

---

# DISSERTATION SUBMISSION

---

**Exploring the Strategies for Teaching Reading  
Comprehension to English First Additional  
Language Grade 9 Learners**

**Bongani Christmas Nyathikazi**

**November 2024**

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements in respect of the Master of Education Degree with Specialisation in Curriculum Studies in the Department of Curriculum Studies and Higher Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State

Supervisor: Dr GT Chimbi

Co-supervisor: Mrs HR Motaung

*Inspiring  
excellence,  
transforming  
lives through  
quality,  
impact, and  
care.*

*Inspiring excellence, transforming lives  
through quality, impact, and care.*

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
FREE STATE  
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE  
VRYSTAAT  
YUNIVESITHI YA  
FREISTATA



## DECLARATION

I, Bongani Christmas Nyathikazi, hereby certify that the dissertation that I handed in for the Master of Education degree at the University of the Free State, titled **“Exploring the Strategies for Teaching Reading Comprehension to English First Additional Language Grade 9 Learners,”** is entirely original and that I have not submitted the same work for credit at any other institution.

Furthermore, I affirm that no other scholar’s work has been used without proper citation and that every source that has been cited or used has been stated and acknowledged with full references.

I give the University of the Free State my copyright in this agreement.

Bongani Christmas Nyathikazi

Signed: *Nyathikazi BC*    Date: 30 November 2024

## **DEDICATION**

This master's degree study is dedicated to my family, and to my parents, whose sacrifices paved the way for my educational pursuits and whose love and support have been my driving force throughout this academic journey. Their unwavering encouragement and patience have enabled me to pursue my passion for a Master of Education in Curriculum Studies and Higher Education, and I am forever grateful.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and most importantly, I would like to sincerely thank the members of the Instructional Leadership, Curriculum Implementation Studies (ILCIS) and Special Interest Group (SIG) research group. Your support, criticism, and persistence moulded my academic journey. Everyone has challenged my thoughts, improved my perspectives, and pushed me to develop my mind. Thank you for your invaluable critical feedback and perseverance. You generously provided expertise and knowledge. This endeavour would not have been possible without your generous support. The group sessions' intellectual discussions, comprehensive arguments, and cooperation have increased my topic knowledge and study depth. Your academic success and support inspired me and, therefore, I value your intellectual affiliation.

I would like to express my special thanks and deepest gratitude to my special SIG coordinator, Prof. T. Jita. Her vision and leadership enhanced our SIG. Prof. Jita, thank you very much. Learners have improved due to your patience, insight, and hard work in building a shared study place. You did a great job assembling a diverse group of experts and encouraging serious investigation and respect. Your support and critical feedback have helped me grow professionally. Thanks for always believing in me and encouraging me.

I value the University of Free State Postgraduate Bursary, Centre for Graduate Support (CGS). This scholarship has given me the resources and financial aid support for this study. It has covered registration fees and tuition fees from my first year up to my final year. I was able to attend conferences both online and face to face. Accessing the materials and networking with other academics have reduced research costs. Thank you for your financial assistance; your support was essential in the completion of my dissertation.

I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr CT Tsotetsi, assistant dean and senior lecturer, for the opportunity to work at the University of the Free State QwaQwa Campus in the Faculty of Education as a junior lecturer. I am thrilled to be part of the team, and I appreciate the trust you have shown in me. Thank you for believing in me.

My supervisor, Dr GT Chimbi, has mentored and encouraged me throughout my academic career. I admire your patience, skills, and devotion. You gave me the resources, knowledge, and confidence to perform my difficult research task. Your informative comments have improved my critical thinking, concepts, and academic performance. Your confidence and hours of counsel are appreciated. Your guidance has been helpful. Thank you once again for your constructive suggestions, valuable support, guidance, and caring supervision that brought out the best in me during the development and planning of this research. I appreciate the experience of learning. Thank you for making time for me and instilling your visions and capabilities in me.

I appreciate my co-supervisor, Mrs HR Motaung's, assistance and encouragement during this master's degree. Your warmth, advice, and insight helped me in this academic journey. Your prompt and comprehensive responses, openness to explain, and assistance during uncertainty showed your commitment to my academic success. I appreciate our partnership and your support for my academic and personal improvement. I will always value your academic recommendations.

This study is dedicated to my late Grandmother, Nelisiwe Patricia Mdimma, and my younger brother, Mthunzi Mhlonipheni Nyathikazi, who have always been my pillars of strength. Thank you all for giving me advice and comfort. Your kindness, endless love, care, and trust throughout my academic challenges are much appreciated. I am doing this research project because of your assistance during my undergraduate journey until now. Your encouragement, financial support, and guidance have made a huge difference. Your help has taken weight off my shoulders.

I thank God the Almighty for His grace during my studies. Faith helped me overcome uncertainty. Ingenuity and determination helped me overcome obstacles.

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
EFAL	English First Additional Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
SACE	South African Council of Educators
SVR	Simple View of Reading Theory

## **ABSTRACT**

This study explored the strategies employed by English First Additional Language (EFAL) teachers to teach reading comprehension to Grade 9 learners in South African schools. The research addressed a critical gap in understanding how teachers navigate various challenges, such as large class sizes, language barriers, and limited resources, while developing learners' comprehension skills. This study utilised and was grounded in the simple view of reading theory, which provides a framework for understanding the essential components involved in reading comprehension. The simple view of reading theory suggests that reading comprehension is a product of two fundamental abilities – decoding skills and linguistic comprehension. According to this theory, decoding skills refer to the ability to recognise printed words and translate them into spoken language accurately and fluently. This involves mastering phonological awareness, phonics, and word recognition abilities. Linguistic comprehension, on the other hand, encompasses the skills necessary to understand the meaning of words, sentences, and texts, including vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, and comprehension strategies. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. For this study, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants. The data generation methods adopted in this study were semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and observation. The findings reveal that teachers predominantly employed a scaffolded approach, integrating explicit instruction techniques—such as skimming, scanning, predicting, and reciprocal teaching—alongside learner-centred methods to foster engagement and comprehension. However, the study highlights significant challenges in teaching higher-order comprehension skills, such as inferencing and evaluating, due to constraints in professional development, inadequate resources, and learners' limited English proficiency. Additionally, differentiated instruction emerged as a key strategy to address the diverse needs of learners. The study concludes that while teachers are committed to enhancing reading comprehension, they require more support in terms of ongoing professional development and access to relevant, culturally appropriate resources. Recommendations include providing teachers with continuous training and updated teaching materials that reflect learner contexts. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on improving English language instruction and learning

outcomes in multilingual and resource-constrained environments. The study recommends six strategies that teachers can use to improve reading comprehension in Grade 9 EFAL classes. These are: 1) prioritising funding and support for equitable education, 2) strengthening instructional support and collaboration in schools, 3) enhancing professional development on explicit instruction, 4) developing clear lesson plans with explicit strategies, 5) fostering collaborative learning and reflective practice among educators, and 6) enhancing instructional practices through professional development and collaboration.

**Keywords:** English First Additional Language, Grade 9, reading comprehension, scaffolded instruction.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS.....	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ix
LIST OF TABLES .....	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xiv
<b>CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Background to the Research.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.3 Problem Statement .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.4 Research Aim.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1.5 Research Objectives .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.5.1 Main research objective.....	6
1.5.2 Sub-research objectives .....	6
<b>1.6 Research Questions .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.6.1 Main research question .....	6
1.6.2 Sub-research questions.....	6
<b>1.7 Limitations and Delimitations.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.8 Overview of the Theoretical Framework.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.9 Rationale and Significance of the Study .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.10 Preliminary Literature Review .....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.10.1 Comprehension instruction: International landscape.....	11
1.10.2 Historical context of EFAL education in South Africa .....	11
<b>1.11 Current Pedagogical Approaches in EFAL Education Recommendations         and Future Directions .....</b>	<b>12</b>

<b>1.12</b>	<b>Overview of the Research Methodology .....</b>	<b>13</b>
1.12.1	Research paradigm.....	13
1.12.2	Research approach.....	13
1.12.3	Research design.....	13
1.12.4	Research site.....	14
1.12.5	Target population.....	14
1.12.6	Sampling.....	14
1.12.7	Sample size.....	15
1.12.8	Data generation instruments.....	15
1.12.9	Description of the participants .....	16
1.12.10	Data analysis.....	16
<b>1.13</b>	<b>Value of the Study .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>1.14</b>	<b>Definition of Key Terms .....</b>	<b>17</b>
1.14.1	English First Additional Language (EFAL).....	17
1.14.2	Reading comprehension.....	17
1.14.3	Assessment of reading comprehension .....	17
1.14.4	Teaching strategies for reading comprehension.....	17
<b>1.15</b>	<b>Outline of the Dissertation .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>1.16</b>	<b>Chapter Summary .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>		<b>20</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Theoretical Underpinning .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Simple View of Reading Theory .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>2.4</b>	<b>International Overview of Comprehension Instruction.....</b>	<b>24</b>
2.4.1	The United Kingdom experience .....	24
2.4.2	The United States of America experience .....	26
2.4.3	The Turkey experience .....	28
2.4.4	Teaching English reading comprehension in China .....	30
2.4.5	Teaching reading comprehension in Nigeria .....	31
2.4.6	Teaching reading comprehension in Kenya .....	32
2.4.7	A South African perspective .....	34
<b>2.5</b>	<b>Strategies Used in Teaching Reading Comprehension .....</b>	<b>35</b>

2.5.1	Morphological awareness and reading comprehension .....	35
2.5.2	Oral language skills and reading comprehension .....	36
<b>2.6</b>	<b>Challenges in Teaching Reading Comprehension .....</b>	<b>37</b>
2.6.1	Limited access to quality instructional resources .....	37
2.6.2	Linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom .....	37
2.6.3	Challenges observed in different parts of the world .....	38
2.6.4	Overall global standpoint on teaching reading comprehension for non-English speakers .....	41
2.6.5	Challenges specific to South Africa .....	43
<b>2.7</b>	<b>Chapter Summary .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>		<b>48</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Research Paradigm .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Research Design and Research Approach .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Research Approach .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>3.5</b>	<b>Setting of the Study .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>3.6</b>	<b>Study Population and Sampling .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>3.7</b>	<b>Data Generation Techniques .....</b>	<b>53</b>
3.7.1	Semi-structured interviews .....	53
3.7.2	Observation .....	55
3.7.3	Document analysis .....	56
<b>3.8</b>	<b>Data Generation Strategies .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>3.9</b>	<b>Data Analysis .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>3.10</b>	<b>Ethical Considerations .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>3.11</b>	<b>Trustworthiness of the Study .....</b>	<b>59</b>
3.11.1	Credibility .....	59
3.11.2	Feasibility .....	59
3.11.3	Transferability .....	59
3.11.4	Dependability .....	60
3.11.5	Traceability .....	60
<b>3.12</b>	<b>Chapter Summary .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS .....</b>		<b>61</b>

<b>4.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>61</b>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Participants' Background Information</b> .....	<b>61</b>
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Data Presentation and Interpretation</b> .....	<b>62</b>
4.3.1	Major Theme 1: Teaching strategies for reading comprehension .....	63
4.3.2	Major Theme 2: Teacher perspectives regarding reading comprehension instruction.....	75
4.3.3	Major Theme 3: Techniques used by teachers to teach reading comprehension .....	80
4.3.4	Major Theme 4: Challenges.....	84
<b>4.4</b>	<b>Discussion of Findings</b> .....	<b>90</b>
4.4.1	Insights from teachers: Alignments and contradictions .....	90
4.4.2	Consistency and inconsistency in Rose's vocabulary instruction .....	91
4.4.3	Alignment and discrepancies in vocabulary instruction .....	93
4.4.4	Navigating the complexities of scaffolding.....	94
4.4.5	Vocabulary instruction and time management.....	95
<b>4.5</b>	<b>Chapter Summary</b> .....	<b>97</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS</b> .....		<b>98</b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>98</b>
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Summary of the Research Findings</b> .....	<b>98</b>
5.2.1	Insights into reading comprehension strategies: Alignments and gaps .....	98
5.2.2	Aligning teaching practices with effective vocabulary instruction strategies .....	99
5.2.3	Enhancing learner independence through scaffolding techniques ...	100
5.2.4	Teacher perspectives regarding reading comprehension instruction	100
5.2.5	Techniques used by teachers to teach reading comprehension .....	101
5.2.6	Opportunities and challenges in teaching reading comprehension ..	102
5.2.7	Understanding and explaining reading comprehension strategies ...	102
<b>5.3</b>	<b>Conclusions of the Study</b> .....	<b>103</b>
<b>5.4</b>	<b>Recommendations of the Study</b> .....	<b>104</b>
5.4.1	Prioritising funding and support for equitable education.....	104
5.4.2	Strengthening instructional support and collaboration in schools.....	105
5.4.3	Enhancing professional development on explicit instruction .....	105

5.4.4	Developing clear lesson plans with explicit strategies .....	105
5.4.5	Fostering collaborative learning and reflective practice among educators .....	105
5.4.6	Enhancing instructional practices through professional development and collaboration .....	106
<b>5.5</b>	<b>Recommendations for Future Research .....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>5.6</b>	<b>Final Remarks .....</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>List of References .....</b>		<b>108</b>
<b>Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interviews Protocol .....</b>		<b>133</b>
<b>Appendix B: Observation Protocol.....</b>		<b>136</b>
<b>Appendix C: Document Analysis Protocol .....</b>		<b>139</b>
<b>Appendix D: Ethical Approval .....</b>		<b>145</b>
<b>Appendix E: Free State Department of Education Permission Letters.....</b>		<b>146</b>
<b>Appendix F: Information Leaflet .....</b>		<b>148</b>
<b>Appendix G: Consent Form.....</b>		<b>153</b>
<b>Appendix H: Title Registration Letter .....</b>		<b>155</b>
<b>Appendix I: Turnitin Report .....</b>		<b>156</b>
<b>Appendix J: Language Editing Certificate .....</b>		<b>157</b>

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 3.1: Data generation process followed in the study .....	57
Table 4.1: Participants' background information.....	62
Table 4.2: Major themes and sub-themes .....	63

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 3.1: Purposive sampling process for this study.....	53
--	----

# CHAPTER 1:

## BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

---

### 1.1 Introduction

In the field of education, it is universally acknowledged that the ability to comprehend written text is an important aspect that affects the learner's academic success as well as lifelong learning (Muzaki, 2024). However, studies have revealed that proficient reading comprehension tends to be challenging, especially for learners whose first language is not English (Alyne et al., 2024; Laroza & Amada, 2024). In a local context, in South Africa, where English is often the first additional language for many learners, the task of teaching reading comprehension becomes particularly demanding (Zano, 2023). To begin with, from the 1st to the 3rd Grade, classes are conducted in the learners' mother tongue or home language. Then, from the 4th Grade, the language of teaching transitions to English up until the 12th Grade, with an option for non-English-speaking learners to take English as a First Additional Language (EFAL) (Fesi & Mncube, 2021).

Adding to this complex picture, South Africa has a problem of low literacy rates and an additional issue of barriers that affect teachers negatively (Carter, Pillay et al., 2024). Putting forward some of these barriers, Adeleke and Onyebuchi (2023) cite the lack of resources, isolation of teachers, and lack of professional development opportunities, especially in schools located in rural areas or townships. Furthermore, the socioeconomic disparities in the country mean that many learners come from backgrounds where English proficiency may not be prioritised or supported at home (Serquina & Batang, 2018). For instance, authors such as Zamani (2017) have argued that parents, who may be illiterate themselves, might be unable to provide assistance with reading English or prioritise supporting learners' self-reading practice at home. This further hinders the development of reading comprehension skills in learners. Indeed, the challenge of mastering reading comprehension is compounded by a myriad factors influencing both the learning and teaching processes. It points to the significance of teachers and the strategies they use to reach the learning outcomes of producing learners who can read English with understanding. Therefore, this study

embarked on a qualitative journey that explored strategies for teaching reading comprehension to Grade 9 EFAL learners.

## **1.2 Background to the study**

Reading comprehension, the ability to understand and extract meaning from written texts, is a fundamental foundation for academic success and lifelong learning (Butterfuss et al., 2020). However, teaching reading comprehension, particularly in an EFAL context, presents significant challenges across various educational settings worldwide (Mohammed & Amponsah, 2018; Solari et al., 2022).

In Australia, the “reading crisis” has been attributed to disparities in access to educational resources, inequities in educational opportunities, and the prevalence of reading disabilities among learners (The Yale Tribune, 2018; McDonald, 2023; Grattan Institute, 2024). Across Europe, countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the Netherlands have also reported persistent challenges in reading comprehension, highlighting the need for enhanced teacher training and early language exposure (Dupont, 2018; Cockerill et al., 2023; Förster et al., 2023).

In Africa, countries such as Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland have implemented various interventions to improve reading comprehension skills, but the gap between policy and classroom reality remains (Dlamini & Sheik, 2019; Letsholo-Tafila & Alimi, 2019; Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019). Indeed, literature shows that regardless of geographic differences, the issue of English reading comprehension persists for non-mother-tongue English speakers in both developed and developing economies, emphasising the global nature of this educational challenge.

To address these challenges, researchers have emphasised the importance of equipping learners with effective reading comprehension strategies from an early age (Madikiza et al., 2018; Babayiğit & Shapiro, 2020; Elston et al., 2022). Strategies such as activating prior knowledge, asking questions, visualising, monitoring understanding, drawing inferences, and summarising have been identified as crucial tools for improving comprehension. Additionally, approaches such as scaffolding, graphic organisers, and interactive read-aloud have been recognised as effective teaching methods for fostering reading comprehension skills (Babayiğit & Shapiro, 2020; Singh et al., 2020). Despite the existence of these strategies and approaches,

the persistent reading comprehension challenges across diverse educational contexts indicate a need for further exploration and innovation in teaching and learning approaches. Addressing these challenges is crucial for equipping learners, particularly in the EFAL context, with the essential skills necessary for academic success and lifelong learning.

In South Africa, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) provides guidelines for teaching reading comprehension strategies, emphasising the progression of learners' proficiency in communication, reading, writing, and language structure (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

The EFAL curriculum strongly emphasises building reading and writing skills, exposing learners to a wide range of texts, and developing critical analysis and evaluation abilities (Department of Basic Education, 2011). However, despite these curriculum interventions, reading comprehension remains a persistent challenge in South African schools (Hugo, 2016; Howard, 2019; Olifant et al., 2019). This challenge is not unique to South Africa. Globally, studies have shown that reading comprehension difficulties cut across different languages and educational contexts (Spencer et al., 2019; D'Angelo et al., 2020; Zhang & Wang, 2022). Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors contributing to reading comprehension difficulties and developing targeted strategies to support learners in overcoming these challenges.

Factors such as diverse learner backgrounds, varying levels of language proficiency, instructional methods, sociocultural influences, and educational policies contribute to the complexity of teaching reading comprehension (Possi & Milinga, 2017; Murray, 2018; Kivi et al., 2021). For instance, in the United States, many learners struggle to attain proficient reading comprehension abilities, particularly those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds (Bunch et al., 2014; Fesi & Mncube, 2021; Catts, 2022). Similarly, in China, despite the implementation of various intervention strategies and the deployment of foreign English teachers, learners continue to face ongoing obstacles in comprehending English texts (Li et al., 2022; Murray et al., 2023; Gao et al., 2023).

The persistent challenge of developing proficient reading comprehension skills among EFAL learners highlights the urgent need for comprehensive investigation and

intervention (Adeleke & Onyebuchi, 2023). Despite the availability of various strategies for teaching reading comprehension, learners whose English is not their mother tongue continue to grapple with understanding and interpreting written texts (Ardasheva et al., 2021). This challenge is not confined to a single educational context but extends globally, reflecting a broader issue in language education (Batista, 2020).

In classrooms across diverse linguistic and cultural settings, EFAL learners often face barriers to effective comprehension, hindering their academic progress and limiting their access to educational opportunities (Adegoriolu et al., 2022). These barriers may stem from factors such as limited exposure to English language input, insufficient vocabulary knowledge, and inadequate instruction in comprehension strategies (Labrigas, 2022; Yaccob et al., 2022). Furthermore, socioeconomic disparities and educational inequalities further increase the challenges faced by EFAL learners, widening the achievement gap and perpetuating cycles of disadvantage (Zamani, 2017).

The complexities inherent in teaching reading comprehension to EFAL learners necessitate a deeper exploration of the underlying factors contributing to this persistent difficulty. Despite the wealth of research on reading comprehension instruction, there remains an insufficiency of studies specifically focused on EFAL contexts. This relates particularly to the challenges of teaching reading comprehension to EFAL learners in rural-based schools, where factors such as limited resources, lack of access to quality educational materials, and socioeconomic disparities further add to the difficulties teachers and learners face. This significant gap in the literature not only highlights the urgency for more targeted investigations but also points to the critical need for attaining lived realities of teachers' perspectives on the matter to put forward tailored interventions that can effectively address the complex challenges encountered by EFAL learners in rural schools. By attaining the reality factors that influence reading comprehension outcomes in these contexts, such research can inform the development of more contextually relevant and impactful instructional strategies, ultimately contributing to improved educational outcomes for EFAL learners in rural areas.

There is a compelling need to undertake a qualitative inquiry into the strategies employed for teaching reading comprehension to EFAL learners, intending to identify

evidence-based approaches that can mitigate the barriers to comprehension and enhance instructional outcomes. By conducting such research, teachers, policymakers, and curriculum developers can gain valuable insights into the most effective instructional practices for supporting EFAL learners in developing their reading comprehension skills.

This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the efficacy of existing strategies and proposing innovative interventions tailored to the needs of EFAL learners, thereby contributing to the advancement of local-language education practices. Through rigorous empirical investigation, this research aims to empower teachers with the knowledge and resources needed to foster literacy development and academic success among EFAL learners, and ultimately promote greater equity and inclusion in the educational landscape. It is indeed a warranted study, given that CAPS provides extensive guidelines related to comprehension strategies (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Organisations such as the South African Literacy Association (SALA) actively promote reading comprehension instruction (Salmerón et al., 2023).

Recent studies have revealed deficiencies in reading comprehension among South African youth, with 78% of Grade 4 learners unable to comprehend written text meaningfully (Ntshikila, 2021; Liswaniso, 2021; Vaughn, Boardman & Klingner, 2024). The 2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (Hillman, O'Grady, Rodrigues, Schmid & Thomson, 2023) results show that 81% of Grade 9 learners perform below the minimum benchmarks for reading proficiency, indicating a persistent situation. South Africa lags significantly behind African, continental, and international averages. This study aims to provide an informed perspective on the challenges faced by Grade 9 EFAL teachers in reading comprehension. This study examines how Grade 9 EFAL teachers' reading comprehension pedagogy, beliefs, and practices bridge policy and practice gaps, aiming to understand frontline teachers' pedagogy and contextual elements. This study is unique in that it explores the teaching strategies of reading comprehension employed for Grade 9 EFAL learners in Phuthaditjhaba, Free State province, contributing new knowledge on teaching strategies for reading comprehension for Grade 9 learners.

### **1.3 Research Aim**

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore the strategies utilised in teaching reading comprehension to Grade 9 learners for whom English served as a first additional language. Through comprehensive investigation, the research sought to identify and understand the effectiveness of various instructional approaches in enhancing reading comprehension outcomes within this context.

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

#### **1.4.1 Main research objective**

The main objective of the study was to explore strategies for teaching reading comprehension to Grade 9 EFAL learners.

#### **1.4.2 Sub-research objectives**

The objectives of the study were to:

- i. Examine the perceptions of Grade 9 EFAL teachers regarding reading comprehension instruction.
- ii. Investigate the specific techniques Grade 9 EFAL teachers use to teach reading comprehension.
- iii. Identify the opportunities and challenges Grade 9 EFAL teachers encounter when teaching reading comprehension.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

#### **1.5.1 Main research question**

What strategies are used by Grade 9 EFAL teachers to teach reading comprehension in selected South African schools?

#### **1.5.2 Sub-research questions**

- i. What are the perceptions of Grade 9 EFAL teachers regarding reading comprehension instruction?
- ii. Which specific techniques do Grade 9 EFAL teachers use to teach reading comprehension?

- iii. What opportunities and challenges do Grade 9 EFAL teachers encounter when teaching reading comprehension?

## **1.6 Limitations and Delimitations**

### **1.6.1 Limitations**

Limitations in a research study are the specificities of the research methodology and design that have an impact on the findings that are drawn from the analysis of the data collected (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). This research study was limited due to the limited sample size of the study. In addition, there is a lack of generalisability of the findings in making sense of the same phenomenon in different settings and geographic locations. The qualitative nature of the study also did not permit the statistical analysis of the data since the data were non-numeric in nature.

When a research study has limitations, those are the ways that the methodology and plan were limited, which make it hard to interpret and apply the results to other situations (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The small size of the group in this study means that the results cannot be put into too many different situations. The study only looked at EFAL teachers in Grade 9 in the Thabo Mofutsanyane district of South Africa's Free State province. This means that the findings may not be fully applicable to other districts or countries where education works differently. The study was also limited by the fact that it was qualitative, which meant that the data could not be analysed statistically since it was not numerical. So, while the study gives deep, rich insights, it does not offer any quantitative conclusions that can be applied to a bigger group of people.

### **1.6.2 Delimitations**

Delimitations of a research study are the boundaries of the study, and they describe what and whom to include and exclude in the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). These are the measures that the researcher takes to control what the study would include and exclude to make it possible to manage it and mainstream it to the achievement of the initial aim of the study. In this study, only Grade 9 EFAL teachers were sampled to participate in the study. All the sampled teachers were from the Thabo Mofutsanyane district, Free State province, South Africa, ignoring other grade

levels and private or independent schools. The study examined teachers' tactics for teaching reading comprehension, not learners' achievement. Qualitative data was collected using semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, not quantitative surveys or experimental research. According to the study's goal, this delimitation allowed a detailed analysis of teachers' teaching practices and experiences.

## **1.7 Overview of the Theoretical Framework**

This study is grounded in the simple view of reading (SVR) theory, which provides a framework for understanding the essential components involved in reading comprehension. Proposed by researchers Gough & Tunmer (1986), the SVR theory suggests that reading comprehension is a product of two fundamental abilities – decoding skills and linguistic comprehension (Catts, 2018). According to this theory, decoding skills refer to the ability to recognise printed words and translate them into spoken language accurately and fluently (Gurjar, 2023). This involves mastering phonological awareness, phonics, and word recognition abilities (Catts, 2018). Linguistic comprehension, on the other hand, encompasses the skills necessary to understand the meaning of words, sentences, and texts, including vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, and comprehension strategies (Duke & Cartwright, 2021).

In the context of teaching reading comprehension to EFAL learners, the SVR theory highlights the importance of addressing both decoding and linguistic comprehension skills. EFAL learners may face challenges in either or both components, which can hinder their overall reading comprehension abilities. By grounding this study in the SVR theory, the research aimed to explore and understand the specific challenges faced by Grade 9 EFAL learners in terms of decoding and linguistic comprehension. The theory provides a framework for identifying areas of strength and weakness, and for developing targeted instructional strategies to support the development of both decoding and linguistic comprehension skills. Furthermore, the SVR theory emphasises the need for a balanced approach to reading instruction, addressing both code-based skills and meaning-based skills. This perspective can inform the

development and implementation of effective teaching strategies that cater for the diverse needs of EFAL learners, ultimately enhancing their reading comprehension abilities.

## **1.8 Rationale and Significance of the Study**

South Africa's dynamic educational landscape shows that EFAL teaching methods affect other educational outcomes. Post-apartheid South Africa initiated educational reforms to reduce inequities and promote inclusive education to unite the nation (Monyeke, 2023). This study investigates how EFAL teachers' involvement in and approaches to teaching Grade 9 learners reading comprehension affect their academic pathways. Researchers have noted the complex relationship between linguistic competence and academic success, as reading comprehension proficiency may improve learners' performance in many courses (Pretorius, 2002). Thus, this study analysed EFAL teachers' strategic methods to design lessons that could enrich Grade 9 education in South Africa.

In this study, Grade 9 is a significant focus. During this phase, learners should progress from basic to abstract thinking and comprehension (Taylor & Vinjevoold, 1999). Unfortunately, research shows that learners in this grade have a considerable reading comprehension gap, requiring quick intervention to revitalise instructional methods (Spaull, 2011). This study investigated teaching approaches in detail and identified gaps and improvements using past study paradigms. Even though many studies have examined language instruction, micro-level analyses of reading comprehension approaches in EFAL settings are rare (Howie et al., 2017).

The changing nature of education in South Africa shows that EFAL teaching methods have a big effect on overall educational results. South Africa started educational changes after apartheid to even out things and make education more open to everyone so that the country could come together (Monyeke, 2023). But problems that don't go away in language instruction keep getting in the way of students' ability to do well in school in many areas. This research looks at how EFAL teachers teach reading comprehension in Grade 9 and how that affects students' academic growth and their ability to move from basic to abstract thought, which is very important at this age (Taylor & Vinjevoold, 1999). Reading comprehension skills are directly linked to

academic success, especially in topics that need analytical and critical thinking skills. The goal of this study is to find ways to teach that could improve students' learning outcomes (Pretorius, 2002).

This study is important since it adds to both the academic and practical understanding of teaching English as a foreign language. According to the Simple View of Reading Theory, reading comprehension depends on decoding skills and language understanding (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). This study takes a close look at different ways of teaching reading within this theory. By using this model, the study helps us figure out how to adapt reading comprehension methods to South African schools, which are often multilingual and short on resources.

This study is useful in many real-world ways. For starters, it gives teachers suggestions based on research on how to make reading comprehension lessons that meet the needs of all their students. It can help with developing curricula and professional development programs for EFAL teachers by showing them the best ways to teach and where there are holes in their current methods. Second, lawmakers and other people with a stake in education can use the study's findings to improve teacher training programs and make sure that teachers have the right tools to help students learn to read and write. Third, students should benefit from better comprehension instruction, which could have a positive effect on their overall academic success and the way they learn in the future.

The study also adds to the body of research-on-research methods by showing that qualitative methods can be used to look into teaching methods in areas that haven't been studied much before. Through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, the study gives us deep, contextualised insights into the real lives of EFAL teachers. This helps us understand the challenges and opportunities in teaching reading comprehension in a more detailed way.

In the end, this study is important for more than just academic discussion. It can be used as a guide to improve EFAL reading comprehension teaching in Grade 9 classrooms. This has bigger effects on South Africa's language policy, curriculum development, and teacher training.

## **1.9 Preliminary Literature Review**

### **1.9.1 Comprehension instruction: International landscape**

Reading comprehension has been a widely studied area across various countries and contexts, with researchers exploring effective pedagogical strategies, available resources, and appropriate assessment methods (Lee, 2017; Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Caraig & Quimbo, 2022; Yaccob et al., 2022). One prevalent approach advocated by scholars is explicit strategy instruction, which involves systematically teaching learners specific strategies such as visualising, questioning, and summarising to enhance their comprehension abilities (Shanahan et al., 2010; Brevik, 2019; Elston et al., 2022; Chinpakdee & Gu, 2024).

Literature further shows that various teaching techniques and strategies have been explored and implemented globally, such as direct explanation, which is suitable for teaching reading comprehension (Feng & Chen, 2016; Kuswiyanti et al., 2023). Another body of literature cites transactional methods in reading comprehension, which let teachers employ six steps, namely predicting, responding to the text based on prior knowledge, seeking clarification, visualising, questioning, and answering as well as summarising (Svensson, 2020; Cardoso et al., 2021; Pressley et al., 2023). Moreover, some studies emphasised interactive constructive methods, which include techniques such as probing learners with questions about content they already know with the intent of arising interests (Tracey, 2017; Huang, 2022; Zhang & Wang, 2022). Additionally, researchers have emphasised the importance of integrating diverse instructional approaches, such as graphic organisers, culturally relevant texts, and formative assessments, to cater to the diverse needs and learning styles of learners (Marzano, 2010; Daniel, 2020; Duke & Cartwright, 2021).

