-RtL implementation, when they were too shy to read in class.

The nature of RtL motivated learners with intentional positive reinforcement in each stage. It improved the learners' reading abilities and my teaching practice as it equipped me with methods and strategies to support my learners in reading and starting to build an understanding of what they were reading. The cues such as “at the beginning, middle, or end of the sentence” promoted knowledge of the words and text for the learners. It also gave them more confidence to try to read and identify the words. In preparing for reading, I learned creative ways of linking the story to learners' experiences by giving the story's background, enabling learners to relate their own experiences to the story, making it easy to understand (described in Chapter 4).

My teaching practice changed as I became more aware of the importance of planning for my reading lessons, such as preparing questions in advance for the 'preparing for reading' stage. I also learned to give different levels of scaffolding support to learners who needed support. A new practice also allowed the learners to help each other, especially in the sentence-making stage.

The other aspect that changed my practice was the role of a critical friend; this was new to me as I had never had this kind of coaching and support before. I had invited a critical friend who would watch my lesson videos and give me feedback on how I was implementing the RtL methodology. However, as time passed, I realised she was not only a critical friend but had also become a mentor and coach. She gave me crucial feedback on my reading sessions and went through the planning stages, heard how I would teach each step, watched videos of my teaching, and gave me detailed feedback and guidance on where to revise and do certain things differently according to the RtL cycle. This helped me gain the confidence to support and prepare carefully for my learners. Not only did she give me feedback on my reading sessions and support me in planning and teaching, but her presence also enhanced the rigour and trustworthiness of my findings. The ability to reflect deeply on my practice and adjust my strategies in response to feedback made my research more reliable, valid, and consistent.

Without the support of my critical friend, I would have been unable to reflect deeply on my practice and identify specific areas for improvement. My critical friend helped me

to evaluate the effectiveness of my teaching strategies and adjust them as needed to better meet the needs of my learners. The involvement of my critical friend as a mentor and coach also had a positive impact on the trustworthiness of my findings. Her feedback and guidance helped me to be more reflective and systematic in my planning and teaching, which enhanced the reliability, validity, and consistency of my results. This taught me the practical value of Vygotsky's (1978) MKO, as I felt I learned from the coaching and guidance from someone who understood the RtL pedagogy better than I did. She only focused on the RtL strategies, showing me how I could improve and providing resources for me. I would practice a lesson plan with her over Zoom to help me to use my time better. My critical friend guided me and followed up even during the administration of the EGRA pre-test and post-test (see Appendix F).

A limitation of the RtL stages is the time that they take in the beginning, I was making mistakes by spending too much time on some of the stages. The joint construction stage was difficult for me initially as I didn't understand how the brainstorming process should work. My timing improved as I practised the stages and reflected with my critical friend.

7.4. Research question 3

The last research question is discussed in this section: In what way does my changed teaching practice support my learners' reading competencies?

My changed teaching practice supported all learners, motivated them, and included them in the reading process. During the EGRA pre-test, some learners did not even want to attempt to read, but in the post-test, all learners in my class wanted to read. My learners developed enjoyment of reading and confidence compared to their earlier fear of making mistakes. My learners interacted and helped each other, got recognition, and were complimented for trying (see an example of my reflection notes in Appendix G). I could attribute this to what they had learned and the confidence they developed from experiencing the RtL pedagogy. This finding aligns with Dladla's (2022) work on RtL in Grade 4 learners, as discussed in Chapter 3.7 of this thesis. Dladla's study also reported increased learner engagement and teacher practice enhancements after RtL.

The RtL methodology enhanced my learners' reading isiXhosa reading ability through the six-step scaffolding interaction. Learners engaged with different texts with enthusiasm and eagerness. This intervention created an inclusive reading culture in my classroom, which engaged all learners – even the weaker learners – to enjoy reading sessions. Each stage included all learners, and it promoted interaction between learners and the teacher and scaffolding. The nature of the RtL pedagogy motivated learners with the intentional positive reinforcement that took place at each stage (Millin, 2016). Positive reinforcement, as seen in my own findings, has been shown to play a significant role in RtL, a result that aligns with findings by Millin (2016) who highlighted the importance of specific and timely feedback and positive reinforcement in scaffolding literacy skills. The impact of teacher competencies on student learning outcomes, including the ability to provide effective feedback and reinforcement, has been noted by Zafira and Gunansyah (2018), emphasising the broader relevance of positive reinforcement in fostering student engagement and motivation. It not only improved the learners' reading abilities, but my teaching practice improved as this was an educational strategy for me, which taught me new ways of teaching reading effectively to my Grade 1 class.

