TEACHING ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION TO GRADE 2

FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my loving

Ouma Jo

(Johanna Elizabeth Pullinger)

Thank you for teaching me that quitting is never an option - never!

Happy 80th birthday!

~Nothing can dim the light that shines from within~

- Maya Angelou -

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Let me glorify Your name through the manifestation of this work. I continue to trust in Your ways and praise your name.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ANA	Annual national assessment
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements
CORI	Concept-orientated reading instruction
CSR	Collaborative Strategic Reading
DES	Direct Explanation of Strategies
EFAL	English First Additional Language
ELL	English language learner
EMC	Establish, maintain and consolidate
FAL	First Additional Language
FP	Foundation Phase
HL	Home language
ISL	Informed Strategies to Learning
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
OBE	Outcomes based education
PIRLS	Progress in international reading literacy skills
QAR	Question-answer relationship
RA	Reading anxiety
RCF	Reading comprehension facilitator
RSA	Republic of South Africa
RT	Reciprocal Teaching
SBRR	Scientifically-based research reading
THRASS	Teaching, handwriting, reading and spelling skills
TSI	Transactional Strategy Instruction
ZPD	Zone of proximal development

Key Concepts

- English as first additional language (EFAL)
- First additional language (FAL) learners
- Foundation phase
- Grade 2
- Home language (HL)
- Independent schools
- Language minority learner
- Language of learning and teaching (LoLT)
- Learners
- Reading comprehension
- Scaffolding
- Strategies for reading instruction
- Students
- Teaching
- Zone of proximal development (ZPD)

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Faculty of Education

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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DEGREE AND PROJECT	MEd
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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I hereby declare that I substantively edited the draft Master's dissertation of Ms Nadia Swanepoel. Recommendations concerning the use of English grammar and spelling, and clarity of expression without changing the meaning were made electronically using MSWord Track changes. The title of the text is *"Teaching English Reading Comprehension to Grade 2 First Additional Language Learners"*.

U J Fairhurst (not signed, sent electronically)

UJ Fairhurst (Prof Emeritus UP)

Abstract

English reading comprehension is an educational challenge worldwide. This study investigated how Grade 2 teachers teach English reading comprehension to First Additional Language (FAL) learners at three selected independent schools in Gauteng where the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is English. Three English medium independent schools in Gauteng, South Africa participated in the study. The participants at each research site consisted of Grade 2 teachers (main participants) and Grade 2 learners (secondary participants). Grade 2 teachers were selected purposively on the criteria that they had taught for more than two years and were teaching English reading comprehension to Grade 2 FAL learners.

This study followed a qualitative approach, and was situated within the interpretivist paradigm. The research design accommodated a case study. The conceptual framework was based on the revised taxonomy by Krathwohl and Anderson for questioning which integrated the role of the teacher in a reading lesson. The three stages of reading, before reading, during reading and after reading were divided into the different levels of thinking and reasoning as suggested in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory.

The data collection strategies were semi-structured interviews with Grade 2 teachers; observing reading lessons they gave; and keeping a journal in which personal reflections on the investigation into teaching and learning practices were documented. Once data was collected, the recordings of the semi-structured interviews were transcribed. The observation checklists and the reflection journal entries were analysed. Data was analysed using a coding process and five themes and twelve sub-themes emerged.

The findings show that the interactive approach was common in the teaching of English reading comprehension. However, parental involvement, the availability of the trained teachers and appropriate resources were necessary. A learner's individual reading needs and reasoning ability have to be considered through the use of differentiated teaching practices. Questioning throughout the reading process improves a learner's understanding of the text.

Abstrak

Die leesbegrip van Engels is 'n wêreldwye uitdaging. Hierdie studie het ondersoek hoe Graad 2-onderwysers onderrig in leesbegrip in Engels aan leerders van Engels as Eerste Addisionele Taal gee by drie uitgesoekte onafhanklike skole in Gauteng waar die taal van leer en onderrig (TLO) Engels is. Drie onafhanklike Engelsmediumskole in Gauteng, Suid-Afrika het aan die studie deelgeneem. By elke skool was die deelnemers Graad 2-onderwysers (hoofdeelnemers) en Graad 2-leerders (sekondêre deelnemers). Graad 2-onderwysers is doelbewus gekies op grond van die kriterium dat hulle langer as twee jaar onderrig gegee het en ten tye van die studie Graad 2-EAT-leerders onderrig het.

Die studie volg 'n kwalitatiewe benadering binne die interpretivistiese paradigma. Die navorsingsontwerp behels 'n gevallestudie. Die konseptuele raamwerk is gebaseer op Krathwohl en Anderson se hersiene taksonomie van vraagstelling wat die onderwyser se rol in 'n leesles integreer. Die drie leesstadia – voor, gedurende en na lees – word in die verskillende vlakke van lees en redenering verdeel, soos wat in Vygotsky se teorie van die Sone van Naaste Ontwikkeling (ZPD) aan die hand gedoen word.

As dataversamelingstrategieë is semigestruktureerde onderhoude met Graad 2-onderwysers gevoer, lesse waargeneem en 'n joernaal gehou waarin persoonlike besinning oor die ondersoek van onderrig- en leerpraktyke gedokumenteer is. Na dataversameling is die opnames van die semigestruktureerde onderhoude getranskribeer. Die waarnemings-kontrolelyste en die inskrywings in die besinningsjoernaal is ontleed. Data is met behulp van 'n koderingsproses ontleed, wat vyf temas en twaalf subtemas na vore gebring het.

Daar is bevind dat die interaktiewe benadering algemeen in die onderrig van leesbegrip van Engels gebruik word. Die betrokkenheid van ouers, beskikbaarheid van opgeleide onderwysers en geskikte hulpbronne was egter noodsaaklik. Leerders se individuele leesbehoeftes en redeneringsvermoë moet by wyse van gedifferensieerde onderrigpraktyke in aanmerking geneem word. Leerders se begrip van die teks verbeter wanneer vrae in die loop van die leesproses gestel word.

Chapter 1

Overview and rationale

1.1 INTRODUCTION

English reading comprehension is an educational challenge worldwide. Countries like the Republic of South Africa (RSA[1]), Canada, England and Abu Dhabi reflect this state as mentioned in the progress in international reading literacy skills (PIRLS) (Mullis, Martin, Foy & Drucker, 2012:15). In South Africa, the low Annual National Assessment (ANA) results endorse this observation and suggest that learners with English as a second language do not do as well as their peers with English as first language. A recent study (Janse van Rensburg, 2016) reports the findings on reading comprehension among Foundation Phase learners. Van der Berg (2016) from Stellenbosch University found that 83% of learners in Limpopo, 44% from Gauteng and 33% of learners in the Western Cape do not understand what they read. The report (Janse van Rensburg, 2016:10) further mentions that 60% of learners do not understand what they read by the time they get to Grade 4.

With the desegregation of the education system, at a time of political change in South Africa, schools were flooded with learners from diverse language backgrounds. This resulted in many learners being in a school where the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) was not their first language, yet they had to learn English. In this study these learners will be called English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners. Most teachers in SA are not trained to teach learners from diverse language backgrounds and are uncertain and confused about the teaching of EFAL learners. If learners lack language comprehension they do not do well in other subjects either. This can lead to a lack of motivation and frustration for the teachers (Janse van Rensburg, 2016:10). Furthermore, Van der Berg (2016) in Janse van Rensburg (2016:10) states that 41% of the learners in the rural areas who go to school where English is the LoLT, read with a speed less than 40 words per minute. "This means by the time that learners reach the end of the sentence, they cannot remember what the rest of the sentence was about. The result is that they cannot achieve in other subjects" (ibid). The reality is that there is no easy solution to this problem, but teachers and parents need to be constantly aware of it (Janse van Rensburg, 2016).

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[1] In light of this study, RSA is normally referred to as South Africa (SA)

This study investigates how Grade 2 teachers teach reading comprehension to EFAL learners at an independent school where the LoLT is English. A qualitative approach with an interpretive research design was followed. Teachers were interviewed using individual semi-structured interviews and teaching in classes was observed. The purpose of this study was to investigate effective strategies teachers can use to foster English reading comprehension in EFAL Grade 2 learners to improve their reading comprehension skills.

Reading instruction in the Foundation Phase (FP) relates to "learning to read" (Harlaar, Dale & Plomin, 2007:116). As a learner's ability to decode letters (Ahmadi, Ismail & Abdullah, 2013: 238) and reading fluency improve (Guthrie, Wigfield & Perencevich, 2004:174), they enter a new world of "reading to learn" (Harlaar *et al.*, 2007:116). Learners can only read to learn effectively, once they are able to comprehend the content of the text and relate it to their prior knowledge and background (Ahmadi, Ismail & Abdullah, 2013:238). Reading comprehension is associated with the ability to make connections between the text and the reader's background (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2013:238; O'Connor & Jenkins, 2002:1; Palincsar & Brown, 1988:118; Guthrie *et al.*, 2004:13; Van Kraayenoord, 2010:288).

FP learners are taught to read early in their first year of formal education. Hours are spent on weekly spelling tests and drill-practice instruction methods to improve learners' reading in the classroom setting (Dewitz & Dewitz, 2003). Van der Berg (2016) explains that learners do get opportunities to read aloud individually and in groups, but many teachers do not give them feedback on their performance. Through experience as a learning support facilitator, I have found that learners who do not read well, will stare at the teacher without answering correctly when asked about the meaning of the passage.

Studies have been conducted on teaching reading comprehension in South African government schools in EFAL. However, little research has been done on the effect of teaching reading comprehension in independent schools in EFAL. Most independent schools are multicultural and it is my view that it is necessary to look at the teaching of reading comprehension in EFAL at independent schools that also reflect its so-called 'rainbow nation' characteristic. The independent schools selected for this study use English as the LoLT. Other reasons for investigating the teaching of reading comprehension in independent schools are because they accommodate EFAL and home language (HL) learners and their ANA results are generally above average. Throughout the investigation of how English reading comprehension is taught to Grade 2 FAL learners, attention will be paid to the strategies teachers with good assessment scores use to teach reading comprehension. Good, useable practices will be identified and recommended for the improvement of reading comprehension in all schools particularly those that appear to be statistically underperforming.

The essence and practice of sound teaching and learning of reading comprehension go alongside the causes of poor reading comprehension (Stanovich, 1986; Barr, Eslami & Joshi, 2010:107). Teachers need to be aware of the causes of poor reading comprehension to be able to assist learners with the correct strategies when teaching reading comprehension. Poor reading comprehension implies that learners are not able to reaffirm the essence of a text read. The three main approaches to fostering reading comprehension are the top-down approach, the bottom-up approach and the interactive approach (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2013). These will each be analysed in Chapter 2 to develop teacher's strategy for instruction.

Finally, a general understanding among parents, teachers and other interested parties about the importance of teaching learners to comprehend what they read is necessary. According to Long and Zimmerman (2008:12), all learners should be taught to read with understanding:

"It is recognised that all learners need to be taught strategies that help them to read with understanding and that help them to unlock the code of written text. Furthermore, they (the learners) must know how to locate and use information, follow a process or argument, summarise, build their own understandings, adapt what they learn, and demonstrate what they learn from their reading in the learning process" (Long & Zimmerman, 2008:12).

1.2   RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Being a second language English speaker myself, I decided to base my study on the teaching of English as a First Additional Language (FAL). This refers to the teaching of English as LoLT to learners that do not have English as their main registered home language (HL). First Additional Language is the term recognised in South Africa which refers to a learner's second language. After qualifying as a FP teacher, I taught at a pre-primary school for one year. Very soon, I realised that my personal teaching style did not suit teaching in a classroom situation but would rather befit a one-on-one form of teaching practice. Consequently, I started an individual tutoring practice from home. I currently teach fifteen learners ranging from Grade 1 to Grade 6, of whom twelve speak English as FAL learners. They are enrolled in different schools, some attend government schools, but the majority are in independent schools. Learners attend my lessons as an extramural activity in the privacy of their home. My role is to reinforce the work covered at school. I have discovered that one of the major hindrances to understanding the text appeared to be a lack of comprehension of what they read. The home language of twelve of the learners is Afrikaans but they attend a school where the LoLT is English.

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My own reading instruction practice is influenced by the theories I studied as a student teacher. However, I have also seen how the learners I tutor are able to read fluently through using sight words and class readers but are not able to understand what they actually read. This is a cause for concern not only for me and their class teachers, but also for the learners and their parents. This study therefore investigates what strategies and approaches teachers are using to teach reading comprehension. If the recommendations from its findings are implemented, the teaching of reading comprehension is expected to improve.

As part of an initial literature review for this dissertation, relevant and useful scholarly work on fostering English reading comprehension where English is the LoLT was discussed. Ample literature (Konza, 2006:90; Joubert, Bester, Meyer, Evans & Phatudi, 2015; Klapwijk, 2015) on strategies for teaching reading comprehension was available. However, little or no research seems to have been done specifically on the teaching Grade 2 EFAL learners to comprehend the English text they were reading. I therefore believe this study worthily fills a gap in the educational field of teaching children to read.

Furthermore, this study is topical because it addresses a global educational concern. The ANA results of FP learners reveal the low literacy levels of FP learners in South Africa. Similarly, the National Senior Certificate (Grade 12) examination results confirm the poor literacy levels among learners whose HL is different to the LoLT.

South Africa is a country of diversities and most school-going learners are from homes where the HL differs from LoLT. From the findings of this study, strategies for teaching reading comprehension to learners of English as a FAL are made. Both teachers in the classroom and the officials from the Department of Basic Education that offer professional development courses may find the results useful.

1.3   THE IMPORTANCE OF READING WITH COMPREHENSION

The relationship between reading and reading comprehension is directly proportional. This means that the quality and quantity of reading comprehension is bound to improve as the quality and quantity of reading increases. Reading per se is of little value if there is no understanding of what has been read (Joubert *et al.*, 2015:101). Reading and reading comprehension are skills that will only improve with practice. As reading fluency improves, so will reading comprehension (Konza, 2006:48). Reading "is a message-getting, problem-solving activity, which increases in power and flexibility the more it is practised" (Joubert *et al.,* 2015:101). Klapwijk (2015:1) supports the notion that reading comprehension depends on the ability to read effectively from an early age.

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On a national level, the ANA results disclose the reading achievement of South African learners. The PIRLS (Section 1) has the same outcomes at international level. It is no secret that "national and international assessment studies indicate that the reading achievement of South African learners is a major cause for concern" (Nel & Adam, 2014:52). "PIRLS is an international assessment of reading comprehension at the fourth grade that has been conducted every five years since 2001" (Mullis *et al.,* 2012:15). The fourth grade, an international term, is the equivalent to Grade 4 in the South African context. A foundation to reading comprehension is laid before a FP learner reaches Grade 4, although the PIRLS assessment only starts in Grade 4. Reading is crucial to the development of learning.

Nel and Adam (2014:52) state that "reading is not simply an additional tool that students need at university [or school]; it constitutes the very process whereby learning occurs". Furthermore, "more than any other skill, the ability to read is fundamental to successfully navigating the school curriculum. Moreover, Mullis *et al.* (2012:15) state that it is central to shaping each individual's trajectory through life, their economic wellbeing, and the ability to actively and fully participate in broader society".

In light of South African learners' low literacy standard, Long and Zimmerman (2009:10) state that "when compared with international data, South Africa lags behind in introducing these higher-order skills such as comparing text with personal experience, comparing different texts and making predictions about what will happen next". Even more frightening is the reality of the state of South Africa's literacy in terms of the drop-out rate: "Of the number of learners enrolled in Grade 1, only half make it to Grade 12" (Modisaotsile, 2012:1).