### **1.9.2 Historical context of EFAL education in South Africa**

In the South African context, the development of EFAL education has been intertwined with the country's sociopolitical history. During the post-apartheid transition, educational changes aimed to promote inclusion and diversity (Dube, 2022). Language policy shifts recognised multilingualism, seeking to integrate Indigenous languages while maintaining English proficiency given the 11 different official languages in the country (Avramenko, 2020). The 1997 Language-in-Education Policy

increased linguistic diversity in classrooms, which some scholars praised as affirming multilingualism and achievement (Heugh, 2013). However, some authors have raised concerns, arguing that such a move risks weakening English acquisition and global competitiveness (Flowerdew, 2019). Despite such arguments, a large body of literature believes that the inclusion of teaching in the learner's mother tongue before transitioning to English being a language of teaching is a beneficial and balanced approach that services the needs of the learners (Adegoriolu et al., 2022).

### **1.10 Current Pedagogical Approaches in EFAL Education Recommendations and Future Directions**

Contemporary EFAL pedagogies in South Africa encompass diverse techniques tailored to drive teachers to navigate the multilingual terrain. These approaches foster active engagement and language absorption and aid in English comprehension (Heugh, 2013). Some of these pedagogies advocate for systematic English instruction given its likelihood to boost learner performance, especially in reading (Spaull, 2011). Moreover, reading comprehension is central to EFAL as it lays the foundations for critical thinking and textual understanding (Adegoriolu et al., 2022). Elaborating further, Taylor & Von Fintel (2016) argue that comprehension strategies introduced early in schooling develop skilled language users and foster academic success. However, some scholars caution that explicit comprehension strategies may hinder linguistic creativity and acquisition, which suggests a balanced focus on comprehension without overshadowing other language facets (Babayiğit & Shapiro, 2020; Amaka, 2021).

Existing EFAL techniques have both advantages and shortcomings. Approaches embracing diverse learning styles and languages foster inclusion (Howie et al., 2017). However, linguistic disparities and resource constraints persist, perpetuating the shortcomings (Brevik, 2019; Wills et al., 2022). Moreover, the inefficacy of some modern techniques points to the need for teacher training and professional development (Murray, 2018; Ngubane et al., 2020; Maja & Motseke, 2021).

## **1.11 Overview of the Research Methodology**

This study aimed to explore effective strategies for enhancing reading comprehension among EFAL learners. To achieve this objective, a qualitative research approach was employed, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the perspectives and experiences of EFAL teachers and learners. The research methodology section outlines the specific methods and procedures that guided the conduct of this study. It provides a detailed description of the research design, sampling techniques, data generation methods, and data analysis procedures employed, and these are briefly described below.

### **1.11.1 Research paradigm.....**

This study was underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm, which emphasises subjective meanings and social constructs. According to Scotland (2012), interpretivism upholds that reality is socially constructed and shaped by human experiences and social contexts. In contrast to positivism's focus on generalisability, interpretivism values subjectivity and seeks insider perspectives of the participants (Cohen, 2011). Fitting this study, interpretivism enabled grasping the beliefs and experiences of teachers regarding reading comprehension instruction through unearthing their situated realities and contextual rationales.

### **1.11.2 Research approach.....**

A qualitative approach was utilised to generate in-depth, contextual data on reading comprehension teaching. Mantula et al. (2024) describe qualitative research as an approach that explores natural phenomena using methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis. This approach emphasises meaning rather than numbers and it inductively derives understandings grounded in participant experiences (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). As this study intended to probe the specifics of EFAL pedagogies, a qualitative approach was suitable for investigating this dynamic topic and capturing teachers' emic perspectives.

### **1.11.3 Research design.....**

An exploratory design guided the in-depth investigation of this less-researched area. Exploratory studies flexibly explore phenomena to gain new insights and generate

hypotheses (Hunter et al., 2019). They emphasise discovery, description, and interpretation rather than the testing of theories (Stake, 2010). As reading comprehension instruction involves complex cognitive and sociocultural dynamics, an exploratory lens encouraged fresh perspectives beyond prevailing assumptions. It opened new trajectories for EFAL pedagogy.

#### **1.11.4 Research site.....**

The research occurred in five designated schools located in the Thabo Mofutsanyane district in the Phuthaditjhaba area of the Free State province. Teachers from these schools participated in the exploration of strategies for teaching reading comprehension to Grade 9 learners studying EFAL. The data generation focused on understanding the approaches used in teaching reading comprehension to Grade 9 learners in the Senior Phase of education.

#### **1.11.5 Target population.....**

In research, the target population is defined as the specific group that possesses the qualities that the researcher is interested in researching (Pandey & Pandey, 2021), for example, individuals who possess qualities such as teaching attitudes or experience. The target population of this study was Grade 9 EFAL teachers from five specific public secondary schools in the Thabo Mofutsanyane district. Teachers were targeted who were professionally registered with the South African Council of Educators (SACE), which serves as the regulatory body for teachers' professional conduct, teaching practices, and classroom management. The targeted population was identified based on the characterisation of offering EFAL at the Grade 9 level and being experienced and professionally registered teachers.

#### **1.11.6 Sampling.....**

Selecting participants from the overall targeted population for this study involved sampling. For this study, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants. This method enabled the identification of information-rich participants with in-depth expertise based on the required characteristics and abilities to contribute meaningfully to the study. In purposive sampling, the researcher selects participants based on their capacity to provide detailed insights into the research issue (Etikan et al., 2016). As this study aimed to gain perspectives on EFAL pedagogies, purposive

sampling facilitated selecting participants with extensive experience in teaching, learning, forming, or engaging with reading comprehension curricula. Their knowledge enriched the data. The purposive sampling phase took a systematic approach to identify and recruit participants for the study. First, a list of secondary schools offering Grade 9 in the Thabo Mofutsanyane district was compiled, serving as the sampling frame. Subsequently, contact details of schools and principals were established to request identification of Grade 9 EFAL teachers who met the inclusion criteria, including professional registration with SACE and a minimum of five years of teaching experience. Upon obtaining consent from the school principals, eligible Grade 9 EFAL teachers were individually approached and invited to participate in the study. Finally, invitations were extended to EFAL teachers from the first five schools that responded positively, with the aim to recruit one teacher from each school for engagement in the research.

#### **1.11.7 Sample size.....**

In determining the sample size for the study, a deliberate approach was adopted to ensure representation from various secondary schools in the Thabo Mofutsanyane district. Specifically, five schools were purposefully selected based on their willingness to participate and their geographical distribution within the district. From each of these five schools, one Grade 9 EFAL teacher was purposefully recruited to participate in the study. Thus, the sample size of five EFAL teachers from different school contexts ensured manageable data generation and analysis processes.

#### **1.11.8 Data generation instruments**

Data generation is the action of obtaining and analysing research data on relevant variables in a planned, methodical way that makes it possible to respond to specific research questions and assess results (Sekaran, 2020). Matching the qualitative enquiry, the data generation methods adopted in this study were semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and observation. The data obtained were later analysed and contextualised with the reviewed secondary data on the subject matter, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the teaching context. Open-ended questions facilitated the interview process, which allowed for the inclusion of follow-up questions.

### **1.11.9 Description of the participants**

The participants in this study were EFAL teachers from five selected secondary schools in the Thabo Mofutsanyane district of the Free State province, who taught this subject in different grades, starting from Grade 9 to Grade 12. These participating teachers were professionally registered with SACE, and their teaching experience ranged from six up to nine years.

### **1.11.10 Data analysis.....**

The data were analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns and themes. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process of thematic analysis was utilised. Thematic analysis identifies, examines, and reports patterns and meanings in data (Nowell et al., 2017). It offers a systematic approach suited to exploratory studies, allowing themes to emerge inductively from participants' accounts. Comprehending EFAL teachers' teaching techniques requires delving into nuanced meanings in their narratives. Thematic analysis facilitated illuminating these latent themes and constructions.

## **1.12 Value of the Study**

This study holds significant value as it addressed a crucial educational need by shedding light on effective instructional practices suitable to support Grade 9 learners as they transition to the Further Education and Training (FET) Phase. The findings can directly inform teaching methods and contribute to the knowledge base on inclusive reading instruction for diverse student populations. Furthermore, the study has the potential to promote equitable educational opportunities by identifying approaches that enhance EFAL learners' reading comprehension skills, a foundational component of academic success. Ultimately, this research can guide teacher training and professional development initiatives, equipping teachers with evidence-based strategies to better serve the needs of EFAL learners and foster their reading proficiency.

## **1.13 Definition of Key Terms**

### **1.13.1 English First Additional Language (EFAL)**

EFAL is for learners whose mother tongue is not English (CAPS 123, 2023). In the context of this study, EFAL refers to the English language subject that focuses on developing fundamental language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening in English.

### **1.13.2 Reading comprehension**

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand and extract meaning from written texts (Banditvilai, 2020). In this study, reading comprehension is acknowledged to go beyond decoding words as it involves grasping the underlying ideas, themes, and messages conveyed by the author (Banditvilai, 2020).

### **1.13.3 Assessment of reading comprehension**

Assessment of reading comprehension refers to the process of evaluating learners' understanding of written texts through various methods, such as comprehension questions, retelling exercises, or performance tasks (Calet et al., 2020).

### **1.13.4 Teaching strategies for reading comprehension**

Teaching strategies for reading comprehension are the instructional methods, techniques, and approaches employed by teachers to facilitate EFAL learners' understanding and engagement with written English texts, with the aim of improving their reading comprehension skills (Li et al., 2024). In the context of this study, reading strategies are systematic methods used by teachers to improve learners' understanding and interpretation of texts. These strategies are particularly important for learners acquiring English as an additional language, as they help bridge the gap between their existing knowledge and the new information presented in reading materials.

Reading strategies can be categorised into three main phases: pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading. Pre-reading strategies involve activating prior knowledge and setting a purpose for reading, such as building background knowledge, setting goals, and predicting content. During-reading strategies facilitate understanding and

retention of information, such as self-monitoring, visualising, and summarising key points after reading sections. Post-reading strategies help consolidate learning and deepen comprehension. These include reflecting on content, evaluating texts, and creating concept maps. These strategies help students think critically, engage with material, and organise their thoughts effectively. By employing these strategies, educators can help students better understand and retain the information presented in reading materials.

## **1.14 Outline of the Dissertation**

### **Chapter 1: Background and Orientation to the Study**

This chapter introduces the research topic by presenting the background of the study, highlighting the persistent challenges in teaching reading comprehension to EFAL learners. It presents the problem statement, outlining the specific issues that this study aimed to address. The aim and objectives of the study are stated, along with the rationale for undertaking the research. Research questions are listed as well to guide the inquiry and investigation into the strategies employed for teaching English reading comprehension.

### **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of existing literature related to teaching reading comprehension to EFAL learners. It explores key concepts associated with English reading comprehension teaching strategies, followed by a discussion of theoretical frameworks underpinning reading comprehension instruction. The chapter further examines strategies for teaching reading comprehension, drawing insights from previous studies conducted in similar contexts locally and internationally.

### **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

The methodology chapter outlines the research design, including the rationale for adopting a qualitative approach within the interpretivist paradigm. It details the selection criteria and recruitment process for participants, as well as the data generation methods employed, which primarily consisted of semi-structured interviews. The chapter also elucidates the procedures for data analysis and discusses

ethical considerations to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the research process.

#### **Chapter 4: Data analysis**

In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented and analysed. An overview of the participants is provided, followed by a thematic analysis of the interview data. The themes that emerged from the interviews are discussed in relation to teachers' perspectives on the strategies utilised for teaching reading comprehension to Grade 9 EFAL learners in selected schools in Phuthaditjhaba.

#### **Chapter 5: Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusions**

The discussion chapter interprets the findings considering the existing literature, examining similarities, differences, and implications for practice. It explores the significance of the findings in addressing the research questions and offers insights into potential areas for further research. It then concludes and puts forward recommendations for enhancing reading comprehension instruction in EFAL contexts. The conclusion also reflects on the broader implications of the study and suggests avenues for future research to build upon the findings presented.

#### **1.15 Chapter Summary**

This chapter served as a comprehensive introduction to the overall dissertation. It commenced by providing background context and articulating the problem statement, followed by clearly defining the research aim, objectives, and questions. The chapter also included an overview of the theoretical framework and emphasised the rationale and significance of the study. It further presented a preliminary literature review to offer insights into the international landscape of comprehension instruction and the historical context of EFAL education in South Africa, as well as current pedagogical approaches and recommendations for future directions. Finally, an overview of the research methodology as well as matters concerning ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the study was provided, along with an outline of the dissertation structure.

# CHAPTER 2:

## LITERATURE REVIEW

---

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature on the strategies utilised in teaching reading comprehension to EFAL learners, primarily in the context of secondary school education. The chapter further discusses the SVR theory as the theoretical framework that offers insight into the mechanisms and factors important in the instructional strategies that promote and support learners' EFAL reading comprehension. The chapter will further provide a comprehensive discussion of international and local teaching strategies for reading comprehension, providing a holistic picture from developed and developing countries' perspectives.

### 2.2 Theoretical Underpinning

The theoretical underpinning serves as a foundational framework that underlies and informs the structure, objectives, and methodology of a study (Durach et al., 2021). In the context of teaching reading comprehension for EFAL, this section will delve into the theoretical foundations that guide and inform the instructional strategies and approaches utilised in the study.

Gough and Tunmer created the Simple View of Reading (SVR) hypothesis in 1986 to explain reading comprehension, according to Kirby & Savage (2008). According to Gustafson et al. (2013), reading comprehension (R) is caused by decoding (D) and linguistic understanding (C), with  $R = D \times C$ , ranging from 0 (inability) to 1 (perfection). Reading requires decoding and language understanding, which are independent but interconnected.

Catts (2018) argues decoding involves word recognition and pronunciation, whereas linguistic understanding encompasses lexicon, syntax, and semantics. Gurjar (2023) states that improving decoding (phonics and fluency) and linguistic knowledge (vocabulary and background) increases reading comprehension. A simple yet complete explanation of the reading process, The Simple View of Reading highlights

the need of both components working together to increase reading comprehension (Duke & Cartwright, 2021).

Guo (2018) found that pupils with good reading comprehension perform better in English-taught mathematics and sciences. SVR theory focusses teaching Grade 9 EFAL learners reading comprehension through decoding and linguistic understanding. Teachers promote reading comprehension by predicting, summarising, questioning, visualising, and linking (Ardasheva et al., 2021).

The Simple View of Reading supports this study by explaining Grade 9 EFAL learners' reading difficulties. This strategy helps teachers detect issues and employ decoding and comprehension skills. Methods of effective teaching include: Explicit instruction methods – Teaching comprehension skills systematically, scaffolding techniques – Providing structured support to learners as well as interactive learning approaches – Engaging learners through discussion and collaborative reading activities.

Research shows that many EFAL teachers cannot understand how to assist learners understand what they read, which causes learners to do poorly (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). This study uses the Simple View of Reading to look into specific strategies that assist grade 9 EFAL learners understand what they are reading and get better at reading in general.

### **2.3 Simple View of Reading Theory**

According to Kirby & Savage (2008), in 1986, scholars Gough and Tunmer coined the SVR theory as a framework put forward to explain that reading comprehension (R) is a result of decoding (D) combined with listening comprehension (C). Gustafson et al. (2013) further explain that the SVR framework can be presented by the formula  $R = D \times C$  and each variable ranges from 0 (inability) to 1 (perfection). They highlight that as much as these components are independent of each other, they are closely interrelated. Giving an elaborate analysis, Catts (2018) argues that proficient reading comprehension is achieved when individuals can accurately decode written text, such as converting printed words into spoken language and understanding the meaning of the language.

Catts (2018) states that decoding involves recognising and understanding individual words, while linguistic comprehension encompasses the ability to understand the vocabulary, syntax, and semantics of the text. Furthermore, this theory suggests that reading comprehension can be enhanced by improving both decoding skills, such as phonics and fluency, and linguistic comprehension, such as vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge (Gurjar, 2023). This model provides a simplified yet comprehensive explanation of the reading process, emphasising the critical role of both decoding and linguistic comprehension in achieving proficient reading comprehension (Duke & Cartwright, 2021).

Resonating with the SVR theoretical beliefs, Guo (2018) associates reading comprehension with English language proficiency and infers that those learners who accurately read with understanding abilities stand a greater chance of performing better in other subjects such as math and science, as these are taught using the English language. Applying the SVR theory to teaching reading comprehension involves a comprehensive approach that addresses both decoding skills and linguistic comprehension to support the learners' overall reading proficiency. Additionally, comprehension strategies are taught to help learners understand and interpret text, with a focus on predicting, summarising, questioning, visualising, and making connections (Ardasheva et al., 2021).

The SVR theory posits that reading comprehension is a product of two essential components: decoding and language comprehension. It emphasises the need for both skills to be developed for effective reading comprehension. In the context of teaching Grade 9 learners, particularly those learning EFAL, understanding this theory helps teachers identify areas in which learners may struggle. Decoding involves translating text into spoken words, and effective strategies, such as phonemic awareness and phonics, can help improve these skills. Language comprehension involves understanding spoken and written language, including vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge.

SVR informs teaching strategies by highlighting the need for a balanced approach that addresses both decoding and comprehension. This includes explicit instruction methods, scaffolding techniques, and interactive learning. Research has indicated that

many teachers lack familiarity with effective reading comprehension strategies, leading to poor learner performance. This theory provides a framework for understanding reading difficulties and guides the development of targeted interventions to enhance reading outcomes for Grade 9 learners.

Catts (2018) asserts that decoding involves word recognition and understanding, whereas linguistic comprehension involves text vocabulary, syntax, and semantics. This idea suggests that improving decoding skills like phonics and fluency and linguistic comprehension like vocabulary and prior knowledge can increase reading comprehension (Gurjar, 2023). This approach simplifies but thoroughly explains reading, emphasising decoding and linguistic understanding (Duke & Cartwright, 2021).

According to SVR theory, Guo (2018) ties reading comprehension to English language competency and suggests that children who read effectively with comprehension are more likely to succeed in English-taught maths and science. SVR theory improves reading comprehension by incorporating decoding and language understanding. Students learn predicting, summarising, questioning, visualising, and linking to understand content (Ardasheva et al., 2021).

According to SVR, reading comprehension includes decoding and language understanding. Both reading comprehension skills are boosted. Understanding this concept helps instructors recognise Grade 9 students', especially EFAL, challenges. Phonemic awareness and phonics help decoders produce words. Understanding oral and written language requires vocabulary and context.

SVR promotes balanced decoding and understanding in instruction. This requires clear training, scaffolding, and participation. Research shows that many teachers lack reading comprehension abilities, which impacts student achievement. This technique explains reading challenges and provides targeted therapies to enhance Grade 9 reading.

## **2.4 International Overview of Comprehension Instruction**

### **2.4.1 The United Kingdom experience**

English comprehension has been studied in various parts of the world, including the United Kingdom. Hessel & Murphy (2019) studied the comprehension of EFAL learners in primary schools in the United Kingdom (UK). They found that the EFAL comprehension of learners aged six to seven years old was drastically more advanced than that of their counterparts who were aged five to six. The findings suggest that as children grow older, their EFAL comprehension also improves. Therefore, it can be deduced that metaphor comprehension develops over the first critical years of schooling. Furthermore, English as an Additional Language learners differ from their native English-speaking counterparts, which is why greater support is required by learners who are non-native English speakers (Smith, 2019). Moreover, Smith (2019) postulates that EFAL learners demonstrate poorer comprehension of reading and writing compared to their English native counterparts.

The United Kingdom has implemented various strategies and initiatives to enhance reading comprehension instruction, particularly for English learners. The Education Endowment Foundation, a prominent organisation in the United Kingdom, has conducted extensive research and disseminated evidence-based guidance for effective reading comprehension teaching. According to the guidance report by Higgins et al. (2019), explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies, such as activating prior knowledge, questioning, and monitoring understanding, has been found to significantly improve learners' comprehension abilities. Additionally, the report emphasises the importance of collaborative learning approaches, where learners actively engage in discussion and share their understanding of texts (Murphy et al., 2018). Furthermore, the use of structured questioning techniques, such as reciprocal reading, has been recommended as an effective way to foster comprehension and metacognitive skills among learners (Ramadan, 2017). The UK government has also introduced initiatives such as UK Learner Premium. This initiative provides additional funding to support disadvantaged learners, including those with English as an additional language, to improve their reading comprehension and overall academic achievement (Department of Basic Education, 2019).

In the UK and other places around the world, a lot of research has been done on how to understand what you read. The understanding levels of English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners in primary schools were looked at by Hessel & Murphy in 2019. They found that as learners get older, they get a lot better at it. The learners between the ages of 6 and 7 did better on their EFAL examinations than the learners between that age and 6 years. The data show that these skills, along with the ability to understand metaphors, get better over the course of the first few years of school. However, Smith (2019) says that EFAL learners often do not understand what their classmates who speak English as their first language write and read as well as they do. This shows that learners who are not native English speakers need more assistant in schools.

That is why the UK has set up several ways and programs to make reading comprehension lessons better, especially for learners who are learning English. Harmades (2024) says that the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has done a lot of research to give tips on how to improve reading comprehension that is based on facts. According to the EEF advice report by Higgins et al. (2019), teaching learners certain reading comprehension strategies—such as using what they already know, asking questions, and making sure they understand—has been shown to make a big difference in their ability to understand. To back this up even more, Wendaferew & Damtew (2023) found that teaching certain reading techniques makes Ethiopian high school learner's better readers.

A lot of attention has also been paid to group learning in UK reading programs. In these, learners take part in discussions, share their ideas, and figure out what the words mean together (Murphy et al., 2018). This fits with what Vaughn et al. (2024) say about how to help learners who are having trouble learning understand what they read. They say it is important to ask organised questions, read out loud to each other, and be shown clearly how to understand what they are reading. Other researchers say that structured asking methods, such as reading back and forth, can help learners improve their reading and thinking skills (Ramadan, 2017).

In addition, UK government has started programs like the UK Learner Premium. This gives extra money to learners who are struggling, like those learning English as a second language (EAL), to help them understand what they read and do better in

school generally (Department of Basic Education, 2019). This project fits with the findings of Ntshikila (2021) and Liswaniso (2021), which stress how important assistance programs are for helping learners improve their reading and writing skills when they are having a hard time in school.

A study from 2023 by Hillman et al. also shows that the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2021 found that making language lessons clear was a key part of helping learners understand what they read better. Alamri & Rogers (2018) also found that the way learners are taught specific words has a big impact on how well they remember technical and academic words. This shows that clear guidance is a great way to help learners understand better.

#### **2.4.2 The United States of America experience**

The United States of America has a long-standing history of research and initiatives aimed at improving reading comprehension instruction. One prominent approach is the implementation of evidence-based reading programmes and curricula (Cho et al., 2021). For instance, the reading comprehension instruction (RCI) programme, developed by researchers at the University of Texas, has been widely adopted across several states (Magnusson & Blikstad-Balas, 2019). The RCI programme focuses on explicit instruction in comprehension strategies, including monitoring, questioning, summarising, and generating inferences (Magnusson & Blikstad-Balas, 2019). Additionally, the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) has placed a strong emphasis on developing reading comprehension skills across various content areas, encouraging the use of complex texts and close reading strategies (Hiebert & Martin, 2015).

Studies conducted in the United States of America, such as that of Acosta (2019) explored strategies used by Spanish first-language-speaking learners in EFAL at Valdosta State University (VSU). The study found that the comprehension skills in terms of reading, writing, and speaking English differed per the amount of time lived in America. Those who had lived in America for longer had high English proficiency, while those who had spent a period of less than a year had low EFAL reading and writing proficiency. To that effect, Lin et al. (2021) point out that the acquisition of

English vocabulary is instrumental in determining the state and level of comprehension. This is owed largely to the perception that in the absence of a good understanding of the meaning of words, it is impossible to derive the meaning of both written and spoken language (Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg, 2014). Therefore, researchers have also explored different strategies to influence teaching and learning, such as collaborative strategic reading (CSR), a technique that combines cooperative learning and explicit strategy instruction to enhance comprehension (Vaughn, 2013). Furthermore, the use of technology-based interventions, such as computer-assisted instruction and online reading programmes, has gained traction in the United States, providing personalised and adaptive support for learners with varying reading abilities (Cheung & Slavin, 2013).

The US has long studied and utilised reading comprehension programs. Evidence-based reading programs and curricula are one example (Cho et al., 2021). The University of Texas' Reading Comprehension Instruction (RCI) program is used in several states (Magnusson and Blikstad-Balas, 2019). The RCI program clearly emphasises comprehension skills including monitoring, questioning, summarising, and making conclusions to improve reading (Magnusson & Blikstad-Balas, 2019).

CCSS stress reading comprehension across academic domains and encourage careful reading of difficult materials (Hiebert & Martin, 2015). These standards challenge learners to critically evaluate texts, enhancing comprehension and analysis. Standardised comprehension frameworks like CCSS and RCI improve English learners' decoding and comprehension (Hillman et al., 2023).

US research have examined language background and reading comprehension. Acosta (2019) analysed Valdosta State University's Spanish-first-language EFAL students' methods. Reading, writing, and speaking English comprehension differed by US resident length, the study found. Long-term US residents had better English reading and writing abilities than those who had been there less than a year. Lin et al. (2021) concur that reading comprehension requires English vocabulary acquisition. Without a strong vocabulary base, Melby-Lervåg and Lervåg (2014) observed that learners struggle to comprehend written and spoken language.

US researchers have developed reading comprehension programs. Cooperation and explicit strategy training increase comprehension in Collaborative Strategic Reading

(CSR) (Vaughn, 2013). This method helps English learners grasp complex texts and is widely utilised in secondary schools.

US learners with varying reading abilities receive tailored and adaptive help via technology-based treatments. Computer-assisted education, online reading programs, and digital literacy tools have established interactive reading comprehension platforms (Cheung and Slavin, 2013). Technological techniques enable learners learn decoding and comprehension at their own speed.

The US's evidence-based reading programs and comprehension strategies can help secondary school EFAL learners develop reading comprehension. In industrialised nations, explicit comprehension instruction, collaborative reading, and technology-assisted learning work, but South Africa's language variety, classroom resources, and teacher readiness necessitate adaption. This study analyses how structured comprehension methods might increase reading comprehension in South African Grade 9 EFAL courses.

### **2.4.3 The Turkey experience**

In Turkey, English is taught as a foreign language, and various approaches have been explored to enhance reading comprehension instruction for non-native English speakers. One prominent strategy is the integration of schema theory into reading comprehension lessons (Yildiz et al., 2014). Schema theory emphasises the importance of activating and building upon learners' prior knowledge and experiences to facilitate comprehension (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). Turkish researchers have investigated the effectiveness of schema-based instruction, which involves activities such as pre-reading discussions, visual aids, and cultural references to activate learners' schemata (Ayedun et al., 2024). Additionally, researchers have explored the use of metacognitive strategy instruction, teaching learners to monitor their understanding, set goals, and employ strategies such as questioning, summarising, and making inferences (Öztürk, 2012). Furthermore, the incorporation of authentic materials, such as newspaper articles, literature, and multimedia resources, has been advocated to provide learners with exposure to real-world English texts and contexts (Erten & Karakaş, 2007). These approaches aim to enhance learners' engagement,

motivation, and comprehension by connecting the reading materials to their lived experiences and cultural backgrounds.

Kwakkel et al. (2023) compared the reading comprehension, word-decoding, and oral language skills of 3rd and 4th graders from both high- and low-income Dutch backgrounds to that of 3rd and 4th graders from low- and high-income minority Turkish or Moroccan backgrounds living in the Netherlands. Concerning the interrelations between oral language skills and reading skills, the development of reading comprehension was found to be influenced more by top-down comprehension-based processes than by bottom-up word-decoding processes for both the EFAL and the native English learners (Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg, 2014). In explaining their reading comprehension skills, the oral language skills of the minority-group learners played a more prominent role than the oral language skills of the Dutch learners (Kwakkel et al., 2023).

Turkey teaches English as a foreign language, and numerous methods have been explored to help non-English speakers understand. Schema theory is a prominent reading comprehension strategy that uses learners' prior knowledge to help them understand (Harmades, 2022). Schema theory claims learners learn better when they relate new information to old knowledge. Reading becomes more meaningful and understandable (Alamri & Rogers, 2018). Visuals, pre-reading talks, and cultural allusions assist learners relate new material to their life in schema-based education (Ayedun et al., 2024).

Wendaferew & Damtew (2023) studied metacognitive strategy training, which trains learners to verify their comprehension, create reading objectives, and summarise, question, and make conclusions. Explicit teaching in metacognitive strategies has been shown to greatly improve reading comprehension in secondary school learners by encouraging self-regulated learning and critical thinking (Vaughn, Boardman, & Klingner, 2020).

Most teachers have also used authentic reading materials such as newspaper articles, books, and multimedia tools to help learners experience English texts and situations from real life (Erten & Karakaş, 2007). Using reading materials that are contextualised has been shown to get learners more interested and motivated since they can see how what they are learning in class applies to real life (Ntshikila, 2021). Similarly,

studies show that vocabulary mastery through explicit instruction is an essential component of reading comprehension development (Harmades, 2024).

An international study by Kwakkel et al. (2023) looked at how well learners from Dutch, Turkish, or Moroccan backgrounds in the Netherlands could understand what they read, decode words, and speak the language. The study compared reading comprehension across different social backgrounds. Their results showed that top-down comprehension-based processes had a bigger effect on reading comprehension than bottom-up word-decoding strategies. This shows that speaking language skills are more important for understanding than just decoding skills (Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg, 2014). Oral language skills were also more important for minority learners to understand than for native Dutch learners (Kwakkel et al., 2024). For EFAL learners to be able to understand what they read, they need to have strong spoken language skills.

Real-life reading materials, schema-based teaching, and teaching learners how to use metacognitive techniques can all assist them understand what they are reading better, as seen in Turkey. It can be hard for Grade 9 English as a Foreign Language (EFAL) learners in South Africa to improve their reading comprehension since they come from different language backgrounds and do not have a lot of real reading materials to use. These methods help those learners a lot. This study looks into how metacognitive reading strategies and schema-based teaching can be used to help EFAL learners in South Africa think more critically and connect with reading in a useful way.

#### **2.4.4 Teaching English reading comprehension in China**

In China, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), and addressing the challenges of reading comprehension among non-mother-tongue English speakers has been a focal point of educational research and pedagogical practice. Dong et al. (2020) have highlighted the complex nature of these challenges, which originate from linguistic, cultural, and educational factors. Linguistically, the structural differences between Chinese and English, such as syntax, vocabulary, and discourse patterns, pose significant obstacles to reading comprehension (Gao et al., 2020). Moreover, the cultural disparities between Chinese- and English-speaking societies can impede

learners' ability to grasp the contextual nuances embedded within English texts (Shen et al., 2020). In response to these challenges, researchers have advocated for the implementation of pedagogical strategies that integrate language and culture, such as content-based instruction (CBI) and task-based learning (TBL), to enhance learners' reading comprehension skills (Liu et al., 2024).

Effective teaching of English reading comprehension in China also necessitates consideration of instructional materials and methodologies tailored to the needs of EFL learners. Research by Gu & Lau (2021) has highlighted the importance of utilising authentic and culturally relevant texts that engage learners and facilitate meaningful comprehension. Additionally, employing interactive and student-centred approaches, such as reciprocal teaching and collaborative learning, has been shown to promote active engagement and deeper understanding of English texts among Chinese EFL learners (Gao et al., 2023). However, challenges persist in the implementation of these methodologies due to constraints in the Chinese educational system, including large class sizes and standardised testing pressures (Xiong, 2024). Therefore, ongoing research endeavours focus on developing innovative instructional models and leveraging technology-enhanced learning platforms to address the diverse needs of EFL learners and foster their English reading comprehension proficiency in the Chinese context (Li & Zhang, 2022; Hongqian, 2023).

#### **2.4.5 Teaching reading comprehension in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, English serves as the official language and is taught as a second language in schools, and the issue of English reading comprehension among non-native speakers is of paramount importance (Oguntade & Akinwamide, 2023). Research by Ayedun et al. (2024) has highlighted the prevalence of reading difficulties among Nigerian learners, attributed to factors such as inadequate language exposure outside the classroom and limited access to quality instructional materials. Additionally, the sociolinguistic context of Nigeria, characterised by diverse Indigenous languages and dialects, presents unique challenges for English language acquisition and reading comprehension (Akubo et al., 2024). To address these challenges, educational initiatives have been proposed to promote bilingual education and integrate learners' first language into English reading instruction (Oguntade & Akinwamide, 2023). Furthermore, research emphasises the importance of teacher training programmes

focused on pedagogical techniques tailored to the needs of EFL learners in Nigeria, including the use of contextualised and culturally relevant reading materials (Fesi & Mncube, 2021).