Reading competency is influenced by both the knowledge and skills to recognise and sound out letters, sounds, and words, as well as by the motivation to do so. My changed teaching practice aided me in paying attention to reading details like fluency for my learners. Learners who struggled with writing developed writing and reading simultaneously during our reading sessions; they understood the sounds and words they were learning to write.

7.5. Limitations and recommendations

The purpose of doing an action research study was so that I could reflect on, and improve my own practice in a systematic way. These results cannot be generalized to other contexts; however, there is some evidence from other studies that support the effectiveness of RtL in the South African context. For example, a study by Dube (2023) as discussed in the literature review chapter 3.7, suggested that RtL significantly improved reading skills in the foundation phase grade two learners. Dube's (2023)

and Ntombela's (2023) studies had a population similar to the one I studied. This study focused on grade one learners who fall under the foundation phase.

Despite possible confounding variables, such as different teachers, learners' literacy support at home, learner motivation, and engagement, RtL demonstrated encouraging results in my study. I recommend considering RtL as a potential approach for literacy teaching in my school, with all Foundation Phase teachers, including Grade R, receiving training, coaching, and mentoring in RtL pedagogy.

7.6. Conclusion

This chapter drew from the findings in Chapters Five and Six to address the three research questions which guided this study. Conclusions and recommendations were explained and explored. This study aimed to enact the isiXhosa literacy recovery curriculum using RtL pedagogy to teach literacy in my Grade 1 class. This study's findings may suggest that the RtL pedagogy made some improvements in literacy, as learners demonstrated better reading skills, greater enjoyment, and positive attitudes toward reading. My teaching practice was also enhanced. However, the extent to which RtL pedagogy only contributed to these improvements cannot be definitively determined.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Department of Education approval letter



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

R/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	17 February 2023
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2023-- 30 September 2023 2023/56
Name of Researcher:	NDENGEZI B.C
Address of Researcher:	2725 MASEKO STREET VOSLOORUS BOKSBURG
Telephone Number:	[REDACTED]
Email address:	[REDACTED]
Research Topic:	Enacting the literacy recovery curriculum in Grade 1: An Action research study.
Type of qualification	MASTER'S DEGREE
Number and type of schools:	1 Primary School
Districts/HO	Johannesburg West

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to the research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below are met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simonsville Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tahabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gauteng.gov.za

1. The letter would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. **Because of the relaxation of COVID 19 regulations researchers can collect data online, telephonically, physically access schools, or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate.**
4. **The Researchers are advised to wear a mask at all times, Social distance at all times, Provide a vaccination certificate or negative COVID-19 test, not older than 72 hours, and Sanitise frequently.**
5. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s has been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
6. A letter/document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs, and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
7. The Researcher will make every effort to obtain the goodwill and cooperation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers, and learners involved. Persons who offer their cooperation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
8. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school program is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
9. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
10. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
11. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
12. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes, and telephones, and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
13. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers, and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
14. On completion of the study, the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
15. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings, and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
16. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a summary of the purpose, findings, and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



Dr. Gurnani Mukatuni
Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE:17/02/2023.....

2

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Appendix B: University of KwaZulu-Natal approval letter



14 April 2023

Bonisiwe Cresencia Ndengezi (211528153)
School Of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear BC Ndengezi,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00005337/2023
Project title: Enacting the literacy recovery curriculum in grade 1: An action research study
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 10 March 2023 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 14 April 2024.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

1/1

Appendix C: Declaration of consent by school principal

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I _____

(Full names of the school principal) have been informed about the study entitled:

Enacting the Literacy Recovery Curriculum in Grade 1: An Action Research Study by Bonisiwe Cresencia Ndengezi.