The current FP curriculum according to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), is designed in a manner that allows progression from one grade to the next. Therefore, it is expected that by the time learners reach Grade 3, they should have mastered the basic skills of reading, writing and speaking in the HL and be able to transfer these skills to an additional language (Singh, 2010:116). Grade 3 teachers can assist in this regard, to ensure that the transition from "learning to read to reading to learn" (Harlaar *et al.*, 2007:116) in Grade 4 is made easier (Long & Zimmerman, 2009). Grade 3 teachers, with the assistance of the Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers, can ensure that all the basic skills, knowledge and values required for the Literacy Learning Programme are met before a learner progresses to Grade 4. This study aims to recommend strategies that Grade 2 teachers can use to enable FAL learners to improve the skill of comprehending what they read in English. This will be done by conducting semi-structured interviews with Grade 2 teachers teaching English reading comprehension and observing their practices.

In the words of Long and Zimmerman (2009:11), the teaching of English reading comprehension needs to improve as a way to assist learners in their overall development of literacy:

> "If one considers the poor levels of reading literacy development displayed by South African learners in the PIRLS 2006 assessment, it is of absolute necessity to consider potential reasons for this in order to assist in the development of targeted interventions aimed at addressing the improvement of learners' reading literacy (including reading comprehension) at all levels of the education system" (Long & Zimmerman, 2009:11).

1.4   PROBLEM STATEMENT

Results from the ANA and PIRLS reveal that the reading skills of South African learners are below the average for their age groups. This implies that the teaching of reading comprehension has to improve for all age groups, especially for FP learners. It is therefore important to explore what strategies do knowledgeable and skilful teachers with good ANA results use to improve English reading comprehension when teaching EFAL in Grade 2.

Klapwijk (2015:3) argues that "teachers are loathe to take on comprehension instruction, and teacher training institutions do not seem to actively incorporate comprehension instruction into their curriculum". Based on this observation, it can be deduced that many teachers are not aware of the strategies for the teaching of reading comprehension in EFAL. Teachers teach under the assumption that they are teaching optimal strategies to comprehend texts read. The problem surfaces when theory is weighed against classroom practice. It is my view that although teachers believe they are using effective reading comprehension strategies, learners are in reality not able to rephrase texts in a manner to show that they understand what was read. Singh (2010:118) asserts that it is critical to teach EFAL learners to read and comprehend the texts so that they can function to their full potential in the classroom.

Teachers' challenges to teach English reading comprehension is presented as a cyclical process. The cycle starts with teachers' insecurity about how to present a text to learners in an understandable manner, incorporating both theoretical knowledge about teaching English reading comprehension and effective classroom practice in order for learners to grasp the essence of the text. In the case that the teacher is able to integrate theoretical knowledge and effective reading comprehension strategies within classroom practice, learners should succeed in understanding the relevant text. The final outcome of the reading comprehension instruction will be reached; learners will be able to answer lower and higher order thinking

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questions about the text in a confident and competent manner. The problem however arises in the fact that teachers battle to integrate theoretical knowledge and effective reading comprehension strategies within classroom practice. Furthermore, as confirmed by the ANA and PIRLS results, learners' lack in literacy, with specific reference to reading and reading comprehension abilities, makes it even more challenging for teachers to bridge the gap and teach reading comprehension. In terms of this study, reading comprehension instruction is aimed at Grade 2 EFAL learners. This presents teachers with the challenge that English as the LoLT may be foreign for some EFAL learners. Teachers have to find ways of making English assessable and understandable for these learners.

It is imperative for the reading comprehension skills of FP learners to improve. Emphasis is placed on "learning to read" (Harlaar *et al.*, 2007:116) in the FP, however, in the years beyond FP, the emphasis is placed in "reading to learn" (Harlaar *et al.*, 2007:116). Learners cannot be expected to cover study material and prepare for assessments and tasks in the later years of their school career, without achieving the FP reading comprehension outcomes according to the curriculum guidelines. Learners need to be guided in a manner to reach their potential and function optimally in the higher grades. (Singh, 2010:118). Teachers subsequently need to be empowered and guided to start integrating theoretical knowledge about teaching English reading comprehension and effective reading comprehension strategies within classroom practice.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.5.1 Primary research question

How is English reading comprehension taught to Grade 2 First Additional Language learners at independent schools?

1.5.2 Secondary research questions

1. Which strategies do teachers use when teaching reading comprehension to Grade 2 EFAL learners?

2. How do teachers view the teaching of EFAL reading comprehension?

3. What factors are likely to influence the teaching of EFAL reading comprehension?

4. What recommendations can be made from the findings to enhance a teacher's strategies for reading comprehension in EFAL?

1.5.3   Working assumptions

Three major approaches to the instruction of reading comprehension appear in the literature and are discussed in detail in Chapter 2 (section 2.3.3). Within each approach, there are multiple teaching strategies that can be used to promote English reading comprehension for Grade 2 EFAL learners. Accordingly, learners cannot be taught how to comprehend if they are not able to read effectively. Similarly, learners cannot be taught to decode and learn to read when they battle with comprehension. My working assumption is that the interactive approach is the most suitable and several authors (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2013:238; Long & Zimmerman, 2009:12) support this viewpoint, stating specifically that the interactive approach is an effective approach in that it:

> "is the midway between the top-down approach and the bottom-up approach. Within this approach, it is recognised that meaning does not exist only in text but is rather a co-construction between the text and the reader's interpretation of it. The surface structure of the content of the text and the reader's personal knowledge of the topic are used interactively by the reader to construct meaning. The reader uses decoding strategies or his/her own personal frame of reference whenever faced with difficulties in reading and/or understanding text" (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2013:238; Long & Zimmerman, 2009:12).

Furthermore, it relates to the study in the sense that it accommodates EFAL Grade 2 learners from both the top-down and the bottom-up approaches.

Within the top-down approach the focus is on how the learner understands the whole text. The reader samples words and strings of words, predicting and inferring the meaning underlying them. Meaning can only be activated by accessing prior semantic, syntactic and discourse knowledge" (Long & Zimmerman, 2009:12). On the other hand, the top-down approach "shows that the reading process is supported by each word in the text and a learner decodes each word to understand the meaning" of the text (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2013:238). When developing their reading comprehension skills some EFAL learners will favour the top-down approach due to their background knowledge and previous teaching and learning experiences; however, others could prefer the bottom-up approach as they might still be in the beginning stages of learning to read. When the interactive approach is used, reading comprehension strategies can be taught to learners irrespective of their stage of reading skills development. It can be tailored to suit the needs of each individual EFAL Grade 2 learner in the class.

1.6   CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

The concepts below are used throughout the study and are explained with specific reference to the applicability of each term to the study. The concepts act as supporting structures for the framework of the study and join various points together.

Reading comprehension is the ability a reader has to make connections between their understanding of the text and their background knowledge (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2013:238; O'Connor & Jenkins, 2002:1; Palincsar & Brown, 1988:118; Guthrie *et al.*, 2004:13; Van Kraayenoord, 2010:288). Readers' perceptions of a text will vary since their "knowledge, experiences and purpose [for reading]" (Van Kraayenoord, 2010:279) differ. Palincsar and Brown (1988:118) maintain that "[reading] comprehension is influenced by the extent of overlap between the readers' prior knowledge and the content of the text". Reading comprehension is a "complex and multifaceted ability" (Van Kraayenoord, 2010:279) that a learner has to master to learn to read and to read to learn effectively. Nel and Adam (2014:55) explain the reading comprehension process as follows:

> "…words must be decoded and associated with their meanings in a reader's memory. Phrases and sentences must be processed fluently so that the meanings derived from one word, phrase or sentence are not lost before the next one is processed. Reading comprehension is a highly complex process which integrates multiple strategies used by the reader to create meaning from the text" (Nel & Adam, 2014:55).

For the purpose of this study, reading comprehension will refer to a Grade 2 learner's ability or inability to understand what they have read.

Foundation Phase refers to the school phase that includes Grade R, the reception year, and Grades 1, 2 and 3. The children are between the ages of five and nine years old (Joubert *et al.,* 2015: 327).

Grade 2 is the second year of formal schooling in a South African primary school. These learners are normally seven or eight years old.

First Additional Language (FAL) learners are referred to as second language learners. The second language is a different language from the learner's home language (HL) or mother tongue.

English as First Additional Language (EFAL) learners are learners whose home language is not English. They learn and use English as their First Additional Language, which can be

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the medium of instruction at the school they attend. This is the case in the schools selected for this investigation.

Independent schools are private schools that are governed independently from the government. In this study, certain private schools in an urban area were selected based on their good reading assessment record and performance in the Annual National Assessment (ANA) results.

Learners, in South African context, and **students**, in international context, refer to Foundation Phase (South African education system) children receiving instruction in the school environment. Both words are used interchangeably in this study.

Language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is the language of instruction at a school. In this study, the LoLT is English.

Home language (HL) is the learner's mother tongue language that is spoken at home.

Strategies for reading instruction are the different techniques used to teach learners how to read.

Teaching is the art of instructing and conveying new knowledge, skills and values. In terms of this study, it focuses on how selected teachers introduce different strategies to Grade 2 First Additional Language (FAL) learners to allow them to master English reading comprehension.

Scaffolding is the term given to explain the "mediator adjusting the complexity and maturity of the teaching interaction to facilitate the [learner's] mastery of the task; providing support when necessary; and providing encouragement and prompts [to the learner] to move ahead when ready" (Lidz, 1991:80).

Language minority learner refers to when a language other than the LoLT (Department of Education) is used by learners at home (Nel, 2009:150)

Zone of proximal development (ZPD) is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978:86).

1.7   THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

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The purpose of this study is to investigate the instruction of reading comprehension at Grade 2 level for EFAL learners. The recommended strategies from the findings could help teachers to teach reading comprehension effectively to enhance learners' reading and comprehension competence.

1.8 THE METHODOLOGY

In an attempt to answer the research question of this qualitative study situated within an interpretivist paradigm, an instrumental case study research method was employed.

After evaluating my strengths and weaknesses as a researcher as well as the nature of this study, I decided it would be best to employ the qualitative research approach. When the context and background of the research questions are looked at, it becomes clear that my background knowledge as a learning support facilitator, interest in people and understanding of teaching reading comprehension in EFAL lean towards the qualitative approach as the best-suited approach to answer the research questions. As the researcher, the interpretivist paradigm allowed me to become part of the participants' life world and view the manner in which they went about teaching reading comprehension in EFAL. The paradigm on which the research was based, became the window through which I looked at the participants and interpreted their interviews and classroom practice.

The research design employed for this study, namely case study research has certain unique features that set it apart from other research designs. Merriam (2009:43) identifies three special features of case study research. Case study research is "particularistic, descriptive and heuristic". Case study research is particularistic in the sense that it focuses on a particular situation or phenomenon. The phenomenon on which this study focused was the teaching of English reading comprehension to Grade 2 First Additional Language learners in independent schools. Merriam (2009:43) elaborates on the meaning of the term 'thick description', meaning that it is "a complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated". The thick description being investigated in this study, is the manner in which teachers understand and teach English reading comprehension to Grade 2 First Additional Language learners. The final special feature of case study research is where case study research is characterised as being heuristic. This refers to the ability of the case study to highlight and enhance the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study. Furthermore, case study research has the capacity to "bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known" (Merriam, 2009:43). I believe case study research is the most suited research design to use.

Three independent schools were identified as research sites and each was a separate case. Qualified Grade 2 teachers were selected purposively on two criteria: that they were teaching in EFAL; and that they had been teaching for more than two years. Teachers who complied with these two sampling criteria were approached to be willing to participate in a semi-structured individual interview. Each qualified Grade 2 teacher who agreed to be interviewed, was requested to teach a reading comprehension lesson in EFAL that would be observed. This was done to ensure that the teacher's views and understanding of teaching reading comprehension in EFAL were in line with their actual teaching and classroom practice. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with the sampled Grade 2 teachers.

Grade 2 teachers served as the primary participants. The Grade 2 learners served as the secondary participants when the Grade 2 teachers were observed in their teaching of reading comprehension in LoLT. The learners were selected by means of convenient sampling since they were already in the class when the teacher's teaching was observed.

Data was collected in a number of ways. The data collection strategies included the making of voice recordings of the individual interviews with Grade 2 teachers; classroom observations that were documented using an observation checklist; and the researcher keeping a reflection journal. These methods shed maximum light on the difference between the theory and practice behind teaching reading comprehension in English as FAL.

The manual data analysis process was started by reading through the interview transcriptions, classroom observation checklists and reflection journal. The first step was to acquaint myself as the researcher with the data and identify important aspects in the data collection documents. The next step was to allocate codes to the important marked aspects. The codes were kept universal and used in the interview transcriptions, observation checklists and reflection journal. After the codes were allocated, they were grouped to identify the five main themes and the twelve sub-themes. Once the themes and sub-themes were finalised, the data from each interview transcription, observation checklist and reflection journal was analysed according to the themes and compared to literature. The research process followed is described in Table 1.1 (Van Heerden, 2012:14).

Table 1.1: The research process used in the study (Van Heerden, 2012:14)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE	
Main research question	**Secondary research questions**
How is English reading comprehension taught to Grade 2 First Additional Language learners?	1. Which strategies do teachers use when teaching reading comprehension to English FAL Grade 2 learners?

	2. How do teachers view the teaching of English FAL reading comprehension? 3. What factors are likely to influence the teaching of English FAL reading comprehension? 4. What recommendations (from the findings) can be made to enhance teachers' strategies for reading comprehension in EFAL?			
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW				
Teaching reading comprehension to language-minority learners	Causes of poor reading comprehension	Reading: assessment, evaluation and the reading process as a whole	Assistance for teachers in teaching reading comprehension	Approaches to foster reading comprehension in EFAL
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY				
Paradigmatic assumptions	**Research design and sampling**	**Ethical considerations**	**Qualitative data collection instruments**	**Qualitative data analysis and interpretation**
Interpretivist paradigm	Instrumental case study Purposive sampling Convenience sampling	Informed consent Confidentiality Anonymity and trust Role of the researcher	Voice recordings from individual interviews Reflection journal Observation sheet	Thematic analysis of data obtained from Individual interviews Reflection journal
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS OF THE STUDY				
Theme 1	**Theme 2**	**Theme 3**	**Theme 4**	**Theme 5**
Teachers' understanding of English reading comprehension	Strategies for teaching English reading comprehension	Teachers as stakeholders	Paradoxical views on teaching reading comprehension	Factors influencing the teaching of English reading comprehension
CHAPTER 5: LITERATURE CONTROL and the FINDINGS				
Literature control				
Comparing results to existing knowledge: supportive evidence	Comparing results to existing know-ledge: contradictory evidence	Comparing results to existing knowledge: silences in literature	Comparing results to existing knowledge: new insights	
Answering of research questions (Chapter 5)				
Primary research questions	Secondary research question 1	Secondary research question 2	Secondary research question 3	Secondary research question 4

1.9   OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Overview and rationale

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In Chapter 1, the rationale and purpose of the study together with the background and context of the study are discussed. Along with this, the main and secondary research questions are presented. The chapter concludes with an introduction to the methodology to be followed to complete the study.

Chapter 2: Reading comprehension - investigating the literature

Chapter 2 is a platform where available literature regarding the teaching of reading comprehension in EFAL is discussed. The chapter is divided into five broad categories:

- teaching reading comprehension to language-minority learners;
- causes of poor reading comprehension;
- reading: assessments, evaluations and the reading process as a whole;
- assistance for teachers in teaching reading comprehension; and
- approaches to foster reading comprehension in EFAL.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

In Chapter 3, the research design and methods used are discussed in-depth as are the methodological and meta-theoretical paradigms; the applied research design adopted for this specific study and the choice of participants are justified. The chapter concludes with a description of the data collection techniques, data analysis and interpretation techniques.

Chapter 4: Results of the study

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the interpretation of the data which was analysed and interpreted from the chosen instruments.

Chapter 5: Literature control and the findings

Chapter 5 is linked to Chapter 4 in the sense that the findings from the study are now interpreted in relation to and compared with the existing literature on teaching reading comprehension in English as a FAL. Identified gaps in the literature and insight into the topic of teaching reading comprehension as an EFAL are highlighted in this chapter. This chapter will also serve as an over-arching summary of the study. The primary and secondary research questions are linked to the findings to evaluate the effectiveness of the study that was based on the stated purpose of the study as formulated in Chapter 1 (Section 5).