Moreover, in Nigeria, while efforts are underway to improve English reading comprehension among learners for whom English is not their home language, challenges persist in the implementation of effective instructional strategies and resources. Research by Adebileje & Akinola (2020) highlights the need for curriculum reforms that prioritise literacy development and incorporate instructional practices fitting the linguistic diversity of Nigerian learners. Furthermore, infrastructural limitations, such as insufficient funding for educational resources and overcrowded classrooms, hinder the effective delivery of English language instruction (Oni & Oluyemish, 2020). To address these challenges, collaborative initiatives involving government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and community stakeholders are essential in providing support for teacher training, curriculum development, and the provision of reading materials (Olalekan et al., 2021).

#### **2.4.6 Teaching reading comprehension in Kenya**

In Kenya, English is the medium of instruction in schools alongside Kiswahili, and efforts to enhance English reading comprehension for non-native speakers are informed by the country's linguistic and educational landscape (Cheptabok & Onchera, 2024). Nyakweba et al. (2020) identified disparities in English language proficiency among Kenyan learners, influenced by factors such as socioeconomic status, teacher qualifications, and instructional methodologies. Moreover, the prevalence of vernacular languages spoken at home poses challenges for English language acquisition and reading comprehension in school settings (Cheptabok & Onchera, 2024). In response, educational interventions in Kenya aim to promote language-rich environments both inside and outside the classroom, fostering a culture of reading through library programmes, community outreach initiatives, and the integration of digital resources (Olando & Mwangi, 2021). Additionally, teacher professional development programmes focus on equipping teachers with strategies for differentiated instruction and scaffolding techniques to support English language learners in developing their reading comprehension skills (Wafula et al., 2021).

However, while strides have been made to enhance English reading comprehension for non-English speakers, persistent gaps exist in the equitable distribution of educational resources and opportunities. Research by Lazarus and Anwalimhobor (2023) emphasise the need for targeted interventions to address disparities in English language proficiency, particularly among marginalised communities and rural schools. Additionally, the quality of teacher education programmes and ongoing professional development initiatives remains a critical factor in improving instructional practices and supporting English language learners (Gitau, 2022). By addressing systemic challenges, Kenya can continue to advance English reading comprehension proficiency among its diverse student population, ensuring equitable access to quality education for all.

Kenya's language and school system affect non-native English reading comprehension (Cheptabok & Onchera, 2024). English dominates school education. Socioeconomic position, teacher quality, and instructional approaches impact Kenyan learners' English language ability, according to Nyakwebwa et al. (2020). Home usage of vernacular languages hinders English language development and school reading comprehension (Cheptabok & Onchera, 2024).

Kenyan educational initiatives address these concerns by creating language-rich classrooms and beyond. Library programs, community outreach, and digital learning tools encourage reading (Olando & Mwangi, 2021). Teacher professional development courses increase English language learners' reading comprehension through personalised teaching and scaffolding (Wafula et al., 2021).

English reading comprehension has improved, but educational resources and opportunity are uneven. Lazarus & Anwalimhobor (2023) suggest targeted interventions in marginalised regions and rural schools to close the English language gap. Teacher education and professional development improve instruction and benefit English language learners, according to Gitau (2022).

The Kenyan experience reveals that EFAL learners require fair access to quality instructional resources and teacher training to increase reading comprehension. Language variety, social disparity, and teacher preparedness effect English reading comprehension like South Africa. This study analyses how Kenyan strategies like

differentiated instruction, scaffolding, and digital literacy integration promote Grade 9 EFAL reading comprehension in South African schools.

#### **2.4.7 A South African perspective**

Helping learners develop knowledge, skills, and strategies to become strategic readers who read for comprehension is a key objective of reading comprehension instruction (Olifant et al., 2020). Reading comprehension is one of the essential skills a learner needs to achieve in their studies, and it is often a skill that South Africans lack. Studies show the potential for improving literacy through explicit teaching strategies on comprehension (Elston et al., 2022). CAPS is a national policy devised by the Department of Basic Education that stipulates what should be included in the curricula of schools for each grade in South Africa as well as how it is to be tested or assessed.

In terms of CAPS guidelines for EFAL in South Africa regarding reading comprehension, Winberg et al. (2020) argue that CAPS does not provide sufficient guidance on how to improve comprehension, and there is no evidence of a research literature review that supports the prescribed programme of assessment. Reading comprehension of primary school learners is a wide terrain. Zimmerman & Smit (2014) highlight the importance of the development of reading literacy as a constructive and interactive process, with readers actively constructing meaning, knowing effective reading strategies, and knowing how to reflect on reading being recognised. The meaning must be generated by the interaction between the reader and the text concerning an experience of reading, with the reader using a set of linguistic skills, cognitive and metacognitive strategies, as well as contextual knowledge (Smart, 2021).

According to Pretorius & Klapwijk (2016), there is a shortage of descriptions of instructional practices and what teachers are doing in their classrooms in South Africa. Far less evidence exists of in-depth research attempts to understand in what way and why teachers may experience problems with the teaching of reading literacy, particularly reading comprehension. What compounds this problem is that many South African teachers are not immersed in rich reading practices. Pretorius et al. (2022)

found that many teachers claim to be doing more than is reflected in their school's literacy results, and general teachers do not have a clear understanding of reading concepts, reading development, and reading methodology (Arends & Fonseca, 2024).

## **2.5 Strategies Used in Teaching Reading Comprehension**

### **2.5.1 Morphological awareness and reading comprehension**

Teaching techniques for reading comprehension often involve developing morphological awareness, which is an understanding of how words can be broken down into smaller units of meaning such as roots, prefixes, and suffixes. Morphological awareness is an important contributor to word reading and comprehension skills (Tighe & Binder, 2015). Studies have shown that poor morphological awareness contributes to reading comprehension difficulties and that children with different reading comprehension profiles can learn morphology at different rates (Tong et al., 2011). Research indicates that morphological awareness contributes significantly to word recognition, vocabulary development, and comprehension skills (Carlisle, 2000; Agustin et al., 2021). Understanding morphological structure enables readers to decode unfamiliar words, infer meanings based on morphemic clues, and comprehend complex texts more effectively (Zhang et al., 2023). Moreover, morphological awareness facilitates word learning by enabling learners to generalise morphemic patterns across words, thereby expanding their vocabulary (Goodwin & Ahn, 2010).

Studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between morphological awareness and reading comprehension abilities (Deacon & Kirby, 2004; Cekiso & Madikiza, 2014). Children with better morphological skills tend to exhibit higher levels of reading comprehension, as morphological awareness enhances their ability to derive meaning from text through morphemic analysis (Tighe & Binder, 2015). Conversely, deficits in morphological awareness have been associated with reading difficulties and comprehension deficits (Mahony et al., 2000). Low levels of morphological skills can impede learners' capacity to decode unfamiliar words, infer meanings, and comprehend complex texts, thereby hindering overall reading proficiency.

### **2.5.2 Oral language skills and reading comprehension**

Research suggests a link between oral language skills and the reading comprehension of English texts in EFAL instruction (Babayiğit & Shapiro, 2020). Oral language skills, as indicated by oral skills and good vocabulary, are important indicators of both reading and comprehension (Ardasheva et al., 2021). Oral language proficiency serves as a foundational component for reading comprehension, as it encompasses the ability to comprehend, produce, and manipulate spoken language (Babayiğit & Shapiro, 2020). Research by Snow et al. (1998) and Dixon and Oakhill (2024) emphasises the significant role of oral language skills, such as vocabulary knowledge, syntactic awareness, and narrative comprehension, in facilitating reading comprehension abilities among learners. Moreover, oral language skills contribute to the development of phonological awareness – the ability to recognise and manipulate the sounds of spoken language – which is crucial for decoding and word recognition in reading (Duke et al., 2021). Therefore, instructional approaches aimed at enhancing English reading comprehension should integrate activities that promote oral language development, including dialogic reading, oral storytelling, and collaborative discussions (Guthrie et al., 2019). By fostering a rich oral language environment that encourages active engagement and meaningful interactions, teachers can lay a strong foundation for building learners' reading comprehension proficiency in English.

Various teaching strategies have been found effective in teaching EFAL reading comprehension, including direct explanation, where teachers directly explain and model the cognitive process of reading comprehension, combining the interpretation of strategies with their application (Käsper et al., 2020; Dugasa et al., 2022). Another example cited in the literature is the transactional method, where learners are taught to use a set of reading strategies, such as setting goals, using background knowledge, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating progress, through dialogue and interaction with teachers (Svensson, 2020; Cardoso et al., 2021). Furthermore, the interactive constructive method is another example that involves readers interacting with their prior knowledge, beliefs, experiences, and texts in a sociocultural context to construct meaning (Huang, 2022; Zhang & Wang, 2022).

## **2.6 Challenges in Teaching Reading Comprehension**

### **2.6.1 Limited access to quality instructional resources**

One of the significant challenges in teaching reading comprehension is the limited access to quality instructional resources, particularly in low-resourced settings (Adeleke & Onyebuchi, 2023). Research by Adegiori et al. (2022) has revealed disparities in access to reading materials, including books, texts, and digital resources, across schools and communities. Inadequate funding for educational resources, coupled with socioeconomic disparities, exacerbates this issue, limiting learners' exposure to diverse texts and literacy-rich environments (Nap-van der Vlist et al., 2021). Moreover, the digital divide, characterised by unequal access to technology and Internet connectivity, further widens the gap in accessing online reading materials and digital literacy tools (Warschauer, 2006). As a result, teachers face challenges in providing learners with varied and engaging reading materials that cater to their diverse interests, backgrounds, and reading levels (Tobias et al., 2020).

Addressing the challenge of limited access to quality instructional resources requires collaborative efforts among policymakers, teachers, and other key stakeholders. Initiatives such as book donation programmes, mobile libraries, and community literacy projects can help expand access to reading materials in underserved areas (Kuswiyanti et al., 2023). Furthermore, investments in digital infrastructure and technology integration in schools can enhance access to online resources and digital literacy skills among learners (Shandu-Omukunyi, 2023). Additionally, professional development programmes for teachers focusing on curating and utilising diverse reading materials effectively can empower teachers to create literacy-rich environments conducive to reading comprehension development (Guthrie et al., 2019). By addressing the systemic barriers to accessing quality instructional resources, teachers can mitigate the challenges associated with teaching reading comprehension and promote equitable literacy outcomes for all learners.

### **2.6.2 Linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom**

Another challenge in teaching reading comprehension arises from linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom, particularly in contexts with multilingual student populations. Research by Elibariki (2017) highlights the complexity of addressing the

diverse language backgrounds and literacy experiences of learners, which can impact their reading comprehension abilities. In linguistically diverse classrooms, teachers must navigate the challenges of providing instruction that accommodates learners' varying language proficiencies and literacy levels (Kuswiyanti et al., 2023). Moreover, cultural differences in reading practices, storytelling traditions, and textual interpretations can influence learners' engagement with reading materials and comprehension strategies (UNICEF, 2022; Zano, 2023). Consequently, teachers face the challenge of fostering inclusive learning environments that honour learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds while promoting reading comprehension development (Sebetao et al., 2023).

To address the challenges of linguistic and cultural diversity in teaching reading comprehension, teachers can adopt culturally responsive pedagogical approaches that validate learners' linguistic and cultural identities (Rahmatirad, 2020). Incorporating learners' native languages and cultural texts into reading instruction can enhance their sense of belonging and engagement with the curriculum (Cummins, 2001). Additionally, providing scaffolded support, such as bilingual resources, language modelling, and peer collaboration, can facilitate comprehension for learners learning English as a second language (ESL) (Babayiğit & Shapiro, 2020). Furthermore, professional development programmes that emphasise culturally responsive teaching practices and strategies for differentiating instruction based on learners' language backgrounds can empower teachers to meet the diverse needs of their learners (Hammond, 2015).

### **2.6.3 Challenges observed in different parts of the world**

Globally, English comprehension and fluency are associated with access to employment opportunities, higher education, travelling widely, and even a better life (Owodally, 2011). English is used all over the world as a means of interaction among people from different backgrounds, cultures, and ethnic groups (Käsper et al., 2020). Olifant et al. (2022) found that in Australia, learners face serious learning difficulties and lack confidence in speaking and taking a proactive role in the classroom due to lack of English comprehension. This implies that the classroom is not as impactful as it should be. Flaws in learners' prior learning experiences regarding grammar and reading skills in teacher-centred classrooms, lack of conversational skills, and beliefs

about language learning instilled during schooling are further challenges faced in Australia (Park, 2016). Sibanda et al. (2024) argue that one of the most pressing challenges in reading comprehension in Australia is accent.

The knowledge and understanding of the developmental process involved in the acquisition of a new language are essential for mainstream teachers. Various countries in Asia have prioritised English as an additional language. To that effect, they run various programmes that involve teaching English to their citizens. One such programme is the English Programme in Korea (EPIK), which is centered around improving the English-speaking abilities of both Korean teachers and learners (Panahi, 2019). Venketsamy and Sibanda (2021) examined learners' perceptions around the challenges they experienced in learning EFAL comprehension. It was found that the influence of Korean cultural factors and social issues acts as a deterrent to the learning of English comprehension among Korean learners. Culture affects the way people learn, retain relevant information, behave, and communicate. The learning and teaching styles in education systems will inevitably be determined to a considerable extent by culture (Yapp et al., 2021).

English has become an important language in global trade. China has also embraced the learning and teaching of English. To that effect, they have enacted the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) programme. Yapp et al. (2021) put forward the argument that globalisation has brought about the need for increased exchanges between countries, and this has prompted the need to learn English, which is an important element of China's adaptation to global trends. Liu et al. (2024) also examined the challenges experienced by TESOL teachers in China. The study found that the teaching model used in TESOL was articulated according to the characteristics of Western classrooms. This was inconsistent with China's national conditions and thus made it difficult to implement the model in China. When teaching EFL, it is thus important to study information about the family background of the learners, languages, cultures, and educational backgrounds to engage them in the classroom and prepare and deliver lessons more effectively (Norton & Wu, 2012).

Miranda & Wahyudin (2023) argue that the comprehension of the English language in Asian countries carries a great deal of importance. This is because English is a universal business language and not knowing the language may compromise learners'

ability to cope in the globally competitive business world (Park, 2016). Kaur et al. (2024) argue that it takes a conscious thorough, systematic effort to acquire or learn ESL. For all native speakers of the language, second language acquisition is a major problem that they have to deal with. Some of the challenges experienced by EFAL teachers in India include problems in English language teaching, heterogeneity of the classrooms, the diverse learning needs of learners, and overdependence on the teacher. Other challenges are technological illiteracy, anxiety, low interest, overcrowded classrooms, refusal to embrace a new language, as well as a lack of policy direction (Agustin et al., 2021; Kaur et al., 2024).

Roy (2017) found that the main causes of EFAL difficulties are environmental. Boys are more likely to see problems compared to girls. Rural learners being more likely to see problems than urban learners is another major finding. In learning ESL, a lack of reading and listening skills can pose several problems. Devi et al. (2020) found that the major challenge with teaching EFAL is that learners had no alternative exposure to English other than in school. This makes it a very difficult task to connect what they learnt in class with their daily lived experiences. Studies on the challenges experienced in EFAL comprehension have also been conducted in Indonesia, finding that Indonesians find it quite difficult to learn English. This is caused by several factors, such as an inadequate learning system, Indonesia's perspective, and lack of motivation, making it hard for Indonesians to learn English (Adipramono, 2013; Cekiso & Madikiza, 2014).

Challenges in English comprehension have also been examined in parts of Africa, including Tanzania. Byabato & Onyango (2022) found that the challenge for learners learning the English language and communicating with their teachers was that they did not enjoy learning English, did not understand English, and could not speak English. The teachers must thus be innovative in making the English language interesting and relevant to the learners' lived experiences. Poor background in English language for teachers, extensive use of the mother tongue in the teaching and learning process, large class sizes, and inadequate teaching and learning materials are some of the challenges faced by learners in learning English (Elibariki, 2017). Further findings indicate insufficient time to practise English and a lack of activities conducted by teachers in classrooms to strengthen learners' English language knowledge and skills (Amaka, 2021).

#### **2.6.4 Overall global standpoint on teaching reading comprehension for non-English speakers**

Literature shows that globally, the issue of reading comprehension in education persists, prompting ongoing discussions among scholars and teachers about effective pedagogical strategies, available resources, and appropriate assessment methods (Taylor, 2017; Caraig & Quimbo, 2022). This enduring challenge has led to a rich body of literature exploring various approaches to teaching and assessing reading comprehension (Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Yaccob et al., 2022). One prevalent argument among scholars is around the efficacy of explicit strategy instruction in developing transferable comprehension skills that enable learners to engage critically with texts and extract meaning (Brevik, 2019; Elston et al., 2022). Thus, pointing to explicit strategy instruction is one of the strategies advocated by many scholars that involves systematically teaching learners specific strategies such as visualising, questioning, and summarising to enhance their comprehension abilities (Chinpakdee & Gu, 2024).

Explaining further, Brevik (2019) describes the explicit strategy as an instruction that aims to break down the reading process into manageable steps, empowering learners to approach texts with confidence and proficiency. A good practical example of this approach is visualisation, which encourages learners to create mental images while reading, fostering deeper engagement with and understanding of the text (Dixon & Oakhill, 2024). Another example is for teachers to use questioning prompts, which drive learners to think critically about the content, leading to more insightful interpretations and analyses (Shanmugavelu et al., 2020). Summarisation is another example that is important for reading comprehension as it requires learners to distil key ideas from the text, honing their ability to identify and articulate main points effectively (Shea & Ceprano, 2017).

In addition to explicit strategy instruction, scholars also emphasise the importance of metacognition in promoting reading comprehension. Metacognition, or the awareness and understanding of one's cognitive processes, plays a crucial role in effective reading comprehension (Elston et al., 2022). By explicitly teaching learners how to use comprehension strategies and encouraging reflection on their reading practices, teachers can foster metacognitive awareness and empower learners to become strategic readers who can regulate their comprehension processes independently.

Furthermore, scholars highlight the value of integrating diverse instructional approaches and resources to support reading comprehension (Dugasa et al., 2022). This may include the use of graphic organisers to help learners visualise text structures and make connections between ideas, the incorporation of culturally relevant texts to engage learners' interests and experiences, and the implementation of formative assessments to monitor progress and provide timely feedback (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). By employing a range of pedagogical strategies and resources, teachers can create dynamic learning environments that cater to the diverse needs and learning styles of their learners, ultimately fostering deep understanding and lifelong literacy skills (Daniel, 2020; Duke & Cartwright, 2021).

Sociocultural theory emphasises that learning is mediated through social interaction and cultural tools, especially language (Olifant et al., 2022). Advocates posit that comprehension develops through socially mediated scaffolding within learners' zone of proximal development (Olifant et al., 2022). Critics argue that this overemphasises environmental factors above cognition. Some promote culturally responsive instruction that aligns with learners' meaning-making repertoires (Gay, 2010; Carter, Podpadec et al., 2024). Teachers require intercultural literacy to effectively bridge differences as cultural brokers (Cho et al., 2019; Sleeter, 2012). Manifestations of theory in practice vary across settings. Sociocultural, critical, and constructivist theories offer conceptual value, but practical implementation depends on context. Digital texts provide added resources, such as lexical support, visuals, and audio (Elston et al., 2022). However, hypermedia may divert some readers' attention (Coiro, 2003). Multimedia enhances accessibility, but users need scaffolding to comprehend content (Fesi & Mncube, 2021). Online discussions support collective knowledge construction, but ensuring participation equity remains an issue (Matope & Senye-Awudi, 2024). Technology integration has yielded mixed outcomes, signalling a need for researcher–teacher collaboration (Cheung & Slavin, 2013; Agustin et al., 2021). Ensuring depth versus superficial reading poses challenges (Carter, Podpadec et al., 2024). Technology holds comprehension development potential depending on settings and learner needs.

Assessment enables responsive, differentiated instruction tailored to changing learner needs (Afflerbach, 2017). Dynamic formative evaluation allows pedagogical adjustments based on comprehension (Andrade, 2019). Immediate, learner-centred

feedback boosts motivation and achievement (Matope & Senye-Awudi, 2024). However, standardised tests often overlook multifaceted meaning-making (Olifant et al., 2022). High-stakes assessments risk prioritising test performance over genuine skills (Amrein-Beardsley, 2020). Balancing daily assessments and benchmarks requires weighing student and systemic needs (Valencia, 2014). Scrutiny of comprehension evaluation practices warrants ongoing research. This global overview reveals convergences alongside ongoing discussions about effective comprehension pedagogy spanning cognition, culture, and technology. Local contextual factors hold significance in translating principles into classroom practice. Teachers must carefully evaluate unique settings when applying research to instructional decisions.

In another study in Great Britain by Burgoyne et al. (2011), the development and progress of reading and writing comprehension abilities were examined among EFAL learners of South Asian origin. The findings reveal that while learners learning English as an additional language often demonstrate fast and accurate reading accuracy, a low level of vocabulary skills makes it difficult for EFAL learners to read spoken and written texts.

Yapp et al. (2021) studied the factors that enable the reading and writing comprehension of bilingual and monolingual speakers in Italy. In the study, different patterns of prediction of reading accuracy were identified, with monolingual learners having a harder time comprehending language compared to bilingual learners. Pseudoword repetition was found to be a predictor of biliteracy. Baker et al. (2012) found that the most important predictor of comprehension skills in bilingual children was morphosyntactic comprehension. Morphosyntactic skill is a longitudinal correlate of sentence comprehension. The morphosyntactic and word order skills are used to read sentences and passages in different ways (Ardasheva et al., 2021). According to the studies cited, reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in the world. It is therefore part of an evolving process in English learning for EFAL learners, which includes projections, summaries of the main ideas, questioning one's assumptions, and clarification on unfamiliar terms.

### **2.6.5 Challenges specific to South Africa**

It is a difficult task for teachers to teach English in historically disadvantaged regions of South Africa to people who do not speak English (Olifant et al., 2020). Yapp et al.

(2021) point out that the challenges of ensuring that learners have access to practical learning opportunities and the possibilities for interaction activities such as discussions, narratives, role-play, and reading-aloud debate are being considered promising strategies by South African schools. However, in the intermediate-level EFAL classroom, there is a negligible implementation of some of these activities (Olifant et al., 2020; Fesi & Mncube, 2021).

One of the challenges related to reading comprehension is connected to a lack of school libraries in South African schools (Mokoena, 2019). More than 70% of schools in South Africa do not have a library (Yapp et al., 2021), and of those that do have a library, Matope and Senye-Awudi (2024) found that only 7% of them are functioning. In a study conducted in the Gauteng province, it was found that some school libraries did not have books, while others had books that were outdated or unappealing to learners (Paton-Ash & Wilmot, 2015). In such a case, learners' choices of books are few. This is unfortunate, since the more access learners have to books, the more they engage in reading (Shonhe & Marambe, 2020). In other words, reading comprehension is impeded by an under-resourced school library.

Another major challenge to the availability of English reading comprehension materials is the lack of staff and poorly managed libraries. One study conducted in the Katlehong Township established that only 29% of the schools in the area employed qualified teacher-librarians (Shandu et al., 2014). Therefore, the necessary library skills are not available to teachers. Another finding from a study on the challenges faced by community libraries in the Limpopo province was that 70% of the teachers who managed school libraries did not have the required skills (Mojapelo, 2017).

Zano (2023) asserts that the ability to interpret and articulate the main ideas from a text institutes the meaning-making process, which is the comprehension process that is required when reading comprehension passages. To achieve deep comprehension, a reader progresses beyond literal comprehension to using the text combined with prior knowledge to construct understanding. Zano (2023) further investigated the challenges that EFAL learners faced when reading comprehension texts and passages. It was found that a combination of strategies to teach reading comprehension was needed to improve the comprehension skills of learners. This

arose out of a realisation that learners faced multiple challenges that could not be addressed through the adoption of a standalone strategy.

The strategies used in teaching comprehension include predicting, integrating visual aids, synthesising ideas, questioning and answering, activating prior knowledge, and critical thinking, among other strategies (Wibowo, 2020). Further challenges in the teaching of reading comprehension were investigated by Fesi and Mncube (2021) in the Eastern Cape. The study was conducted with Grade 4 learners in an EFAL setting. The results reveal that the low level of reading skills of Grade 4 EFAL learners, low teacher motivation and morale, overcrowded classrooms, and limited creativity in teaching strategies were the challenges faced by Grade 4 EFAL learners and teachers in reading comprehension (Fesi & Mncube, 2021). Olifant et al. (2022) posit that for effective learning in EFAL in the context of South Africa, learners in public schools need to be able to read. However, this is challenged by the poor levels of EFAL reading comprehension.

It is hard to teach English as a First Additional Language (EFAL) in South African places that have a history of poverty, especially to people who do not understand English (Olifant et al., 2020). Yapp et al. (2021) talk about how hard it is to give learners real-life learning experiences like debates, conversations, role-playing, and reading out loud. These possible ways of teaching aren't used very often in middle school EFAL classes (Olifant et al., 2020; Fesi & Mncube, 2021).

South African schools lack libraries, which makes reading comprehension instruction difficult. Mokoena (2019) estimates that over 70% of South African schools lack libraries, and only 7% have fully working ones (Matope & Senye-Awudi, 2024). Many Gauteng school libraries lacked books and had obsolete or unappealing reading materials, according to a study (Paton-Ash and Wilmot, 2015). Limited access to reading resources reduces learners' interest and understanding (Shonhe & Marambe, 2020).

Another issue is the lack of skilled teacher-librarians and bad library administration. Only 29% of Katlehong Township schools employed competent teacher-librarians, leaving teachers unqualified to administer libraries (Shandu et al., 2014). Limpopo community library research found that 70% of instructors supervising school libraries lacked the competence to assist literacy growth (Mojapelo, 2017). This lack of school

library resources and administration limits students' access to quality reading materials, which improves reading comprehension.

Zano (2023) stresses that reading comprehension involves understanding, articulating core concepts, and integrating past information to make meaning. An EFAL reading comprehension study indicated that learners had various comprehension issues that cannot be solved by one method (Zano, 2023). Improved comprehension requires a combination of evidence-based reading practices. These include forecasting, employing visual aids, synthesising concepts, questioning and answering, activating existing knowledge, and encouraging critical thinking (Wibowo, 2020).

Fesi & Mncube (2021) discovered additional issues for Eastern Cape Grade 4 EFAL students. poor reading skills, poor instructor excitement, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient instructional creativity impacted reading comprehension (Fesi & Mncube, 2021). Olifant et al. (2022) also remark that while reading competence is essential for learning, many public school learners struggle with EFAL reading comprehension, which hinders their academic performance.

South African EFAL schools have structural issues include inadequate reading materials, teacher training, and teaching. Like Kenya and Turkey, Grade 9 EFAL learners require evidence-based reading comprehension interventions. This study examines how interactive teaching, library access, and teacher professional development improve secondary school reading comprehension in South Africa.

## **2.7 Chapter Summary**

This literature review chapter provided a solid foundation for understanding the strategies and theoretical framework relevant to teaching reading comprehension for EFAL learners, setting the stage for the subsequent analysis and discussion in the following chapters. The chapter provided a comprehensive review of existing literature on the strategies employed in teaching reading comprehension, primarily at the primary school education level. This involved defining key concepts central to the subject of study, followed by a detailed discussion of sociocultural theory, the interactive compensatory model, and the SVR theory as the key theories related to the

teaching of English reading comprehension. The chapter further reviewed literature on EFAL comprehension in various parts of the world, centred on the teaching strategies as well as challenges experienced in teaching EFAL comprehension in developed and developing countries as well as in South Africa.

# **CHAPTER 3:**

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

---

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a detailed description of the research paradigm and design employed in this study based on fitting the study's overall objectives. It further details the sampling process, recruitment of the participants, and data generation and analysis techniques, and addresses the ethical considerations and trustworthiness to uphold the integrity and credibility of the research process.

### **3.2 Research Paradigm**

This study is underpinned by the interpretivist research paradigm, aligning with the qualitative nature of the inquiry into the strategies for teaching reading comprehension to Grade 9 EFAL learners. According to Alharahsheh & Pius (2020), interpretivism is a philosophical stance or research paradigm that emphasises the importance of understanding and interpreting human behaviour within its sociocultural context. This paradigm suggests that reality is subjective and socially constructed, shaped by individuals' interpretations, meanings, and experiences (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Employing this paradigm encouraged the engagement in in-depth analysis, interpretation, and understanding of teaching English reading comprehension to EFAL learners. This complemented the qualitative approach adopted in this study as well as the semi-structured interview data generation approach and thematic analysis method employed.

Interpretivism was seen as suitable for this study due to its focus on understanding and interpreting human behaviour within its sociocultural context. By adopting an interpretivist stance, the research aimed to tap into the subjective experiences, perspectives, and interpretations of teachers regarding reading comprehension instruction. The interpretivist paradigm afforded this research philosophical lenses to acknowledge the diverse and contextually embedded meanings associated with reading comprehension instruction, allowing for a deeper understanding of the complexities associated with it in teaching and learning.

### 3.3 Research Design and Approach

This study employed an exploratory research design, which was a fitting choice given the nature of the research of this qualitative inquiry. This selection supports the assertion by Asenahabi (2019), who argues that an exploratory research design is appropriate when the aim is to investigate a relatively understudied phenomenon, to gain insights and understanding, and to identify issues for further research. In this study, the exploratory design allowed for an open-ended and flexible approach to examine the experiences, perspectives, and challenges faced by teachers when teaching English reading comprehension to learners for whom English is not their mother tongue. The qualitative nature of the inquiry aligned well with the exploratory design, as qualitative methods are particularly suited for exploring complex, contextual, and subjective phenomena. It enabled a rich understanding of the topic studied.

Since the topic was qualitative, exploratory study was the right way to go. Asenahabi (2019) says that exploratory research is the best way to learn more about an event that has not been studied much and to find important research topics. The exploratory approach of this study let the researchers look at teachers' experiences, attitudes, and problems when they try to teach non-native English learners how to understand what they read in English. Qualitative methods are great for getting to the bottom of complicated, subjective, and situational events since they let you look at the problem in great depth.

One problem with exploratory study is that the results can't be used in other situations. Since exploratory study usually uses small, non-random groups, the results may not be true for the whole community. To ensure transferability to similar educational settings, substantial descriptive data was given (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Exploratory research is slowed down by subjectivity and expert bias. Triangulation was used to lower the risk of bias in the study since how qualitative data is interpreted depends on the researcher. Interviews, observations, and document analysis were all used to check the study's results against each other (Flick, 2020). During the study process, researchers used a reflecting notebook to think about any possible biases.

It is very hard to repeat exploratory study. Since quality results depend on the situation, it might be hard to get the same results again. The study methods and steps for gathering data were written down so that other researchers could use the same methods in similar classroom settings (Bryman, 2021). Exploratory research data is often not accurate since participants' answers are subjective and don't always match up. To make sure the study was reliable, members could check and approve interview transcripts and readings by other volunteers (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This made sure that the data correctly showed how the subjects felt, which increased the credibility of the study.

Another problem with informal research is that collecting and analysing data takes a lot of time. Since qualitative study is so in-depth, it takes time to transcribe, code, and do theme analysis. To quickly and carefully look at the data, a structured coding scheme and systematic theme analysis were used (Nowell et al., 2017). Exploratory study design can shed light on difficult or little-studied topics, but it has problems with being able to be applied to other situations and repeated. Triangulation, reflexivity, member checking, and ordered data analysis made sure that this study was based on solid research. These methods made the results more solid and useful in school settings that focus on English reading comprehension.

### **3.4 Research Approach**

This study adopted a qualitative approach, aligning with the nature of the research questions and the depth of understanding sought regarding the strategies for teaching reading comprehension to Grade 9 EFAL learners. Qualitative research is well-suited for exploring complex phenomena, such as the multifaceted strategies employed by teachers in teaching reading comprehension, as it allows for the in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives, experiences, and practices (Bell et al., 2022). By embracing a qualitative approach, this study was able to capture the rich and contextualised data necessary to gain a nuanced understanding of the challenges, successes, and innovative approaches employed by teachers in the classroom.