I understand the purpose and procedure of the study.

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL _____

DATE: _____

Appendix D: Parental consent form

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL For research with human participants

Information Sheet and Consent for your Child/ ward to Participate in Research

Project title: **Enacting the literacy recovery curriculum in Grade 1: An Action research study.**

Date: 07/12/2022

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Bonisiwe Cresencia Ndengezi, a Master of Education student from University of KwaZulu- Natal, School of Education, on the Pietermaritzburg Campus.

My study involves reflecting on the literacy recovery curriculum in Grade 1. It is an Action research study. This means that I am going to be in the position of a teacher and a researcher in this study.

The study involves using results of language and comprehension tests that the learners regularly write in class, observation of my practice when delivering reading lessons, and the video recording of all the reading lessons. Your child/ward is a student in this class, and thus I am requesting your consent.

The focus of the observation and video recording will be on the teacher's practice and not on your child /ward. However, ethical research practices require that you are aware of the study and give your consent on behalf of your child/ward. Please know that there are no anticipated risks or harm to your child/ward.

The data will not be made public in any way and will only be used for research purposes. The video recording will be deleted when the study is completed.

Confidentiality will be observed and the school and teacher's identity will be protected. Therefore, in the report, different names (pseudonyms) will be used for the teacher and the school to ensure integrity and confidentiality.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at [REDACTED] or my supervisor Prof. Carol Bertram, BertramC@ukzn.ac.za, and or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details below.

PARENTAL/ GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM FOR CHILD's PARTICIPATION

I (Name)..... the parent/guardian of

..... (child/ward) in grade 1

have been informed about the study, "Enacting the literacy recovery curriculum in Grade 1: An Action research study", by Bonisiwe Ndengezi.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my child's/ward's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that s/he may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at [REDACTED] or Prof Carol Bertram at (033) 260 5349.

If I have any questions or concerns about my child's rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000 KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

I hereby provide consent for my child to be present during:

Video-recording of English reading lessons YES / NO

Document analysis of results for class comprehension tests for the study YES/NO

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Appendix E: Learner assent form

Good day Learner _____ (name).



My name is Miss Bonisiwe Ndengezi. Many of you would know me as the Grade 1 teacher at school.

I am also a student at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.



I am currently doing research as

part of my degree.



Research means that I will conduct a careful study and investigation so that

I can discover and explain new knowledge.



I am currently thinking about how I teach reading



in grade 1.



I would like you to tell me more about what you think and feel about learning to read in isiXhosa. In

other words, how have you experienced reading in isiXhosa language?

[Type here]

Firstly, I would like to have a meeting with you where we can have a discussion and each learner will have the

opportunity to tell me more about what they have experienced with learning to read isiXhosa.  I

will also record our session because the information you provide is important for research. The meeting will be

30 minutes long.



You can choose a new name for yourself and I will not use your name in the

research writing. Are you happy or sad to be part of my research study? Please mark with an X in the box.



If you have any problems or concerns/questions, you may contact the researcher at:

Mobile number: [REDACTED]

Email address: [REDACTED]

Supervisor: Professor C. Bertram

[Type here]

Supervisor's number: [REDACTED]

Supervisor's email: BertramC@ukzn.ac.za

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for reading this and thinking about whether you would or would not like to be in my project.

Appendix F: Early Grade Reading Assessment subtasks

Letter & Sound

Assessment 1

Umzekelo: b s

Itshathi 1/1

V	l	h	g	S	y	z	W	e	n
l	k	T	d	K	t	q	d	z	A
h	w	z	m	U	r	j	A	x	U
g	r	b	Q	L	f	l	Z	s	r

Word Reading

Assessment 1

Ukufundwa kwamagama aqhelekileyo. (WR)