1.10   CONCLUSION

The process of acquiring reading comprehension can be linked to the transformation of "learning to read" to "reading to learn" (Harlaar *et al.*, 2007:116). Reading comprehension in

English as a FAL is a complex process that consists of many sub-processes like phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension (Ehri *et al.*, 2007:416). Decoding is another very important concept used in the process of meaning making when texts are read, especially in English as FAL (Long & Zimmerman, 2009:12*;* Gunning, 2010:8; Carnine, Silbert & Kame'enui, 1990:3; Grabe & Stoller, 2002:32). The importance of a learner's background knowledge should not be forgotten. Learners require their background knowledge to give attention to the main ideas of a text, to evaluate [information from the text] critically, to monitor comprehension and to make inferences (Van Kraayenoord, 2010:286).

The acquisition of English as the FAL goes through many stages and the learner has to face many challenges. Learners will only be able to comprehend texts read, once they have established a vocabulary data base from which they can gather meaning (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986:72; Nagy, 2003:1). Teachers should assist learners in their development of this vocabulary data base. The study focuses on EFAL Grade 2 learners, furthermore, the study advocates the need to avoid just giving learners reading word lists without them understanding the essence of the passage. There are cases where teachers themselves have not been trained in the effective teaching of reading comprehension in English as a FAL (Klapwijk, 2015:2). Another concern is that there are many different factors that can cause poor reading comprehension among learners of English as a FAL and all learners can encounter them (Ghonsooly & Loghmani, 2012: 334; De Witt, 2009:108; Prinsloo, 2009: 34). These internal or external barriers to poor reading comprehension can be identified and treated appropriately with the aim of assisting learners to overcome the respective barriers.

South Africa is proud to be known as a rainbow nation. However, along with the presence of multiculturalism comes a host of different languages. Although learners are free to use their HL at home or when conversing with family members and friends who understand them, the LoLT in South African schools is predominantly English (Department of Education: 1997). This poses a challenge to a multitude of EFAL learners. This study addresses the teaching of reading comprehension in EFAL in a South African context, within English independent schools. However, it is anticipated that the findings of this study could be implemented in other countries where English is also used as the LoLT within independent schools.

The ANA shows that the literacy skills of South African learners are below the average of their age groups. Nel and Adam (2014:52) confirm that "national and international assessment studies indicate that the reading achievement of South African learners is a major cause for concern". Learners' poor literacy results, in turn, have a direct effect on the school leaving Grade 12 matriculation results. Educational attainment has a ripple effect. In order to address

the poor performance of Grade 12 literacy results, the root of the problem needs to be addressed in the Foundation Phase of the country's education system. This is where the study aims to intervene and investigate teaching reading comprehension in English as a FAL to Grade 2 learners.

In Chapter 1, I explained the purpose and the rationale of the study. Concepts that are discussed throughout the study were explained. Furthermore, the chapters to follow in the study were outlined.

In the following chapter, the contextual, conceptual and theoretical backgrounds will be investigated by paying attention to what the literature states about these three backgrounds. Chapter 2 investigates the zone of proximal development (ZPD) as the theoretical framework, and discusses the role of the teacher during the reading process. Finally the chapter is concluded with the conceptual framework or reading comprehension.

Chapter 2

Contextual, conceptual and theoretical backgrounds:
investigating the literature

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a structured review of literature pertaining to teaching reading comprehension in English as a First Additional Language (FAL). The study is based on the application of contextual, conceptual and theoretical backgrounds. The contextual background includes relevant educational policy and educational practices. The conceptual background covers important aspects of teaching reading comprehension in EFAL covering language development, overcoming poor reading comprehension, approaches to teaching it, assessment and evaluation that aims to improve reading competence, suitable reading materials and finally, the teacher's role as an important facet of teaching reading skills. The chapter concludes by presenting the study's theory under the theoretical background section. The theoretical background comprises of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), the revised taxonomy (Krathwohl & Anderson, 2010:64) and the stages of reading which forms the conceptual framework.

2.1.1 The essence of reading comprehension

Reading comprehension in English as FAL has a number of components that have to be identified, before addressing the factors that contribute to a learners' ability, or lack of it, to gather meaning from texts (Han & Anderson, 2009:194). Essentially it can be defined as "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (Bernhardt, 2011:7). When examining its components, they are clearly seen to stem from a multifaceted and multidimensional process, which does not come as a natural process for all learners. Comprehending written text being read in English as FAL, is like learning a new skill. Some learners will be able to grasp the concepts of the skill quicker than other learners. However, each learner is a person-in-totality with specific physical, emotional, social and cognitive characteristics. The teaching of English reading comprehension needs to be so inclusive that all learners, irrespective of their abilities, will be able to achieve success in learning this skill. Moreover, Maslow's hierarchy of needs state that each person has basic needs that have to be satisfied before higher needs can be

fulfilled (Prinsloo, 2009:34). Developmental aspects can therefore lead to learners having to face barriers to learning reading skills through effective strategies.

Various strategies for enhancing the teaching reading comprehension in English as a FAL are examined with an emphasis on the acquisition of vocabulary and the importance of establishing background knowledge to which learners can refer in the process of constructing meaning from a passage read. The three over-arching approaches identified are the bottom-up approach, the top-down approach and the interactive approach as detailed in 2.3.3.1 is part of the conceptual background.

On a theoretical level, there are numerous language development theories, the most notable being those developed by Piaget, Vygotsky and Skinner. These theories outline the underlying principles and beliefs about ways to teach English as a FAL. Phatudi (2014:3) maintains that this includes reading comprehension which, in Grade 2 classroom practice, depends on the learner's reading level, together with the reading material provided. One of the teacher's responsibilities is to ensure that the reading material is on the same level as the learner's reading level to stimulate enthusiasm and provide enough space for growth in their reading ability. Giving a learner reading material that is either too easy or too difficult can be detrimental to the development of effective reading comprehension (Prinsloo, 2009:32).

The National Reading Panel highlights five aspects of language that are very important in the development of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Following Bernhardt (2011:13), the importance and influence of each of these components in the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL will be explored in this study. Finally, the role of the reading comprehension facilitator (RCF) is analysed in Section 4.4. The RCF is the Grade 2 teacher who uses English reading comprehension strategies to teach learners to read.

Extensive support for the effective teaching of reading skills in English as FAL is viewed as a means to support teachers by suggesting ways to improve their teaching. Teachers are offered various assessment strategies to employ for assessing a learner's word recognition skills, reading level, reading age and reading comprehension. Teachers can be guided through the entire reading process of reading, starting with 'before reading' progressing to 'during reading' and ending with 'after reading' (Klapwijk, 2015; Burt & Ridgard, 2014:4).

2.2 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1 Assessment policy for reading curriculum

As mentioned earlier, the relationship between reading and reading comprehension is directly proportional, meaning that the quality and quantity of reading comprehension is bound to improve as the quality and quantity of reading is increased. Reading is of little value if there is no understanding (Joubert *et al.,* 2015:101). Reading, and eventually reading comprehension, are skills that will only improve with enough practice. Reading "is a message-getting, problem-solving activity, which increases in power and flexibility the more it is practised" (Joubert *et al.*, 2015:101). Literature supports the notion that reading comprehension depends on the ability to read effectively from an early age (Klapwijk, 2015:1).

The Annual National Assessment (ANA) "was introduced by President Jacob Zuma during his second State of the Nation Address held on 11 February 2010" (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga quotes President Zuma's description of the ANA in the release of 2014's ANA test results as follows: "ANA is a tool that will allow all Grade 3, Grade 6 and Grade 9 learners to write literacy and numeracy tests which will be moderated independently" (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

On a national level, the ANA determines the reading achievement of South African learners and this is done internationally through the Progress in International Reading Literacy Skills (PIRLS) assessment. "PIRLS is an international assessment of reading comprehension at the fourth grade that has been conducted every five years since 2001" (Mullis, Martin, Foy & Drucker, 2012:15). It is no secret that "national and international assessment studies indicate that the reading achievement of South African learners is a major cause for concern" (Nel & Adam, 2014:52).

Although the PIRLS assessment in reading comprehension only starts in Grade 4 in the United States of America (US), in South Africa the foundation to reading comprehension must be laid before a learner reaches Grade 4 in the Foundation Phase (FP). Reading is crucial in the development of learning. Nel and Adam (2014:52) state that "reading is not simply an additional tool that students need at university [or school]; it constitutes the very process whereby learning occurs". Furthermore,

> "more than any other skill, the ability to read is fundamental to successfully navigating the school curriculum. Moreover, it is central to shaping each individual's trajectory through life, his or her economic wellbeing, and the ability to actively and fully participate in broader society" (Mullis *et al.,* 2012:11).

2.2.2 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements for the Foundation Phase

The current FP curriculum in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), is designed in a manner that allows for progression from one grade to another. According to Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016:1), "CAPS was designed to provide a more structured and sequenced approach to literacy instruction, explicitly articulating pacing, time on task and learning outcomes". CAPS is the follow-up curriculum from outcomes based education (OBE) (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016:1). Apart from the adapted curriculum, there have been other measurement put in place as aliteracy in general and, more specifically reading comprehension, was identified as a problem in the South Africa. Learning Programmes were implemented in 2008 to guide teachers in the teaching of literacy (ibid.).[2]

Since CAPS is a progressive curriculum, the knowledge, skills and values obtained in the previous year are built on so that, in a learner's current and future years of education, learning will improve. It is expected that by the time learners reach Grade 3, they will have mastered the basic skills of reading, writing and speaking in their home language (HL) and can then transfer these skills to an additional language (Singh, 2010:116). Grade 3 teachers can assist in this progression to ensure that the transition from "learning to read" (Harlaar *et al.*, 2007:116) to "reading to learn" (ibid,) in Grade 4 is made easier (Long & Zimmerman, 2009). In the light of this study, strategies Grade 2 teachers can use to assist EFAL FP learners to foster reading comprehension in practice are identified.

Part of the general aims of the South African Curriculum is to ensure progression from the simple to complex (Department of Education, 2012:4). According to CAPS, there are many learners in South Africa who start using EFAL in Grade 4 as an academic language. Since CAPS works in a step-by-step manner, learners should reach a "high level of competence in English by the end of Grade 3, and they need to be able to read and write well in English" (Department of Education, 2012:8). To make this possible, progress must be visible right through the Foundation Phase, which is from Grade 1 right through to Grade 3.

The notion of progression is explored even further by CAPS in the reading and viewing component of literacy instruction. In Grades R and 1, much emphasis is placed on teaching learners to communicate in EFAL through oral language in preparation of learning to read and write in EFAL. Thereafter, in Grades 2 and 3, a learner's literacy skills in EFAL should be extended through having a wide vocabulary in EFAL. It is thus crucial that a great deal of time

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[2] Abbreviation used to refer to the same source, instead of repeating the same reference

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should be spent in developing language abilities in EFAL in the Foundation Phase. This prepares learners for being confident and competent EFAL language users in their later years of education (Department of Education, 2012:8).

Learning a new language or aspects of it, is no easy task. For learners to be taught reading comprehension in English as an FAL, there are certain aspects that need to be looked at. Phatudi (2014:7) highlights that language consists of four systems, "phonology (sounds), semantics (meaning), syntax (sentence formation) and pragmatics (use)". Language can only be learned once all these systems have been developed and integrated. The South African curriculum, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), has been designed around these four systems. The CAPS ensures that all four of these systems are embraced to ensure successful teaching and learning of a language. The four systems which CAPS outlines are listening and speaking, reading and viewing and writing and handwriting. The last system, namely thinking and reasoning and language structure and use is integrated into the above systems of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Department of Education, 2012:8).

2.2.3 Literacy levels of learners in South Africa

The teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL in the FP is a challenge. In South African classrooms there are learners from various cultures and languages (Joubert *et al.,* 2015:17) from diverse backgrounds. Since the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is English and is different to the learners' HL, learners often experience a language barrier between what the teacher has actually said and what was implied. Teachers assist learners with the text to be read by going through it with them to explain its meaning to ensure comprehension. However learners lack knowledge and insight regarding the vocabulary and background knowledge necessary to comprehend it (Macaro, 2003:123). The general low literacy standard of South African learners is a real concern.

In this regard, Long and Zimmerman (2009:10) state that
> "when compared with international data, South Africa lags behind in introducing these higher order skills such as comparing text with personal experience, comparing different texts, and making predictions about what will happen next" (Long and Zimmerman, 2009:10).

Even more frightening is the reality of the state of South Africa's literacy: "Of the number of learners enrolled in Grade 2, only half make it to Grade 12" (Modisaotsile, 2012:1). In the words of Long and Zimmerman (2009:11),

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"if one considers the poor levels of reading literacy development displayed by South African learners in the PIRLS 2011 assessment, it is of absolute necessity to consider potential reasons for this in order to assist in the development of targeted interventions aimed at addressing the improvement of learners' reading literacy (including reading comprehension) at all levels of the education system" (Long and Zimmerman, 2009:11).

Knowing what the level of South African learners' literacy is, I will attempt to identify strategies for effective instruction of English reading comprehension for Grade 2 EFAL learners.

The literature available on reading comprehension performance in South Africa is about the need to improve learners' performance in reading comprehension. The way in which reading comprehension in EFAL is taught at schools is not sufficient and needs to change (Klapwijk, 2015; Klapwijk & Pretorius, 2016; Janse van Rensburg, 2016). Teachers are able to teach learners how to read in EFAL classes. However, learners are not guided to apply the knowledge and insight gained to the process of reading and understanding a text. Learners need to read with insight to be able to progress from learning to read to reading to learn. Learners, parents and teachers alike get frustrated when task after task, learners seem to lose interest in a text being read in EFAL due to inadequate comprehension of what they read.

2.3 CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

2.3.1 Language development theories

2.3.1.1 The role of language development theories

There are a number of important language development theories to consider that concern the teaching of reading comprehension in English as an FAL. The work of three influential language theorists, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and Skinner is tabled (Table 2.1) to show their influence in the classroom situation (Phatudi, 2014:3). These theories were important during my observations when I specifically noticed how EFAL learners learn to understand what they were reading and how the classroom situation can be created for learning.

Table 2.1:   Exploring language theories developed by various language theorists (Phatudi, 2014:3)

Language theorist	Language theory	Influence	Influence in classroom situation
Jean Piaget	Cognitive constructivism	Individuals gain knowledge through experience, by means of self-discovery and hands-on-experience. Learners learn a language through assimilation and accommodation. Meaning making starts with the concrete and gradually moves to the abstract.	Learning environment should be inviting and encourage active learning. Learning stations in classroom should lure learners for self-discovery. Items in the classroom should be labelled, to promote incidental reading. Classroom should be print-rich.
Lev Vygotsky	Social constructivism	Language is learned by talking and listening to teachers and learners. Language of others is "internalised" (Phatudi, 2014:4). The role of the more knowledgeable other is very important in order to ensure scaffolding to take place. Learning takes place through interaction with others and constructing knowledge based on the interaction with others.	The learning environment should allow for learners to practise new ideas in a new language. Although the teacher is important to scaffold learner's learning, the teacher should step back to ensure the learner is able to practice new ideas on their own.
Skinner	Behaviourism	Learning is the result of habit forming. Behaviours are shaped according to the responses received; good responses will strengthen the behaviour and poor responses will supress the behaviour. This learning theory does not rely on knowledge processing to take place, rather learning is as a result of environmental stimuli.	Learners learn best when their responses are acknowledged. This will improve their learning behaviour. In the case that learners' responses are never acknowledged, they may develop negative attitudes to learning.

2.3.1.2 The role of background knowledge in reading

Considerable research (Konza, 2006:2; Macara, 2003:123) has been done to determine the extent to which background knowledge of a topic affects comprehension and a number of

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conclusions can be drawn from these findings. More has to be done before it can be "categorically stated" (Macaro, 2003:123) that background knowledge makes comprehension easier. This scholar contends that the aspect which makes reading comprehension challenging could entail the kind of topic itself or the readers' linguistic knowledge. A very interesting point mentioned is that readers may end up not using their background knowledge as a strategy to deduce meaning from the text is not applied even though readers may have more than enough background knowledge relating to a topic. The aspect of background knowledge comes into play when a reader has broad background knowledge of a topic, but struggles to use bottom-up approaches to reading comprehension. In this case, "effective use of prior knowledge can result in very effective working memory management when aspects of the text give the reader problems" (Macaro, 2003:127).