The choice of qualitative methodology is grounded in the belief that teaching reading comprehension is not merely a technical endeavour but a dynamic and socially

situated practice shaped by various contextual factors (Dang et al., 2024). Hence, qualitative research methods, such as semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, were deemed appropriate for this study. Semi-structured interviews provide a flexible yet focused approach to data generation, allowing for an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives while maintaining consistency across interviews (Saunders et al., 2019). Furthermore, thematic analysis enables the systematic identification and interpretation of patterns and themes within the data, offering insights into the diverse strategies, challenges, and instructional approaches employed by teachers in teaching reading comprehension (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By employing these qualitative methods, this study uncovered the complexities inherent in teaching reading comprehension and generated valuable insights that could inform educational practice and policy.

### **3.5 Setting of the Study**

In the context of this study, data were collected in natural settings to ensure the authenticity and ecological validity of the research findings as emphasised by Creswell & Creswell (2018). The study was conducted in schools where the participating teachers worked, allowing for the interactions to take place in the familiar context of the classroom environment. Immersing the research process in the natural setting for the participants added to the depth of this study, as the participating teachers were questioned in real-world educational settings. The choice of natural settings aligns with the qualitative nature of the study, as it enables the researcher to explore the situated practices and contextual factors that shape teachers' instructional strategies (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Additionally, conducting the study in schools facilitated access to participants and ensured their active engagement in the research process. This setting also provided opportunities to observe the school and classroom environment where instruction took place.

### **3.6 Study Population and Sampling**

The target population for this study was Grade 9 EFAL teachers from five specific public secondary schools within the Thabo Mofutsanyane district. The target was teachers who were professionally registered with SACE, which serves as the regulatory body for teachers' professional conduct, teaching practices, and classroom

management. The targeted population was identified based on the characteristics needed for offering EFAL at the Grade 9 level and being experienced and professionally registered teachers.

Purposive sampling was used to draw a sample from the targeted population of this study. This sampling method allowed for the intentional selection of participants who could provide rich and relevant insights into the phenomenon under study. By focusing specifically on Grade 9 EFAL teachers, the study aimed to generate detailed information about the strategies the teachers employed in teaching reading comprehension to learners in this particular grade. Additionally, limiting the sampling to the Thabo Mofutsanyane district ensured a concentrated focus on a specific geographical area, enhancing the study's contextual relevance and depth of understanding. Through purposive sampling, the study sought to generate targeted and meaningful data from participants who possessed expertise and experience relevant to the research objectives. The sampling process involved several steps to ensure the selection of appropriate participants, and these steps are illustrated in

Figure 3.1 below.

Five invitations to recruit a maximum of one teacher in each school yielded positive results, as five schools responded positively, securing a consultation with a total of five EFAL teachers from the five schools. The distribution was one teacher per school in five schools.

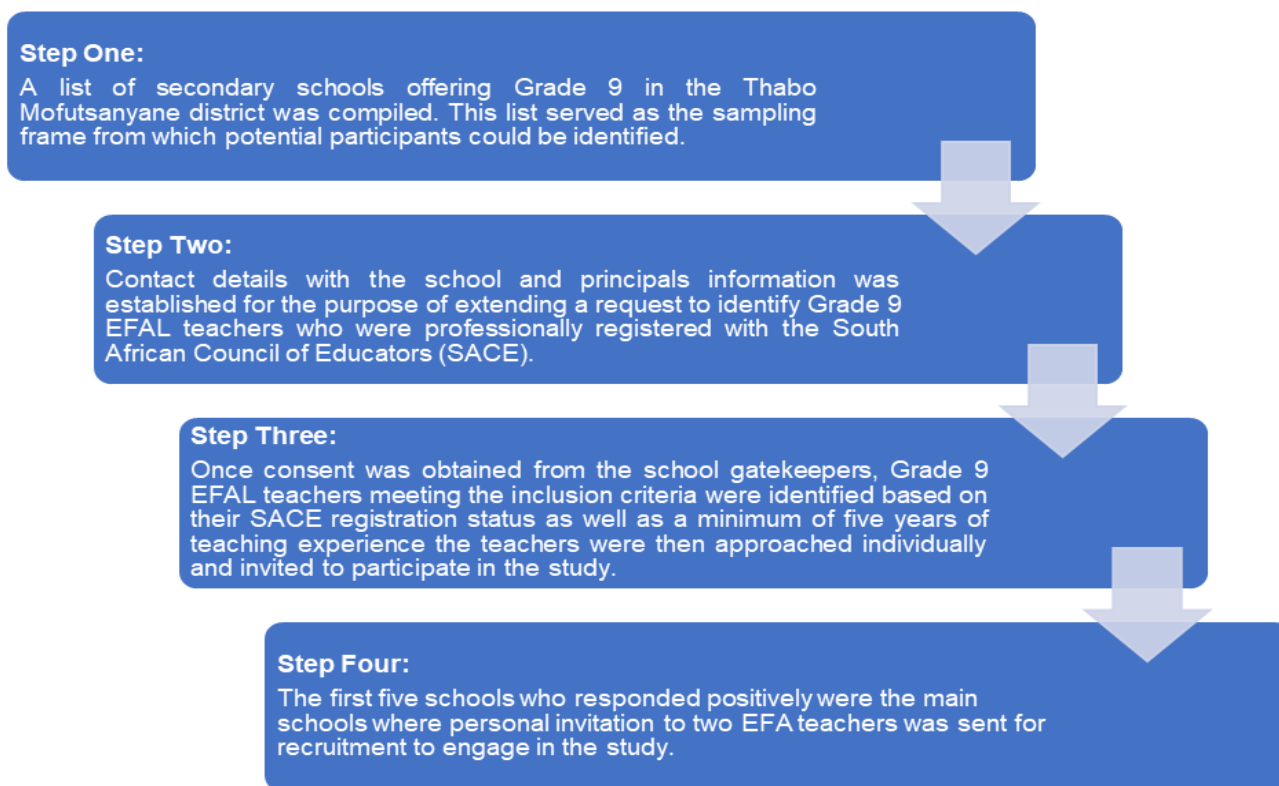


Figure 3.1: Purposive sampling process for this study.

### 3.7. Data Generation Techniques

#### 3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

In this study, primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with participating teachers (see Appendix A for the interview protocol employed). These interviews employed open-ended questions, allowing for in-depth exploration of teachers' perspectives, experiences, and practices related to the strategies they employed when instructing EFAL lessons. The use of semi-structured interviews facilitated a flexible yet focused approach to data generation, enabling participants to provide detailed insights, while also allowing the researcher to probe further into specific areas of interest. Moreover, primarily, in the first and second chapters of this study, secondary data in the form of a comprehensive literature review

were engaged. This literature review synthesised existing research, theories, and perspectives relevant to the research topic, providing a theoretical foundation and context for the study. In the discussion of the results and recommendations section, both primary and secondary data were contextualised to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research findings. The primary data obtained from semi-structured interviews were analysed and presented alongside the insights drawn from the literature review. This integrated approach allowed for a comprehensive interpretation of the results.

It was mostly secondary data that were used in the first and second parts of this study, along with the main data. That's where the literature review was done. This study put together ideas, studies, and points of view from the past that were connected to the topic of the research. It gave the study an academic basis and a view of the bigger picture. The part called "Discussion of Results and Recommendations" put both main and secondary data in the right place. Ideas from the literature review were shown along with the main data from semi-structured conversations. This made sure that the results were carefully considered in a well-known theory and empirical setting. Since they can get rich, thorough, and subtle data, one of the best things about semi-structured interviews is that they are often used in qualitative studies (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Since semi-structured interviews let people give open-ended comments, people could say what they thought in their own words. This helped experts learn more about how they taught, the problems they faced, and their experiences with EFAL learners.

This method is also good since it is adaptable, which means the researcher can change the questions based on what people say. Being able to adapt was very helpful for this study since it allowed the researcher to dig deeper into new topics. This way, important issues about teaching English as a foreign language were fully explored. The researcher was able to see behavioural cues and get more information from the talks since they happened in person.

Also, semi-structured conversations helped the researcher, and the subjects get to know each other and form bonds. This made it easier for the teachers to talk about their work and share their experiences. This helped me a lot to understand how reading comprehension methods work in real life and what problems EFAL teachers

have to deal with. There are some good things about semi-structured talks, but there are also some issues that needed to be found and fixed in this study. To plan, carry out, record, and evaluate answers to in-depth interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2023) takes a lot of time. This is one of the main issues with gathering data. A clear interview guide was made to help with this. It kept the talks on track with the main ideas while still letting people be creative with their answers.

It's also possible that the speaker is biased, which means that the researcher's tone, words, or actions could change how the subjects answer (Flick, 2020). That is why the researcher stayed neutral during the interviews and only asked standard questions when they had to. This made sure that the data collection was fair. Member checking was also used, which meant that participants could look over and confirm their interview transcripts, making sure that their answers were correctly recorded and understood. Another problem with semi-structured conversations is that the results are hard to apply to other situations since the sample size is so small (Bryman, 2021). While the study's main goal wasn't to find statistically significant patterns, it did try to make the results more useful by giving thorough descriptions of the context. This way, future researchers can use the results in similar educational settings.

Another problem with informal research is that it takes a lot of time to collect and analyse data. Since qualitative research is so thorough and in-depth, it takes a lot of time to do things like transcription, coding, and thematic analysis. To fix this, a structured coding scheme and a systematic thematic analysis approach were used to make sure the data analysis process was quick and accurate (Nowell et al., 2017).

### **3.6.2 Observation**

Observation is the second data generation method employed in this study (see Appendix B for the observation protocol employed). Observation is a method of collecting data by observing actions or occurrences or noting physical qualities in research subjects' natural environment (Fife & Gossner, 2024). Observations can be either overt, where the subjects know that they are being observed, or covert, where they do not know that they are being observed and the observer is hidden. The advantage of covert observation is the fact that the subjects are more likely to behave

naturally when they are entirely unaware of being observed. Nonetheless, this study employed overt observation and the researcher was a non-participant.

Observation was also selected on the basis that it could provide the researcher with a better understanding of how teachers teach reading comprehension in Grade 9 EFAL. Hameed (2024) explains that it is important for the researcher to establish the focus of the observation, draw up a system for data generation, have recording sheets and checklists and, lastly, write down field notes. In this study, the researcher's focus was to observe how teachers teach reading comprehension in the EFAL classroom, particularly in Grade 9.

### **3.6.3 Document analysis**

Document analysis is commonly used as an addition to other methods and was the third method employed to collect data in this study (see Appendix C for the document analysis protocol employed). As defined by Hossain et al. (2024), document analysis is the arranged process of analysing and understanding applicable materials and relevant government and school documents in the case of this study. Mannheimer (2024) states that document analysis can involve analysing government and school policies, school-based improvement plans, lesson plans, and learner workbooks. Document analysis was chosen because it allowed the researcher to use data derived from documents to contextualise data collected during interviews. It further allowed the researcher to make sense of resources and select the appropriate pieces for the study. In this study, the following documents were analysed: annual teaching plans, lesson preparation sheets, and assessment plans. The limitations was that, teachers were using old lesson plans to gather the new lesson plan per week.

### **3.7 Data Generation Strategies**

The data were analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns and themes. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process of thematic analysis was utilised. Thematic analysis identifies, examines, and reports patterns and meanings in data (Modugno, 2024). Table 3.1 illustrates the data generation process followed in this study.

**Table 3.1: Data generation process followed in the study**

<b>Sub-research question</b>	<b>Data generation strategy</b>	<b>Data source</b>	<b>Analysis procedure</b>
1. What are the perceptions of Grade 9 EFAL teachers regarding reading comprehension instruction?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>- Document analysis</li> <li>- Observations</li> </ul>	Senior Phase EFAL teachers	Thematic analysis
2. Which specific techniques do Grade 9 EFAL teachers use to teach reading comprehension?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>- Document analysis</li> <li>- Observations</li> </ul>	Senior Phase EFAL teachers	Content analysis
3. What opportunities and challenges do Grade 9 EFAL teachers encounter when teaching reading comprehension?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>- Document analysis</li> <li>- Observations</li> </ul>	Senior Phase EFAL teachers	Thematic analysis
4. How can the reading comprehension teaching strategies employed by Grade 9 EFAL teachers be understood and explained?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>- Document analysis</li> <li>- Observations</li> </ul>	Senior Phase EFAL teachers	Thematic analysis

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

In this study, the data analysis process followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process of thematic analysis, which provides a structured framework for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns or themes within qualitative data. The first step involved immersion in the data collected from the semi-structured interviews with participating teachers. This included transcribing the interviews verbatim and repeatedly reading through the transcripts to become familiar with the content. This step involved familiarisation with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The second step was to generate initial codes by systematically identifying noticeable patterns or recurring concepts in the data. This involved highlighting meaningful segments of text that captured key ideas or recurring themes relevant to the research objectives (Braun

& Clarke, 2006). The third step was to search for predominant themes that emerged across the five datasets of the five participants. This process involved organising and grouping related codes into broader themes based on their conceptual coherence and relevance to the research questions and objectives. In the fourth step, after the initial themes had been identified, they were reviewed and refined through a process of iterative analysis. This involved revisiting the data to ensure that the themes accurately reflected the content and context of the interviews and making adjustments as needed.

Moving to the fifth step, the themes were clearly defined and named to capture their essence and significance. Each theme was accompanied by a detailed description that outlined its defining characteristics and relevance to the research objectives. The final step involved writing up the findings of the thematic analysis and integrating interview excerpts and illustrative examples from the data to support the identified themes. This process included synthesising the thematic findings into a coherent narrative that effectively conveyed the key insights and implications of the study.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were made a priority in this study to ensure the protection of participants' rights, privacy, and confidentiality. Before data generation, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board (Appendix D). In addition, permission was sought from the Free State Department of Education to conduct the study and was subsequently granted (Appendix E). Furthermore, informed consent was sought from all participants, outlining the purpose and procedures of the study (see Appendices F and G for the information leaflet and consent form, respectively). The participants in this study had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or judgment. Measures were in place to safeguard participants' anonymity and confidentiality, including the use of pseudonyms and secure data storage. Additionally, efforts were made to minimise potential harm or distress to participants throughout the research process. Adherence to ethical guidelines and principles was maintained rigorously to uphold the integrity and trustworthiness of the study.

### **3.10 Trustworthiness of the Study**

Ensuring the trustworthiness of a study is essential to uphold the validity and reliability of its findings. In line with Naeem et al. (2024), this section discusses the key aspects of credibility, feasibility, dependability, confirmability, and traceability in relation to this study.

#### **3.10.1 Credibility.....**

Credibility refers to the believability and authenticity of the study's findings (Pham, 2024). In this study, credibility was established through various means, including thorough engagement with participants to develop rapport and trust. Additionally, member-checking was employed to verify the accuracy and alignment of the interpretations with participants' experiences (Babayiğit & Shapiro, 2019). Moreover, by triangulating data from multiple sources and employing rich, descriptive narratives, credibility was enhanced, ensuring that the findings accurately represent the participants' perspectives (Flick, 2018).

#### **3.10.2 Feasibility.....**

Feasibility refers to the practicality and viability of conducting the study with the available resources, including time, funding, and access to participants (Ahmed, 2024). In this study, feasibility was carefully considered during the planning phase to ensure that the research objectives could be achieved within the allocated timeframe. Additionally, potential logistical challenges were anticipated and addressed proactively to minimise disruptions to the research process. By prioritising feasibility, the chances of successful completion and meaningful outcomes of the study are maximised.

#### **3.10.3 Transferability.....**

Transferability concerns the extent to which the findings of the study can be applied or generalised to other contexts or populations (Ahmed, 2024). To enhance transferability, detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and procedures were provided to allow readers to assess the relevance and applicability of the findings to the research settings. Additionally, thick descriptions and rich qualitative data were used to capture the complexity and nuances of the phenomenon under study, enhancing the potential for transferability to similar contexts (Ahmed,

2024). By promoting transparency and contextual understanding, the study facilitates the transferability of its findings to diverse settings and populations.

#### **3.10.4 Dependability.....**

Dependability pertains to the stability and consistency of the study procedures and findings over time (Johnson et al., 2020). To ensure dependability, rigorous methodological procedures were followed consistently throughout the study, including detailed documentation of data generation and analysis processes. Moreover, clear and transparent reporting of the study methods and procedures enhances the dependability of the findings, allowing for potential replication and verification by other researchers.

#### **3.10.5 Traceability.....**

Traceability refers to the ability to trace and document the research process from start to finish, ensuring transparency and accountability (Ahmed, 2024). In this study, traceability was achieved through meticulous documentation of all stages of the research, including the sampling process, data generation methods, and analytical procedures. Clear and comprehensive record-keeping facilitates the reproducibility of the study, enabling other researchers to follow the same steps and verify the findings independently. By ensuring traceability, the study promotes transparency and enhances the overall trustworthiness of its outcomes.

### **3.11 Chapter Summary**

This chapter offered an overview of the research methodology, beginning with the philosophical underpinnings and adoption of an exploratory qualitative design. It outlined the purposive sampling technique used to select participants and described the data generation process, primarily facilitated through semi-structured interviews. Additionally, the chapter explained the thematic data analysis and ethical considerations followed, emphasising participant rights and privacy protection. Strategies to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of findings were outlined. Overall, this chapter set the foundation for subsequent presentation and interpretation of study findings.

# **CHAPTER 4:**

## **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

---

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter analyses, interprets, and discusses the data generated from the semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and document analysis. Grade 9 EFAL teachers in selected South African schools were interviewed and observed to determine their reading comprehension practices. The chapter addresses the primary and secondary research questions, participants' background information, and presentation, interpretation, and discussion of the data. The chapter further examines the qualitative data themes and sub-themes generated from the interviews, observations, and document analysis. This study's primary research question is: What strategies are used by Grade 9 EFAL teachers to teach reading comprehension in selected South African schools?

The following sub-research questions assisted in creating a narrative for each theme:

- i. What are the perceptions of Grade 9 EFAL teachers regarding reading comprehension instruction?
- ii. Which specific techniques do Grade 9 EFAL teachers use to teach reading comprehension?
- iii. What opportunities and challenges do Grade 9 EFAL teachers encounter when teaching reading comprehension?

A thematic approach was used to identify the challenges and opportunities participants encountered in their EFAL classrooms while teaching reading comprehension.

### **4.2 Participants' Background Information**

Five secondary school EFAL teachers in the Senior and FET phases participated in this study. The study was conducted in five secondary schools located in the Thabo Mofutsanyane district of the Free State province. The participants varied in age, ranging from 28 to 46 years old. They had teaching experience of 10 to 15 years and held qualifications that ranged from a Postgraduate Certificate in Education to an

Honours degree in Curriculum Studies. Table 4.1 below presents a summary of the five participants' backgrounds.

**Table 4.1: Participants' background information**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Teaching grade</b>	<b>Teaching experience</b>
<b>Rose</b>	32	Female	B.Ed. in Languages; Honours in Curriculum Studies	Gr. 8–12	5 years
<b>Sane</b>	30	Female	B.Ed. in Languages; Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL)	Gr. 8–12	5 years
<b>Amanda</b>	30	Female	B.Ed. in Languages	Gr. 8–12	7 years
<b>Zama</b>	28	Female	B.Ed. in Languages; Postgraduate Diploma in Education Management	Gr. 8–12	4 years
<b>Ncando</b>	46	Male	B.Ed. in Languages	Gr. 8–12	9 years

### **4.3 Data Presentation and Interpretation**

The results from the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews, the observations, and the document analysis are presented, explained, and analysed in this section. This study aimed to explore the strategies that teachers employed in teaching reading comprehension to Grade 9 EFAL learners. The six steps of thematic analysis were used (Proctor, 2024), as outlined in Chapter 3, to analyse the data in this study. The four above-mentioned sub-research questions served as the basis for the analysis. The manual categorisation of the interview transcripts produced the themes and sub-themes presented in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Major themes and sub-themes**

<b>Major theme</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
1. Teaching strategies for reading comprehension	1.1 Pre-reading strategies 1.2 Vocabulary instruction 1.3 Scaffolding
2. Teacher perspectives regarding reading comprehension instruction	2.1 Vocabulary development 2.2 Time constraints 2.3 Differentiated instruction
3. Techniques used by teachers to teach reading comprehension	3.1 Skimming and scanning 3.2 Questioning techniques 3.3 Graphic organisers
4. Challenges	4.1 Large sizes 4.2 Language barriers

The themes and sub-themes that were derived from the semi-structured interviews, observation, and document analysis are subsequently presented.

#### **4.3.1 Major Theme 1: Teaching strategies for reading comprehension**

This theme aimed to explain how participants taught reading comprehension skills to their Grade 9 EFAL learners.

##### *4.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Pre-reading strategies*

Participants were asked to explain how they taught reading comprehension skills to their Grade 9 classroom learners. Rose stressed the significance of pre-reading by saying:

*“I approach teaching reading comprehension [by] first breaking down the text for the learners. A lot of them (learners) struggle with understanding. I start with pre-reading activities—like predicting what the text is about based on the title and any visuals. After that, we read the passage together as a class.”*

To teach reading comprehension, Rose breaks down texts and uses pre-reading exercises to get learners interested. This method focuses on providing scaffolding for learners who have comprehension difficulties. Text deconstruction, pre-reading exercises, and group reading are some of Rose’s main ideas. These codes’ themes include collaborative learning environments, engagement tactics, and scaffolding

learning. A collaborative learning environment creates a community of learners, engagement tactics inspire learners, and scaffolding learning attends to the requirements of each learner. The last themes include the function of collaborative reading in promoting understanding, active participation through prediction, and scaffolding for comprehension. By dissecting texts, using pre-reading exercises, and encouraging group reading, Rose's methodical approach to teaching reading comprehension tackles learner challenges. According to data from the semi-structured interview, lesson observation, and Rose's lesson plan, Rose's teaching approach emphasises engagement and scaffolding to improve learners' reading comprehension. To engage learners and promote a collaborative learning environment, this method breaks down texts and uses pre-reading activities. The lesson plan incorporates comprehension scaffolding activities that promotes sports debate and newspaper article reading. The CAPS criteria, which place a strong emphasis on vocabulary development and active participation, are in keeping with Rose's teaching style. Pronunciation, synonyms, and tenses are among the goals of the lesson, which supports the requirement for language development. The lesson plan also places a strong emphasis on group interaction and learning through collaborative reading strategies. The lesson plan reinforces the collaborative element of Rose's teaching philosophy by encouraging learners to read, reflect, and discuss as a group.

Contrary to Rose, Sane said:

*"I focus on [a] combination of approaches. First, I start with pre-reading activities, where we discuss the context of the text. It helps to activate prior knowledge, and learners get a sense of what they're about to read. We might look at key vocabulary and let them guess meanings from context before we check in the dictionary."*

Sane's approach to teaching reading comprehension involves a combination of pre-reading activities and contextual discussions to activate learners' prior knowledge and contextual understanding. These initial codes, referred to as "activating prior knowledge", focus on engaging learners before reading, discussing the context of the text, connecting new information with their existing knowledge, and examining key vocabulary. The theme of activating prior knowledge encompasses contextual understanding, vocabulary familiarisation, and enhanced comprehension, all of which

contribute to better understanding and retention of new information. This approach emphasises the importance of connecting prior knowledge with new learning to facilitate deeper comprehension.

Sane's teaching approach to reading comprehension is characterised by several contradictions and alignments. In her interview, she emphasised the importance of activating prior knowledge as a foundational strategy, which involves engaging learners through pre-reading activities and contextual discussions. This approach connects new information with learners' existing knowledge and familiarises them with key vocabulary, leading to better retention and understanding of the material. However, during her lesson observations, the specific teaching techniques to achieve these goals were not explicitly outlined, leading to confusion among learners.

The lesson plan provided by Sane includes various activities aimed at developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, but does not explicitly mention the activating prior knowledge strategy. Contradictions identified include a lack of alignment of teaching techniques, unclear objectives, inconsistent execution of the theory, and no mention of activating prior knowledge or scaffolding techniques. Sane's teaching philosophy emphasises activating prior knowledge as essential for reading comprehension, but this principle does not consistently translate into her observed practices or lesson plans. The initial lack of clarity regarding teaching techniques may hinder learners' ability to connect their prior knowledge with new content effectively. To align her teaching more closely with her stated beliefs, Sane could benefit from integrating explicit strategies for activating prior knowledge into both her lesson plans and classroom practices.

Amanda's perspective differed, as she said:

*"I begin by giving learners background of the text (scaffolding), explaining new vocabulary, and creating a context for them to understand. I also use pre-reading activities to engage them thinking about what the text might be about, like asking them to predict or make connections to things they already know."*

Amanda's teaching philosophy emphasises scaffolding understanding and activating prior knowledge, which involves providing background information, teaching vocabulary, and creating a contextual framework to enhance comprehension. However, her lesson objectives are aimed at improving reading comprehension skills

among Grade 9 learners. Techniques such as predicting, questioning, summarising, and inferring are used to engage learners with the text, but they are not explicitly stated as focal strategies at the beginning. This lack of explicitness may have led to ambiguity in learner understanding regarding how to apply these techniques effectively.

The lesson plan outlines specific objectives related to identifying elements such as setting, figurative language, theme, and plot in a novel. It adopts a learner-centred approach and includes activities for learner engagement, but does not explicitly mention scaffolding techniques or strategies for activating prior knowledge. Contradictions identified include a lack of explicitness of strategies, a lack of explicit activities designed to connect new material with learners' existing knowledge, and a lack of clarity regarding the application of reading strategies. Amanda's teaching philosophy emphasises scaffolding understanding and activating prior knowledge, but these principles did not consistently manifest in her observed practices and lesson plans.

In her interview, Zama said:

*"I usually try to break down the text into more manageable parts for learners to grasp the overall message. I start by introducing key vocabulary before they even read the passage. Once they're familiar with some words, I let them read the passage silently; after that, we read it together as a class."*

Zama's methodical approach to teaching reading comprehension involves breaking down texts into manageable parts, introducing key vocabulary, and facilitating silent and collaborative reading. This structured process aims to enhance learners' understanding of the text's message. Strategies include vocabulary introduction, silent reading, and collaborative reading.

Segmenting the text helps learners to focus on smaller chunks of information, while vocabulary preparation equips learners with the necessary tools. These practices foster individual reflection and shared understanding, enhancing overall comprehension. Zama's approach prioritises learner accessibility and understanding, creating an environment conducive to developing strong comprehension skills. This highlights the importance of structured support in education and how effective teaching practices can significantly improve learners' reading experiences and outcomes. Zama emphasised the importance of activating prior knowledge as a foundational

strategy in her teaching. She believed that engaging learners through pre-reading activities and contextual discussions is crucial for enhancing comprehension.

This approach involves connecting new information with learners' existing knowledge and familiarising them with key vocabulary, leading to better retention and understanding of the material. However, during lesson observation, it was observed that the specific teaching techniques to achieve these goals were not explicitly outlined at the beginning. This lack of clarity may have contributed to confusion among learners regarding how to apply these objectives in practice. The lesson plan provided by Zama includes various activities aimed at developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, but does not explicitly mention the activating prior knowledge strategy. Contradictions identified include a lack of alignment of teaching techniques, unclear objectives, and inconsistent execution of the theory. The lesson plan focuses on specific reading tasks without outlining how they connect to learners' existing knowledge. Additionally, the implementation of the theory is inconsistent, with some strategies applied later in the lesson not integrated into the lesson plan or initial objectives.

#### 4.3.1.2 *Sub-theme 1.2: Vocabulary instruction*

Participants stressed that uncommon terminology often impaired learners' text comprehension. Consequently, many of them taught crucial vocabulary before reading. In this regard, Rose said that:

*"I always start my lessons by highlighting key vocabulary that the learners may not be familiar with. If they don't understand the words, they won't understand the passage."*

Rose emphasised the importance of vocabulary in her teaching approach, stating that understanding key vocabulary is crucial for comprehending reading passages. She uses a deliberate teaching strategy, starting lessons with vocabulary instruction, and a learner-centric approach, focusing on learners' familiarity with words. The overarching theme related to explicit vocabulary instruction is the importance of vocabulary in comprehension.

The refined theme highlights explicit vocabulary instruction as a fundamental component of effective reading instruction. The final theme identifies explicit

vocabulary instruction as essential for comprehension, highlighting Rose's proactive approach to teaching vocabulary at the beginning of lessons. Rose's statement demonstrates a strong commitment to explicit vocabulary instruction as a critical element in her teaching practice. By starting lessons with an emphasis on key vocabulary, she aims to eliminate barriers to comprehension and ensure learners have the necessary tools to engage with texts effectively. This approach reflects a learner-centric philosophy that prioritises understanding and accessibility in reading comprehension. Rose's interview insights align closely with data from her lesson plan and observations, particularly regarding the emphasis on vocabulary as a cornerstone of effective reading instruction. Rose stressed the significance of vocabulary for comprehension, advocating for explicit vocabulary instruction at the beginning of lessons. She highlighted that understanding key terms is essential for grasping reading passages, indicating a proactive teaching strategy focused on learners' familiarity with words.

In her observed lesson, Rose implemented a scaffolding approach by pre-teaching vocabulary related to the reading material. This strategy not only aligns with her interview assertions but also facilitates learners' confidence in approaching complex texts. The explicit focus on vocabulary was evident as she ensured learners understand key terms before engaging with the text, reinforcing her belief in the role of vocabulary in comprehension.

Rose's lesson plan includes objectives that emphasise reading comprehension techniques such as summarising and inferring, alongside vocabulary acquisition. The plan aims to enhance learners' cognitive and linguistic skills, consistent with the CAPS guidelines for teaching EFAL. The teaching strategies observed during the lesson—summarising, inferring, and identifying main ideas—are directly linked to the stated objectives. Rose's approach to integrating vocabulary instruction within these strategies underscores her commitment to explicit teaching methods discussed in her interview. Moreover, the use of guiding questions to activate prior knowledge further exemplifies her learner-centric approach. The observations noted a positive learning environment in which learners felt comfortable participating. Rose's effective classroom management techniques fostered engagement, aligning with her interview comments about creating a supportive atmosphere conducive to learning.

On the other hand, Zama said: *“Before we even open the text, I go through the difficult words with the class, and we discuss their meanings. This makes the text less daunting for them.”* Zama’s proactive approach to teaching vocabulary involves discussing difficult words before reading a text to reduce anxiety and improve comprehension. This approach is structured and aims to reduce anxiety and enhance comprehension. The discussion of meanings facilitates a better understanding of the passage. Zama believed that addressing vocabulary upfront is essential to ease learners into reading tasks and that explicit vocabulary instruction helps alleviate potential difficulties learners may encounter when reading. This proactive approach prepares learners to engage with the text more confidently and effectively. Zama’s approach to teaching vocabulary and reading comprehension is a proactive one, emphasising discussing challenging words before reading to reduce learner anxiety and enhance comprehension. She believed that explicit vocabulary instruction is crucial for fostering better comprehension skills. During a lesson, Zama focused on enhancing reading comprehension among Grade 9 EFAL learners using techniques such as predicting, questioning, summarising, and inferring. However, the articulation of these strategies could have been clearer, as they were implicit rather than explicitly linked to the lesson objectives. Predicting was effective as an initial engagement strategy, summarising for checking comprehension, and questioning for encouraging critical thinking. The lack of explicit connection of these strategies to CAPS during the lesson could have limited learners’ understanding of their relevance. Zama’s lesson plan outlines objectives, focusing on character analysis and thematic exploration, but lacks detailed strategies for vocabulary instruction.

Similarly, Ncando said that: *“Vocabulary is the main issue for my learners. If they don’t understand the key terms, they can’t grasp the meaning of the text.”* Ncando emphasised the importance of vocabulary in reading comprehension, stating that it is a main issue for learners. He believed that understanding key terms is crucial for comprehending the overall meaning of a text. He believed that explicit vocabulary instruction is necessary to support comprehension, and that vocabulary knowledge directly affects learners’ ability to understand texts. The statement highlights the need for direct instruction and the impact of vocabulary knowledge on learning. Ncando’s belief is that without a solid understanding of key terms, learners cannot effectively comprehend reading materials. He viewed explicit vocabulary instruction as an

essential component of effective teaching that directly impacts learner–learning outcomes. By prioritising vocabulary instruction, he aims to equip learners with the necessary tools to navigate complex texts and improve their overall literacy skills.

Ncando’s teaching philosophy and methodologies are centred around the importance of vocabulary and reading comprehension strategies. He emphasised the need for explicit vocabulary instruction to help learners understand key terms and text meaning. Observations show that Ncando's lesson objectives aim to improve reading comprehension through techniques such as skimming, scanning, and inferencing. Although vocabulary instruction was not explicitly mentioned in the lesson, the focus on understanding key terms implicitly supports his interview assertions.