Umzekelo: utata icici

Itshathi yamagama 2/1

umama	utata	usisi	usana	kuba	isikolo	wa ka	kudala
ikati	vuka	wabona	funa	lala	suka	wema	mna
bona	cula	iti	Imali	luma	Emva	cela	udade
imoto	sela	ubisi	yena	usuku	waya	Ihagu	intombi
wona	ifama	icawa	Ewe	jika	vasa	umfo	zathi
hayi	zisa	nomama	lilela	ibali	ukuba	njani	phambili
wabona	ubisi	Imini	isele	wa ka	lila	phambi	imini
ubisi	imali	kugala	ihagu	isofa	ibali	umhlobo	wabo
umalume	ikofu	wabeleka	qoqa	vela	vota	kusasa	umsebenzi
buza	xoxa	zola	bona	funda	esikhulu	amehlo	maziye

Passage reading

Assessment 1

Passage reading (PR)

Itshathi 3.1

ULolo wayeza kuqala ukuya kwisikolo	5
esikhulu. Lwalungathi alufiki olu suku	5
yimivuyo.	1
Ngomhla wokuvulwa kwezikolo wavuka	4
ekuseni. Wahamba waza watya isidlo	5
sakusasa. Emva koko uLolo wabeleka	5
ubhaka wakhe waya esikolweni nomama	5
wakhe.	1
Esikolweni waboniswa utitshalakazi wakhe.	4
Utitshalakazi wabalisa ibali likaSidumo.	4
USidumo libali elidlala kumabonakude.	4
ULolo wahleka izinto ezenziwa nguSidumo	5
Wabona ukuba kumnandi esikolweni	5
esikhulu.	5