2.3.1.3 Reading comprehension in English as FAL in the South African context

EFAL learners are "language minority learners" (Ehri *et al.*, 2007:419; Biemiller, 1999). This term refers to when a language other than the LoLT (Department of Education) is used by learners at home (Nel, 2009:150). These learners' abilities to use English as a FAL may be limited for everyday use, but developed well enough to gain knowledge and understanding from classroom instruction where English is used as the LoLT (Ehri *et al.*, 2007:419). Language minority learners (Ehri *et al.*, 2007:419; Biemiller, 1999) face greater challenges in reading and comprehending texts than English as FAL learners. The latter group need to achieve the same skills in English as is the case in their HL. Nel (2009:150) continues to provide statistics about the eleven official languages recognised in South Africa. "The constitution makes provision for the language rights of all citizens [keeping in mind that] the official language in most of the schools is English" (Nel, 2009:150). There are, however difficulties, for EFAL learners. Nel (2009:151) states that EFAL learners "acquire talking and communicating abilities differently to learners whose HL is English".

In South Africa (SA) EFAL learners can be enrolled in schools where the LoLT is English because their parents wish them to have an education of higher quality, as it is believed to unlock more opportunities in their future lives. Alternatively, learners can find themselves in these schools due to "uncontrollable circumstances" (Nel, 2009:150), such as in the areas where the families live or where there is a shortage of schools where the LoLT is the same as learners HL. In Gunning's opinion, all learners are able to learn to read provided they receive optimal instruction (Gunning, 2010:19). He emphasises that the problem to be faced is not that learners cannot read but that the learners battle to comprehend what they have read. Learners are quick to "sail through word lists and read oral passages flawlessly with good

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expression" (Gunning, 2010:70). Furthermore, learners are able to decode the words, but they struggle to comprehend what they have just read (Dewitz & Dewitz, 2003:422).

The purpose of investigating teaching strategies to promote English reading comprehension of Grade 2 FAL learners in the South African context, is to provide a framework for assisting Grade 2 teachers in South Africa to support language minority learners (Ehri *et al.*, 2007:419; Biemiller, 1999). Learners need to be introduced to strategies that foster comprehension as it "enables the transfer of knowledge from one situation to another. Understanding allows flexibility and promotes meaning making." (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006:24). Understanding texts better, will allow learners to relate to the text and have an in-depth understanding of how it relates to their prior knowledge. Research concerning the teaching of English reading comprehension to Grade 2 learners has been done in many parts of the world. However, this study focuses on learners in the South African context which is strongly influenced by the fact that multiple cultural and language backgrounds are frequently represented among learners in one class.

2.3.1.4 The role of inclusion in teaching reading comprehension in South Africa

The role of the teacher is further explored as a facilitator who makes inclusion possible. Swart and Pettipher (2009:3) points out that the meaning of inclusion in the classroom signifies that every learner is seen as an individual who should be respected, accommodated and valued. Furthermore, Swart and Pettipher (2009:3) reinforces the notion that learners should not be discriminated against due to race, disability, poverty or illness. Inclusion links to the idea that learners should have the best possible learning environment that suits them with the necessary resources being available (Swart & Pettipher, 2009:3). Multi-level teaching (Engelbrecht & Swanepoel, 2013:38) is defined as an "instructional model in which teachers design one lesson on the same topic that every learner in the class can work on together at his or her unique level of ability to access the curriculum at a specific time". This implies that the teacher should adapt the reading material according to learners' various levels of reading ability as a way to assist in the teaching of reading comprehension in English as a FAL. Inclusion is seen as a major part of the CAPS curriculum as expressed in its general aims when it maintains that:

> "inclusion should become a central part of the organisation, planning and teaching at each school. This can only happen if all teachers have a sound understanding of how to recognise and address barriers to learning, and how to plan for diversity" (DoE, 2012:5).

Learners will also benefit from learning opportunities and experiences created by the teacher to complement reading instruction and its comprehension in English as a FAL. Examples could include taking learners for an appropriate educational outing to a zoo, a circus, a supermarket or a nursery to illustrate the central theme of the reading material. This will allow learners to create background knowledge and gather information which they can refer back to when they are dealing with the written material. Moreover, such an opportunity will enable a learner who has never been to such a location to have a frame of reference for the context of the reading extract.

2.3.2 Causes of poor reading comprehension

Reading comprehension comprises three 'pillars' that include:

> "the ability to read words, the ability to comprehend language, and the ability to access background and topical knowledge relevant to specific texts. When these three 'pillars' are in place, the natural outflow will be successful reading comprehension" (O'Connor & Jenkins, 2002:1).

Stanovich (1986) is very exact about what will happen if the support structures are not in place: "Weakness anywhere in the system can spell trouble for growth in the other foundation skills and for reading development". Failure to read, leads to problems with reading comprehension. This has an avalanche effect.

Barr *et al.,* (2012:107) explain what happens when learners "cannot read well". Not being able to read well, leads to developing a dislike in reading. Reading then becomes laboured and unsatisfying. Reading becomes an effort and learners read less. "When learners do not read much, they become unfamiliar with the vocabulary, sentence structure, text organization, and concepts of academic or conversational written language". Finally, learners' "comprehension skills fall further behind, because they do not read, and they also become poor spellers" (Barr *et al.*, 2010:107).

In summary, there are a number of causes of poor reading comprehension. They range from reading material that is too difficult to learners being forced to read material which is above or below their reading ability and to reading anxiety within learners. Literature suggests that there are very useful ways in which these causes of poor reading comprehension can be addressed to ensure that all learners are able to read and understand the gist of the text. This study investigates whether some of these causes occur in the classes of the participants in this sample used for this study.

2.3.2.1 Reading cues within challenging reading material

Oczkus (2009) introduces twenty-five ways to engage learners and improve their comprehension. Joubert *et al.,* (2015:135) explore some of these ways that enable learners to give the text read meaning. Learners are likely to come across challenging reading material, which may hamper their understanding of the text if they are not familiar with key words from the passage. In the case where learners are taught to read using the bottom-up approach, they can use the knowledge gathered to decode unfamiliar words. However, there will be learners who are not familiar with the bottom-up approach to reading. Joubert *et al.,* (2015:135) discusses reading cues that can be used to "analyse and comprehend written test". The reading cues include semantic cues, syntactical cues, contextual cues, visual-phonetic images and picture cues (Oczkus, 2009).

Semantic cues (Oczkus, 2009), as Joubert *et al.,* (2015:135) explain, refer to the meaning linked to specific words, phrases or sentences. This clue requires learners to picture the object the word represents in their minds, then to link the word to the picture. An example of this type of clue is the word *a-p-p-l-e*. A learner could ask the teacher what this word means. The teacher responds until the learner is familiar with the meaning of the written word *a-p-p-l-e*. Once the learner has a picture of an apple in their mind the association of word and picture becomes meaningful - *a-p-p-l-e* with an apple (Joubert *et al.,* 2015:135).

Syntactical cues (Oczkus, 2009) refer to "the grammatical arrangements of words" (Joubert *et al.,* 2015:135). If a learner reads a phrase but misses one word, often the meaning can be deduced from the missed word, based on the context of the other words in the sentence. Example: *"The dog chases his own tail".* If the learner reads all the words except 'his', he will be able to fill in the missing word by using the context of the sentence as a guide to find the word he missed (Joubert *et al.,* 2015:135).

Contextual cues (Oczkus, 2009) refer to setting the context for deducing the meaning of words in a sentence. Example*: "The pig pushed its snout in the mud"*. The learner should also know that he/she cannot read 'nose' instead of snout, since a pig has a snout and not a nose (Joubert *et al.,* 2015:135). Visual-phonetic images refer to the shape the letters of a word form. Learners use their knowledge of phonics combined with the shape of the word to help them "unlock the word" (Joubert *et al.,* 2015:135). Once the first and last letter of the word is in place, learners may find it easier to decipher the word and associate the meaning to the word. Picture cues refer to the pictures that should complement the text. Cases where learners are unfamiliar with the meaning or pronunciation of a word, they can look at a picture for cues (Joubert *et al.,* 2015:135) to visualise the word.

2.3.2.2 Grading reading material according to the Fry graph

Reading material given to learners should correlate with their age and their ability to read. When reading material given to learners is beyond their reading ability, teachers should scaffold it to help them reach the desired level of performance within the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Gunning (2010:106) explains that if the teacher selects reading material that is too easy, an injustice to the learner results, whereas choosing reading material that is too difficult, could lead to the learner starting to really dislike reading. "Learners should know at least 95% of the words in the material they are asked to read. Furthermore, learners should have about 75% comprehension" (Gunning, 2010:107) of the words read. The level of reading material is calculated using Fry's graph for estimating readability (Gunning, 2010:108). This readability estimate requires the teacher to count the first 100 words of a passage and then estimate the readability according to it after determining and indicating the average number of sentences per hundred words. Thereafter, the number of syllables per 100 words is calculated. Using these two indicators, the teacher should be able to determine the readability of the text per grade using the graph.

According to the Fry Graph (Gunning, 2010:108), normal Grade 2 reading material should have an average of ten sentences per 100 words, and an average of 120 syllables per 100 words. Learners should be comfortable with the reading material they are given and be able to manage it. If it is far beyond their ability, it is the teacher's responsibility to then adapt the material appropriately. On the other hand, if learners are handed reading material that is below their ability to read, learners get frustrated and bored and might start causing chaos in a class (Dednam, 2009:132). There are further procedures which the teacher can follow to determine the learners' word recognition and reading comprehension as a percentage (Dednam, 2009:133) but these are irrelevant in this discussion.

2.3.2.3 Teachers' distance from comprehension instruction

Klapwijk (2015:2) investigates possible reasons for the non-engagement of teachers in comprehension instruction. Some answers worthy of mention include a lack of teacher education in teaching reading comprehension strategies. Teacher training and development seems focus "on reading instruction and teaching learners to decode words" (Klapwijk, 2015:2). Another reason why teachers seem to disengage with reading comprehension instruction, is the fact that "becoming a comprehension strategy instruction teacher is painfully difficult" (Klapwijk, 2015:2). Teachers believe that challenges learners face in linguistic development, be it reading, writing or comprehending, should be addressed only by the language teacher. Klapwijk (2015:3) emphasises the point that it is every teacher's

responsibility to ensure the linguistic development of learners, regardless of the subject they teach. Learners cannot be expected to read any text within any subject, without understanding its essence.

2.3.2.4 The role of reading fluency in teaching reading comprehension

Fluency plays a vital role in reading comprehension. A learner who is reading at frustration level, will have very poor reading fluency, which, in turn, will influence reading comprehension as well. Pikulski and Chard (2005:510) define fluency as "the freedom from word identification problems that might hinder comprehension" and comment that "fluency has been shown to have a 'reciprocal relationship' with comprehension, with each fostering the other". Pikulski and Chard (2005:517) elaborate on the importance of fluency in the development of reading comprehension by stating that. "[In the case of] a reader who has not developed fluency, the process of decoding words drain attention, and insufficient attention is available for constructing the meaning of texts". The assertion made is that fluency and reading comprehension depend on each other: "Fluency without accompanying high levels of reading comprehension is of very limited value" (Pikulski and Chard, 2005:518).

2.3.2.5   Reading anxiety

With regard to reading anxiety, emotional factors such as fear, need to be taken into account. Since "anxiety can be found in all aspects of linguistic development" (Ghonsooly & Loghmani, 2012:334), all learners and teachers should be made aware of its reality. In fact, they assert that reading anxiety becomes one of the major emotional barriers foreign language learners have to face. This study suggests that Grade 2 EFAL learners could face the same emotional barrier when learning reading comprehension strategies.

The concept of reading anxiety was first introduced by Zbornik and Wallbrown in 1991, which Ghonsooly and Loghmani (2012:334) point out that it "represents a specific aspect of general anxiety that has been invested in the reading process". Two possible sources of potential anxiety in FAL learners are identified as unfamiliar texts and writing systems, and unfamiliar cultural material. Other factors which can also cause anxiety in FAL learners on a personal level such as the level of "competitiveness, learner beliefs, teacher's comments on the learner's performance, fear of negative evaluation" (ibid.) and classroom routine.

2.3.2.6 Affective, cognitive and contextual factors contributing to poor reading comprehension

The learning of English as a FAL can only take place effectively once additional factors such as the affective factors, cognitive factors and contextual factors have acted together. A learner can consequently, only learn reading comprehension strategies once a solid language foundation is in place as a point of reference. Background knowledge and knowledge about English as a language are needed for learners to achieve results in reading comprehension. Phatudi's (2014:41) explanations of these factors are tabled in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Additional factors influencing the learning of English as a first additional language

Factor to learning English as FAL	Implication on the learning of English as FAL
Affective factors	Learners' emotional states have an implication on how well and quickly learners are able to acquire English as FAL. These factors include the learner's level of confidence and attitude in learning English as FAL. "Negative emotions and attitudes" (Phatudi, 2014:41) which learners may experience regarding the learning of English as FAL, may act as a barrier preventing learners from acquiring the respective language.
Cognitive factors	Phatudi (2014:41) stresses that "a learner's mental or intellectual ability plays a role in language learning". Furthermore, a learner who is believed to be intelligent is not always the learners who acquired the language the fastest. Gardner highlights the eight types of intelligences. One of these intelligences is "linguistic intelligence" which implies that a learner with this intelligence, is likely to acquire English [as FAL] quicker than a learner with another dominant intelligence.
Contextual or situational factors	The theory of input associated with Krashen (1982), states that the "structural linguistic input that the learner receives at school" (Phatudi, 2014:42) plays a role in learners' ability to acquire an additional language, this case being English a FAL. The "comprehensibility of learning material" (Phatudi, 2014:42) will determine how much of what learners have been exposed to, has been a benefit in assisting with the comprehension of the learning material. The level at which the learning material is presented to learners, is also very important to ensure the effective comprehension of learning material (Phatudi, 2014:42). Finally, the relevance of learning material presented to learners, can either benefit or hamper learners' acquisition of English as FAL (Phatudi, 2014:42).

2.3.2.7 External and internal barriers that influence language development

Learners' language development can be influenced by a variety of internal and external barriers (De Witt, 2009:108). External barriers to language development can be identified as factors around the learner. These barriers include the environment, education systems and educative methods, socio-economic status, a good model, experience and physical factors (ibid.).

Internal barriers to linguistic development refer to barriers within the learner that could hamper the linguistic development of a learner. They include a learner's maturation, intelligence, motivation and personality. Table 2.3 presents the external barriers as well as their influence on learners' language development (ibid.). The barriers to the development of language are applicable to the development of the HL and the LoLT, especially in this study where the emphasis is on teaching reading comprehension in English as a FAL.

Table 2.3: An explanation of learner's external barriers to language development

External barriers to language development	Influence to learners' linguistic development
Environment	A learner's home language is learned through the use of communicating with family members at home or away from the educational setting if the HL is different to the LoLT. The LoLT is learned through the use of the specific language used for learning and teaching in the school environment.
Education situation	The manner in which parents communicate with their children, can influence the learner's linguistic development. The manner in which parents communicate with their children forms a relationship. The nature of the relationship can either hamper or enhance the learner's language development.
Educative methods	This refers to the degree in which educators explain content to learners. If teachers are too prescriptive in their explanations and expectations, a learner's confidence and consequently their language development can be hampered. This could also influence the degree to which a learner shows initiative and grows their creativity.
Socio-economic status	On the one hand, De Witt (2009:108) states that parents "from a middle socio-economic class tend to help and support their children more, which may lead to learners' increased understanding of underlying principles and meanings of communication". On the other hand, parents from a lower socio-economic class "communicate with their children in a more prescriptive and demanding manner" (De Witt, 2009:108). This may result in a decrease in the creativity and displays of initiative a learner feels free to show. Ultimately, the

External barriers to language development	Influence to learners' linguistic development
	learner's linguistic development could regress instead of progress. *(continues overleaf)*
A good model	The teacher must be a good model worth following, by ensuring attention is paid to the correct pronunciation of words, using words especially descriptive words in the correct context.
Experience	The manner in which "the child's thinking is actualised" (De Witt, 2009:108) is just as important as the vocabulary and language used to communicate with people around the child. De Witt (2009:108) emphasises the point that the "environment in which the learner experiences language is very important. [Furthermore] the learner should be given opportunity to practise speech to ensure interest is not lost".
Physical factors	De Witt (2009:108) makes specific reference to the "maturation of the speech organs in order for the learner's speech and linguistic development to take place. Furthermore, the learner's physical condition is also important for language acquisition to take place".