Ncando's teaching strategies included activating prior knowledge, demonstrating skimming, and encouraging predictions. These techniques engage learners and prepare them for deeper comprehension tasks, indirectly supporting vocabulary acquisition by encouraging learners to identify and understand key terms in the text. The lesson plan focuses on identifying elements such as setting, figurative language, theme, and plot within a novel, integrating vocabulary understanding into discussions about themes and characterisations.

Both the observations and lesson plan reflect Ncando’s educational philosophy, with strategies such as modelling reading techniques and gradually releasing responsibility being consistent with effective teaching practices that promote comprehension. The lesson adhered to CAPS, which emphasises cognitive and metacognitive strategies for reading comprehension. By aligning his teaching methods with CAPS guidelines, Ncando ensures that his approach meets national standards while fostering higher-order thinking skills among learners.

The results of the study regarding specific vocabulary training are in line with other research that has constantly stressed how important it is to teach vocabulary as a condition for reading comprehension. Nagy and Townsend’s (2012) research suggests that knowing many words is one of the best ways to tell if someone will be able to understand what they read, especially if they are learning a language that is not their first. In the same way, Snow (2020) explains that teaching specific words helps learners who have not had much experience with academic English to catch up, which lets them better understand more difficult words.

However, there are some differences of opinion in the research about the best ways to teach words. While the participants in this study thought it was best to teach vocabulary before learners started using it, some studies suggest that the best way to learn vocabulary is to read a lot and come across words in real-life situations (Matope & Senye-Awudi, 2024). Still, this study's results show that pre-teaching words is a better and more useful approach when fewer tools are available or when learners do not speak English very well.

After considering these points of view, it is clear that while both pre-teaching vocabulary and learning through context have their good points, pre-teaching vocabulary is better for EFAL learners in South Africa. When there are language hurdles and not enough exposure to English, it can be hard to understand what is being said. Explicit grammar teaching can help learners understand what is being said and improve their general language skills.

#### 4.3.1.3 *Sub-theme 1.3: Scaffolding*

This sub-theme examines how participants implemented scaffolding in Grade 9 EFAL classrooms through the interviews, classroom observations, and lesson plans of Ncando, Zama, and Rose. According to Ncando: *“Scaffolding is crucial because many learners don’t have the skills to read independently. They need to see how it’s done first.”* The data reveal the importance of scaffolding for learners, with independent reading skills and the role of modelling in fostering learner autonomy. However, the observational data suggest a potential gap between Ncando’s emphasis on explicit modelling and the actual instructional delivery. The lesson plan, which outlines various activities for developing reading comprehension and writing skills, does not explicitly mention how modelling will be integrated into these tasks. This lack of clarity in the lesson plan highlights the need for ongoing reflection and adaptation in teaching practices to meet learners’ needs effectively.

The analysis revealed both alignment and discrepancies among Ncando's interview insights, observation data, and lesson plans regarding scaffolding practices in education. While there is a shared recognition of the importance of scaffolding and modelling, challenges arise in ensuring their explicit integration into instructional practices. To bridge these gaps, it is crucial to enhance clarity in teaching methods and ensure that lesson plans reflect explicit scaffolding strategies as articulated by

Ncando. This mixed methods analysis underscores the need for ongoing reflection and adaptation in teaching practices to meet learners' needs effectively.

In Zama's interview, she said: *"I guide them step by step, and then eventually they try it themselves. This approach works well, especially for struggling learners."* The interview data focus on the gradual release of responsibility in learning, a pedagogical approach that aims to guide learners through complex tasks while fostering independence over time. This approach is particularly beneficial for struggling learners who may feel overwhelmed by the demands of independent work. Zama emphasised the importance of breaking down complex tasks into manageable components, creating a supportive learning environment that encourages exploration and confidence. The ultimate goal of scaffolding is to cultivate learner autonomy, allowing learners to internalise skills and strategies through guided practice before transitioning to independent application. This approach works well for struggling learners, aligning with educational research that emphasises the necessity of scaffolding for learners lacking foundational skills. The researcher's insights highlight the importance of differentiated instruction and adapting teaching methods to meet diverse learner needs. The emphasis on scaffolding aligns with best practices in pedagogy, reinforcing the idea that effective teaching involves creating pathways for learners to develop competence and confidence.

The pedagogical approach of scaffolding is crucial for struggling learners, as it breaks down complex tasks into manageable components and creates a supportive learning environment. This method is particularly beneficial for those who may feel overwhelmed by the demands of independent work, emphasising the need for differentiated instruction tailored to diverse learner needs. During the interview, Zama highlighted the importance of scaffolding in education, stating that it helps learners internalise skills and strategies before transitioning to independent application. Key strategies employed during the observation include prediction and vocabulary pre-teaching, guided reading strategy, and surface-level engagement. However, there were gaps between the participant's interview insights and classroom practice, such as a lack of explicit instruction and surface-level engagement.

The lesson plan, which outlines objectives focusing on identifying elements such as setting, figurative language, theme, and plot in a novel, adopts a learner-centred

approach aimed at engaging learners actively in their learning process. Key elements include characterisation and theme presentation, which support scaffolded learning by allowing learners to articulate their understanding collaboratively. Informal assessments are also used to support learners as they develop their comprehension skills.

However, there are discrepancies between the interview data, observational insights, and lesson plans regarding scaffolding practices in education. While there is a shared recognition of the importance of gradual release of responsibility in supporting struggling learners, challenges arise in ensuring these concepts are explicitly integrated into instructional practices. To bridge these gaps, teachers should refine their instructional methods by incorporating explicit modelling and varied questioning techniques that promote critical thinking. By aligning classroom practices with the principles articulated in interviews, teachers can create more effective learning environments that support all learners in developing independence and confidence in their abilities.

Rose asserted the following: *“In large classes, scaffolding allows me to work with learners at different levels. I can help those who are struggling while the others work independently.”* Rose's pedagogical approach emphasises scaffolding as a mechanism for differentiated instruction in diverse classroom settings. This approach addresses the inherent diversity within large classrooms, where learners present varying levels of ability and understanding. Scaffolding allows teachers to provide tailored support to learners at different levels while simultaneously promoting independence among more advanced learners.

Scaffolding serves as an essential tool for differentiation, allowing teachers to adapt their teaching methods to meet individual learner needs. By breaking down complex tasks into manageable components, teachers can guide struggling learners through challenging material while ensuring that more capable learners can engage with content independently. This approach aligns with contemporary educational practices that emphasise personalised learning experiences and create inclusive environments where all learners can thrive.

Rose's emphasis on helping struggling learners reflects a commitment to equity in education. Scaffolding provides structured support that enables these learners to

grasp essential concepts and skills they might otherwise find inaccessible. By offering targeted assistance, teachers can foster a sense of belonging and competence among struggling learners, which is crucial for their motivation and engagement. Scaffolding also promotes autonomy among advanced learners. While some learners receive the support they need to succeed, others can explore content at their own pace, maintaining engagement across diverse ability levels within a classroom. This balance is vital for maintaining engagement across diverse ability levels within a classroom.

As a researcher, Rose's insights reflect an understanding of differentiated instruction and the importance of adapting teaching methods to cater for diverse learner needs. The theme of scaffolding as a mechanism for differentiated instruction resonates with current educational theories advocating for learner-centred learning environments where teachers facilitate rather than dictate learning. By employing scaffolding techniques, teachers can ensure that all learners have the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their starting point. Rose's lesson focused on improving reading comprehension skills through techniques such as summarising and inferencing, aligning with Rose's commitment to differentiated instruction. The lesson included activities that encouraged learners to summarise key ideas and infer meanings from context, aligning with Rose's belief in scaffolding as a way to support struggling learners while challenging more advanced learners to engage critically with the text.

Comprehension strategies were linked to broader language skills such as vocabulary acquisition, reflecting Rose's approach to creating a cohesive learning experience where various skills are developed simultaneously. However, there were some discrepancies, such as limited depth in instruction, which might hinder the development of critical thinking skills among all learners, particularly those ready for more complex tasks. The lesson plan outlines several activities aimed at developing reading comprehension and writing skills, including reading a sports news report, answering questions, and focusing on pronunciation and writing directions. Both the observation and lesson plan demonstrated an understanding of how various language skills could be integrated into reading comprehension activities, reflecting Rose's approach to creating cohesive learning experiences.

The analysis revealed both agreements and contradictions among the interview data, observational insights, and lesson plans regarding Rose's teaching practices focused

on scaffolding and differentiated instruction. While there was a shared recognition of the importance of supporting struggling learners and promoting autonomy among advanced learners, challenges arose in ensuring that those concepts were explicitly integrated into instructional practices.

#### **4.3.2 Major Theme 2: Teacher perspectives regarding reading comprehension instruction**

Participants were asked what their perspectives were regarding the teaching of reading comprehension. The following sub-themes emerged for this theme.

##### *4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Vocabulary development*

Participants commented on the significance of vocabulary development as many learners still struggled with basic vocabulary. In her interview, Rose said:

*“Many of our learners struggle with basic vocabulary. Before we even begin reading, we spend time going through difficult words to make sure they understand the key terms. It helps them to follow the text more easily.”*

Rose emphasised the importance of vocabulary instruction as a foundation for reading comprehension, stating that many learners struggle with basic vocabulary. She believed that dedicating time to pre-reading difficult words helps learners understand key terms and follow the text more easily. This approach not only prepares learners for the reading task but also fosters confidence and competence, which are crucial for their motivation. Rose’s focus on vocabulary instruction also reflects her commitment to creating a supportive learning environment, ensuring that all learners understand essential terminology, and fostering inclusivity and equity in her classroom. This approach aligns with current educational theories advocating for explicit language development to enhance literacy skills. During the lesson observed, Rose employed several key strategies that aligned with her emphasis on vocabulary instruction. The lesson focused on improving learners’ ability to analyse and understand passages in English as a first additional language, with clear articulation of objectives and integration of vocabulary instruction. She also aimed to build learners’ confidence in interpreting complex texts, consistent with her interview insights about fostering a supportive learning environment where learners felt capable of engaging with challenging material.

Her lesson plan outlines activities aimed at developing reading comprehension and writing skills, including reading a sports news report and answering questions, which allows for the practical application of vocabulary in context. However, the lesson plan does not explicitly detail how vocabulary will be pre-taught or integrated into these activities, which may lead to missed opportunities for reinforcing vocabulary knowledge effectively. Comparing interview, observation, and lesson plan data, it is evident that Rose's strong commitment to vocabulary instruction, focus on building confidence, and integration of skills align with her approach to creating cohesive learning experiences. However, there are contradictions, such as the absence of a detailed plan for systematically integrating unfamiliar words into every lesson or activity and the absence of explicit details on how vocabulary will be taught before engaging with texts.

In her interview, Sane further added that: "*Vocabulary is one of the main barriers to comprehension. I always start with new words because if they don't understand the words, they won't understand the passage.*" Sane's statement highlights the importance of vocabulary as a fundamental gateway to comprehension, highlighting its role in effective reading comprehension. She emphasised the need for targeted instructional strategies to bridge the gap between vocabulary and language acquisition. Sane's proactive approach to teaching by starting with new words ensures that learners have the necessary tools to comprehend texts. This aligns with research indicating that explicit vocabulary instruction can significantly enhance learners' understanding and retention of material (Harmades, 2024; Alamri & Rogers, 2018). Sane's focus on vocabulary mastery not only improves immediate comprehension but also fosters long-term literacy skills. This approach aligns with the current educational practices advocating for explicit teaching methods to enhance literacy skills. Emphasising vocabulary as a gateway to comprehension can create more inclusive learning environments, particularly in diverse classrooms with diverse linguistic backgrounds.

#### 4.3.2.2 *Sub-theme 2.2: Time constraints*

In addition to the aspect of vocabulary development, Sane and Amanda highlighted time constraints as a major challenge that made it difficult to cover all reading

comprehension strategies that they employed in their teaching practices in the classroom. In her interview, Sane indicated that:

*“I find it difficult to cover all the necessary comprehension strategies within the time allocated. Often, I am forced to rush through lessons, which doesn’t allow learners to fully grasp what we are doing.”*

Sane struggles to cover all necessary comprehension strategies within the time allocated – a common challenge faced by teachers. She emphasised vocabulary as a barrier to comprehension and expressed frustration over time constraints, which often force her to rush through lessons. Observation data from Rose's lesson align with Sane's concerns, including clear articulation of objectives, integration of vocabulary instruction, and building confidence. However, Sane's lesson plan does not explicitly detail how vocabulary will be pre-taught or integrated into activities, potentially leading to rushed instruction. Emphasis on pronunciation and writing directions may detract from comprehensive vocabulary instruction and reading strategies.

Comparing data sources, insights from Sane's interview and lesson observations show a strong commitment to vocabulary instruction as being crucial for improving reading comprehension. Both sources emphasise the importance of building learner confidence through effective teaching strategies. Comprehension strategies are linked to broader language skills such as vocabulary acquisition, aligning with Sane's approach to creating cohesive learning experiences. Overall, the limited time available hampers the effective integration of vocabulary instruction and comprehension strategies into classroom practices.

Likewise, Amanda said: *“With the large amount of content we have to get through, I feel like I’m not giving learners enough time to practise their reading comprehension skills. There’s just not enough time.”* Amanda expressed frustration over time constraints that hinder her ability to provide adequate practice for reading comprehension skills. She believed that covering a substantial amount of content often results in rushed lessons, preventing learners from fully grasping the material. This highlights systemic issues related to curriculum pacing and instructional time. During observation of Rose's lesson, key strategies were employed to address Amanda's concerns, such as clear articulation of objectives, integration of comprehension strategies, and building confidence.

The lesson plan outlines activities aimed at developing reading comprehension and writing skills, but it does not explicitly detail how much time would be allocated for practising these skills. Emphasis on pronunciation and writing directions might detract from the time available for comprehensive vocabulary instruction and reading strategies. A comparison of data from Amanda's interview and lesson observations revealed a shared concern about time limitations impacting the effectiveness of teaching reading comprehension skills. Both sources emphasised the importance of building learner confidence through effective teaching strategies. However, contradictions were noted, such as a lack of depth of instruction and specificity in lesson planning. These issues highlight the need for teachers to balance curriculum demands with effective teaching practices to ensure that effective reading comprehension strategies are integrated into classroom practices.

#### 4.3.2.3 *Sub-theme 2.3: Differentiated instruction*

Ncando and Amanda were asked about the various strategies they employed in Grade 9 classrooms to meet different learners' needs. In Ncando's case, he said: *"I try to use different strategies for different learners, but honestly, I don't feel like I've been trained well enough to do this properly."* Ncando acknowledged the importance of employing diverse strategies in his classroom, highlighting the need for adapting instruction to meet individual learner needs. However, he acknowledged a lack of training, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy and frustration among teachers. Ncando's willingness to try different strategies suggests a desire for professional growth, but without adequate training and support, this may not translate into effective instructional practices. This highlights the need for ongoing professional development focused on differentiation strategies and effective teaching methods, as teachers often feel unprepared to meet the demands of diverse classrooms. As a researcher, Ncando's insights reflect a broader issue within educational systems.

Ncando acknowledged the importance of employing different strategies to cater for different learners but felt inadequately trained to do so effectively. This lack of confidence can lead to frustration and feelings of inadequacy among teachers who are aware of best practices but lack the necessary training to execute them effectively. Ncando's perspective highlights several important themes: awareness of diverse needs, lack of training, and desire for professional growth. In Ncando's observed

lesson, he employed several key strategies, such as clear articulation of techniques, building learner confidence, and integrating skills. However, the lesson plan outlines activities aimed at developing reading comprehension skills, emphasising a learner-centred approach and focusing on key literary elements.

Amanda had the following perspective about differentiated instruction: *“In theory, differentiated instruction is great, but in practice, it’s difficult to manage with large classes and a strict curriculum. I don’t always feel equipped to implement it well.”* Amanda's perspective on differentiated instruction highlights the challenges faced by teachers in implementing this effective teaching strategy. Large classes and strict curricula can make it difficult to provide individualised attention and support for diverse learning needs. Amanda also felt unequipped, indicating a lack of confidence or resources necessary for successful implementation. This sentiment reflects a broader concern among teachers who may be aware of best practices but lack the tools or training to apply them effectively. Amanda's insights reveal the complexities involved in executing differentiated instruction within the current educational system. She emphasised the need for administrative support and resources that enable teachers to implement differentiation strategies more effectively.

When comparing Ncando and Amanda's perspectives, themes emerge that highlight their shared challenges and unique contexts. Both participants understood the importance of addressing diverse learner needs through differentiated instruction but expressed concerns about their ability to implement these strategies effectively due to various constraints. They also emphasised the need for professional development and resources to empower teachers to meet their learners' diverse needs effectively. Amanda's perspective highlights several critical themes: theoretical vs. practical challenges, the impact of class size and curriculum, and feeling unequipped. She acknowledged the value of differentiated instruction but expressed frustration over its practical application in her classroom. The mention of large classes and strict curriculum requirements underscores systemic challenges that hinder effective differentiation.

The comparative analysis revealed both agreements and contradictions. Amanda demonstrated an understanding of the importance of addressing diverse learner needs through differentiated instruction. Both participants expressed feelings of inadequacy

related to their training and preparation for implementing differentiated instruction effectively. For the systemic challenges, it is Amanda's lack of training that affects her ability to deliver effective instruction. Contradictions include implementation confidence, where Amanda expressed a desire to try different strategies despite feeling untrained, and specificity in lesson planning, where Amanda's lesson plan provides clear objectives and techniques but lacks details on how to manage time effectively within those constraints.

### **4.3.3 Major Theme 3: Techniques used by teachers to teach reading comprehension**

The aim of this theme is to reflect on the techniques that participants used to teach reading comprehension in their Grade 9 classes.

#### *4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Skimming and scanning*

Responses of Sane, Ncando, and Amanda regarding their use of skimming and scanning as reading strategies and insights were examined separately to highlight their unique perspectives. In this regard, Sane elaborated: *"I often start with skimming and scanning exercises to help learners find key points in the text without getting overwhelmed by every word. This makes them more confident when approaching long passages."* Sane's approach to teaching reading involves skimming and scanning exercises to boost learners' confidence and reduce anxiety in lengthy texts. This method helps learners to locate essential information efficiently, promoting a sense of achievement and effective navigation. Sane emphasised the importance of managing large volumes of information in academic settings and addressing cognitive overload. By encouraging skimming and scanning, she promotes a strategic reading habit that can be beneficial across various subjects. This approach aligns with best practices in literacy instruction, promoting autonomous reading skills. It is particularly important in diverse classrooms where learners may struggle with varying levels of reading proficiency. Sane's insights demonstrate a thoughtful approach to teaching reading strategies that prioritise learner confidence and effective text navigation.

Amanda said: *"When learners use scanning, they can focus on finding specific information like dates or names, which is important for answering certain types of comprehension questions."*

According to Ncando: *“Skimming and scanning are simple yet effective techniques. They make the task of reading less daunting for learners, especially those with limited English vocabulary.”* Ncando emphasised the importance of scanning as a strategy for locating specific information within the text. He believed that this technique can be applied effectively in answering comprehension questions and prepares learners for standardised tests and assessments. Ncando’s focus on scanning reflects his understanding of how specific reading strategies can enhance overall comprehension skills. By training learners to look for specific details, he helps them to develop a more analytical approach to reading, which is crucial for deeper understanding. Ncando’s insights highlight the importance of teaching targeted reading strategies such as scanning, which not only supports comprehension but also fosters critical thinking skills for navigating complex texts across disciplines.

Amanda had the following perspective: *“Skimming and scanning are simple yet effective techniques. They make the task of reading less daunting for learners, especially those with limited English vocabulary.”* Amanda emphasised the importance of skimming and scanning in that they are simple yet effective techniques for learners who may feel overwhelmed by reading tasks. These techniques are straightforward, making them less intimidating for learners. They enhance comprehension, especially for learners with limited vocabulary, and empower learners by allowing them to approach reading tasks with greater confidence. Amanda incorporates skimming and scanning into her curriculum as essential components of reading instruction. Her lesson plans outline specific activities where learners practise skimming for main ideas and scanning for details in texts. Observation insights show that Amanda often models skimming and scanning during her lessons, demonstrating how to apply these strategies in real time. The theme of reading strategies, particularly through skimming and scanning, reflects Amanda’s commitment to making reading accessible and building student confidence in handling texts.

#### 4.3.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Questioning techniques

This sub-theme explores Zama and Amanda’s statements regarding their use of predictive and inferential questioning strategies. Insights are examined separately to highlight their unique perspectives. Zama said: *“I use a lot of predictive questioning during reading activities. For instance, I’ll ask, ‘What do you think will happen next?’*

*This gets them thinking beyond just what's written.*" Zama's use of predictive questioning encourages learners to engage in critical thinking. By asking learners to anticipate what might happen next, she prompts them to consider the narrative structure and character motivations, fostering deeper engagement with the text. Predictive questioning serves as a strategy to keep learners actively engaged during reading activities. This aligns with best practices in literacy instruction, where active participation is linked to improved comprehension outcomes. By inviting learners to make predictions, Zama helps to build their confidence in interpreting texts.

This approach not only empowers learners but also encourages them to take ownership of their reading experience. Zama's insights reflect an effective pedagogical strategy that integrates prediction into reading comprehension instruction. Her emphasis on fostering critical thinking through predictive questions aligns with educational research that advocates for active learning techniques. This approach is especially beneficial in diverse classrooms where learners may struggle with comprehension, as it allows them to connect personally with the material.

Amanda made the following assertion: "*Asking inferential questions like, 'Why do you think the character did that?', helps the learners to engage critically and not just focus on the literal meaning.*" Amanda's focus on inferential questioning highlights the importance of encouraging learners to look beyond the literal text. By prompting learners to consider character motivations and underlying themes, she facilitates a deeper understanding of the material. Inferential questions require learners to analyse and interpret information rather than merely recall facts. This promotes critical engagement with the text and enhances analytical skills that are essential for academic success. Amanda's approach allows learners to make personal connections with the characters and events in the story. This not only enriches their reading experience but also fosters empathy and emotional investment in the narrative.

Amanda's insights underscore the value of inferential questioning as a tool for enhancing comprehension skills among learners. Her recognition of the need for learners to engage critically with texts reflects a commitment to developing higher-order thinking skills in her classroom. This approach is vital for preparing learners for more complex literary analyses and discussions, particularly in diverse educational settings. It is evident that integrating such questioning techniques into literacy

instruction can significantly benefit learners by fostering engagement and enhancing comprehension skills. Continued professional development focused on these strategies could further empower teachers to create dynamic learning environments that cater to diverse learner needs while promoting academic success.

#### 4.3.3.3 *Sub-theme 3.3: Graphic organisers*

Statements from Sane, Rose, and Amanda regarding their use of graphic organisers in reading instruction are presented and discussed under this sub-theme. In response to which graphic organisers she used in her teaching, Sane said: *“I use mind maps a lot, especially with longer texts. It helps the learners to see the main ideas and how they’re connected.”* Sane’s use of mind maps emphasises the importance of visual aids in understanding complex texts. By mapping out the main ideas and their connections, learners can more easily grasp the structure of the material. The mind maps serve as a tool to break down lengthy texts into manageable parts. This approach helps learners to focus on key concepts rather than feeling overwhelmed by details, thereby enhancing overall comprehension.

By using mind maps, Sane encourages learners to think critically about how ideas relate to one another. This method promotes deeper engagement with the text and fosters analytical skills. Sane’s insights highlight the effectiveness of mind maps as a pedagogical tool in reading instruction. Her emphasis on visual representation aligns with research that supports the use of graphic organisers to enhance comprehension and retention. This approach is particularly beneficial for diverse learners who may struggle with traditional text formats, as it allows them to visualise relationships between concepts.

On the other hand, Rose said: *“Flow charts are really helpful for texts that involve a sequence of events. It helps the learners to follow the story and remember the key points.”* Rose’s focus on flow charts underscores their utility in illustrating sequences of events within narratives. This helps learners understand the progression of a story and reinforces their ability to recall key points. Flow charts serve as a simplification tool, breaking down complex narratives into clear, linear representations. This approach aids learners in organising their thoughts and enhances their ability to summarise content effectively. By visualising sequences through flow charts, Rose

provides a strategy that supports memory retention. Learners can refer back to these charts as they engage with texts, reinforcing their understanding of plot development.

Rose's insights emphasise the importance of using flow charts as an instructional strategy for teaching narrative structure. Her recognition of their role in simplifying complex information aligns with educational practices that advocate for visual learning aids. This method not only supports comprehension but also empowers learners to become more independent readers who can navigate texts with greater ease.

Amanda said the following regarding graphic organisers: *"I think graphic organisers are a great tool because they help learners to organise their ideas and see the bigger picture."* Amanda highlighted the role of graphic organisers in helping learners structure their thoughts and ideas. This organisational aspect is crucial for effective reading comprehension and writing skills. By using graphic organisers, Amanda facilitates a broader understanding of content, allowing learners to see connections among various ideas and themes within a text. This holistic view is essential for deeper learning. The use of graphic organisers encourages active participation from learners as they visually map out information. This engagement is vital for maintaining interest and motivation during reading activities.

Amanda's insights underscore the versatility of graphic organisers as educational tools that promote both organisation and engagement in learning processes. Her emphasis on helping learners to see the bigger picture aligns with research that supports visual learning strategies in literacy education. This approach is particularly effective in diverse classrooms where learners may benefit from varied methods of information presentation.

#### **4.3.4 Major Theme 4: Challenges**

This theme highlights the challenges participants encountered in teaching reading comprehension in Grade 9 classrooms.

##### *4.3.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Language barrier*

Rose, Sane, Ncando, and Amanda stressed skimming and scanning as ways to improve Grade 9 EFAL learners' reading comprehension. They highlighted that this strategy helped learners to rapidly recognise the text's essential ideas and features. Rose highlighted that: *"Many of my learners come from homes where English is rarely*

*spoken, and that makes it very difficult for them to understand the texts I give them.”* Rose stressed the significant impact of learners’ home environment on their language acquisition, highlighting a lack of exposure to English at home as a barrier to comprehension and engagement with academic texts. She acknowledged the difficulties learners face in understanding the material, highlighting the complexities of teaching ESL. Rose emphasised the need for targeted instructional strategies, such as scaffolding and vocabulary instruction, to bridge the gap created by limited exposure to English. She emphasised the importance of considering learners’ linguistic backgrounds in curriculum design and instructional strategies to enhance learning outcomes.

Observation data from Ncando’s lesson highlight key strategies such as clear articulation of techniques, building confidence, and integrating vocabulary. Ncando’s lesson plan outlines activities aimed at developing reading comprehension skills, emphasising a learner-centred approach and focusing on literary elements. However, the plan lacks explicit details on teaching these skills or time allocation for practice.

Amanda’s perspective highlights the importance of vocabulary knowledge as foundational for comprehension, highlighting the connection between vocabulary knowledge and the ability to derive meaning from passages. She suggested an urgent need for explicit vocabulary instruction as part of reading comprehension strategies. Comparative analysis revealed that all participants emphasised the importance of vocabulary knowledge as foundational for comprehension. Challenges related to language exposure were also discussed, with Rose’s comments about learners coming from non-English-speaking homes illustrating how background influences language acquisition. Comprehension strategies are linked to broader language skills, but there are contradictions, such as implementation confidence and specificity in lesson planning.

Amanda’s perspective was that: *“Sometimes they don’t even know the basic words, so how can they understand the bigger meaning of the passage?”* Amanda emphasised the importance of a strong vocabulary base in language learning, as learners struggle to comprehend complex texts without it. She also highlighted the connection between vocabulary knowledge and comprehension, which is crucial for teachers to develop reading strategies. Amanda’s comments suggest the urgent need

for explicit vocabulary instruction in reading comprehension strategies, aligning with research advocating for targeted vocabulary development to support overall literacy. Therefore, Amanda's insights underscore the critical role of vocabulary in reading comprehension and the need for teachers to prioritise it.

Amanda's comments suggest an urgent need for explicit vocabulary instruction in reading comprehension strategies, reinforcing the idea that effective teaching must address these foundational gaps. Observation data from Amanda's lesson reveal key strategies for improving learners' ability to analyse and understand passages in EFAL. These strategies include clear articulation of techniques, building confidence in interpreting complex texts, and integrating vocabulary. However, the effectiveness of these strategies is questioned due to the challenges highlighted in her interview. Overall, Amanda's approach to vocabulary acquisition is crucial for effective language learning.

Amanda's lesson plan focuses on developing reading comprehension and writing skills through activities such as reading a sports news report and answering questions. It emphasises pronunciation and writing directions but lacks specificity on how vocabulary will be pre-taught or integrated into these activities. The plan aligns with Rose's commitment to vocabulary instruction, building learner confidence through effective teaching strategies. However, there are contradictions, such as the lack of a detailed plan for systematically integrating unfamiliar words into every lesson or activity, suggesting that execution may not align with her stated goals. Additionally, the lesson plan lacks explicit details on how vocabulary will be taught before engaging with texts, which may limit the effectiveness of her instructional strategies in practice.

Ncando's perspective was: "*The struggle is real when they can't even pronounce certain words. It takes extra time just to get through a few lines.*" Ncando highlighted the importance of addressing pronunciation issues in language instruction, as it directly impacts reading fluency and comprehension. Phonetic difficulties can impede reading progress, leading to frustration for learners and teachers. Additionally, balancing curriculum demands with adequate support for struggling learners can be challenging. The impact of these challenges on learning flow can disrupt lessons, potentially hindering comprehension and engagement. Effective interventions are needed to support learners in overcoming these barriers. Pronunciation issues directly

impact reading fluency and comprehension, highlighting the importance of foundational skills for effective reading. Balancing curriculum demands with adequate support for struggling learners can disrupt lesson flow and hinder comprehension. Ncando emphasised the need for effective interventions to support learners in overcoming pronunciation and comprehension barriers.

Observation data show key strategies in Ncando's lesson, including clear articulation of techniques, building confidence, and integrating vocabulary. The lesson plan outlines activities aimed at developing reading comprehension skills, emphasising a learner-centred approach and focusing on literary elements. However, the plan lacks explicit details on teaching these skills or time allocation for practice.

Comparative analysis revealed that Ncando's emphasis on addressing pronunciation issues aligns with the broader understanding that vocabulary knowledge is foundational for comprehension. Targeted instruction is needed to support learners struggling with pronunciation and comprehension, emphasising the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction as part of reading strategies. Comprehension strategies are linked to broader language skills such as vocabulary acquisition, supporting Ncando's approach to creating cohesive learning experiences.

However, there are contradictions in Ncando's approach. While he acknowledged the importance of using different strategies for different learners, he also expressed feelings of inadequacy regarding his training, highlighting a gap between theoretical understanding and practical application. Additionally, the lesson plan lacks detailed strategies for addressing pronunciation issues specifically within the context of vocabulary instruction, which he identified as critical.

Sane said the following: *"I have to constantly pause and explain words, but that breaks the flow of the lesson."* Sane's vocabulary instruction strategy, which involves constant pauses, can disrupt lesson flow, causing disengagement among learners. This suggests a need for more integrated approaches to vocabulary instruction that minimise disruptions. Balancing comprehensive instruction with effective pacing is a challenge faced by teachers, emphasising the importance of finding strategies that allow for both support and fluidity in lessons. Sane's insights emphasise the need for developing instructional strategies that integrate vocabulary teaching into broader lesson objectives without sacrificing engagement or flow.

Sane discussed the challenges of her vocabulary instruction strategy. The strategy involves constant pauses to explain words, which can disrupt lesson flow and cause disengagement among learners. Key themes include the need for balancing support and pacing, integrating approaches to vocabulary instruction, and clear articulation of techniques. Observation data reveal key strategies in Sane's lesson, such as building confidence, integrating vocabulary instruction, and emphasising the importance of broader language skills such as vocabulary acquisition. The lesson plan outlines activities aimed at developing reading comprehension skills, emphasising a learner-centred approach and focusing on literary elements. However, the plan lacks explicit details on how vocabulary will be taught or reinforced throughout the lesson.