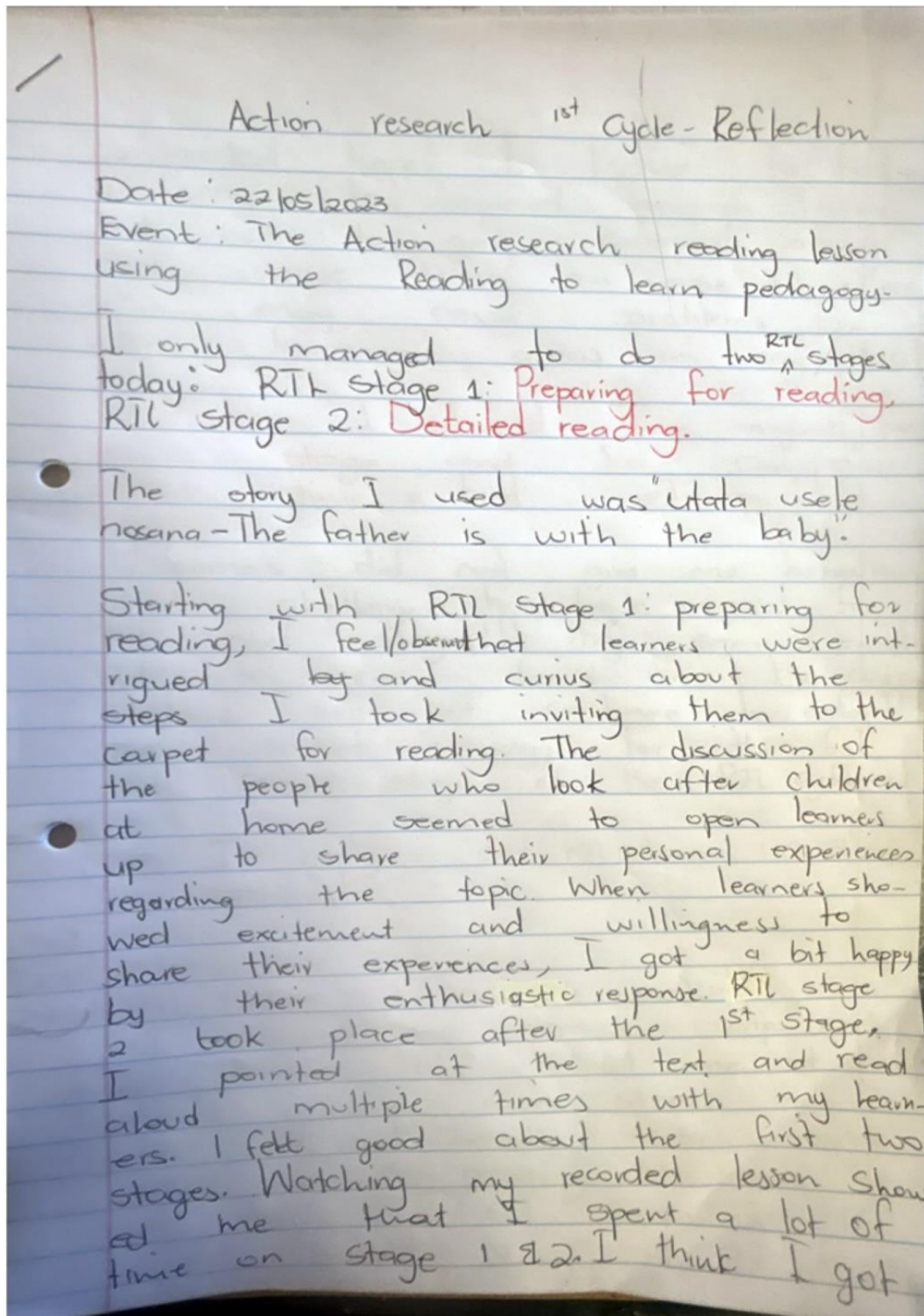
Comprehension questions

Imibuzo yesicatshulwa

Itshathi 3./

Umbuzo	Ichanekele	Ayichanekele
1. Ngubani owayeza kuya esikolweni?		
2. Wavuka nini ngosuku lokuvulwa kwezikolo?		
3. Waya nabani esikolweni?		
4. Wenza ntoni utitshalakazi wabo?		
5. Ingaba wabona ngathi kumnandi na esikolweni uLolo?		

Appendix G: Reflective journal entry example.



Scanned by TapScanner

Overexcited here! I have to find a way to spend enough time but not to get carried away and waste time on one thing as this may cause problems for other learning areas in my class!

NB: Maybe I should time myself for each stage and be cautious about time! * Find a strategy!!!

☹️ learners did not give me behavioural challenges here, fingers crossed for the next stages... They seemed excited to come learn on the carpet, I will just continue to adopt the carpet strategy for the first and second stage of the RTL (yukunsi)

NB: I only did RTL stage 1 & 2 on the 23/05/2023.

Date: 23/05/2023:

Yenti RTL Stage 3: Sentence making

- I had the sentence strips ready for learners, this helped me not run around making more strips!

- learners read the sentence, "utata usele nosana" pointing at words as they read. I held some of the learner's hands to point at the

read until they could do so on their own. I paired 2 learners per sentence strip!

observation: I noticed that a lot of learners were struggling in/during sentence making. - I found myself all over and overwhelmed as learners needed me!

This stage took very long! I watched my recorded lesson and realised that this stage took long and overlapped to the next day from the recorded lessons, the time this stage took is 90 minutes.

After watching recorded lesson, I realised that I did not execute this stage correctly, I did not give learners cue questions, but told them which word to cut, this called for correction! I had difficulty supporting all 50 learners at once, as learners were all keen & excited to take part.

Weaker learners actually were excited to take part and I observed ^{myself} from the video as being more drawn to weaker learners a sort of leaving those who could do it independently out, I observed that the independent best focus here & there! I need ~~to~~ to find a way to include all learners!

NB: I should watch more ^{RTL} videos on this stage & see how other teachers keep all learners' attention & not exclude any learners!

Remember!

Also, ask Bongji for ideas!!! more practice definitely needed!

○ Spelling: I had spelling words ready, we broke words to syllables, clapped syllables and learners wrote words using the covering & writing technique, they said this is a fun game 😊, this was good to experience because reading hasn't always been fun with my learners! So spelling went well, &

○ Sentence writing 😞
My learners struggled to write the sentence! I had to watch the video to see what I could change after the video!!

- I noticed that I skipped removing key words & filling the missing key words in the sentence!

How to improve: write down everything I am going to do: eg: Remove key word "Utata" have learners read & fill it. Write my instructions in detail

and number them accordingly!

Date: 25/5/2023

RTL Stage 4: Joint Construction

We read the text here, but had difficulty doing it with my learners. It was just chaotic, I struggled with the process of brainstorming with my learners. I need to learn more and watch more videos on joint construction stage, also ask Bongzi for more training.