Table 2.4 presents the internal barriers as well as its influence to learners' language development according to De Witt (2009:108).

Table 2.4: An explanation of a learner's internal barriers to language development

Internal barriers to language development	Influence on a learner's linguistic development
Maturation	De Witt (2009:109) explains that the "maturation of the brain and related neurological systems, is a condition necessary for language and speech development".
Intelligence	Although it is a dangerous assumption to make, De Witt (2009:109) states that the more intelligent child is likely to speak before that of the less intelligent child. Intelligence thus is likely to effect on the rate at which linguistic development takes place.
Motivation	Opportunities should be created to encourage the learner to speak. Learners should also know that they will be listened to when they do speak. Phatudi (2014:32) asserts that intrinsic motivation is very important for learning a new

Internal barriers to language development	Influence on a learner's linguistic development
	language. Language should be enjoyed (Phatudi, 2014:32). "The motivation to learn a language is determined by the attitudes created towards learning the language and feelings of wanting to be integrated with the group of speakers of the language (Phatudi, 2014:32).
Personality *(continued)*	A child feeling safe and secure in their environment will speak sooner than a child with "personality and adjustment problems" (De Witt, 2009:109). A learner's personality has a direct influence on their ability to communicate with other people. "A self-conscious learner who is afraid of making mistakes, may find it difficult and threatening to communicate, [whereas]…a learner with an outgoing personality *(continues overleaf)* who never hesitates to speak to other people, may find communicating interesting" (Phatudi, 2014:23). Furthermore, Phatudi (2014:23) stressed that the manner in which language is presented, may either motivate or discourage the learner from attempting to learn it.
Listening and auditory skills	Learners' ability to concentrate can be hampered by problems with their auditory and visual perception. "The ability to concentrate and to process what has been heard is a good indicator that one has the ability to learn a language" (Phatudi, 2014:23).
Memory skills	Learners' ability to retain information will influence their ability to learn a new language. Visual memory and auditory memory can be enhanced through simple games and exercises such as "teaching rhymes, poems and songs in the additional language" (Phatudi, 2014:24).

2.3.3 Approaches to teach reading comprehension in English as FAL

2.3.3.1 Approaches to foster English reading comprehension

Through reviewing literature on strategies of instruction to promote the reading comprehension of Grade 2 EFAL learners, various strategies were identified. Although the strategies are not only unique to EFAL, they are included in the teaching and learning of language as a whole. These strategies can be categorised into three broad approaches namely the top-down approach, the bottom-up approach and the interactive approach. The characteristics of these three approaches are compared (Table 2.5).

The top-down approach to fostering reading comprehension, also known as the whole language approach (Long & Zimmerman, 2008:12), "refers to… the students' prior information and expectations [which] help them to construct meaning from a reading text" (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2013:238). In essence,

> "the focus is on how whole text is accessed and understood by the learner. The reader
> samples words and strings of words, predicting and inferring the meaning underlying

them. Meaning can only be activated by accessing prior semantic, syntactic and discourse knowledge" (Long & Zimmerman, 2008:12).

The top-down approach is a quicker approach to foster reading comprehension and learners can cover more text in a shorter time.

"It is not necessary for a reader to read all of the vocabulary and sentences in the text or read the context, word by word, but rather selects certain vocabularies and phrases to comprehend the meaning of the text and some key words can help the reader to recognise the text quickly" (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2013:238).

Table 2.5: Characteristics of three different approaches to reading instruction

Criteria	Top-down approach	Bottom-up approach	Interactive approach
Alternative naming	Whole language approach	Phonological processing approach	No alternative naming
Aspects being referred to	Learner's prior information and expectations	Build comprehension from the basics of language	Reading process supported by an interaction between the text information and learner's background
Focus	The manner in which the text is accessed and understood by the learner	Learning names and shapes of the letters of the alphabet	Decoding and integrating background knowledge
Advantages	Quicker to foster comprehension, learners can read more text in a shorter period of time	Makes learning to read easier by breaking challenging activities into smaller steps and skills	Suitable for all learners
Criticism	Over dependence on reader's background, learners are not taught how to make sense of words unknown to them	Reading goes through a mechanical pattern, it can slow the reading process down, lastly, learners rely on short term memory too much	No criticism found as yet

Criticism against this approach stresses "over reliance on a reader's background linguistic and conceptual information and [the tendency to] ignore the importance of the text. Moreover, this approach does not teach learners ways to 'decipher' text which is unknown to the reader" (ibid.).

The bottom-up approach, also known as the phonological processing approach (Long & Zimmerman, 2008:12) "expects learners to first decode individual letters and words before

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there is any focus on comprehension" (Long & Zimmerman, 2008:12). This approach suggests that learners start building their way to reading comprehension from the basics of language. "The bottom-up model shows that the reading process is supported by each word in the text and a learner decodes each word to understand the meaning" (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2013: 238). This process starts by teaching learners to "learn the names and shapes of the letters of the alphabet. Next, learners learn consonant sounds, followed by simple and then more complex vowel correspondences" (Gunning, 2010:8). Basically, "bottom-up procedures are intended to make learning to read easier by breaking complex tasks into their component skills. Instructions proceed from the simple to the complex" (Gunning, 2010:8; Carnine, Silbert & Kame'enui, 1990:3).

When taking a closer look at the bottom-up approach to reading comprehension, decoding words play a very important role in encouraging reading comprehension. However, the:

> "bottom-up [approach] has been criticised that, all reading goes through a mechanical pattern in which the reader should translate a piece-by-piece mental information in the passage/passages, with little interference from his/her own background knowledge" (Grabe & Stoller, 2002:32).

Furthermore, Ahmadi *et al.,* (2013:239) explain that "decoding word by word" can slow the reading process down as "learners rely on their short term memory too much, which can cause this to be overloaded with information" (ibid).

Apart from the top-down and bottom-up approaches to fostering reading comprehension, Ahmadi *et al.,* (2013:238) and Long and Zimmerman (2009:12) explain that there is a third approach, the interactive model.

> This "refers to the reading process which is supported by an interaction between the text information and the learner's background knowledge as well as interaction between different types of metacognitive reading strategies" (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2013:238).

2.3.3.2 Exploring top-down strategies to fostering reading comprehension

The four main top-down reading comprehension strategies Gunning (2010:312) identifies are preparational, organisational, elaborational and metacognitive strategies. After learners have received the text and read it, the teacher proceeds to:

> "prepare learners to construct meaning, by paraphrasing, summarising, clustering related words, noting and using the structure of the text. Furthermore, it includes

previewing the text, activation of prior knowledge, setting a purpose and goals and making predictions" (ibid.).

Organisational strategies "involve comprehending the main idea, identifying the main details, sequencing and organising events, following directions and summarising" (ibid.). Elaborational strategies require learners to build associations "between information being read and prior information or integrating information by manipulating or transforming it" (ibid.). Finally, metacognitive strategies require learners to "be aware of their comprehension, and regulating it" (ibid.).

2.3.3.3 Alternative top-down strategies

Apart from the four comprehension strategies identified by Gunning (2010:312), Van Krayenoord (2010), Cross and Paris (1988:133) Palincsar (1986) and Palincsar and Brown (1988), Guthrie *et al.,* (2004), discuss alternative top-down approach strategies to foster reading comprehension. These are titled Informed Strategies to Learning (ISL), Reciprocal Teaching (RT), Direct Explanation of Strategies (DES), Transactional Strategy Instruction (TSI) and Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR). For the purpose of this review, only ISL and RT will be discussed very briefly.

The strategy ISL assists learners to promote comprehension by teaching them strategy-specific skills that include "understanding the purposes of reading, activating background knowledge, allocating attention to the main ideas, evaluating critically, monitoring comprehension and making inferences" (Van Kraayenoord, 2010:286). Different kinds of cognitive knowledge create awareness of comprehension and are "declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge" (Cross & Paris, 1988:133; Ahmadi *et al*., 2013:237) that are used in reading and understanding.

Reciprocal teaching (RT) was designed with the core objective to teach learners to "monitor their comprehension as teachers could use four specific strategies to that allowed them to comprehend text by predicting, questioning, summarising and clarifying, according to Van Kraayenoord (2010:287); Yang (2010); Palincsar and Brown (1988); and Lundberg and Reichenberg (2013:89).

i) Minor top-down strategies

Three minor strategies that can also be used to foster comprehension are DES, TSI and CSR. DES differs from the other two in the sense that teachers "use direct explanation of strategies in teaching learners to become better comprehenders" (Van Kraayenoord, 2010:288).

Alternatively, Van Kraayenoord, (2010:288) explains that learners are "taught to make links with prior knowledge, make and confirm predictions, summarize, and re-read [text]" as a manner to comprehend what has been read. The CSR strategy is closely related to the TSI strategy. Here, learners look at the text as a whole, where after they predict, evaluate their predictions by monitoring their understanding of the text, and finally identify the main areas of the text. "Learners learn to preview the text, monitor comprehension and use fix-up strategies, identify the main ideas by restating them, and summarize the text" (Van Kraayenoord, 2010:288).

ii) The concept-orientated reading instruction strategy (CORI)

The concept-orientated reading instruction (CORI) strategy is "an instructional model that merges reading strategy instruction, conceptual knowledge in science and support for student motivation" (Guthrie *et al.*, 2004: ix; Van Kraayenoord, 2010:288). The CORI programme is designed with the aim of not only fostering reading comprehension, but also motivating learners to develop an "intrinsic motivation to read" (Guthrie *et al.*, 2004: ix).

The strategies taught in the CORI model teach learners to "activate background knowledge, ask questions, search for information, summarise and organise [information]" (Guthrie *et al.*, 2004:13; Van Kraayenoord, 2010:288). The CORI model accommodates both "language minority learners" (Ehri *et al.*, 2007:419; Biemiller, 1999) as well as struggling learners by working in smaller groups. "Within these 'small groups', [struggling] learners are assisted with "oral reading fluency, simpler strategy instruction and bridging from text to response" (Guthrie *et al.*, 2004:19).

The CORI model emphasises the importance of reading fluently. Learners cannot be taught comprehension strategies, if they are not able to read a passage with relative fluency. "[In order to teach comprehension strategies], learners must, in one reading, be able to read a page of text with sufficient fluency to get the main idea relatively well" (Guthrie *et al.*, 2004:174). The CORI model lends itself very well to language minority learners (Ehri *et al.*, 2007:419; Biemiller, 1999) and struggling learners.

iii) Four blocks and guided reading strategies

Strategies used to foster reading comprehension expand further than the strategies already mentioned. The four blocks approach "consists of four separate sections, "guided reading", "writing", "self-selected reading" and "working with words" (Kramer, 2000:13), which are the

different basic components of a literacy programme that are reading, writing, speaking and listening to equip learners with reading comprehension abilities.

Guided reading will be discussed as the only one of the four blocks that applies to this study. This block entails "pre-reading (5-10 minutes), followed by the reading section (15-20 minutes)" (Kramer, 2000:13). This part of the strategy concludes with a writing activity which deals with a component of the text learners had to read. The pre-reading section is vital to fostering comprehension as learners are guided in their development of "building prior knowledge, introducing three to five vocabulary words, setting a purpose for reading, filling in a graphic organiser, and teaching a mini-lesson on a comprehension strategy" (Kramer, 2000:13). There is, however, some criticism of the four blocks strategy. Moats (2007:17-18) argues that it does very little to accommodate language minority learners (Ehri *et al.*, 2007:419; Biemiller, 1999) or struggling learners. This strategy is designed for learners who can read and comprehend relatively well.

Guided reading is another approach to developing reading comprehension that "is used for individuals or with groups of students who are approximately on the same level of reading development" (Gunning, 2010:374). Fountas and Pinnell (1996:2) and the Literacy Secretariat (2012:1) agree that the ultimate goal in guided reading is to help learners master how to use independent reading strategies successfully, which are related to guided reading through "word recognition and comprehension strategies" (Gunning, 2010:374).

A guided reading lesson consists of five sections: introducing the text, reading the text, followed by a discussion, extending the ideas, revisiting (and rereading passages) and, lastly, extending ideas about the passage and making inferences (Gunning, 2010:274; Literacy Secretariat, 2012:1). Moats (2007:15) explains that guided reading is not a scientifically-based research reading (SBRR) programme. "Proponents of guided reading and balanced literacy sometimes talk the talk of SBRR, but they do not walk the walk" (Moats, 2007:19). He criticises it as a model to foster reading comprehension stating that

> "Approaches such as four blocks and guided reading do not complement text reading and writing with strong, systematic, skills-based instruction, in spite of their claims. Only programs that teach all components of reading, as well as writing and oral language, will be able to prevent and ameliorate reading problems in the large number of children at risk" (Moats, 2007:21).

2.3.3.4 Exploring bottom-up strategies to fostering reading comprehension

The bottom-up approach to teaching reading comprehension entails teaching the basics of language paying attention to "first learning separate letters and the characteristics of letters, then diphthongs and other letter units that represent sounds, then single words, followed by phrases and sentences, and lastly, the meaning of text" (Joubert, Bester, Meyer, Evans & Phatudi, 2015:104). It is through the bottom-up approach that the reader first needs to "master the mechanical and technical aspects of written language before attention can be paid to comprehension and understanding" (Joubert *et al.,* 2015:104). In the bottom-up approach, reading is a process of decoding the text by the reader (Macaro, 2003:120).

One of the main strategies within the bottom-up approach to fostering reading comprehension is the Reading Rescue programme. Reading Rescue (RES) as "a reading intervention model more encompassing than a reading program, focused on curriculum materials and instructional procedures. The instruction involves one-to-one tutoring" (Ehri, *et al.*, 2007:416). This strategy includes the five major language components (phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension) which are prescribed by the National Reading Panel (Ehri *et al.*, 2007:416).

The reading comprehension component of the Reading Rescue approach

> "entails [that] the tutor encourages students to apply reading skills and strategies taught. Students were taught to decode unknown words by relying on their letter-sound knowledge and then cross-checking with meaning and pictures to confirm the identities of the words. Students are asked literal, inferential, and evaluative questions after the text was read as a means to foster comprehension" (Ehri *et al.*, 2007:426).

The National Reading Panel of the United States provides additional insight into the teaching of reading and language. Bernhardt (2011:13) emphasises the fact that the finding of the report is of such importance to the act of reading and reading instruction, that it influenced legislation and policy on reading instruction internationally. Although the report published by National Reading Panel did not focus primarily focus on second language concerns, the findings "naturally spill over to second language issues" (Bernhardt, 2011:13). The report argues that all [reading] instruction "should include at least five components for effective reading instruction" (Bernhardt, 2011:13). The five components are phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

In the words of Bernhardt (2011:14), the National Reading Panel asserts that "vocabulary and comprehension instruction are critical to learning to read…undoubtedly, the two are intertwined". Considering that the act of comprehension is the act of combining all these listed aspects, it can be said that reading comprehension is "a profound complex task for readers. It

places [first additional language] readers into double jeopardy. Not only do [first additional language] readers have to control linguistic forms, and do so automatically, they must tackle cultural differences that are not different, but commonplace, for readers from the first language group" (Bernhardt, 2011:14) All FAL learners would agree with Bernhardt that "comprehension is far more layered in a second language than in a first" (ibid.).