The comparative analysis revealed that Sane's emphasis on vocabulary instruction aligns with her observation that comprehension strategies should be connected to broader language skills such as vocabulary acquisition. Insights from both the interview and classroom observation indicate a need for explicit vocabulary instruction as part of reading comprehension strategies. Additionally, comprehension strategies are linked to broader language skills such as vocabulary acquisition, supporting Sane's approach to creating cohesive learning experiences. Contradictions identified include implementation confidence, which contradicts her desire for maintaining lesson flow and learner engagement, and specificity in lesson planning, which lacks detailed strategies for addressing vocabulary issues specifically within the context of reading comprehension. Overall, Sane's lesson plan needs to be more integrated to minimise disruptions while still providing necessary support to learners.

#### 4.3.4.2 *Sub-theme 4.2: Large class sizes*

This sub-theme entails overcrowded classrooms, highlighted as one of the obstacles that Zama and Ncando encountered in their classes. Zama highlighted the following: *"I have 45 learners in one class, and there's just no way I can help each one individually with their comprehension issues."* Zama, a teacher with 45 learners in one class, acknowledged the overwhelming nature of large class sizes, which can make it difficult to address each learner's unique comprehension challenges effectively. She also acknowledged the limitations of individualised instruction, reflecting a broader issue within educational systems, where teacher-to-learner ratios hinder personalised instruction. Zama called for systemic changes, such as smaller class sizes or

additional support staff, to help manage diverse learner needs more effectively. This highlights the need for a more inclusive and effective approach to teaching.

Observation data from Zama's lesson highlight key strategies for improving learners' ability to analyse and understand passages in EFAL. Key strategies include clear articulation of techniques, building confidence, and integrating comprehension strategies. Her lesson plan outlines activities aimed at developing reading comprehension skills, emphasising a learner-centred approach and focusing on literary elements. Comparative analysis revealed that insights from both Zama's interview and classroom observation highlight the difficulties posed by large class sizes in effectively addressing individual learner needs. Clear instruction is important for managing large groups, and comprehension strategies are linked to broader language skills such as vocabulary acquisition. However, the lesson plan does not specify how to address these challenges within her teaching strategies. Additionally, the lesson plan lacks detailed strategies for addressing the diverse needs of 45 learners.

Ncando said: "*Group work helps, but even then, it's hard to manage 10 groups at once.*" Ncando emphasised the importance of group work in facilitating peer learning and collaboration among learners. However, managing multiple groups simultaneously can be challenging, leading to chaos and limiting its effectiveness. This highlights the need for effective classroom management strategies that allow teachers to oversee group activities while maintaining learner focus. Ncando's experiences highlight the need for educational reform, such as smaller class sizes and enhanced support systems, to empower teachers to provide personalised instruction. The success of group work relies on effective management strategies that allow teachers to facilitate meaningful interactions without sacrificing oversight. Professional development focused on classroom management techniques and collaborative learning strategies could greatly benefit teachers in challenging environments.

Ncando's lesson focused on vocabulary instruction, emphasising the importance of clear articulation of techniques, building confidence, and integrating vocabulary into the learning process. The lesson aimed to improve learners' ability to analyse and understand passages in EFAL. However, the lesson plan lacks explicit details on how vocabulary would be taught or reinforced throughout. Ncando's lesson plan

emphasises a learner-centred approach, focusing on literary elements such as setting, figurative language, theme, and plot. However, the plan lacks explicit details on how vocabulary would be taught or reinforced. Comparative analysis revealed that Ncando's emphasis on vocabulary instruction was critical, and there was a need for targeted instruction. However, implementation confidence is a challenge, as it contradicts his desire to maintain lesson flow and learner engagement. Additionally, the lesson plan lacks detailed strategies for addressing vocabulary issues specifically within the context of reading comprehension, which he identified as critical. Overall, Ncando's lesson plan highlights the need for more integrated approaches to vocabulary instruction to minimise disruptions and provide the necessary support to learners.

#### **4.4 Discussion of Findings**

##### **4.4.1 Insights from teachers: Alignments and contradictions**

The collected data from the interviews, observations, and lesson plans of Sane, Rose, and Amanda reveal both alignments with and contradictions to existing literature on reading comprehension strategies. Both Sane and Amanda emphasised the significance of activating prior knowledge as a foundational strategy in reading comprehension. This aligns well with existing literature that highlights the role of background knowledge in enhancing comprehension (Fisher & Frey, 2023). Research indicates that when learners can connect new information to what they already know, they are more likely to retain and understand the material.

The strategies employed by Rose, such as breaking down texts and using pre-reading exercises, are consistent with findings that advocate for the use of graphic organisers. These tools help learners to visualise relationships between concepts and improve their understanding of complex texts (Burke, 2022). The literature supports the idea that structured visual aids can significantly enhance reading comprehension by making information more accessible (Vaughn, Boardman & Klingner, 2024). The emphasis on group reading and collaborative learning in Rose's approach is supported by research that suggests that collaborative learning can foster engagement and improve comprehension outcomes (Vacca et al., 2021). The literature indicates that

when learners work together, they are more likely to discuss and reflect on their understanding, leading to deeper insights.

All three participants highlighted the need for scaffolding in their teaching practices. This aligns with the emphasis of literature on providing structured support to help learners navigate complex texts (Olifant et al., 2022). Scaffolding is recognised as a critical component in facilitating independent comprehension and promoting learner autonomy. While Sane emphasised activating prior knowledge through pre-reading activities, her lesson observations revealed a lack of explicit teaching techniques to achieve this goal. This inconsistency contradicts the literature, which stresses the importance of clearly defined instructional strategies to effectively activate prior knowledge (Sibanda et al., 2024). Without explicit techniques, learners may struggle to make connections between their existing knowledge and new content.

Amanda's lesson plans aimed at improving reading comprehension skills but did not clearly outline how scaffolding techniques would be implemented. This lack of explicitness contradicts the research advocating for clear objectives and defined strategies in literacy instruction (Venketsamy & Sibanda, 2021). When objectives are not clearly articulated, it can lead to ambiguity in learner understanding regarding how to apply these techniques effectively. While vocabulary development is a crucial aspect of reading comprehension highlighted in the literature (Hadley & Mendez, 2021), there was a noticeable absence of explicit vocabulary instruction in both Sane and Amanda's approaches. This oversight contradicts existing research that emphasises the need for targeted vocabulary instruction as part of effective reading strategies (Yapp et al., 2021). The findings from Sane, Rose, and Amanda underscore the complexity of implementing effective reading comprehension strategies within diverse classroom settings. While their approaches align with established research emphasising the importance of activating prior knowledge, scaffolding techniques, and collaborative learning environments, inconsistencies in implementation reveal gaps that need addressing.

#### **4.4.2 Consistency and inconsistency in Rose's vocabulary instruction**

The research findings related to Rose's teaching approach to vocabulary instruction reveal both alignments with and contradictions to existing literature on effective reading comprehension strategies. Rose emphasised the significance of starting

lessons with vocabulary instruction, which aligns closely with existing research that highlights explicit vocabulary teaching as a fundamental component of effective reading instruction (Timmons, 2021). Studies indicate that explicit instruction helps learners to acquire essential vocabulary, thereby enhancing their comprehension skills (Gallagher, 2023; Wendaferew & Damtew, 2023). The use of scaffolding in Rose's approach—pre-teaching vocabulary related to reading material—reflects the advocacy by literature for structured support in literacy education (Rodgers, 2022). Research supports that scaffolding strategies can significantly improve learners' confidence and ability to engage with complex texts (Alrawili et al., 2020). Rose's focus on a learner-centric approach that prioritises learners' familiarity with words aligns with educational best practices that advocate for tailoring instruction to meet individual learner needs (Suryati & Ratih, 2024). This approach is supported by research indicating that personalised learning experiences enhance learner engagement and comprehension outcomes (Walkington & Bernacki, 2020).

The integration of vocabulary instruction within broader comprehension strategies—such as summarising and inferencing—mirrors findings in the literature that advocate for holistic approaches to teaching reading (Yapp et al., 2021). This method not only supports vocabulary acquisition but also enhances overall reading comprehension. While Rose's interview insights strongly advocate for explicit vocabulary instruction, her lesson plans did not consistently reflect this emphasis. Existing research stresses the necessity of clearly defined instructional strategies for effective vocabulary teaching (Yapp et al., 2021). The absence of explicit mention of activating prior knowledge or scaffolding techniques in her lesson plans suggests a disconnect between her stated beliefs and practical application.

Although Rose's philosophy emphasises the importance of vocabulary for comprehension, observations indicated that some strategies were not effectively implemented during lessons. This inconsistency contradicts the emphasis in literature on the need for reliable execution of instructional strategies to achieve desired learning outcomes (Sani & Ismail, 2021).

While Rose's lesson plan included objectives related to reading comprehension techniques, it lacked explicit activities designed to reinforce vocabulary development beyond initial instruction. Research indicates that repeated exposure to vocabulary in

various contexts is crucial for long-term retention and understanding (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). The limited focus on ongoing vocabulary practice may hinder learners' ability to fully integrate new terms into their language use. The findings from Rose's teaching approach reveal both alignment with and contradictions to existing research on effective vocabulary instruction. Her commitment to explicit vocabulary teaching and scaffolding reflects well-established practices in literacy education. However, inconsistencies in implementation and a lack of explicitness in lesson plans highlight areas for improvement.

#### **4.4.3 Alignment and discrepancies in vocabulary instruction**

The research findings regarding Zama and Ncando's approaches to vocabulary instruction reveal both agreements with and contradictions to established literature on effective reading comprehension strategies. Both Zama and Ncando emphasised the necessity of explicit vocabulary instruction as a foundational component of reading comprehension. This aligns with research indicating that direct vocabulary teaching significantly enhances learners' understanding of texts (Nagy & Townsend, 2012; Agustin et al., 2021). Their approaches reflect the consensus in educational literature that vocabulary knowledge is critical for reading success, particularly for learners who may struggle with language acquisition. Zama's proactive approach to discussing challenging words before reading is consistent with studies that highlight the importance of preparing learners to engage with complex texts (Snow, 2020). By familiarising learners with key vocabulary, she aims to reduce anxiety and improve comprehension, a strategy supported by research emphasising the role of pre-teaching vocabulary in enhancing reading experiences (Herrera, 2022).

Ncando's emphasis on integrating vocabulary instruction with techniques such as skimming, scanning, and inferencing aligns with findings that advocate for holistic approaches to teaching reading (Rifai, 2024). This integration helps to reinforce learners' understanding of key terms, while also developing their overall comprehension skills. Both teachers utilised strategies that activate prior knowledge, which is supported by literature emphasising its role in facilitating deeper comprehension (Brabham & Villaume, 2002). Engaging learners in discussions about their existing knowledge before introducing new concepts is a well-established practice that enhances learning outcomes.

While Zama articulated the importance of activating prior knowledge and explicit vocabulary instruction, her lesson plans often lacked clear connections between these strategies and the stated objectives. This inconsistency contradicts research advocating for clearly defined instructional strategies that enhance learner understanding (McKenzie, 2011). The absence of explicit links may hinder learners' ability to apply these strategies effectively. Ncando's observations indicate that while he values explicit vocabulary instruction, his lesson plans do not always explicitly mention vocabulary teaching techniques. This contradiction contrasts with research suggesting that explicit instruction is crucial for effective vocabulary acquisition (Snow, 2020).

Without clearly outlined strategies in lesson plans, learners may struggle to grasp the importance of vocabulary in their reading comprehension. Although both participants recognised the significance of vocabulary for comprehension, their approaches may not sufficiently address the need for ongoing vocabulary practice beyond initial instruction. Research indicates that repeated exposure to vocabulary in various contexts is essential for long-term retention (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). The limited focus on continuous vocabulary development could impede learners' ability to fully integrate new terms into their language use.

#### **4.4.4 Navigating the complexities of scaffolding**

Both Ncando and Rose emphasised scaffolding as a crucial strategy for supporting learners, particularly those who struggle with independent reading skills. This aligns with existing research that highlights scaffolding as an essential instructional strategy that aids learner understanding by breaking down complex tasks into manageable components (Wood et al., 1976). Their commitment to scaffolding reflects well-established practices recognised for fostering learner autonomy. Ncando's focus on the gradual release of responsibility is consistent with literature advocating for this approach as a means to guide learners through complex tasks while fostering independence (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). This method is particularly beneficial for struggling learners, as it allows them to build confidence and competence over time. Both participants recognised the importance of modelling in their instructional practices. Research supports the effectiveness of modelling as a strategy that helps learners understand processes and expectations (Carter, Podpadec et al., 2024). By

demonstrating skills before asking learners to apply them independently, teachers can enhance comprehension and retention. Rose's assertion that scaffolding allows her to work with learners at different levels aligns with research emphasising the necessity of differentiated instruction in diverse classrooms (Tomlinson, 2001). Scaffolding strategies enable teachers to tailor support to meet individual learner needs while promoting independence among more advanced learners.

While both Ncando and Rose articulated the importance of scaffolding in their interviews, their lesson plans often lacked explicit strategies for integrating these concepts into instructional practices. This disconnect contradicts research advocating for clearly defined instructional strategies that enhance learner understanding (McKenzie, 2011). The absence of explicit connections may hinder learners' ability to apply scaffolding techniques effectively. Observational data indicate that some strategies employed by Ncando and Rose resulted in surface-level engagement rather than deeper comprehension. This contrasts with literature emphasising the need for active engagement and critical thinking in learning environments (Rifai, 2009). Without fostering deeper engagement, the effectiveness of scaffolding may be diminished.

There were gaps between Ncando's interview insights regarding explicit modelling and the actual instructional delivery observed during the lessons. This inconsistency contradicts research suggesting that the reliable execution of instructional strategies is crucial for achieving desired learning outcomes (Sani & Ismail, 2021). The lack of clarity on how modelling will be integrated into tasks may limit its effectiveness.

#### **4.4.5 Vocabulary instruction and time management**

Both Rose and Sane emphasised the critical role of vocabulary instruction as foundational for reading comprehension. This aligns with existing research indicating that explicit vocabulary teaching significantly enhances learners' understanding and retention of material (Nagy & Townsend, 2012; Snow, 2020). Their approaches reflect a commitment to fostering a supportive learning environment where all learners can access essential terminology.

Rose's strategy of dedicating time to pre-teach difficult words is consistent with literature advocating for explicit language development to enhance literacy skills (Beck et al., 2013). Research supports the idea that pre-teaching vocabulary not only

prepares learners for reading tasks but also builds their confidence, which is crucial for motivation. The emphasis on scaffolding techniques aligns with best practices in pedagogy that advocate for breaking down complex tasks into manageable components (Wood et al., 1976). Both Rose and Sane recognised that scaffolding is essential for helping struggling learners internalise skills before transitioning to independent application.

Sane and Amanda's concerns about time constraints echo systemic issues highlighted in educational research regarding curriculum pacing (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The struggle to cover all necessary comprehension strategies within limited timeframes is a common challenge faced by teachers, impacting their ability to provide thorough instruction. While Rose articulated the importance of vocabulary instruction in her interviews, her lesson plans often lacked explicit details on how vocabulary will be integrated into activities. This disconnect contradicts research advocating for clearly defined instructional strategies that enhance learner understanding (McKenzie, 2011).

The absence of explicit connections may hinder learners' ability to apply vocabulary effectively during reading tasks. Observational data indicate that some strategies employed by both Rose and Sane resulted in surface-level engagement rather than deeper comprehension. This contrasts with literature emphasising the need for active engagement and critical thinking in learning environments (Rifai, 2024). Without fostering deeper engagement, the effectiveness of vocabulary instruction may be diminished.

There were gaps between the participants' interview insights regarding explicit vocabulary instruction and the actual instructional delivery observed during the lessons. This inconsistency contradicts research suggesting that the reliable execution of instructional strategies is crucial for achieving desired learning outcomes (Sani & Ismail, 2021). Although both participants recognised the significance of vocabulary for comprehension, their approaches may not sufficiently address the need for ongoing vocabulary practice beyond initial instruction. Research indicates that repeated exposure to vocabulary in various contexts is essential for long-term retention (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). The limited focus on continuous vocabulary development could impede learners' ability to fully integrate new terms into their language use.

#### **4.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the data generated from the five participating Senior Phase EFAL teachers who voluntarily participated in the study. The major findings of this study highlight the importance of scaffolding and modelling in promoting independent reading skills, but there is a potential gap between explicit modelling and actual instructional delivery. The lesson plans lacked explicit guidance on modelling integration, highlighting the need for ongoing reflection. Participants Sane, Amanda, Rose, Zama, and Ncando faced challenges in integrating comprehension strategies, expressing frustration over time constraints and systemic issues.

# **CHAPTER 5:**

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

---

### **5.1 Introduction**

This study explored the strategies for teaching reading comprehension to Grade 9 EFAL learners in the Thabo Mofutsanyane district. This chapter provides a summary of the findings, as well as conclusions and recommendations. Through the thematic analysis of data obtained from semi-structured interviews, observation, and document analysis, in-depth insights were gained into strategies teachers utilised in teaching comprehension in Grade 9 EFAL classes. This research emphasises the need for educators to adopt tailored instructional strategies for diverse students, focusing on creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. It explores various pedagogical approaches to facilitate deeper understanding and foster a love for reading. By focusing on interactive and student-centred techniques, such as collaborative learning and incorporating culturally relevant materials, the research aims to equip educators with practical tools to enhance comprehension skills effectively.

### **5.2 Summary of the Research Findings**

#### **5.2.1 Insights into reading comprehension strategies: Alignments and gaps**

The study of Sane, Rose, and Amanda's reading comprehension strategies reveals both alignments with and contradictions to existing literature. Sane and Amanda emphasised the importance of activating prior knowledge as a foundational strategy, which aligns with the role of background knowledge in enhancing comprehension. Rose's strategies, such as breaking down texts and using pre-reading exercises, support the use of graphic organisers, which help learners to visualise relationships between concepts and improve their understanding of complex texts.

The emphasis on group reading and collaborative learning in Rose's approach is supported by research suggesting that collaborative learning fosters engagement and

improves comprehension outcomes. All three participants emphasised the need for scaffolding in their teaching practices, which is recognised as a critical component in facilitating independent comprehension and promoting learner autonomy. However, Sane's lesson observations revealed a lack of explicit teaching techniques to achieve this goal, contradicting the emphasis by literature on clearly defined instructional strategies for effectively activating prior knowledge. Amanda's lesson plans did not clearly outline how scaffolding techniques were to be implemented, contradicting the research advocating for clear objectives and defined strategies in literacy instruction. The findings highlight the complexity of implementing effective reading comprehension strategies in diverse classroom settings.

### **5.2.2 Aligning teaching practices with effective vocabulary instruction strategies**

Rose's approach to vocabulary instruction aligns with literature on effective reading comprehension strategies, emphasising explicit vocabulary teaching as a fundamental component. She used scaffolding and pre-teaching vocabulary related to reading material, aligning with literature advocating for structured support in literacy education. Her learner-centric approach prioritises learners' familiarity with words, aligning with educational best practices. However, Rose's lesson plans did not consistently reflect this emphasis, suggesting a disconnect between her beliefs and practical application. Observations indicated that some strategies were not effectively implemented during lessons, contradicting the emphasis by literature on the reliable execution of instructional strategies.

Zama and Ncando's approaches to vocabulary instruction also align with literature, emphasising explicit vocabulary instruction as a foundational component and activating prior knowledge for deeper comprehension. Zama and Ncando's lesson plans highlighted the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction and activating prior knowledge, but they often lacked clear connections between these strategies and objectives. This contradicts research suggesting that explicit instruction is crucial for effective vocabulary acquisition. Both participants emphasised scaffolding as a crucial strategy for supporting learners, particularly those struggling with independent reading skills. However, their lesson plans often lacked explicit strategies for integrating these concepts into instructional practices, contradicting research suggesting that reliable

execution of instructional strategies is crucial for achieving desired learning outcomes. Observational data indicate that some strategies employed by Ncando and Rose resulted in surface-level engagement rather than deeper comprehension, contradicting literature emphasising the need for active engagement and critical thinking in learning environments. Time constraints also impact the effectiveness of explicit modelling in tasks. Both participants recognised the significance of explicit vocabulary instruction and scaffolding, although their lesson plans often lacked explicit strategies for integrating these concepts into instructional practices.

### **5.2.3 Enhancing learner independence through scaffolding techniques**

Ncando emphasised the importance of scaffolding in education, as many learners lack independent reading skills. However, there is a potential gap between explicit modelling and the actual instructional delivery. The lesson plan did not explicitly mention how modelling was to be integrated into tasks, highlighting the need for ongoing reflection and adaptation in teaching practices. The interview data focus on the gradual release of responsibility in learning, a pedagogical approach that aims to guide learners through complex tasks while fostering independence over time. Key strategies employed during observation include prediction and vocabulary pre-teaching, guided reading strategy, and surface-level engagement.

The lesson plan adopted a learner-centred approach, focusing on characterisation and theme presentation and informal assessments. However, there are discrepancies between the interview data, observational insights, and lesson plans regarding scaffolding practices. To bridge these gaps, teachers should refine their instructional methods by incorporating explicit modelling and varied questioning techniques that promote critical thinking. In Rose's pedagogical approach, scaffolding allows for differentiated instruction in diverse classroom settings, ensuring all learners have the opportunity to succeed.

### **5.2.4 Teacher perspectives regarding reading comprehension instruction**

EFAL teachers emphasise the importance of reading comprehension for academic success, language development, and brain growth. They believe that building words is crucial for understanding, especially for non-English speakers. However, teachers face challenges in addressing gaps between learners' words and written expressions,

which can hinder their ability to read complex texts and understand detailed information.

The CAPS curriculum limits teachers' time, requiring them to focus on tasks that require direct understanding, rather than higher-order skills such as inferring and evaluating. This may hinder learners' ability to learn deeply and engage with books. Differentiated teaching is also seen as beneficial, but it is challenging to implement due to the wide range of skill levels in EFAL classes. Vocabulary and understanding are crucial, and teachers believe that learners benefit most from learning vocabulary before reading. However, pre-reading tasks are often rushed or forgotten due to curriculum demands, highlighting a gap between teachers' goals and classroom activities. Limited class time also hinders learners from using learning techniques effectively.

#### **5.2.5 Techniques used by teachers to teach reading comprehension**

EFAL teachers use various reading comprehension tactics to enhance their students' understanding and confidence. Pre-reading strategies, such as word pre-teaching and forecasting, help learners understand the topic, structure, and keywords of the text, making it easier for them to focus on the text. Vocabulary pre-teaching is particularly beneficial for EFAL learners, as it helps them to understand new ideas without dealing with difficult language patterns. Skimming and scanning are also used to help learners recognise major concepts and quickly find information in literature. Cekiso & Madikiza (2014) support skimming and scanning as key reading practices, especially for language learners struggling with text density.

Questioning techniques, such as predictive, inferential, and evaluation questions, are also used to encourage critical thinking. Predictive questions encourage learners to think about their next learning topic, while inferential questions help them to understand character impulses and hidden messages. However, teachers often struggle to use these techniques due to the different skill levels of learners and limited time for in-depth discussions. Research suggests that asking inferential and evaluative questions requires strong language skills and mental work, which may be challenging for EFAL learners in resource-limited environments.

### **5.2.6 Opportunities and challenges in teaching reading comprehension**

Large class sizes make it difficult for teachers to personalise courses and provide one-on-one aid, making it difficult for them to address the needs of all learners, particularly those who struggle. Additionally, a lack of resources in South African schools, such as old textbooks and limited access to digital tools, makes education less equitable and slows down the growth of EFAL language skills.

Limited access to technology such as computers, the Internet, and video tools further complicates the situation. Digital tools such as e-readers, interactive whiteboards, and educational apps can help learners understand vague ideas and keep their attention, but they are not always available in schools, thus limiting teachers' ability to provide engaging and mixed reading experiences. Language barriers in South Africa, particularly for 9th graders whose first language is not English, also contribute to the difficulty in understanding texts and remembering words. Teachers often code-switch or transfer important words into their learners' local languages, but this only helps them to understand some of what they are being taught.

### **5.2.7 Understanding and explaining reading comprehension strategies**

Reading comprehension methods are a range of scaffolded activities that enhance text-reading confidence and competence. Teachers use explicit instruction like pre-teaching vocabulary and implicit techniques like collaborative learning to meet the needs of EFAL learners. Think-aloud methods, such as summarising, making predictions, and asking questions, help learners to understand complex texts. Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development supports this approach. Integrating comprehension with other language skills, vocabulary, and grammar education improves reading skills, especially for second-language learners. Consistency in comprehension instruction is crucial, with skimming, scanning, and asking repeatedly helping children to understand tasks and boost reading confidence. Frequent literacy use strengthens and stretches the brain, helping children to read diverse types of literature.

### 5.3 Conclusions of the Study

A conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that the use of graphic organisers and collaborative learning reflects best practices in literacy instruction, highlighting the benefits of visual aids and group work. However, there were gaps in participants' lesson plans regarding explicit teaching techniques, such as a lack of clear instructional strategies for activating prior knowledge. This highlights a disconnect between theoretical understanding and practical application. The complexity of implementing reading comprehension strategies in diverse classroom settings has been highlighted, requiring ongoing reflection and adaptation in teaching practices. To bridge these gaps, professional development focused on explicit modelling and strategic planning in literacy instruction is needed. By refining instructional methods and aligning classroom practices with theoretical insights, teachers can create more effective learning environments that foster independence and confidence among learners.

Rose's approach to explicit vocabulary instruction and scaffolding aligns well with best practices in education, indicating a solid foundation in her teaching philosophy. However, there is a gap between her beliefs and the practical application of these strategies in lesson plans, highlighting the need for teachers to understand and implement effective strategies reliably. Observations reveal that, while participants recognised the value of explicit vocabulary instruction, their lesson plans often lacked clear connections to this practice, which can hinder student learning.

Scaffolding is essential for supporting learners, particularly those struggling with independent reading skills. However, a lack of explicit strategies for integrating scaffolding into lessons highlights a broader challenge in diverse classroom environments. Continuous improvement is necessary for educators to better meet learners' needs, including refining lesson plans to explicitly outline strategies such as modelling and scaffolding. Systemic challenges, such as time constraints, further complicate the implementation of comprehensive vocabulary instruction and reading comprehension strategies. These issues reflect broader challenges within educational settings that can impact teachers' abilities to deliver thorough instruction.

Ncando's emphasis on scaffolding as a critical educational strategy highlights the challenges faced by learners in developing independent reading skills. However, there

is a gap between theory and practice, with the absence of clear integration of modelling in the lesson plans. The gradual release model, which supports learners through complex tasks while fostering independence, is beneficial for struggling students but requires more depth and explicit instruction. Both Ncando and Rose adopted learner-centred strategies, encouraging active participation and collaboration. Explicit instruction is needed to help students grasp complex concepts and develop independent learning skills. Adaptation is crucial to bridge these gaps and enhance critical thinking. Scaffolding is effective in addressing diverse learner needs in large classrooms, creating an inclusive learning environment that promotes success for all students.

#### **5.4 Recommendations of the Study**

This study makes six recommendations on strategies teachers can use to improve reading comprehension in Grade 9 EFAL classes. These are: 1) prioritising funding and support for equitable education, 2) strengthening instructional support and collaboration in schools, 3) enhancing professional development on explicit instruction, 4) developing clear lesson plans with explicit strategies, 5) fostering collaborative learning and reflective practice among educators, and 6) enhancing instructional practices through professional development and collaboration.

##### **5.4.1 Prioritising funding and support for equitable education**

Policymakers should prioritise increased funding for schools, especially in underserved areas, to improve educational quality and equity. This includes building new facilities and ensuring adequate resources for teacher salaries, training, and classroom materials. Implementing a progressive tax code could generate revenue for this purpose. Comprehensive professional development programmes should focus on effective teaching strategies, providing teachers with the tools to implement evidence-based practices effectively. Promoting community involvement in education can lead to more tailored educational approaches. Revising assessment policies to be developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and inclusive of all students' backgrounds is crucial for ensuring academic success.

#### **5.4.2 Strengthening instructional support and collaboration in schools**

School administrators should support professional development initiatives for teachers, focusing on effective instructional strategies such as explicit vocabulary instruction and scaffolding techniques. This could involve workshops, peer mentoring programmes, and collaborative planning sessions. Administrators should encourage collaborative teaching practices by providing opportunities for co-teaching, team planning, and sharing successful strategies. Structured observation and feedback systems should be implemented to identify strengths and areas for improvement in teaching practices related to vocabulary instruction and reading comprehension strategies. Lastly, resources should be allocated to support diverse learning needs, including access to materials, visual aids, and technology, and hiring of staff who can communicate effectively with students and families from diverse backgrounds.

#### **5.4.3 Enhancing professional development on explicit instruction**

Targeted professional development programmes should be implemented that focus on explicit instruction and modelling techniques. These programmes should emphasise the importance of integrating clear instructional strategies into lesson plans, particularly for activating prior knowledge and scaffolding. Training should include practical examples and opportunities for teachers to practise these techniques in a supportive environment, ensuring they can apply them effectively in their classrooms.

#### **5.4.4 Developing clear lesson plans with explicit strategies**

Teachers should create detailed lesson plans that explicitly outline instructional strategies for vocabulary instruction and reading comprehension. This includes specifying how to activate prior knowledge, implement scaffolding techniques, and use graphic organisers. Providing templates or examples of effective lesson plans can help teachers align their practices with best educational practices and ensure consistency in instruction.

#### **5.4.5 Fostering collaborative learning and reflective practice among educators**

The SVR theory is crucial for teaching reading comprehension to Grade 9 EFAL learners. It posits that reading comprehension is a product of decoding and language

comprehension, which are essential for effective reading. This theory can be applied to teaching strategies by focusing on decoding skills, which can be challenging for students, especially in a second language. It also emphasises the importance of language comprehension, which includes vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge. Strategies that build these areas, such as pre-reading activities or vocabulary instruction, can significantly enhance students' understanding of texts. Effective reading instruction must integrate both decoding and comprehension strategies, as many teachers lack explicit training in teaching these intertwined skills. The theory can guide teacher training programmes by emphasising the need for proficiency in both aspects of reading, particularly for English First Language learners. Additionally, the theory provides a framework for assessing students' reading abilities, allowing for more tailored interventions.

#### **5.4.6 Enhancing instructional practices through professional development and collaboration**

Teachers should prioritise continuous professional development to improve their instructional practices. This includes participating in workshops, online courses, and collaborative learning communities. Using explicit instruction techniques, such as modelling desired skills and releasing responsibility, can help students understand complex concepts and build confidence in independent learning. Teachers should also foster collaboration among peers through team planning sessions and sharing best practices. Regular reflection on teaching practices is crucial for continuous improvement. This involves assessing lesson effectiveness, generating feedback, and analysing student outcomes. This helps to identify areas for growth, adapt instructional approaches, and better meet diverse student needs.

#### **5.5 Recommendations for Future Research**

This study highlights several areas that require further research to understand and improve reading comprehension methods in EFAL classes. Future research should investigate how certain reading comprehension strategies, such as asking and group work, affect learners' academic success over time. Additionally, studies on the cost-effectiveness of digital tools in EFAL classes could provide insights into the effectiveness of teaching methods. Cultural relevance of reading materials used in

EFAL classes in South Africa could help identify information that connects learners with books, highlighting the need for culturally important tools. Long-term studies that examine the impact of vocabulary expansion on reading ability over time could help researchers determine the best ways to help EFAL learners, especially those without access to resources. A larger sample of EFAL teachers from different regions, schools, and socioeconomic backgrounds is recommended for comparative research. This would help to provide an understanding of the needs and challenges of teachers in different locations and help determine how different situations affect reading comprehension techniques. Longitudinal designs can also be used to examine teaching methods and learners' results over time, showing trends and changes in teaching that short-term studies cannot show.

Results of future studies should be more objective using numeric analysis, such as data from surveys or test scores, to back up personal insights. Mixed methods approaches that combine qualitative insights with quantitative data can help with the triangulation of data and provide stronger conclusions. Measurable data can help determine the frequency and consistency of certain techniques used by EFAL teachers. Lastly, exploring how digital tools and resources can improve teaching reading comprehension is another important area for future research.

## **5.6 Final Remarks**

Studying EFAL teachers' Grade 9 reading comprehension tactics has shown the complexity and subtleties inherent to South African educational practices. This study examined teachers' perspectives, strategies, and challenges in teaching reading comprehension, highlighting the importance of effective teaching tactics for academic success. Despite challenges such as limited resources and large class sizes, teachers persist in addressing instructional obstacles. Policy initiatives such as fair access to digital resources and differentiated instruction professional development can help teachers optimise their teaching methods. The study suggests a more comprehensive understanding of instructional approaches for EFAL reading comprehension education, contributing to the multilingual and resource-limited literacy development debate. Supporting teachers with tools, training, and policy direction can improve learners' reading skills.