NB: So I have spoken to my critical friend and RTL trainer for guidance and also watched videos of teachers using RTL in their reading lessons. There is big ^{room} for improvement in my instruction, the joint construction. ~~I get~~ My critical friend & RTL trainer went through the entire RTL cycle again before I planned the 2nd second cycle RTL lesson. My critical friend also watched my lesson and gave me detailed feedback on it.

Appendix H: Critical friend feedback example

Critical friend Feedback

Action research cycle 1

I have watched all your videos. Well done on the use of synonyms and affirmations, I noticed you did that well and your learners actively participated which was good. The carpet setting seemed interesting, but please make sure that all learners can see the text and pictures. This is a good start.

Please note that the feedback I give you is to help guide you into mastering the RTL pedagogy and for your benefit as well as your learners.

Below are some concerns and corrections for your RTL lessons.

1. In preparing for reading; learners must know the story before they read it, this means that you must summarize the story for learners first.
 - You must open the story, sum it up for learners, do picture walk and then ask them questions based on what you have introduced them to or as you tell them what the story is about and introduce the characters, you can ask them simple questions.
 - The above is important, do not let them guess what is happening, follow the RTL steps thoroughly (watch the RtLSA Step 1 shared reading book on YouTube).
2. Do not just tell learners what words to cut from the sentence but give them cues as we discussed on zoom, e.g. let them identify the words then cut them.
3. A concern/ question: "Was your story linked to anything in the curriculum? What was the purpose of the story?"
 - It is important that the story you select or create covers all the components of the curriculum, for example; Phonics must be covered, language use, writing vocabulary and punctuation of the week in your class.
4. I suggest that you consider creating your own story that links the sounds, phonics etc for the week.
NB: Emphasize the sound that you are focusing on throughout the RTL stages.
-Have different words that use the same sound.

Your lesson planning must be your guide, write everything you are going to say such as questions.

5. I saw that you struggled a lot with joint rewriting, this stage requires preparedness just like all other stages; you have many learners I see, so you must stand in front of the class and instruct from where they can all see you.

- Brainstorming how to change each line from the story, eg "utata usele nosana"
- Write in your planning that "Ask learners to tell me who else can be with the baby", this is to remind yourself how to guide learners.
- As learners tell say their ideas, write on the chart.
- When the volunteer scribe writes, you must be close to them and also keep the class engaged as to tell the scribe what to write. Let us have a zoom meeting for mainly Joint construction after your next lesson plan, and we take it from there for the next cycle.

Please consider these points when you plan for your next cycle. Keep going, this is a good start you can do it!

Appendix I Turnitin report

dissertation

ORIGINALITY REPORT

5%

SIMILARITY INDEX

4%

INTERNET SOURCES

1%

PUBLICATIONS

1%

STUDENT PAPERS

MATCH ALL SOURCES (ONLY SELECTED SOURCE PRINTED)

1%

★ vital.seals.ac.za:8080

Internet Source

Appendix J: Confirmation of editing

Geraldine Coertze

*Independent Communications Consultant
Language Practitioner -
English Language Academic Editor*

Confirmation of Academic Editing

Author: Bonisiwe Cresencia Ndengezi

Date: 06 February 2024

Document type: Masters dissertation

Discipline: Education, Teacher Development Studies


Academic supervisor: Prof. Carol Bertram

Institution: University of KwaZulu-Natal

Dissertation title: Enacting the Literacy Recovery Curriculum in Grade One: An Action Research Study

This document serves to confirm that the above dissertation was language edited during January/February 2024. Besides this, assistance was provided with the Table of Contents, List of Figures, List of Tables and with checking the format of the reference list.

The document was returned to the author with tracked changes and comments. It was the responsibility of the author to accept or reject changes and to attend to issues raised in the comments. The final, corrected version of the document was not proofread, although assistance was provided with final layout.


Ms Geraldine Coertze
Communications Consultant

Address: Pelham, Pietermaritzburg

Email: gericoe@gmail.com

Cell: +

*Individual member: South African Translators' Association
Associate member: Professional Editors' Guild (SA)
Entry-level member: Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading (UK)
Full member: South African Communication Association
Highest qualification: MSocSc (CCMS), UKZN*