Another example of a bottom-up approach to reading is the teaching, handwriting, reading and spelling skills (THRASS) method (Joubert *et al.,* 2015:109) which is connected to the phonic method, a core component of the bottom-up approach to reading. Joubert *et al.,* (2015:109) mention that the phonic method uses visual and auditive elements in its approach to teaching reading. The phonic method "pays attention not only to the phonological structure of the spoken word, but also the meaning and the syntax of words" (Joubert *et al.,* 2015:109).

There are a number of benefits and restrictions to using the phonic method as part of the bottom-up approach to reading (Table 2.6).

Table 2.6: Comparing the benefits and restrictions of using the phonic method for literacy instruction (Joubert *et al*., 2015:110)

Benefits to using the phonic method for literacy instruction	Restrictions to using the phonic method for literacy instruction
Associations are made to fix letter-sound relationships by incorporating the shape of the letter with the sound the letter represents.	The reading speed decreases since learners focus too much on individual letters, which leads to jerky word-for-word reading.
The letter is written on various surfaces such as in the air, on paper on the desk, shaving foam and wet sand to fix the association between actually writing the letter and forming the letter-sound relationship.	Learners' eyes do not move ahead naturally to recognise the next word as too much time is spent on decoding and sounding out the correct word.
The words are traced and copied on various surfaces while it is repeated out loud a number of times.	Learners are not taught any other tools to recognise words other than to sound the words out.
Pictures are used to illustrate the words.	Learners are slow to start reading independently; they find it too much trouble to and recognise words, which could keep them from applying this skill to other books.
Flash cards are used to practise different words.	-
The words are used in different contexts.	-
The word is repeated.	-

2.3.3.5 Exploring the interactive approach to fostering reading comprehension

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In the interactive approach to teaching reading comprehension, the characteristics of the bottom-up approach and the top-down approach are integrated. Macaro (2003:120) states that the interactive approach is "now widely accepted as the most powerful explanation of how we go about accessing the meaning of a written text". Accessing text through this approach, allows the reader to draw on various knowledge sources (Macaro, 2003:120; Bernhardt, 2011:26).

Reading, according to the interactive approach, is not a process that moves from letters to words to comprehension (Konza, 2006:9). Reading is an integration of the bottom-up and the top-down approaches (ibid.). The importance of reading fluency comes into play with the interactive approach. Konza (ibid.) agree with Macaro (2003:120) and Bernhard (2001:26) in stating that

> "since information from different sources is held in working memory, the greater the amount of attention required to decode or predict the words, the less attention will be held available to integrate the information in order for comprehension to take place" (Konza, 2006:9).

Word recognition and reading fluency work together to improve reading comprehension. Konza (ibid.) elaborates that "without rapid word recognition, too much attention is focused on the decoding part of reading, leaving too little attention available for working out memory".

The interactive approach is useful for teaching reading comprehension to both poor and skilled learners as it integrates of the two, bottom-up and top-down approaches (Konza, 2006:10), as illustrated in Table 2.7.

Table 2.7: The accommodation of poor and skilled readers in terms of the interactive approach

	Poor readers	Skilled readers
Characteristics	• Limited decoding ability general • Poor sight word vocabulary	• Visual features tend to be unclear • Sentence structure and words are unclear
Accommodation	• Relies more on context clues • Examines pictures • Guesses or predicts words inaccurately	• Able to use either bottom-up or top-down strategies to make sense of meaning • Applies prediction strategies where appropriate

2.3.3.6 The role of vocabulary instruction in fostering reading comprehension

> "Researchers in reading have found that knowledge of word meanings has a strong relationship to reading comprehension skill … Less clear is the nature of the relationship between the teaching of word meanings and growth in reading comprehension skill" (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986:72).

Furthermore, Nagy (2003:1) argues that "vocabulary knowledge is fundamental to reading comprehension; one cannot understand text without knowing what most of the words mean". In addition, Barr *et al.,* (2012:106) state that "reading and vocabulary instruction can serve as an instructional process to respond to English language learner (ELL) needs".

Fundamentally, "vocabulary development plays a critical role in young children's learning to read and, as a result, their overall success in school" (Iannone-Campbell, Wasik, 2012:321). Vocabulary instruction can thus not be separated from reading comprehension. "Vocabulary knowledge is strongly correlated to reading comprehension, so closely correlated that some researchers use the two almost synonymously" (Stahl, 2003). The importance of vocabulary instruction in teaching reading comprehension in English as a FAL cannot be overemphasised. Engelbrecht and Swanepoel (2013:219) discuss the strategies teachers should use when they are busy with reading instruction and the class or the learner comes across a difficult word. The teacher should take time to "explain why the word seems difficult to read. This could be because of a silent sound, a sound pronounced differently from the way that it is written or an irregular pronunciation" (ibid.).

There are certain steps to follow in the teaching and learning of a new vocabulary. Learners cannot be expected to comprehend texts read in English as a FAL if they do not have a basic knowledge of the vocabulary involved in the language. Phatudi (2014:98) asserts that it is through conversations that learners acquire vocabulary, which eventually assists them with reading comprehension. Vocabulary acquisition thus comes through the direct or indirect act of teaching of the meaning of words to learners. Phatudi (2014:98) is of the opinion that "extensive reading to learners will ensure that new words are learned. The teacher must always identify new words and explain them to the learners". The steps Phatudi (2014:98-102) identifies for teaching vocabulary to learners are given in Table 2.8).

2.3.4 Assessment and evaluations aimed at improving reading comprehension

For the teacher to have enough background knowledge of the learner's reading and reading comprehension ability, there are a number of helpful evaluation procedures available. The teacher can only know how much assistance a learner needs after necessary evaluation has been done. The teacher can do baseline assessments of word recognition, reading age and reading comprehension in the classroom. These differ from ANA assessment (Section 2.2.1).

Table 2.8: Analysing steps to teaching vocabulary (Phatudi, 2014:98-102)

Steps to acquiring vocabulary	Guidelines
Build experiential background	1. Ensure that the meaning of new words the learner will come across during the reading of the passage has been explained to them. 2. Introduce and explain the meaning of high-frequency words. 3. Re-introduce and re-emphasise words and reinforce the meaning of the words, making reading comprehension easier for learners.
Teach words in relation to other words	1. When the meaning of new words is taught to learners, ensure that the words are linked to previously taught or known words. Phatudi (2014:99) explains that "linking words to others that are familiar enhanced the meaning of the words and use in the context". Furthermore, learners are required to draw on their background knowledge to draw similarities and differences between the words they know and new words.
Develop depth of meaning by relating taught words to personal experience	1. The teacher should take care to teach new words in relation to a learner's personal experience. This will ensure the words become meaningful. 2. The use of pictures is a good way to introduce words in a visual manner.
Create an interest in words	1. The teacher can create an interest in words by activating prior knowledge and encouraging prediction. New words can be reinforced by repeating the word during story telling.
Teach words systematically, emphasising the meaning of words	1. The teacher should take time to get to know the learners in the class well enough to know how the vocabulary should be introduced to them. Care should be taken to introduce the words in a systematic manner to ensure a learner's gradual progress.
Encourage learners' active participation	1. When learners take part in the learning process of vocabulary acquisition in a lively and interactive manner, learning becomes "permanent and meaningful" (Phatudi, 2014:101). 2. Encourage learners to take part in role play, reciting poems and talking about stories. Phatudi (2014:101) suggests "charts, pictures, audiotapes, songs and rhymes" as alternative fun ways in which vocabulary can be taught.
Repeat taught words in different contexts	1. "Repetition of vocabulary is essential for comprehension" (Phatudi, 2014:101). The process of vocabulary teaching should not be confined to only taking place in a strict manner but also be integrated throughout the curriculum and take place spontaneously (Phatudi, 2014:102). Finally, vocabulary instruction should always consider a learner's level of reading comprehension and their language proficiency.

2.3.4.1 Assessment for word recognition

The one-minute reading test can be used as part of a reading aloud exercise to assess word recognition skills in learners. Both the teacher and the learner have a copy of the words in front of them. While the learner is given one minute to read as many words as possible, the teacher indicates the errors made by the learner on her copy. After one minute has passed,

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the teacher counts the number of words read and the number of words read correctly. The number of words read correctly is put over the number of words read as a percentage and calculated accordingly (Dednam, 2009:133).

2.3.4.2 Assessment for reading comprehension

A learner's level of reading comprehension can be calculated as a percentage after using a simple silent reading comprehension text with accompanying questions. If the text, that has to be pitched at the right level (Dednam, 2009:133), is more than one page long, questions should be asked after each page has been read. The procedure is to

> "determine the total number of questions as well as the number of incorrect answers for the whole passage. Subtract the number of incorrect answers from the total number of question. Then divide the number of questions answered correctly by the total number of questions. The answer is then multiplied by 100 to determine a percentage" (ibid).

2.3.4.3 Assessment for reading age

A learner's reading age can be determined by applying the one-minute reading test. Both the teacher and the learner have a copy of the word list in front of them. The learner is given one minute to read as many words as possible while the teacher indicates errors made on her copy of the words. After one minute, the teacher counts the number of words read correctly and matches it to the age indicated on the one-minute reading test chart. The teacher compares the learner's chronological age in years and months to the result of the test to record the learner's reading age. A backlog or head start in reading age can be given in years and months.

2.3.4.4 Determining learners' level of reading

A learner can be provided suitable reading material if their reading level has been determined. Dednam (2009:132) points out that a learner's reading ability can be measured against three levels (Table 2.9): the independent level; the instructional level; and the frustration level. In addition, they note that, although the formula for determining reading level was originally developed for reading English, it can be used for other languages as well. It is vital for the teacher to be aware of the reading level of each learner in the class. Through the use of scaffolding (Table 2.2) and teaching reading comprehension strategies, a learner's reading improve to such an extent that they move from the frustration level to the instructional level and finally to the independent level. The level of reading is, however, related to the learner's level of comprehension.

Table 2.9: A comparison of the different levels of reading (Dednam, 2009:132)

	Independent level	Instructional level	Frustration level
Characteristics	Learners read without the support of the teacher.	Reading material is challenging but not too difficult.	Learners find the pronunciation and understanding the content difficult.
	Reading material is suitable for homework activities and recreational activities.	The teacher guides the learners through the reading lesson.	Reading aloud is too soft or too loud. Reading is word by word. Intonation is inadequate. Bad reading habits occur, e.g. sub-vocalisation, lip-reading, head movements and finger pointing. The learner often asks for help. The learner shows little interest in the content and appears to be tired. The learner refuses to read.
Word recognition %	98 - 100%	95 - 98%	Less than 95%
Comprehension %	90 - 100%	70 - 89%	Comprehension less than 70%

These three forms of assessment are integrated accordingly into this study.

2.3.5 Reading materials for Grade 2

Reading material for Grade 2 learners is arranged according to predictability, high-frequency and decidability as Gunning (2010:109) maintains. Gunning (2010:109) explains that books that focus on predictability use large pictures and the reader's prior knowledge to make sense of the story and hence read it. The pictures complement the text and allow learners to be able to retell the story with little real reading taking place. Books that are classified according to high-frequency contain words such as "of, and, the, was, where" (Gunning, 2010:109) throughout the story. He explains that "these words occur very often in the text, they are said to be high-frequency". Books classified as decodable contain "texts [where] phonics elements have been taught" (Gunning, 2010:109) and reinforced throughout.

2.3.6 Effective reading comprehension facilitators

Effective reading comprehension facilitators (RCFs) need to be caring "and believe in their [the learners] ability to achieve" (Gunning, 2010:23). "High expectations combined with kind instructions" (Engelbrecht and Swanepoel, 2013:66) are necessary for children to live up to the expectations set by the RCF's …highly effective RCFs are also superior motivators (Gunning, 2010:23). Engelbrecht and Swanepoel (2013:66) identify twelve personal characteristics of highly competent teachers. These characteristics are essential to transform a RCF to a highly effective RCF. Highly effective RCFs should be fair and consequent at all times. Children need a sense of routine and guidelines according to which they can work. Having said that, RCFs should also be compassionate enough to pick up when the learner is not well, emotionally or physically. "Fairness is not necessarily equal treatment; fairness accounts for providing to the support needs of every individual learner" (Engelbrecht & Swanepoel, 2013:61).

A highly effective RCF will create a safe environment for the child to work in and this make the learner feel at ease. The RCF can achieve this by displaying a good sense of humour combined with a positive attitude. "The [RCF] manage constantly to incorporate an element of fun into their lessons. As long as it is not at the expense of any learner, the teacher should occasionally share a laugh with the class" (Engelbrecht & Swanepoel, 2013:63). Learners are sensitive to the RCF's attitude and willingness to learn. The RCF's attitude can easily hamper or support the learner's ability to learn. The RCF's positive attitude will create a sense of belonging for the child. Under the right conditions, the child is likely to thrive.

The best RCFs combine their creativity with the best materials. The aim of every lesson should be to interest learners and involve them in the process of learning. Furthermore, these RCFs use resources around them to the best of their ability. In addition, the best RCFs ensure that every lesson has a purpose; these RCFs are goal-orientated. This can only be achieved if RCFs are prepared and place the children's interests before their own. Children refer back to lessons taught by the teacher where a personal touch has been added to make the subject material more appealing. Highly effective RCFs need to be willing to admit mistakes and show forgiveness towards learners. Finally, Engelbrecht and Swanepoel (2013:63) agree that "trust is the cornerstone of respect".

Comprehension fostering is a multi-disciplinary approach which cannot be achieved without selecting the most appropriate strategy for each learner's individual needs. Comprehension fostering strategies are tailor-made to best serve and equip English second language learners in the Foundation Phase. Once the learners' background knowledge has been activated, the vocabulary revised and reading strategies employed, the journey to reading comprehension can commence. The RCF plays a vital role in this journey, and can either hamper or scaffold (Lidz, 1991:80; Attarzadeh, 2011:5) the experience. At the end of the day, "you're never too old, too wacky, too wild to pick up a book and read to a child!" (Seuss, n.d).

2.3.7 The establish, maintain and consolidate framework (EMC)

The establish, maintain and consolidate (EMC) framework is named after the components it represents (Klapwijk, 2015:4). This model empowers teachers to teach reading comprehension strategies to learners, through all the grades at school by developing vocabulary and creating a culture of reading. It is my view that it is essential for every teacher of English reading comprehension to be familiar with this easy-to-use framework. Klapwijk (2015:4) explains that:

> "comprehension is a product of reading-predicting-checking of predictions and that the framework is constructed in the same manner to use reading strategies in a continuous style, but with the ability to adjust to the recursive nature of the reading process" (Klapwijk, 2015:4).

The EMC framework is divided into three phases, 'before reading', 'during reading' and 'after reading'. During the 'before reading' phase, the framework focuses on establishing meaning making; the 'during reading' phase on meaning making; and the 'after reading' phase on consolidating it. The EMC framework is central to teaching reading comprehension strategies in English as FAL to learners and teachers are advised to consciously use it in practice. Klapwijk (2015:4) asserts that the "phases [of the framework] are intended to ease the acquisition of reading strategy instruction for teachers new to the concept and provide sufficient structure to ensure it is sustained".

The EMC framework is not there to replace any existing frameworks that aim to teach reading comprehension strategies. Klapwijk (2015:4) makes it clear that the framework is there to complement existing research about reading comprehension instruction. The EMC framework (Klapwijk, 2015:4) is a proudly South African framework which understands the challenges teachers have to deal with in teaching reading comprehension to learners in a situation where the LoLT differs from their HL. Klapwijk (2015) introduced the framework to the South African

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education environment and its usefulness in the SA context is tabled in Table 2.10. He is from the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages at the University of South Africa.