## List of References

- Acosta, K., 2019. The reading comprehension strategies of second language learners: A Spanish-English study. *Dimension*, 57-85.
- Adebileje, A. & Akinola, A., 2020. Teaching and learning English as a second language in Nigeria: Examining evolving approaches and methods. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 10(9), 1015-1024.
- Adegoriolu, E.T., Moloi, T.J. & Omodan, B.I., 2022. Strategies of teaching English as a second language: Findings from a mixed-method research. *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 8(1), 1-19.
- Adeleke, I.J. & Onyebuchi, C.N., 2023. Challenges teachers experience in teaching English second language in secondary schools in the Northwest province. *World Languages, Literature and Cultural Studies*, 2(1), 11-19.
- Adipramono, R., 2013. Improving the first semester students vocabulary mastery by using ventriloquism technique. *Journal of English and Education*, 7(1), 68-87.
- Afflerbach, P., 2017. *Understanding and using reading assessment, K-12*. ASCD.
- Agustin, W., Wahyudin, A.Y., & Isnaini, S. 2021. Language learning strategies and academic achievement of English Department students. *Journal of Arts and Education*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.33365/jae.v1i1.34>
- Ahmed, S.K., 2024. The pillars of trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, 2, art. #100051.
- Akubo, E.A., Oyetunde, T.O. & Anyebe, M.O., 2024. Effects of metacognitive strategies on senior secondary students' reading comprehension achievement in Jos South Local Government area, Plateau State, Nigeria. *BW Academic Journal*.
- Alharahsheh, H.H. & Pius, A., 2020. A review of key paradigms: Positivism vs interpretivism. *Global Academic Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(3), 39-43.

- Alrawili, K.S., Osman, K. & Almontasheri, S., 2020. Effect of scaffolding strategies on higher-order thinking skills in science classroom. *Journal of Baltic Science Education*, 19(5), 718-729.
- Alyne, C., Firdaus, M. & Yukamana, H., 2024. The implementation of discovery learning method to improve the Seventh Grade learners' reading comprehension on descriptive text: A classroom action research. *PPSDP International Journal of Education*, 3(1), 112-121.
- Amaka, E., 2021. Problem of English language proficiency in Tanzania schools: The causes and the way forward. *Language in India*, 21, 144-161.
- Amrein-Beardsley, A., 2020. Policies and practices of promise in teacher evaluation: The introduction to the special issue. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 28, 55.
- Andrade, H.L., 2019, August. A critical review of research on student self-assessment. *Frontiers in Education*, 4, 87.
- Ardasheva, Y., Crosson, A.C., Carbonneau, K.J. & French, B.F., 2021. Unpacking contributions of morphosyntactic awareness and vocabulary to science reading comprehension among linguistically diverse learners. *TESOL Quarterly*, 55(3), 931-965.
- Arends, K.J. & Fonseca, K., 2024. From word recognition skills to reading for the meaning of a science text. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 14(1), a1323.
- Asenahabi, B.M., 2019. Basics of research design: A guide to selecting appropriate research design. *International Journal of Contemporary Applied Researches*, 6(5), 76-89.
- Avramenko, O., 2020. South African English impact on cultural identity formation and intercultural communication. *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research*, 129(1), 339-346.
- Ayedun, T.J., Odeniyi, S.O. & Adeniyi, D.S., 2024. School factors as determinant of reading achievement of senior secondary school students in Ogun State, Nigeria. *Canadian Journal of Educational and Social Studies*, 4(2), 90-102.

- Babayiğit, S. & Shapiro, L., 2020. Component skills that underpin listening comprehension and reading comprehension in learners with English as first and additional language. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 43(1), 78-97.
- Baker, D.L., Park, Y. & Baker, S.K., 2012. The reading performance of English learners in grades 1–3: The role of initial status and growth on reading fluency in Spanish and English. *Reading and Writing*, 25, 251-281.
- Banditvilai, C., 2020. The effectiveness of reading strategies on reading comprehension. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 10(2), 46-50.
- Batista, F.C.A., 2020. English language teaching in Brazil: A gap in policy, problems in practice. *English Language Teaching*, 13(8), 135-140.
- Beck, I.L., McKeown, M.G. & Kucan, L., 2013. *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction*. Guilford Press.
- Bell, E., Bryman, A., & Harley, B. 2022. *Qualitative data analysis*. Oxford University Press eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hebz/9780198869443.003.0037>
- Brabham, E.G. & Villaume, S.K., 2002. Vocabulary instruction: Concerns and visions. *Reading Teacher*, 56(3), 264-268.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V., 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Brevik, L.M., 2019. Explicit reading strategy instruction or daily use of strategies? Studying the teaching of reading comprehension through naturalistic classroom observation in English L2. *Reading and Writing*, 32, 2281–2310.
- Bunch, G., Walqui, A. & Pearson, P.D., 2014. Complex text and new common standards in the United States: Pedagogical implications for English learners. *Tesol Quarterly*, 48(3), 533-559.
- Burgoyne, K., Whiteley, H.E. and Hutchinson, J.M., 2011. The development of comprehension and reading-related skills in children learning English as an additional language and their monolingual, English-speaking peers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81(2), 344-354.

- Burke, E., 2022. *The works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke: Vol. 3. BoD–Books on Demand.*
- Butterfuss, R., Kim, J. & Kendeou, P., 2020. Reading comprehension. In: G. W. Noblit, ed. *Oxford research encyclopedia, education* (pp. 1-24). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Byabato, E. & Onyango, D.O., 2022. Challenges facing pupils in learning English as a subject in public primary schools in Nyamagana district. *British International Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 9(2), 40-51.
- Çakıcı, B., 2024. The impacts of using classroom walls as indirect learning materials on second language learners' learning. *Journal of English Language*, 2(1), 60-75.
- Calet, N., López-Reyes, R. & Jiménez-Fernández, G., 2020. Do reading comprehension assessment tests result in the same reading profile? A study of Spanish primary school children. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 43(1), 98-115.
- CAPS 123, 2023. *What is the difference between CAPS English FAL and English HL?* [Online]  
Available at: <https://caps123.co.za/what-is-the-difference-between-caps-english-fal-and-english-hl/>  
[Accessed 20 March 2024].
- Caraig, R.V. & Quimbo, M.A.T., 2022. Assessing reading comprehension difficulties in core science subjects of senior high school learners in a private school in Calamba City, Philippines. *International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 14(3), 1983-2010.
- Cardoso, W., Collins, L. & Cardoso, W., 2021. Developmental sequences in second language phonology: Effects of instruction on the acquisition of foreign sC onsets. *Frontiers in Communication*, 6, art #662934.
- Carlisle, J.F., 2000. Awareness of the structure and meaning of morphologically complex words: Impact on reading. *Reading and Writing*, 12, 169-190.

- Carrell, P.L. & Eisterhold, J.C., 1983. Schema theory and ESL reading pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 17(4), 553-573.
- Carter, J., Pillay, P., Podpadec, T., Gina, J., Khumalo, N., Knight, B. ... Vickers-Hulse, K., 2024. 'It's like a compass which I use to find direction': Findings and learning from an evaluation of an app designed to support the teaching of reading comprehension in rural and township schools in South Africa. *Literacy*, 58(2), 178-189.
- Carter, J., Podpadec, T., Pillay, P., Babayiğit, S., & Gazu, K.A. 2024. A systematic review of the effectiveness of reading comprehension interventions in the South African multilingual context. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 29(1-2), 69-103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611.2024.2314522>
- Catts, H.W., 2018. The simple view of reading: Advancements and false impressions. *Remedial and Special Education*, 39(5), 317–323.
- Catts, H.W., 2022. Rethinking how to promote reading comprehension. *American Teacher*, 45(4), 27-40.
- Cekiso, M. & Madikiza, N. 2014. Reading strategies used by Grade 9 English Second Language learners in a selected school. *Reading & Writing*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/rw.v5i1.42>
- Cheptabok, M.C. & Onchera, P.O., 2024. Challenges faced by students in developing English language speaking skills in public secondary schools in Homa Bay County, Kenya. *Journal of Frontiers in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(3), 80-98.
- Cheung, A.C. & Slavin, R.E., 2013. Effects of educational technology applications on reading outcomes for struggling readers: A best-evidence synthesis. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 48(3), 277-299.
- Chinpakdee, M. & Gu, P.Y., 2024. The impact of explicit strategy instruction on EFL secondary school learners' reading. *Language Teaching Research*, 28(1), 296-319.
- Cho, E., Capin, P., Roberts, G., Roberts, G.J. & Vaughn, S. 2019. Examining sources and mechanisms of reading comprehension difficulties: Comparing English

- learners and non-English learners within the simple view of reading. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 111(6), 982-1000.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000332>
- Cho, Y., Kim, D. & Jeong, S., 2021. Evidence-based reading interventions for English language learners: A multilevel meta-analysis. *Heliyon*, 7(9), e07985.
- Cockerill, M., Thurston, A. & O’Keeffe, J., 2023. Using fluency and comprehension instruction with struggling readers to improve student reading outcomes in English elementary schools. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, 5, art. #100264.
- Cohen, M.F., 2011. *An introduction to logic and scientific method*. Read Books Ltd.
- Coiro, J., 2003. Exploring literacy on the Internet: Reading comprehension on the Internet: Expanding our understanding of reading comprehension to encompass new literacies. *The Reading Teacher*, 56(5), 458-464.
- Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D., 2018. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 5th ed. London: Sage Publications.
- Cummins, J., 2001. Bilingual children’s mother tongue: Why is it important for education. *Sprogforum*, 7(19), 15-20.
- D’Angelo, N., Krenca, K. & Chen, X., 2020. The overlap of poor reading comprehension in English and French. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 1-11.
- Dang, T.T.C., Nguyen, H.V. & Tran, P.T.T. 2024. Qualitative data collection. In H.P. Bui (Ed.), *Applied linguistics and language education research methods: Fundamentals and innovations* (pp. 41-54). IGI Global.  
<https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-2603-9.ch004>
- Daniel, S.J., 2020. Education and the COVID-19 pandemic. *Prospects*, 49(1), 91-96.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Burns, D., Campbell, C., Goodwin, A.L., Hammerness, K., Low, E.L., McIntyre, A., Sato, M. & Zeichner, K., 2017. *Empowered educators: How high-performing systems shape teaching quality around the world*. John Wiley & Sons.

- Deacon, S.H. & Kirby, J.R., 2004. Morphological awareness: Just “more phonological”? The roles of morphological and phonological awareness in reading development. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 25(2), 223-238.
- Department of Basic Education (South Africa), 2011. *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS): English first additional language*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Department of Basic Education (South Africa), 2019. *Language development framework for the GET and FET*. [Online]  
Available at:  
<https://www.education.gov.za/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=xGAvPohAQ0A%3D&tabid=628&mid=2060>  
[Accessed 20 March 2023].
- Devi, R., Juniardi, Y. & Syafrizal, S., 2020. Improving students’ reading comprehension and writing ability of narrative text through story map strategy. *Proceeding AISELT*, 4(4).
- Dixon, M., & Oakhill, J. 2024. Exploring teachers teaching reading comprehension: Knowledge, behaviours and attitudes. *Education 3-13*, 52(7), 963-978. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2024.2357884>
- Dlamini, P. & Sheik, A., 2019. Exploring teachers’ instructional practices for literacy in English in Grade 1: A case study of two urban primary schools in the Shiselweni region of Eswatini (Swaziland) *Reading & Writing-Journal of the Reading Association of South Africa*, 10(1), 1-9.
- Dong, Y., Tang, Y., Chow, B.W.Y., Wang, W. & Dong, W.Y., 2020. Contribution of vocabulary knowledge to reading comprehension among Chinese students: A meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, art. #525369.
- Dube, F., 2022. The ethos of tolerance of diversity in post-apartheid jurisprudence. *Obiter*, 43(1), 124-141.
- Dugasa, G., Olana, T. & Ali, S. 2022. Effects of explicit reading strategy instruction on Grade 9 students’ achievement in reading comprehension. *Education Research International*, 2022, art. #7872840. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/7872840>

- Duke, N.K. & Cartwright, K.B., 2021. The science of reading progresses: Communicating advances beyond the simple view of reading. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 56, S25-S44.
- Duke, N.K., Ward, A.E. & Pearson, P.D., 2021. The science of reading comprehension instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 74(6), 663-672.
- Dupont, P., 2018. Assessing adolescent reading comprehension in a French middle school: Performance and beliefs about knowledge. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(7), 30-61.
- Durach, C.F., Kembro, J.H. & Wieland, A., 2021. How to advance theory through literature reviews in logistics and supply chain management. *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, 51(10), 1090-1107.
- Elibariki, M., 2017. *Challenges facing primary school learners in learning English as a foreign language: A case of primary schools in Itiki District Council* (Master's dissertation). Tanzania: Open University of Tanzania.
- Elston, A., Tiba, C. & Condy, J., 2022. The role of explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies to an English as a second language learner. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 12(1), 1-10.
- Erten, İ.H. & Karakaş, M., 2007. Understanding the divergent influences of reading activities on the comprehension of short stories. *Reading*, 7(3), 113-133.
- Etikan, I., Musa, S.A. & Alkassim, R.S., 2016. Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1-4.
- Feng, Q. & Chen, L., 2016. A study on teaching methods of reading comprehension strategies by comparison between TEM-4 reading comprehension and IELTS academic reading comprehension. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 7(6), 1174-1180.
- Fesi, L. & Mncube, V., 2021. Challenges of English as a first additional language: Fourth Grade reading teachers' perspectives. *South African Journal of Education*, 41(3), 1-11.

- Fife, S.T. & Gossner, J.D. 2024. Deductive qualitative analysis: Evaluating, expanding, and refining theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 23.
- Fisher, D. & Frey, N., 2023. *The vocabulary playbook: Learning words that matter, K-12*. Corwin Press.
- Flick, U., 2018. Triangulation in data collection. In *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection* (pp. 527-544). SAGE Publications.
- Flowerdew, J., 2019. The linguistic disadvantage of scholars who write in English as an additional language: Myth or reality. *Language Teaching*, 52(2), 249-260.
- Förster, N., Forthmann, B., Back, M.D. & Souvignier, E., 2023. Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on reading performance of Second Grade children in Germany. *Reading and Writing*, 36(1), 289-315.
- Gallagher, K., 2023. *Readicide: How schools are killing reading and what you can do about it*. Routledge.
- Gao, J., Yang, Z., Li, F., Yasen, B. & Wen, S., 2023. The influence of cognitive ability in Chinese reading comprehension: Can working memory updating change Chinese primary school learners' reading comprehension performance? *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, art. #1283781.
- Gao, T., Zhao, J., Li, X., Mao, Y., Chen, Q. & Harrison, S.E., 2020. Impact of rapid reading skills training on reading rate and reading achievement among primary school students in China. *Educational Psychology*, 40(1), 42-61.
- Gay, G., 2010. *Classroom practices for teaching diversity: An example from Washington State (United States)*. Centre for Educational Research and Innovation.
- Gitau, E.T., 2022. Influence of Provision of Resources on the Implementation of Curriculum in Public Secondary Schools in Dagoretti Sub County, Kenya (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).
- Goodwin, A.P. & Ahn, S., 2010. A meta-analysis of morphological interventions: Effects on literacy achievement of children with literacy difficulties. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 60(2), 183-208.

- Gough, P.B. & Tunmer, W.E., 1986. Decoding, reading, and reading disability. *Remedial and Special Education*, 7(1), 6-10.
- Grattan Institute, 2024. *Australia needs a reading revolution*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://grattan.edu.au/australia-needs-a-reading-revolution/>  
[Accessed 3 May 2024].
- Gu, Y.X. & Lau, K.L., 2021. Examining the effects of integrated instruction on Chinese sixth graders' reading comprehension, motivation, and strategy use in reading fiction books. *Reading and Writing*, 34(10), 2581-2602.
- Guo, Y., 2018. A survey on methods and theories of quantized neural networks. *Cornell University*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://arxiv.org/abs/1808.04752>  
[Accessed 22 Oct. 2024].
- Gurjar, N., 2023. Fluency and comprehension. In: N. Gurjar, S. Meacham & C. Beecher, eds. *Methods of teaching early literacy* (pp. 1-20). Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Digital Press.
- Gustafson, S., Samuelsson, C., Johansson, E. & Wallmann, J., 2013. How simple is the simple view of reading? *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 57(3), 292-308.
- Guthrie, N.L., Berman, M.A., Edwards, K.L., Appelbaum, K.J., Dey, S., Carpenter, J., Eisenberg, D.M. & Katz, D.L., 2019. Achieving rapid blood pressure control with digital therapeutics: Retrospective cohort and machine learning study. *JMIR Cardio*, 3(1), e13030.
- Hadley, E.B. & Mendez, K.Z., 2021. A systematic review of word selection in early childhood vocabulary instruction. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 54, 44-59.
- Hameed, U. 2024. *Qualitative data analysis*. ResearchGate.
- Hammond, S.M., 2015. An overview of microRNAs. *Advanced Drug Delivery Reviews*, 87, 3-14.

- Hasirci Aksoy, S., 2021. The Effect of Short Films as Advance Organizer on Reading Comprehension and Self-Efficacy Perception. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching*, 8(3), pp.2131-2149.
- Herrera, E.M., 2022. Improving reading comprehension and vocabulary through explicit vocabulary instructions. *Research, Society and Development*, 11(15), .e436111537206.
- Hessel, A.K. & Murphy, V.A., 2019. Understanding how time flies and what it means to be on cloud nine: English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners' metaphor comprehension. *Journal of Child Language*, 46(2), 265-291.
- Heugh, K., 2013. Multilingual education policy in South Africa constrained by theoretical and historical disconnections. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 33, 215-237.
- Hiebert, E.H. & Martin, L.A., 2015. Changes in the texts of reading instruction during the past fifty years. In P.D. Pearson & E.H. Hiebert (Eds.), *Research based practices for teaching common core literacy* (pp. 215-236). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Higgins, S., Aguilera, A.B.V., Dobson, E., Gascoine, L., Katsipataki, M. & Rajab, T., 2019. *Education Endowment Foundation evidence database: Protocol and analysis plan*. Education Endowment Foundation. Available at: [https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/documents/toolkit/EEF-Evidence-Database-Protocol-and-Analysis-Plan\\_v1\\_1\\_June2019.pdf](https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/documents/toolkit/EEF-Evidence-Database-Protocol-and-Analysis-Plan_v1_1_June2019.pdf)
- Hongqian, L.I.U., 2023. The effect of using Mandarin online teaching enhances Chinese reading comprehension skills for vocational students in Guizhou, China. *Procedia of Multidisciplinary Research*, 1(10), art. #49.
- Hossain, M.S., Alam, M.K. & Ali, M.S. 2024. Phenomenological approach in the qualitative study: Data generation and saturation. *ICRRD Quality Index Research Journal*, 5(2).
- Howard, S.J., 2019. Reading comprehension difficulties in South Africa: Where to from here? *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 9(1), 1-5.

- Howie, S.J., Combrinck, C., Roux, K., Tshele, M., Mokoena, G. & McLeod Palane, N., 2017. *PIRLS Literacy 2016: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2016: South African children's reading literacy achievement*. Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA).
- Huang, Y., 2022. Construction of "interactive" English translation teaching model based on data-driven learning. *Hindawi*, 1(1), 1-10.
- Hugo, A.J., 2016. Reading problems in the Intermediate Phase: Grade 4 teachers' opinions. *Journal for Language Teaching*, 50(2), 167-183.
- Hunter, D., McCallum, J. & Howes, D., 2019. Defining exploratory-descriptive qualitative (EDQ) research and considering its application to healthcare. *Journal of Nursing and Health Care*, 4(1), 1-8.
- Jansen, A., 2019. Increasing leisure reading among university students using e-readers with audio. *College & Research Libraries*, 80(3), p.356.
- Johnson, J.L., Adkins, D. & Chauvin, S., 2020. A review of the quality indicators of rigor in qualitative research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 84(1), 138-146.
- Käsper, M., Uibu, K. & Mikk, J., 2020. The effects of teaching strategies on primary school students' reading outcomes and interest in reading. *L1 Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, 20(1), 1-24.
- Kaur, G., Meena, S.K. & Jain, N., 2024. Need of developing the tool for analysing learning difficulties in normal school going children: Systemic review. *International Journal of Academic Research and Development*, 9(4), 23-28.
- Kirby, J.R. & Savage, R.S., 2008. Can the simple view deal with the complexities of reading? *Literacy*, 42(2), 75-82.
- Kivi, P.J. Namaziandost, E., Alamdari, E.F., Saenko, N.R., Inga-Arias, M., Fuster-Guillén, D., Sirisakpanich, D. & Nasirin, C. 2021., The comparative effects of teacher versus peer-scaffolding on EFL learners' incidental vocabulary learning and reading comprehension: A socio-cultural perspective. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 50, 1031-1047.

- Kuswiyanti, T.S., Achdiyat, I.P., Rosfiani, O., Hermawan, C.M., Batrisya, A.N. & Hermawan, I.N., 2023, June. The efficacy of the direct instruction approach for teaching English to Fourth-Grade students with ordinal numbers. In *Proceedings of the 1st Lawang Sewu International Symposium on Humanities and Social Sciences 2022 (LEWIS 2022)* (Vol. 758, p. 341). Springer Nature.
- Kwakkel, H., Droop, M., Verhoeven, L. & Segers, E., 2023. The role of home and classroom literacy environment and expectations in early vocabulary development in bilingual primary education. *Educational Psychology*, 43(10), 1180-1201.
- Labrigas, M.A., 2022. Factors affecting reading comprehension in Cebuano and English language texts. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, 7(4), 110-120.
- Laroza, C.B. & Amada, A.T., 2024. Reading comprehension level among Grade 7 learners of General Santos City National High School: Basis for a proposed intervention program. *European Journal of English Language Teaching*, 9(1), 64-83.
- Lazarus, K.U. & Anwalimhobor, B.I., 2023. Metacognitive awareness of reading strategies as predictors of reading comprehension achievement among students with learning disabilities in Nigeria. *Indonesian Journal of Disability Studies*, 10(1), 83-94.
- Letsholo-Tafila, R. & Alimi, M.M., 2019. Reading comprehension skills of Standard 4 learners: A comparison of private and public schools in Botswana. *Per Linguam*, 35(2), 18-38.
- Li, C., Wang, Y., Qian, L. & Shang, Z., 2022. An investigation into the use of socio-cultural strategies in L2 writing among Chinese English majors. *English Language Teaching*, 15(9), 127-137.
- Li, Y., Jia, K., Myat Kyaw, H.M., Li, H. & Yan, M., 2024. The unique contribution of reading motivation to reading comprehension increases from Grades 2 to 4 in Chinese children. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 47(4), 557-579.

- Lin, L., Lam, W.I. & Tse, S.K., 2021. Motivational strategies, language learning strategies, and literal and inferential comprehension in second language Chinese reading: A structural equation modeling study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, art. #707538.
- Liu, S., Li, N., Zhang, X., Wang, L.C.A. & Liu, D., 2024. Effects of working memory and visual search skill on Chinese reading comprehension: Examining the simple view of reading. *Reading and Writing*, 1-23.
- Madikiza, N., Cekiso, M.P., Tshotsho, B.P. & Landa, N., 2018. Analysing English first additional language teachers' understanding and implementation of reading strategies. *Reading & Writing*, 9(1), 1-10.
- Magnusson, C.G. & Blikstad-Balas, A.R.M., 2019. To what extent and how are reading comprehension strategies part of language arts instruction? A study of lower secondary classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 54(2), 187-212.
- Mahony, D., Singson, M. & Mann, V., 2000. Reading ability and sensitivity to morphological relations. *Reading and Writing*, 12, 191-218.
- Maja, M.M. & Motseke, M., 2021. Strategies used by UNISA student teachers in teaching English First Additional Language. In L. Waller & S. Waller (Eds.), *Higher education: New approaches to accreditation, digitalization, and globalization in the age of Covid*. Intech Open.
- Mannheimer, S. 2024. Qualitative data reuse in practice. In *Scaling up: How data curation can help address key issues in qualitative data reuse and big social research. Synthesis lectures on information concepts, retrieval, and services*. (pp. 25-45). Cham: Springer.
- Mantula, F., Mpofo, A.C., Mpofo, F.Y. & Shava, G.N., 2024. Qualitative research approach in higher education: Application, challenges and opportunities. *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences (EAJESS)*, 5(1), 1-10.
- Marzano, R.J., 2010. Formative versus summative assessments as measures of student learning. In *Handbook of data-based decision making in education* (pp. 259-271). Routledge.

- Matope, S. & Senye-Awudi, P., 2024. Using the strategy instructions approach (SIA) in teaching reading comprehension: A case study schools in the Amathole East district south in Africa. *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, 4(13), 1581-1592.
- McDonald, S., 2023. Constructing the (il)literate boy: Crisis talk, literacy promotion websites and the simplification of boyhood literacies. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 122, art. #102255.
- McKenzie, L.D., 2011. *Scaffolding English language learners' reading performance* (PhD study). Walden University.
- Melby-Lervåg, M. & Lervåg, A., 2014. Reading comprehension and its underlying components in second-language learners: A meta-analysis of studies comparing first- and second-language learners. *Psychological Bulletin*, 140(2), 409-433.
- Merriam, S.B. & Grenier, R.S. eds., 2019. *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Miranda, J.A. and Wahyudin, A.Y., 2023. Pre-service teachers' strategies in improving students' speaking skills. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 4(1), 40-47.
- Mlachila, M. & Moeletsi, T., 2019. *IMF working paper: Struggling to make the grade: A review of the causes and consequences of the weak outcomes of South Africa's education system*. WP/19/47.
- Modugno, L. 2024. Evaluating qualitative expectational data on investments from business surveys. *Journal of Business Cycle Research*, 20, 59-88.
- Mohammed, I. & Amponsah, O., 2018. Predominant factors contributing to low reading abilities of pupils at Elsie Lund Basic School in the Tamale Metropolis, Ghana. *African Educational Research Journal*, 6(4), 273-278.
- Mojapelo, S.M., 2017. Challenges faced by libraries in democratic South Africa: A case of community libraries in Limpopo province. *Information Development*, 34(4), 408-421.

- Mokoena, M.S., 2019. *Improving reading comprehension for English first additional language learners: A free voluntary reading approach* (PhD thesis). Phuthaditjhaba: University of the Free State.
- Monyeke, T.F., 2023. *Management of implementation of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement for English First Additional Language* (Master's dissertation). Bloemfontein: Universit of the Free State.
- Murphy, P.K., Greene, J.A., Firetto, C.M., Hendrick, B.D., Li, M., Montalbano, C. & Wei, L., 2018. Quality talk: Developing students' discourse to promote high-level comprehension. *American Educational Research Journal*, 55(5), 1113-1160.
- Murray, D.E., 2018. The world of English language teaching: Creating equity or inequity? *Language Teaching Research*, 42(1), 60-70.
- Murray, N., Liddicoat, A.J., Zhen, G. & Mosavian, P., 2023. Constraints on innovation in English language teaching in hinterland regions of China. *Language Teaching Research*, 27(5), 1246-1267.
- Muzaki, F.I., 2024. Critical thinking in integrated language learning on elementary schools. *Journal of Data Acquisition and Processing*, 39(1), 475-491.
- Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K. & Ranfagni, S. 2024. Demystification and actualisation of data saturation in qualitative research through thematic analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 23.
- Nagy, W. & Townsend, D., 2012. Words as tools: Learning academic vocabulary as language acquisition. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 47(1), 91-108.
- Nap-van der Vlist, M.M., Houtveen, J., Dalmeijer, G.W., Grootenhuis, M.A., van der Ent, C.K., van Grotel, M., ... & Nijhof, S.L., 2021. Internet and smartphone-based ecological momentary assessment and personalized advice (PROfeel) in adolescents with chronic conditions: A feasibility study. *Internet Interventions*, 25, art. #100395.
- Ngubane, N., Ntombela, B.X. & Govender, S., 2020. Translanguaging pedagogy in selected English First Additional Language writing classrooms. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 38(2), 142-151.

- Norton, B. & Wu, Y., 2012. TESOL in China: Current challenges. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35(1), 191-194.
- Nowell, L.S., Norris, J.M., White, D.E. & Moules, N.J., 2017. Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1).
- Nyakweba, I., Muwangu, J. & Sendikadiwa, E.N., 2020. Assessing the compliance of the Commission of University Education (CUE) standards for the library physical facilities at Rongo University Library, Western Kenya. *International Journal of Library Science*, 9(5), 105-113.
- Oguntade, F.M. & Akinwamide, T.K., 2023. Effects of reading-writing and think-pair-share strategies on secondary school students' performance in essay writing in Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Training*, 10(1), 18-37.
- Olalekan, S.O., Adeyanju, M.M., Osonuga, I.O. & Babatunde, T.A.Y.O., 2023. Human SARS CoV-2 spike protein mutations in West Africa. *Health Sciences Investigations Journal*, 4(1), 443-447.
- Olando, E.J. & Mwangi, M., 2021. Influence of teachers' teaching experience on teaching of literacy skills among Grade One pupils in Mombasa, Kenya. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 8(11), 465-477.
- Olifant, T., Cekiso, M. & Rautenbach, E., 2019. Teachers' perceptions of Grades 8–10 English First Additional Language learners' reading habits, attitudes and motivation. *Reading & Writing*, 10(1), a254.
- Olifant, T., Cekiso, M., & Boakye, N. 2022. Investigating English First Additional Language educators' reading comprehension practices in selected schools in Gauteng, South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 42(4), 1-10.
- Olifant, T., Cekiso, M., Boakye, N. & Madikiza, N., 2020. Investigating reading comprehension strategies used by teachers during first additional language reading instruction. *Journal for Language Teaching*, 54(2), 71-93.
- Oni, L.A. & Oluyemisi, H., 2020. Curbing youth restiveness in Nigerian schools through effective educational planning: A panacea. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Studies and Research (NJESR)*, 14(1).

- Owodally, A.M.A., 2011. Multilingual language and literacy practices and social identities in Sunni Madrassahs in Mauritius: A case study. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 46(2), 134-155.
- Öztürk, Ö., 2012. The effects of graphic organizers on reading comprehension achievement of EFL learners. *Pamukkale University Journal of Education*, 32, 37-45.
- Panahi, M., 2019. *Epik or Hagwon? Career choice in South Korea: The experiences and occupational decisions of NESTs in public schools vs. English academies* (Master's thesis). St. Cloud State University.
- Pandey, P. & Pandey, M.M., 2021. *Research methodology tools and techniques*. Bridge Center.
- Park, E., 2016. *Social and educational challenges of international learners caused by accented English in the Australian context: A sociolinguistic analysis of linguistic experience* (Master's thesis). Queensland, Australia: Griffith University.
- Paton-Ash, M. & Wilmot, D., 2015. Issues and challenges facing school libraries in selected primary schools in Gauteng province, South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 35(1), 1-10.
- Pearson, P.D. & Gallagher, M.C., 1983. The instruction of reading comprehension. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 8(3), 317-344.
- Pham, C.H., 2024. Qualitative data analysis. In H.P. Bui (Ed.), *Applied linguistics and language education research methods: Fundamentals and innovations* (pp. 55-69). IGI Global.
- Possi, M.K. & Milinga, J.R., 2017. Special and inclusive education in Tanzania: Reminiscing the past, building the future. *Educational Process: International Journal*, 6(4), 55-73.
- Pressley, T., Allington, R.L. & Pressley, M., 2023. *Reading instruction that works: The case for balanced teaching*. Guilford Publications.
- Pretorius, E.J. & Klapwijk, N.M., 2016. Reading comprehension in South African schools: Are teachers getting it, and getting it right? *Per Linguam: A Journal of Language Learning = Per Linguam: Tydskrif vir Taalaanleer*, 32(1), 1-20.

- Pretorius, E.J., 2002. Reading ability and academic performance in South Africa: Are we fiddling while Rome is burning? *Language Matters: Studies in the Languages of Southern Africa*, 33(1), 169-196.
- Pretorius, M.J., Le Roux, M. & Geertsema, S., 2022. Verbal working memory in second language reading comprehension: A correlational study. *Communication Disorders Quarterly*, 43(4), 234-245.
- Proctor, T. 2024. Qualitative data analysis. ResearchGate. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381565026\\_Qualitative\\_data\\_analysis](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381565026_Qualitative_data_analysis) is [Accessed 22 Nov. 2024].
- Rahmatirad, M., 2020. A review of socio-cultural theory. *Siasat Journal*, 5(3), 23-31.
- Ramadan, O.A., 2017. The impact of reciprocal teaching strategies on learners' reading comprehension ability, strategy use and attitudes (Master's thesis). Birzeit University, Palestine
- Rifai, A., 2024. Improving students' reading comprehension through *know, want to know, learned and how* strategy. *Journal Ilmiah Kesmas-IJ*, 24(1), 49-61.
- Rodgers, S., 2022. Past, present, and future of the Journal of Advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 51(2), 133-135.
- Roy, O., 2017. *Jihad and death: The global appeal of Islamic State*. Oxford University Press.
- Salmerón, L., Vargas, C., Delgado, P. & Baron, N., 2023. Relation between digital tool practices in the language arts classroom and reading comprehension scores. *Reading and Writing*, 36(1), 175-194.
- Sani, S. & Ismail, H.H., 2021. Assessing the use of learning strategies among young Malaysian English as second language learners. *Creative Education*, 12, 2124-2145.
- Saunders, M.N.K., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A., 2019. *Research methods for business learners*. 8th ed. London: Pearson Education.
- Scotland, J., 2012. Exploring the philosophical underpinnings of research: Relating ontology and epistemology to the methodology and methods of the scientific,

- interpretive, and critical research paradigms. *English Language Teaching*, 5(9), 9-16.
- Sebetoa, P.M., Maruma, M.W. & Modiba, N.S., 2023. Managing reading and writing in English first additional language: A case of first entering education learners at the University of Limpopo. *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 38(S1), 641-655.
- Sekaran, U., 2020. *Research methods for business: A skill building approach*. 8 ed. Chicago: John Wiley & Sons.
- Serquina, E.A. & Batang, B.L., 2018. Demographic, psychological factors and English proficiency of ESL students. *TESOL International Journal*, 13(4), 182-191.
- Shanahan, T., Callison, K., Carriere, C., Duke, N.K., Pearson, P.D., Schatschneider, C. & Torgesen, J., 2010. *Improving reading comprehension in kindergarten through 3rd Grade*. IES practice guide. NCEE 2010-4038. U.S. Department of Education.
- Shandu, L., Evans, N. & Mostert, J., 2014. Challenges in the provision of school library services in Katlehong secondary schools. *Mousaion*, 32(4), 1-13.
- Shandu-Omukunyi, N., 2023. English first additional language learning and teaching with digital resources. *South African Computer Journal*, 35(1), 1-16.
- Shanmugavelu, G., Ariffin, K., Vadivelu, M., Mahayudin, Z. & Sundaram, M.A.R., 2020. Questioning techniques and teachers' role in the classroom. *International Journal of Education*, 8(4), 45-49.
- Shea, M. & Ceprano, M.A., 2017. Reading with understanding: A global expectation. *Journal of Inquiry and Action in Education*, 9(1), 48-68.
- Shen, H.H., Zhou, Y. & Gao, G., 2020. Oral reading miscues and reading comprehension by Chinese L2 learners. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 32(2), 143-168.
- Shonhe, L. & Marambe, E.M., 2020. Strategic framework for service delivery improvement in school libraries. *Journal of Information and Knowledge Management*, 10(2), 1-10.

- Sibanda, M., Dippenaar, H. & Swart, A. 2024. The teacher's role in teaching reading comprehension skills to Grade 9 English Home Language learners. *Reading & Writing*, 15(1), a495.
- Singh, C.K.S., Mohtar, T.M.T., Kepol, N., Abdullah, N.Y., Mat, M., Moneyam, S. ... Rahmayanti, H., 2020. ESL teachers' scaffolding strategies to teach writing. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(7), 3064-3076.
- Sleeter, C.E., 2012. Confronting the marginalization of culturally responsive pedagogy. *Urban Education*, 47(3), 562-584.
- Smart, A., 2021. Teachers' guides: Isn't that what they should be? *IARTEM e-Journal*, 13(1), 1-26.
- Smith, N., 2019. *The reading comprehension skills of children learning English as an additional language* (PhD thesis). York: University of York.
- Snow, D., Cress, D., Downey, L. & Jones, A., 1998. Disrupting the "quotidian": Reconceptualizing the relationship between breakdown and the emergence of collective action. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 3(1), 1-22.
- Snow, N., 2020. Rethinking public diplomacy in the 2020s. In *Routledge handbook of public diplomacy* (pp. 3-12). Routledge.
- Solari, E.J., Kehoe, K.F., Cho, E., Hall, C., Vargas, I., Dah-Leonard, K. ...Conner, C., 2022. Effectiveness of interventions for English learners with word reading difficulties: A research synthesis. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 73(3), 158-174.
- Spaull, N., 2011. *A preliminary analysis of SACMEQ III South Africa*. Working Papers 11/2011. Stellenbosch University, Department of Economics.
- Spencer, M., Wagner, K.W. & Petscher, Y., 2019. The reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge of children with poor reading comprehension despite adequate decoding: Evidence from a regression-based matching approach. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 111(1), 1-14.
- Stahl, S.A. & Fairbanks, M.M., 1986. The effects of vocabulary instruction: A model-based meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 56(1), 72-110.

- Stake, R.E., 2010. *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. Guilford Press.
- Suryati, I. & Ratih, K., 2024. How can teachers tailor success? Innovative strategies for content, process, and product in EFL classrooms. *Voices of English Language Education Society*, 8(1), 150-162.
- Svensson, V., 2020. Droplet scRNA-seq is not zero-inflated. *Nature Biotechnology*, 38(2), 147-150.
- Taylor, N. & Vinjevold, P. eds., 1999. *Getting learning right: Report of the President's Education Initiative Research Project*. Joint Education Trust.
- Taylor, S. & Von Fintel, M., 2016. Estimating the impact of language of instruction in South African primary schools: A fixed effects approach. *Economics of Education Review*, 50, 75-89.
- Taylor, T. L., 2017. *Integrating comprehension strategy instruction into literature study for primary students* (Master's capstone project). Saint Paul, Minnesota: Hamline University.
- The Yale Tribune, 2018, June 28. *Australia's national literary crisis*. [Online] Available at: <https://campuspress-test.yale.edu/tribune/australias-national-literary-crisis/> [Accessed 3 May 2024].
- Theofanidis, D. & Fountouki, A., 2018. Limitations and delimitations in the research process. *Perioperative Nursing-Quarterly Scientific, Online Official Journal of GORNA*, 7, 155-163.
- Tighe, E.L. & Binder, K.S., 2015. An investigation of morphological awareness and processing in adults with low literacy. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 36(2), 245-273.
- Timmons, M., 2021. *Kant's doctrine of virtue: A guide*. Oxford University Press.
- Tobias, J.A., Ottenburghs, J. & Pigot, A.L., 2020. Avian diversity: Speciation, macroevolution, and ecological function. *Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution, and Systematics*, 51(1), 533-560.

- Tomlinson, C.A., 2001. *How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms*. ASCD.
- Tong, X.F., Tong, D.Y.K. & Loy, L.C., 2011. Factors influencing entrepreneurial intention among university students. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies*, 3(1), 487-496.
- Tracey, D.H., 2017. Understanding the reading process: One path to strengthening classroom instruction. *Education and Urban Society*, 49(9), 814-831.
- UNICEF, 2022, Sept. 19. *Only a third of 10-year-olds globally are estimated to be able to read and understand a simple written story*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/bulgaria/en/press-releases/unicef-only-third-10-year-olds-globally-are-estimated-be-able-read-and-understand#> [Accessed 10 March 2024].
- Vacca, R.T., Vacca, J.A.L., Mraz, M. & Williams-Duncan, O.M., 2021. Content area reading: Literacy and learning across the curriculum. *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue*, 23(1-2), 317-320.
- Valencia, F., 2014. Monetary policy, bank leverage, and financial stability. *Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control*, 47, 20-38.
- Vaughn, L., 2013. *Bioethics: Principles, issues, and cases*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Venketsamy, R. & Sibanda, S. 2021. Exploring strategies teachers use to develop literacy skills among English First Additional Language learners in the Foundation Phase. *Perspectives in Education*, 39(2), 235-266.
- Wafula, N.K., Kabuka, E.K. & Bota, N.K., 2021. Relationship between class size and academic achievement of students with learning difficulties in Kakamega County, Kenya. *Journal of the International Association of Special Education*, 21(1), 3-10.
- Walkington, C. & Bernacki, M.L., 2020. Appraising research on personalized learning: Definitions, theoretical alignment, advancements, and future directions. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 52(3), 235-252.

- Warschauer, M., 2006. Literacy and technology: Bridging the divide. *Cyberlines*, 2, 163-174.
- Wibowo, Y.E.W., 2020. An analysis of teachers' strategies in teaching reading comprehension. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Literacy*, 4(1), 20-27.
- Wills, G., Ardington, C., Pretorius, L. & Sebaeng, L., 2022. *Benchmarking early grade reading skills: English first additional language*. Summary report. Johannesburg: Khulisa Management Services.
- Winberg, C., Dippenaar, H. & De Lange, M.M., 2020. Why the English Home Language Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement will not improve learners' reading comprehension. *Reading & Writing – Journal of the Reading Association of South Africa*, 11(1), 1-9.
- Wood, D., Bruner, J.S. & Ross, G., 1976. The role of tutoring in problem solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 17(2), 89-100.
- Xiong, Y., 2024. Investigating the impact of collaborative strategic reading on reading comprehension and reading anxiety among high school EFL lower attainers. *English Teaching & Learning*, 1-23.
- Yacob, N.S., Yunus, M.M. & Hashim, H., 2022. Globally competent teachers: English as a second language teachers' perceptions on global competence in English lessons. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, art. #925160.
- Yapp, D., De Graaff, R. & Van den Bergh, H. 2021. Effects of reading strategy instruction in English as a second language on students' academic reading comprehension. *Language Teaching Research*, 27(6), 1456-1479.
- Yildiz, M., Yildirim, K., Ates, S., Rasinski, T., Fitzgerald, S. & Zimmerman, B., 2014. The relationship between reading fluency and reading comprehension in fifth-grade Turkish students. *International Journal of School & Educational Psychology*, 2(1), 35-44.
- Zamani, N.F.M., 2017. High English literacy among learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds: Exploring the challenges. *IIUM Journal of Educational Studies*, 5(2), 4-19.

- Zano, K., 2023. From the teachers' perspectives: Resources used in teaching reading comprehension to English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners in the FET Phase. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 27(3), 376-388.
- Zhang, D., Ke, S.E. & Mo, Y., 2023. Morphology in reading comprehension among school-aged readers of English: A synthesis and meta-analytic structural equation modeling study. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 115(5), 683-699.
- Zhang, N. & Wang, H., 2022. Construction and research of constructive English teaching model applying multimodal neural network algorithm. *Computational Intelligence and Neuroscience*, 21(6), 1-16.
- Zimmerman, L. & Smit, B., 2014. Profiling classroom reading comprehension development practices from the PIRLS 2006 in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(3), art. #962.



	to teach reading comprehension in selected South African schools?
<b>Sub-questions</b>	<b>Interview questions for Secondary School English First Additional Language teachers</b>
<b>1. What are the perceptions of Grade 9 EFAL educators regarding reading comprehension instruction?</b>	<p>1.1 Explain how you teach reading comprehension skills to your grade 9 (nine) learners. Your response should be open-ended.</p> <p>1.2 How then do you perceive the usefulness and (or) the irrelevance of the aforementioned teaching style for (towards) the teaching of reading comprehension?</p> <p>1.3 In your own subjective opinion, what resources do you deem <sup>1</sup>available, and <sup>2</sup>appropriate for use as far as the teaching of reading comprehension is concerned? Explain in-depth.</p> <p>1.4 How effective are these teaching and (or) learning resources? Explain using at least three verbs.</p>
<b>2. Which specific techniques do Grade 9 EFAL educators use to teach reading comprehension?</b>	<p>2.1 Do you employ a specific technique for teaching reading comprehension to your grade nine learners? Explain in-depth.</p> <p>2.2 Do (or does) those technique(s) align satisfactorily with the stipulations of the CAPS document, in your own view.</p>
<b>3. What challenges do Grade 9 EFAL educators encounter when teaching reading comprehension?</b>	<p>3.1 Do you encounter challenges or obstacles at all as far as the teaching of reading comprehension is concerned. Explain at a greater length.</p> <p>3.2 How do you combat or subvert the challenges discussed above.</p>
<b>4. How can the reading comprehension teaching strategies employed by Grade 9 EFAL educators be understood and explained?</b>	<p>4.1 Use a diagram to illustrate and (or) demonstrate your personal and subjective understanding of the teaching strategies which you discussed above.</p>

	<p>4.2 From the diagrammatical illustration of your personal teaching strategies, which do you frequently employ in your pedagogical practice in the teaching of reading comprehension and across the curriculum?</p>
--	---

## Appendix B: Observation Protocol

### LESSON OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

**Study title: Exploring the strategies for teaching reading comprehension to English First Additional Language Grade 9 learners**

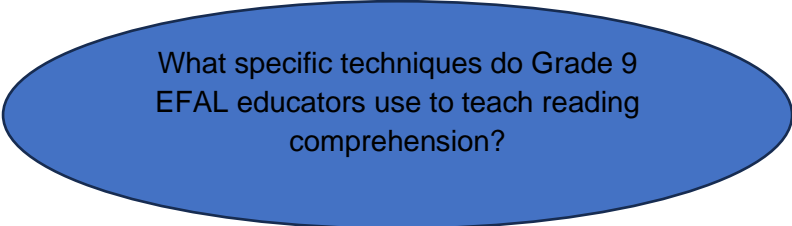
**SETTING: CLASSROOM**

**TYPE OF OBSERVER: NON-PARTICIPANT**

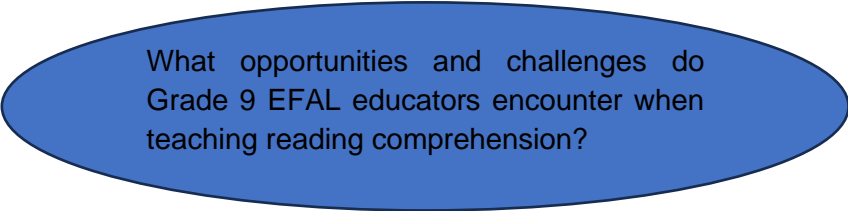
**DATE:**

**TOPIC:**

**OBSERVATION DURATION:**



What specific techniques do Grade 9 EFAL educators use to teach reading comprehension?



What opportunities and challenges do Grade 9 EFAL educators encounter when teaching reading comprehension?

LESSON COMPONENTS	OBSERVATIONS MADE
<b>1. Lesson objective</b>	
1.1. In the lesson objectives, were the reading comprehension teaching techniques clearly articulated?	
1.2. How then were the teaching techniques paralleled to the <sup>1</sup> lesson objectives, <sup>2</sup> intergrated learning outcomes.	
<b>2. Lesson introduction</b>	
2.1. In the introduction of the lesson, were (or was) the reading comprehension teaching strategy (or strategies) clearly evident?	
2.2. What are (or is) the teaching strategies (or strategy) which were (or was) preliminary used in the introduction of the lesson?	
2.3. Were those strategies intertwined with the specifications of the CAPS document?	
<b>3. Lesson content</b>	
3.1. Was the teaching strategy utilised in the development and or delivery of the reading comprehension content?	
3.2. In the lesson epicenter, was the teaching strategy constantly across and throughout the content delivery?	
<b>4. Assessment</b>	
4.1. Was the post-lesson assessment administered through a certain assessment technique?	



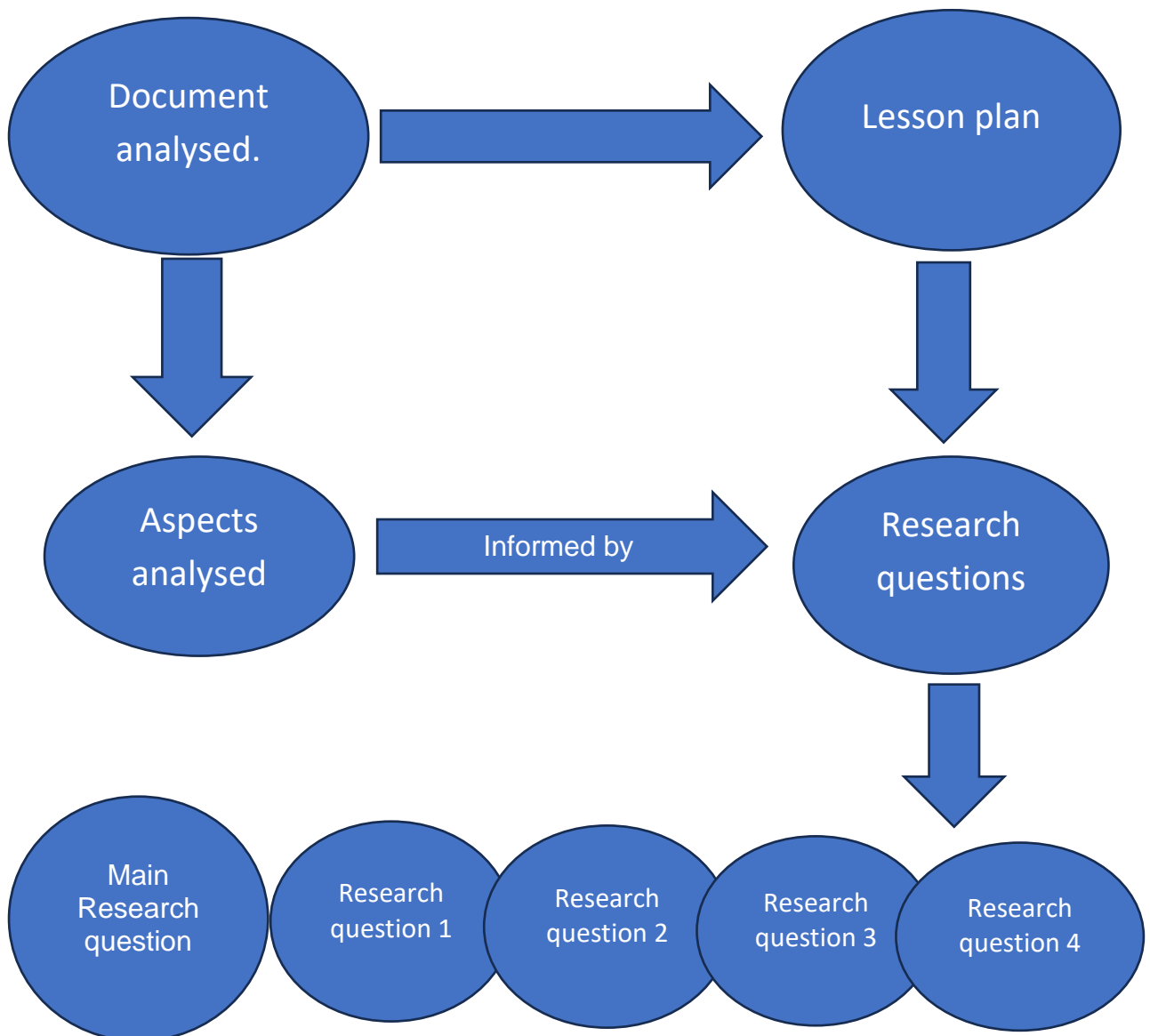
## Appendix C: Document Analysis Protocol

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
FREE STATE  
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE  
VRYSTAAT  
YUNIVESITHI YA  
FREISTATA



UFS·UV  
EDUCATION  
OPVOEDKUNDE

### Document analysis outline.













## Appendix D: Ethical Approval

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
FREE STATE  
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE  
VRYSTAAT  
YUNIVESITHI YA  
FREISTATA



### GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

Registration Number: REC-112922-058

20-Jun-2024

Dear Mr Bongani Nyathikazi

#### **Application Approved**

Research Project Title:

**Exploring the strategies for teaching reading comprehension to English First Additional Language Grade 9 learners.**

Ethical Clearance number:

**UFS-HSD2023/2534**

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted via an Amendment on RIMS to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit a Final Report on RIMS for your study/research project to the ethics office once the project has concluded. Should you require more time than the allotted 12 months to complete this research, please apply for an extension by submitting a Continuation/Report on RIMS. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance. We wish you success with your research.

Please note: While doing the modifications, the applicant deslected loss of work time as a potential risk. Although the application is approved, this remains a risk which should be mitigated when engaging with participants.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr Adri Du Plessis**

**Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee**

Dr Adri  
du  
Plessis

Digitally signed  
by Dr Adri du  
Plessis  
Date: 2024.06.20  
18:19:58 +02'00'

205 Nelson Mandela P.O. Box 339  
Drive Bloemfontein 9300  
Park West Tel: +27(0)514019337  
Bloemfontein 9301 [duplessisA@ufs.ac.za](mailto:duplessisA@ufs.ac.za)  
South Africa [www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)



# Appendix E: Free State Department of Education Permission Letters

Enquiries: M.Z. Thango  
Ref: Research Permission: B C Nyathikazi  
Tel. 051 404 8808  
Email: [MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za](mailto:MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za)



Mayekeni area  
Main Road P100  
Ndwedwe  
4342

Dear Mr. B. C. Nyathikazi

## PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that you have been granted permission to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education within the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District. The details in relation to your research project with the University of the Free State are as follows:

**Topic:** Exploring the strategies for teaching reading comprehension to English First Additional Language Grade 9 learners.

- 1. List of schools Involved:** Club view Secondary School, Reahola Secondary School, Thokoana Secondary School, Mafube Secondary School and Selelekela Secondary School.
- 2. Target Population:** Five educators teaching English FAL in grade 9 at the selected schools.
- 3. Period of research:** From the second week of February 2024 until 30 September 2024. Please note that the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for an extension. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
- 4. The approval is subject to the following conditions:**
  - 4.1** The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
  - 4.2** A bound copy of the research document should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 101, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Thuto House, St. Andrew Street, Bloemfontein or can be emailed to the above-mentioned email address.
  - 4.3** You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
  - 4.4** The ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department
- 5. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.**

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. MZAMOW JACOBS  
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 08/02/2024

Enquiries: M.Z. Thango  
Ref: Notification of research: B C Nyathikazi  
Tel. 051 404 8808  
Email: [MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za](mailto:MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za)



District Director  
Thabo Mofutsanyana District

Dear Ms. Mabaso

**NOTIFICATION OF RESEARCH: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT IN THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT**

This letter serves to inform you that Mr. B. C. Nyathikazi has been granted permission to conduct research in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District under the auspices of the University of the Free State. The details in relation to the research project are as follows:

**Topic:** Exploring the strategies for teaching reading comprehension to English First Additional Language Grade 9 learners.

- 1. List of schools involved:** Club view Secondary School, Reahola Secondary School, Thokoana Secondary School, Mafube Secondary School and Selekela Secondary School.
- 2. Target Population:** Five educators teaching English FAL in grade 9 at the selected schools.
- 3. Period of research:** From the second week of February 2024 until 30 September 2024. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year nor during normal school hours. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
- 4. Research benefits:** It is envisaged that this study will assist educators to directly implement pedagogies and make their perspectives pivotal while learners experience classroom processes first-hand. Moreover, policymakers might shape curricular frameworks and resource allocation. Community members' involvement as parents and stakeholders impacts learning ecologies. This heterogeneous population will illuminate the topic's complexity.
- 5. The Sub-directorate of Research and policy will make the necessary arrangements for the researchers to present the findings and recommendations to the relevant officials in the Department.**

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. MZAMO W. JACOBS  
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 08/02/2024

## **Appendix F: Information Leaflet**

### **Research study information leaflet and consent form**

### **Research study information leaflet and consent form to the principal (s)**

**Date:**

08 July 2024

**Title of the research project:**

“Exploring the strategies for teaching reading comprehension to English First Additional Language Grade 9 learners”

**Principle investigator / researcher(s) name(s) and contact number(s):**

<b>Name of student/research:</b>	<b>Student number:</b>	<b>Contact number:</b>
Bongani Christmas Nyathikazi	2015225648	079 317
1654		

**Faculty and Department:**

**Name of Faculty:** Education

**Name of Department:** Curriculum Studies and Higher Education

**Study leader(s) name and contact number:**

**Name of study leader, Main Supervisor):** Dr. Godsend Tawanda Chimbi (UFS Staff member)

**Contact number: Tel:** 058 718 5195 **Cell phone:** 062 730 8084

**Name of the study leader, Co-supervisor:** Mrs. Hadio T. Motaung (UFS Staff member)

**Tell:** 058 718 5470, **Cell phone:** 076 291 4581

**What is the aim / purpose of the study?**

To explore the strategies utilised by Grade 9 English First Additional Language (EFAL) teachers to teach reading comprehension in selected South African schools.

**Who is doing the research?**

Bongani Christmas Nyathikazi (I) is the one who will be doing the research. I am supervised by Dr. GT. Chimbi and Mrs. HR. Motaung. I am doing this project to explore the strategies for teaching reading comprehension to English First Additional Language Grade 9 learners.

**Has the study received ethical approval?**

Awaiting (ethical clearance application under development).

**Approval number:** UFS-HSD2023/2534-0001

**Why are you invited to take part in this research project?**

This research project is in fulfilment of the requirements in respect of the Master of Education degree qualification in Curriculum Studies and Higher Education. Participants were chosen because they are English First Additional Language teachers in the Senior Phase and FET Phase. They are five (5) participants in this study selected for the following reasons: they are English First Additional Language teachers at the Senior Phase and FET, have at least five (5) years of teaching experience in EFAL, hold a Bachelor of Education degree in Senior Phase and FET Phase teaching, and they are male or female.

**What is the nature of participation in this study?**

The participant's actual role will be to answer the questions of this study. The study involves audio recording taping, document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and observations. The questions of the study are:

**Main Research Question**

What strategies are used by Grade 9 English First Additional Language educators to teach reading comprehension in selected South African schools?

## **Sub-Research Questions**

1. What are the perceptions of Grade 9 EFAL educators regarding reading comprehension instruction?
2. Which specific techniques do Grade 9 EFAL educators use to teach reading comprehension?
3. What opportunities and challenges do Grade 9 EFAL educators encounter when teaching reading comprehension?
4. How can the reading comprehension teaching strategies employed by Grade 9 EFAL educators be understood and explained?

The expected duration of participation and the time needed to complete specific research activities like, document analysis, semi-structured interviews and observations are within the period of 3 months. The time allocated to conduct interviews is 30 minutes per participant and an hour for semi-structured interviews. There are no risks to the study as teachers are adults who can make decision to remain or withdraw in the study.

### **Can the participant withdraw from the study?**

Being in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

### **What are the potential benefits of taking part in this study?**

The study population will comprise EFAL teachers, learners, policymakers, and community members engaged with Grade 9 reading comprehension education. These groups represent diverse positionalities and experiential insights regarding comprehension instruction. Teachers directly implement pedagogies, making their

perspectives pivotal. Learners experience classroom processes first-hand. Policymakers shape curricular frameworks and resource allocation. Community members' involvement as parents and stakeholders impacts learning ecologies. This heterogeneous population will illuminate the topic's complexity.

### **What is the anticipated inconvenience of taking part in this study?**

Possible or reasonably foreseeable side-effects to the potential participants is that their teaching time will be affected and to avoid this the researcher will conduct interviews, observations, and semi-structured interviews when the teachers are not having classes. The researcher will ask the teachers to indicate the times they will be free so that he can interview them or engage in focus group discussions.

### **Will what I say be kept confidential?**

Yes, confidentiality of information will be maintained. Your name will not be recorded, anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a fictitious code number or a pseudonym, and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. Only the researcher and supervisors will have access to the data and confidentiality will be maintained by signing a confidentiality agreement. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records. Your anonymous data may be used for other purposes, e.g., research report, journal articles, conference presentation, etc. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the semi-structured interviews, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the semi-structured interviews will treat information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all participants to do so. For this reason, I advise you not to disclose personally

sensitive information in the interviews. You are absolutely under no obligation to participate in the study, and you can stop being in the study at any time without getting in trouble.

### **How will the information be stored and ultimately destroyed?**

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of three years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet at the university of the Free State for future research or academic purposes, electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. There are no anticipated risks associated with the study.

### **Will I receive payment or any incentives for participating in this study?**

No payment or incentives will be received in this study.

### **How will the participant be informed of the findings / results of the study?**

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Bongani Christmas Nyathikazi on 079 317 165 4 / [2015225648@ufs4life.ac.za](mailto:2015225648@ufs4life.ac.za) / [NyathikaziBC@ufs.ac.za](mailto:NyathikaziBC@ufs.ac.za). The findings are accessible for five (5) years. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact 079 317 165 4, [NyathikaziBC@ufs.ac.za](mailto:NyathikaziBC@ufs.ac.za) Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr. GT. Chimbi, Cell phone: 062 730 808 4 or email address: [ChimbiGT@ufs.ac.za](mailto:ChimbiGT@ufs.ac.za) (Main supervisor) or Mrs HR. email address: [MosiaHR@ufs.ac.za](mailto:MosiaHR@ufs.ac.za) (Co-supervisor) cell phone number: 076 291 458 1. There are no risks associated with this research.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

## Appendix G: Consent Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ undersigned, (participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant") confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the \_\_\_\_\_ (the "Study") in relation to

and which Study is being conducted by \_\_\_\_\_ (Insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that–

1. The Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits, and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study.
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet.
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study.
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data

with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the semi-structured interview.

Full Name of Participant:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): Bongani Christmas Nyathikazi

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix H: Title Registration Letter



14 December 2023

### APPLICATION FOR TITLE REGISTRATION

**Applicant:** Nyathikazi, BC  
**Student Number:** 2015225648  
**Discipline:** Curriculum Studies  
**Study Code:** Masters (EDCI8900)


Dear Mr Nyathikazi

Your registered title is as follows: *Exploring the strategies for teaching reading comprehension to English First Additional Language Grade 9 learners* "

All of the best with your studies.

Yours sincerely,

  
Prof Patrick Mafora  
Chair: CTR committee

  
Ms CS Duvenhage  
Secretary: CTR committee

205 Nelson Mandela Drive | Park West, Bloemfontein 9301 | South Africa  
P.O. Box 339 | Bloemfontein 9300 | South Africa | [www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)



# Appendix I: Turnitin Report

Bongani Nyathikazi THESIS 31 OCTOBER 2024.docx

## ORIGINALITY REPORT

<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

## PRIMARY SOURCES

<b>1</b>	<b>scholar.ufs.ac.za</b> Internet Source	<b>1%</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>www.researchgate.net</b> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>repository.up.ac.za</b> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>core.ac.uk</b> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>repositorio.uta.edu.ec</b> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Sibanda, Sophie Deliwe. "Approaches to the Teaching of Literacy Skills to English First Additional Language Learners in Grade 3", University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2023</b> Publication	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Groene, Johanna C.. "Impact of Interruption: Literacy Instruction During the COVID-19 Pandemic", The University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, 2024</b> Publication	<b>&lt;1%</b>

## Appendix J: Language Editing Certificate



17 Fallopilus Street, Bloemfontein   
+(27) 076 081 0730   
info@rephraseit.co.za 

**25 November 2024**

**Student:** Bongani Christmas Nyathikazi  
**Student number:** 2015225648

I declare that I language edited the master's dissertation titled, *Exploring the Strategies for Teaching Reading Comprehension to English First Additional Language Grade 9 Learners*

During the editing process, I looked for and corrected spelling, grammar, punctuation, paragraph and syntax errors. Where I noticed inconsistencies or unclarity in the text, I made comments to draw the author's attention to the inconsistency or unclarity. I also made suggestions where changes could be made. Lastly, I double-checked the references in the text and in the reference list to make sure that they are consistent throughout. Where sources or source information were still missing, I indicated such to the author so that he could locate and add the missing information.

**Disclaimer:** The ultimate responsibility for accepting or rejecting the changes and recommendations rests with the student and I cannot be held responsible for any layout or language issues that might have emerged as a result of subsequent amendments to the text.

Yours sincerely

Johannes Pieter Odendaal

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Odendaal".