Table 2.10:   An explanation of the characteristics of the EMC framework (Klapwijk, 2015:4)

Characteristics of the framework	Discussion
Focus	The primary focus is on the teacher's ability to teach comprehension through the use of strategies. The framework was designed to increase a teacher's comprehension instruction abilities, and assumes that learners will benefit from the method of association (Klapwijk, 2015:4).
Multilingual instruction	The framework is designed to assist teachers and learners alike where learners are taught reading comprehension strategies in their second or third language. It is a South African model that accommodates the multicultural and multilingual traits commonly found in classrooms (Klapwijk, 2015:4).
Application across subjects	The EMC framework applies to all teachers, irrespective of the subject or subject matter they teach. Teachers undergo a "fusion of roles" (Klapwijk, 2015:4), which requires them to plan for language growth as part of a lesson. Furthermore, the EMC framework undertakes that it is every teacher's responsibility to ensure comprehension of the text dealt with (Klapwijk, 2015:4).

Figure 2.1 illustrates the four goals the EMC framework to guide teachers with the instruction of reading comprehension. Table 2.11 presents an explanation of how its specific aspects can be applied to assist teachers and learners alike to develop reading comprehension in English as a FAL. The EMC framework needs to be applied correctly to have the desired outcome.
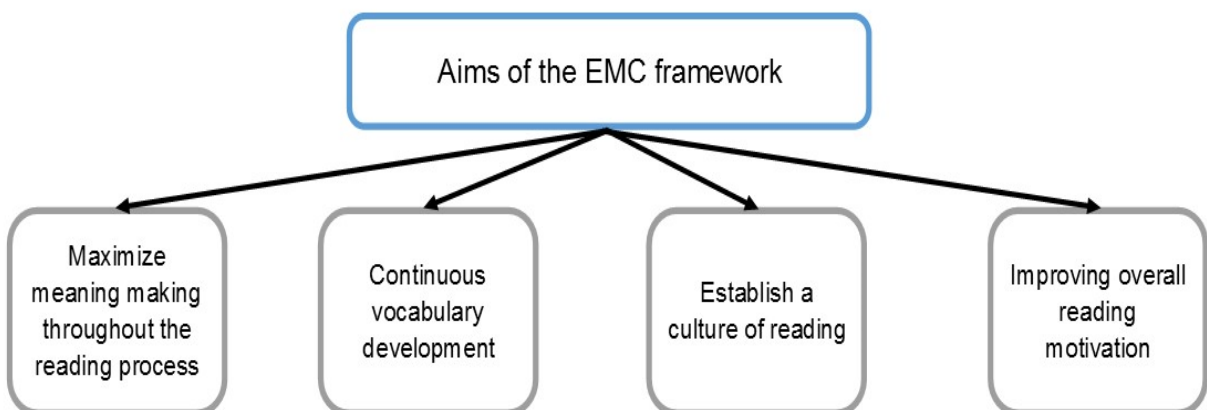
Figure 2.1: The aims of the EMC framework (Klapwijk, 2015:5)

Table 2.11: An explanation of how to apply the EMC framework (Klapwijk, 2015:5)

Establishing meaning-making processes *before reading*	Maintaining meaning-making processes *during reading*	Consolidating meaning making *after reading*
1. Determine the purpose of reading to channel a learner's thinking processes in a specific direction. 2. Activate text knowledge and text type. The type of text in conjunction with the purpose of the text, lays the foundation for initial meaning making. 3. Activate prior knowledge by linking prior knowledge to new knowledge. 4. Making predictions of the text before the text is read. 5. Pre-reading questions refers to the learners' ability to ask questions before reading the text.	1. Both the teacher and the learner are active participants in the reading process. 2. Learners are taught to monitor their own understanding and they learn to apply different reading techniques. 3. For learners to monitor of their own understanding, they should teach themselves to ask questions such as: Do I understand what I am reading?	Learners should write about a text so that the teacher can determine if what was read was understood correctly. Learners should also be taught to ask questions according to the question-answer relationship (QAR) (Klapwijk, 2015:7). There are four types of questions learners can learn to ask themselves: 1. *Right there questions* - the answers can be found in the text. 2. *Think and search questions* - the answer can be found by searching for and putting together information from different parts of the text. 3. *Author and I questions* - the questions are based on the information, but learners must relate it to their own experience. 4. *On my own questions* - the answer is not in the text, but learners use prior knowledge to answer the questions.

2.4   THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.4.1   Zone of proximal development

The theoretical framework on which this study is based, is that of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Linked to this, is socio-cultural learning theory. The ZPD is a strategy that teachers can use in teaching reading comprehension strategies to learners in English as a FAL. Learners will be guided through instruction and demonstration to a point where reading

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comprehension in English is developed. The rationale for choosing the ZPD as a theoretical framework is to allow teachers to view the impact of their teaching strategies on a learner's understanding of a written text. This theory also allows teachers to view their own teaching abilities with regard to their learners' written and spoken work. Teachers will have to continually adapt their teaching strategies by means of scaffolding measures to ensure that learners comprehend the text read.

Schwieter (2010:32) defines the ZPD as follows:

> "The ZPD is a theoretical concept that is shaped by a sociocultural theory in which learning is interpreted as an intricate, social act facilitated within a specific cultural environment. This environment specifies that learning is best developed when a novice learner is assisted by a [qualified teacher] who has special training and/or advanced skills in the theme in question" (Schwieter, 2010:32).

John-Steiner and Mahn (1996:191) explain that Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, originally formulated in the early twentieth century, is based on the concept that human activities do not take place in isolation from other individuals. Furthermore, these activities are bound and interconnected through language as a mode of communication. They maintain that Vygotsky developed the ZPD to explain the way 'social and participatory' learning took place. The note that "sociocultural theorists, expanding the concept of zone of proximal development, increasingly conceptualise learning as distributed, interactive, contextual [and] the result of learners' participation in a community of practice" (John-Steiner and Mahn,1996:198).

The most frequently referenced definition of the ZPD is:

> "The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978:86).

Put differently, "the basic idea behind [the theory of ZPD] is that a more knowledgeable learner or expert facilitates the learning development of a novice learner within the appropriate zone of his/her aptitude" (Schwieter, 2010:31). Referring to these two quotes, the words 'adult' and 'expert' respectively, both refer to a qualified teacher.

Lantolf and Thorne (2000:207) report on the intense fascination Vygotsky had with the manner in which schooling affects cognitive development: "Vygotsky was particularly intrigued with the complex effects that schooling had on cognitive development. The activity of participation in schooling involved, at least in part, learning through participation in sociocultural and

institutionally organized practices". Furthermore, "one of Vygotsky's most important findings is that learning collaboratively with others, particularly in instructional settings, precedes and shapes development" (ibid.). Schwieter (2010:31) adds that scaffolding is a widely-acceptable term in the field of Education that is commonly linked to the theory of ZPD. "[This] illustrates how guidance supports developmental learning through the ZPD" (Schwieter, 2010:31).

Schwieter (2010:32) highlights Vygotsky's (1987:212) argument that instruction through scaffolding should move ahead of development in the ZPD:

> "Instruction is only useful when it moves ahead of development. When it does, it impels or wakens a whole series of functions that are in a stage of maturation lying in the ZPD. This is the major role of instruction in development...instruction would be completely unnecessary if it merely utilized what had already matured in the developmental process, if it were not itself a source of development" (Schwieter, 2010:32).

Scaffolding is the term given to explain the "mediator adjusting the complexity and maturity of the teaching interaction to facilitate the [learner's] mastery of the task; providing support when necessary; and providing encouragement and prompts [to the learner] to move ahead when ready" (Lidz, 1991:80). Attarzadeh (2011:5) states that scaffolding is "the term introduced by Bruner in 1986 to refer to the help given to a child by an adult, usually a talk that supports a child in carrying out an activity". Furthermore, scaffolding can be defined as:

> "a metaphor for the interaction between an expert and a novice engaged in a problem-solving task or the adult controlling those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner's capacity, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his range of competence" (Attarzadeh, 2011:5).

The principle of scaffolding within the ZPD suits the teaching environment of fostering English reading comprehension within Grade 2 classroom practice very well. Lantolf and Aljaffareh (1996) and Attarzadeh (2011:3) state that it is under guidance or in collaboration with [a] more knowledgeable person (the RCF in this case) which causes movement of learners from a lower level to a higher level. This guidance or assistance is scaffolding in Vygotskian terminology. This assistance in the ZPD functions most effectively when it is tailored to the learner, adapted and eventually withdrawn in response to learner development. See Figure 2.2 for a visual presentation of scaffolding within the ZPD.
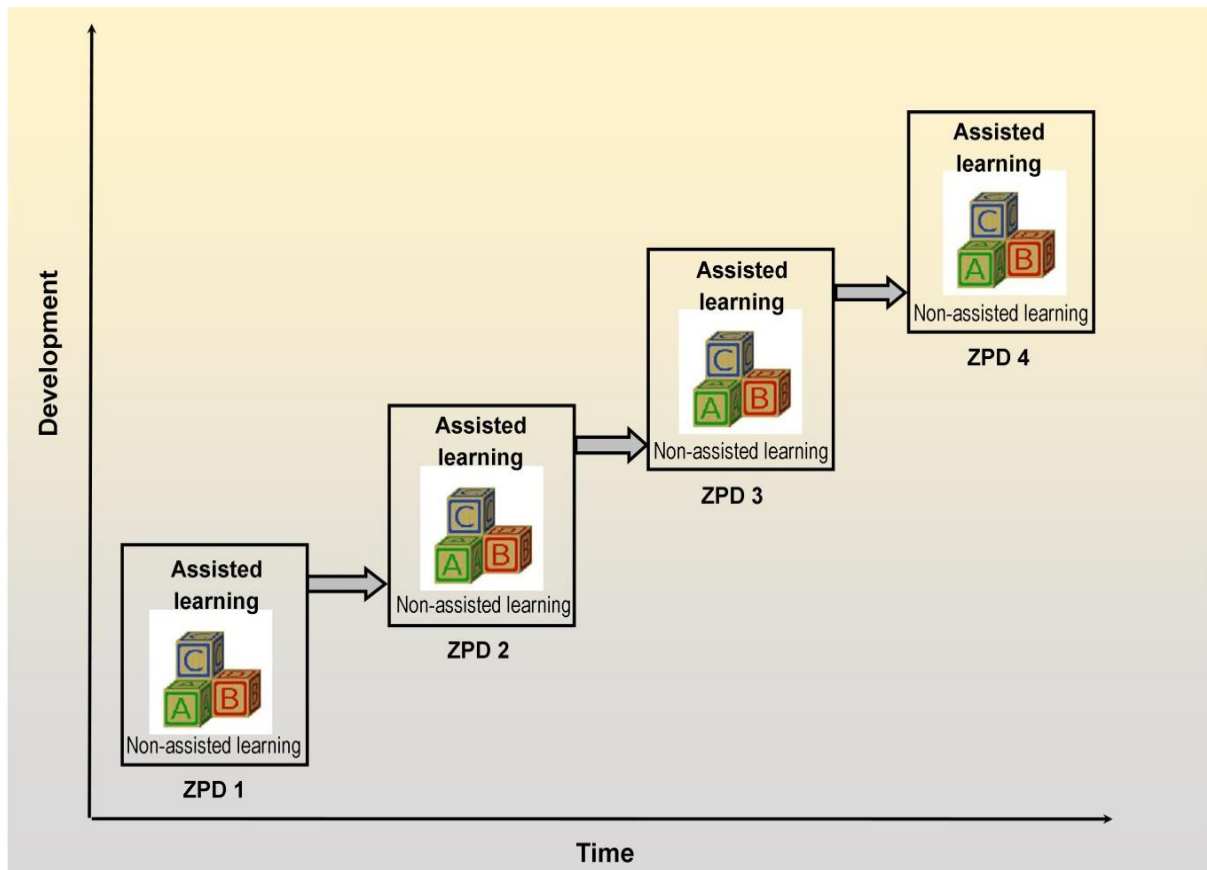
Figure 2.2: A visual presentation of the ZPD (Adapted from Schwieter, 2010:33)

2.4.2 The theoretical aspects of Bloom's Taxonomy

Benjamin Bloom coined the term "Bloom's taxonomy" in 1965 (Wilson, 2013). Athanassiou, McNett and Harvey (2003:535) explain this framework as a:

> "six-level classification system that uses observed student behaviour to infer the level of student achievement. Moving from simple to more complex, the taxonomy's levels include knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation". (Athanassiou, McNett and Harvey, 2003:535).

Bloom's taxonomy can be represented visually as a triangle (Figure 2.3) and interpreted as moving from the simplest to the most complex levels of critical and creative thinking. The six functions of thought or categories of critical and creative thinking (Wilson, 2013) each has its own description and function (Table 2.12).

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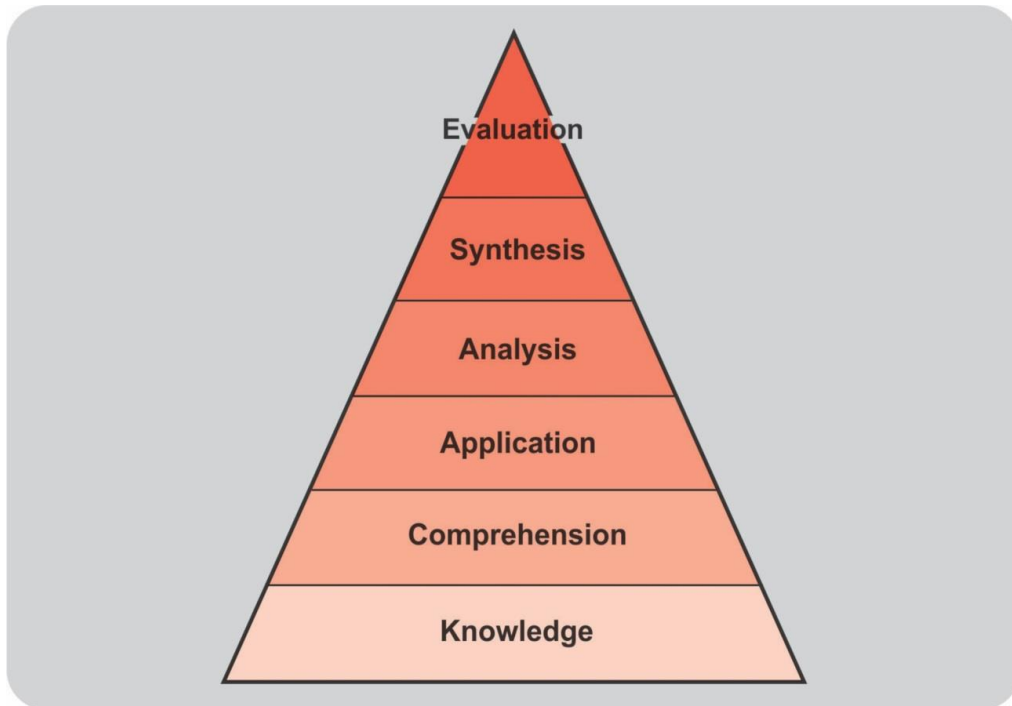
Figure 2.3: **The different categories of critical and creative thinking of Bloom's taxonomy (Adapted from Wilson, 2013)**

Table 2.12: The functions of Bloom's categories of thought explained

Bloom's taxonomy	
Category of thought	**Function (Wilson, 2013)**
Knowledge	Remembering or retrieving previously learned material
Comprehension	The ability to grasp or construct meaning from material
Application	The ability to use learned material, or to implement material in new and concrete situations
Analysis	The ability to break down or distinguish the parts of material into its components so that its organizational structure may be better understood
Synthesis	The ability to put parts together to form a coherent or unique new whole
Evaluation	The ability to judge, check, and even critique the value of material for a given purpose

In 2001, Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl revised Bloom's taxonomy and called it the "revised taxonomy" (Krathwohl, 2002:212) that is based on the work of Bloom. However the titles of the categories of critical and creative thinking were changed from nouns to verbs (Figure 2.4), but it still has a solid foundation that dates back to Bloom.

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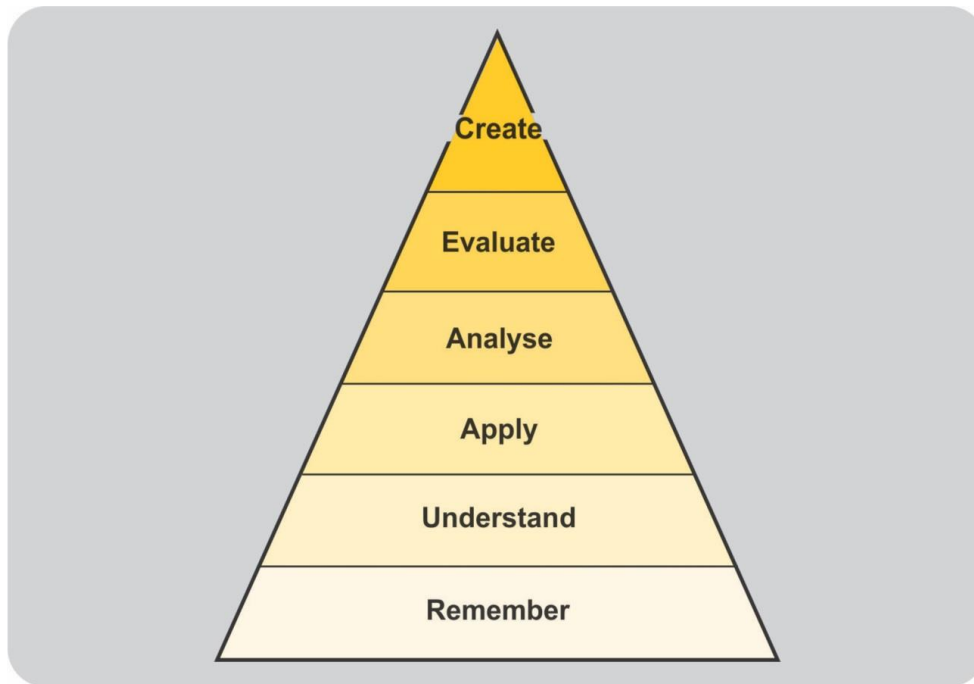
Figure 2.4: The different categories of critical and creative thinking of the revised taxonomy (Adapted from Wilson, 2013)

The six categories of thought according to the revised taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002:212) also have distinct functions. These functions are summarised in Table 2.13.

Krathwohl and Anderson (2010:64) wanted to improve the revised taxonomy which was "unidimensional and suggested that the revision should contain two dimensions: knowledge and cognitive processes" (Krathwohl & Anderson, 2010:64). It is interesting to note the distinct differences between Bloom's taxonomy and the revised taxonomy. Not only are the nouns in Bloom's taxonomy changed to verbs in the revised taxonomy, but the last two knowledge levels have also been swopped around. When Krathwohl and Anderson started reviewing the original taxonomy, Merl Wittrock was approached to assist with the process. Wittrock was a firm believer that the original category of 'synthesize' should be changed to 'create' (Krathwohl & Anderson, 2010:64). When Wittrock (Krathwohl & Anderson, 2010:64) was asked about this change, his response was:

> "Create goes beyond merely making new knowledge fit with existing knowledge as Synthesize suggests…Create describes the active processes of constructing meaning and, subsequently, plans of action that need to be carried out" (Krathwohl & Anderson, 2010:64).

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Table 2.13: The different categories of critical and creative thinking of the revised taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002:212)

Revised taxonomy	
Category of thought	**Function (Wilson, 2013)**
Remembering	Remembering is when memory is used to produce definitions, facts, or lists, or recite or retrieve material.
Understanding	Constructing meaning from different types of functions be they written or graphic messages activities like interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining.
Applying	Applying relates and refers to situations where learned material is used through products like models, presentations, interviews or simulation.
Analysing	Breaking material or concepts into parts, determining how the parts relate or interrelate to one another or to an overall structure or purpose. Mental actions included in this function are differentiating, organizing, and attributing, as well as being able to distinguish between the components or parts.
Evaluating	Making judgements based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing. Critiques, recommendations, and reports are some of the products that can be created to demonstrate the processes of evaluation.
Creating	Creating requires users to put parts together in a new way or synthesize parts into something new and different, creating a new form or product. This process is the most difficult mental function in the new taxonomy.

Another change Wittrock (Krathwohl & Anderson, 2010:64) was responsible for, was the change of "comprehension" in the original taxonomy to "understand" in the revised taxonomy.

2.4.3 Applications of various theories to foster English reading comprehension

Bloom's taxonomy is a framework that consists of six different levels of thinking. These levels range from knowledge, comprehension, application, synthesis, analysis and finally evaluation. Knowledge is the first level where the least critical and creative thinking is required; the last level, evaluation, is the level which requires the most critical and creative thinking from the learners. Knowledge can be integrated into the pre-reading stage where the teacher taps into the learner's prior knowledge. Ensuring that learners understand what the context of the story to be read is, already serves as applying a level of scaffolding. Discussing challenging words with the learners (Burt & Ridgard, 2014:4) before reading of the story can achieve this.

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After the reading of the story, the teacher unobtrusively assists learners to make the story their own to truly appreciate its meaning. Through questioning and using the comprehension section from Bloom's taxonomy (Wilson, 2013), teachers can probe learners to get their critical and creative thinking abilities activated. This will, in turn, serve as the scaffolding tool, which leads learners to a better understanding of the story that was read and the remaining question categories, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Wilson, 2013) continue to do so. During the classroom observations I specifically focused on the type of questions the teachers were asking during this step of the process of a reading lesson. I also compared what a teacher said during the individual semi-structured interview with what they actually did when teaching of reading comprehension. I paid attention to the type of guidelines and instructions teachers gave the learners. The link between the strategies for teaching English reading comprehension and Bloom's taxonomy enables the process in which the various thinking strategies are used to get learners to think and along prescribed levels (Wilson, 2013). Nystrand (2006:392) states that "the language used by teachers and students in classrooms determines what is learned and how learning takes place". Bloom's taxonomy leads both the Grade 2 teacher and the learners to thinking from which asking questions will flow.

Long and Zimmerman (2009:12) characterise the interactive approach as the midway mark between the top-down and the bottom-up approaches.

> "Within this approach, it is recognised that meaning does not exist only in text but is rather a co-construction between the text and the reader's interpretation of it. The surface structure of the content of the text and the reader's personal knowledge of the topic are used interactively by the reader to construct meaning. The reader uses decoding strategies or his/her own personal frame of reference whenever faced with difficulties in reading and/or understanding text" (Long & Zimmerman, 2009:12).

The bottom-up traits of the interactive approach requires learners to be able to read words by means of decoding (Long & Zimmerman, 2009:12; Gunning, 2010:8; Carnine, Silbert & Kame'enui, 1990:3; Grabe & Stoller, 2002:32). The top-down traits of the interactive approach assist learners to interpret the text by means of referring to background knowledge. Furthermore, the focus is placed on how the learner understands the text (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2013:238). Learning becomes evident when learners are able to interpret text with the assistance of the teacher as the knowledgeable other. Metaphorically expressed, the ZPD is reached at this moment. Learning within the ZPD is fostered once a learner's critical and creative thinking has been activated through questioning according to Bloom's taxonomy (Wilson, 2013). Fostering English reading comprehension is achieved through combining these two techniques through the process of scaffolding. Once learners' thinking reaches the

ZPD, new understandings can be fostered. Without being aware of it, learners do influence each other's thinking that also strengthens comprehension. Although this study focuses on the role of the Grade 2 teacher in fostering English reading comprehension, it acknowledges that Peer-assistance is a versatile tool.

Grade 2 teachers use scaffolding and questioning according to Bloom's taxonomy as a manner to activate learners' critical and creative thinking. I observed whether teachers used these strategies to improve reading comprehension during their teaching of reading comprehension. Schwieter (2010:32) defines the ZPD as follows:

> "The ZPD is a theoretical concept that is shaped by a sociocultural theory in which learning is interpreted as an intricate, social act facilitated within a specific cultural environment. This environment specifies that learning is best developed when a novice learner is assisted by another learner who has special training and/or advanced skills in the theme in question" Schwieter (2010:32).

The entire process of reading (before reading, during reading and after reading) can be linked to both scaffolding and questioning according to Bloom's taxonomy to enable learners to reach the ZPD. The Grade 2 teacher is actively involved throughout the three distinct phases of before, during and after the reading process. Refer to Figure 2.5.

2.4.4 The role of the teacher during reading process

The role of the teacher during the process of reading is illustrated Figure 2.5 below. The strategies presented in the flow diagram are of such a nature that the teacher makes use of critical and creative thought processes to get the learners in the ZPD for optimal learning and fostering of English reading comprehension.

2.4.4.1 Before reading

The Grade 2 teacher's role in fostering English reading comprehension before reading comprises the following actions (Burt & Ridgard, 2014:4):

Fostering English reading comprehension: The reading process

Before reading	While reading	After reading
Predict	Look back	Discuss
What do you know?	Check your understanding	Retell
Vocabulary	Check your predictions	Act out
	Make further predictions	Show your understanding
	Take note of characters	Make links
	Take note of the plot	Compare
		Key elements
		Summarise

Figure 2.5: Graphically presenting the probing techniques the teacher uses throughout the reading process. (Adapted from Burt & Ridgard, 2014:5)

- Assisting learners to look at the cover and pictures of the book to make informed predictions about the book.

- Reading the blurb, "[the] description of a book esp. printed on its jacket as promotion by its publishers" (Oxford Dictionary, 1995), to facilitate learners in making further predictions about the book.

- Starting to activate learners' background knowledge and determine what they already understand about the context; continuous probing will be used to activate what learners know about the subjects of the story.

- Linking the experience of the learners to the context of the book, and making the content of the book more applicable to the learner's life.

- Exploring and developing vocabulary which means that learners should be introduced to new words found in the text, where the meaning of these words should be explained; learners' knowledge of existing vocabulary should also be tested.

2.4.4.2 During reading

Teachers could use the following steps during the process of reading:

- Learners are encouraged to continuously look back and reflect on what they have read. They should ask the following questions to determine their understanding (Burt & Ridgard, 2014:4):
  - How are my predictions different to the actual storyline?
  - What have I just read?
  - Who are the characters?
  - What might happen next?
  - How is the plot unfolding?
- Learners should constantly evaluate their initial predictions and make further prediction.
- Learners will be reading from individual books or appropriate reading materials.

2.4.4.3 After reading

- The Grade 2 teacher should create a platform where a learner can actively reflect on what was read (Burt & Ridgard, 2014:4).
- This can be done through a number of strategies that include:
  - discussing highlighted parts of the story
  - retelling the story
  - acting out the story
  - showing understanding by answering higher-order thinking questions
  - comparing predictions throughout the story to actual story
  - making links between the story and learners' life world, milieu and context
  - comparing different elements (characters, settings, events) in the story with other stories
  - summarising the story

The example of a story book has been used, however, this study is not confined to story books only, a variety of texts can be used.

2.4.5 Conceptual framework for reading comprehension

The visual representation (Table 2.14) is adapted from the revised taxonomy for questioning combined with the role of the teacher during reading. Each colour represents a different level of reasoning according to the ZPD and revised taxonomy.

Table 2.14: The stages of reading divided into different levels of thinking and reasoning according to the ZPD and revised taxonomy

Before reading	During reading	After reading
ZPD 1 – REMEMBER **Knowledge questions: (Remember)** - Activate prior knowledge - Make predictions - Vocabulary development **Evaluate:** - Evaluate the cover and the title of the book: discuss your idea of what the story might be about	**Knowledge questions: (Remember)** - Look back, answer knowledge questions - Evaluate understanding	**ZPD 4 – ANALYSE** **Knowledge questions: (Remember)** - Revise names of the characters - Revise the setting, time - Revise the name of the book **Comprehension questions: (Understanding)** - Show understanding by answering in-depth questions - Name the elements in the story
	ZPD 2 – UNDERSTAND **Comprehension questions: (Understanding)** - Test learner's concentration skills. **Application questions: (Apply)** - Put yourself in the story, what would you do differently? - How would you end the story? **Analysis questions: Analyse** - Compare your predictions to the plot of the story - Discuss characters thus far - Discuss like or dislike for the story thus far	**ZPD 5 – EVALUATE** **Application questions: (Apply)** - Retell the story - Act the story out - Change the story to suit your context **Analysis questions: Analyse** - Discuss favourite and least favourite characters - Discuss like or dislike for the story
	ZPD 3 – APPLY **Evaluate:** - Who is your favourite character? **Create:** - Create a new character for the story - Create a new ending for the story - Create a new title for the story	**ZPD 6 – CREATE** **Evaluate:** - Appropriate title for the book - Appropriate pictures used in the book - Compare first, second predictions to the book. **Create:** - Create a new character for the story - Create a new ending for the story - Create a new title for the story

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Going through the three stages of reading, it is evident that natural progression takes place, starting with the 'before reading' stage, eventually moving to the 'during reading' stage to end off with the 'after reading' stage with the ultimate aim of teaching reading comprehension in English as FAL.

The stages of the reading have been divided into the different levels of thinking and reasoning as suggested by Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) theory and Krathwohl and Anderson's (2010:64) revised taxonomy. The revised taxonomy is based on Bloom's taxonomy. This conceptual framework adopted for this study is an amalgamation of the ZPD and the revised taxonomy of Krathwohl and Anderson (2010). I believe that this amalgamation will lend itself well to the teaching of reading comprehension strategies in English as FAL. This conceptual framework represents a holistic process that will continually probe teachers to evaluate their teaching strategies of reading comprehension before, during and after the reading of a specific text. The conceptual framework serves as a guideline for a teacher to determine whether proposed strategies and questions levels are being used or not.

Each ZPD level has a double-barrelled title depending on its origin. For example: ZPD 1 - Remember: The section 'ZPD 1' refers to the level of thinking and reasoning according to the ZPD. The second part of the title 'Remember' originates with the corresponding level of thinking and reasoning according to the revised taxonomy (Krathwohl & Anderson, 2010:64).

Within the six zones of the structure of the ZPD, the word 'proximal' is an adjective, whereas the understanding of noun 'proximity' refers to "nearness in space, time or relationship" (Oxford Dictionary, 1995). Since the role of the teacher in the acquisition of English reading comprehension is to lead the learner to a better understanding of the text read, the ZPD as a process implies that learning in this context takes place in close proximity to the teacher.

The first zone, ZPD 1 - *Remember*, is found in the 'before reading' stage and continues into the 'during reading' stage (refer to 2.4.2 for details on the revised taxonomy levels). During this level, the teacher assists the learner to enter the first stage of thinking and reasoning by activating prior knowledge, predicting and offering vocabulary instruction to set the context for reading comprehension. This level ends with looking back at the text that was read and determining whether knowledge was acquired or not.

The second zone, ZPD 2 - *Understand*, is found in the 'during reading' stage and involves the teacher testing the learner's understanding of the text. It also refers to the ability to apply and relate the information of the text to their life world, to analyse the text by making comparisons, to discuss the characters and express an opinion about the story while the text is still being read. The teacher supports the learner throughout the entire process.

The third zone, ZPD 3 - *Apply*, is also found in the 'during reading' stage. Here the learner is guided to apply and integrate their prior knowledge and state what they personally like and dislike about the story. Learners are assisted in their thinking and reasoning to a point where they can face higher-order thinking questions. The questions starting from ZPD 3 challenge a learner's insight and critical creative thinking. Since the story is still being read, typical questions found in this zone, would ask a learner to elaborate on their favourite character in the story to as far as they had read. Learners can also be expected to create new characters for a story with or without having read to the end of the story; or think of an appropriate ending. At this stage, a learner can also start evaluating the appropriateness of the title of the book.

The next zone, ZPD 4 - *Analyse*, is the first zone in the 'after reading' stage of reading. It requires a learner to look back to what they have read and to analyse the characters by reviewing the names of the characters, the setting and the title of the book. Levels of thinking and reasoning expected from a learner deepen and they are increasingly required to tap into their critical and creative thinking abilities more and more.

The second last zone, ZPD 5 - *Evaluate*, requires learners to reflect and elaborate on the text. They can be asked to retell the story, act it out or even change the story to suit another context or life world. In fiction reading, learners tend to relate to the characters of a story and can discuss their favourite character; in non-fiction, the elements of the text they tend to favour can be identified as topics for comment.

The last zone, ZPD 6 - *Create*, is the highest level of thinking and reasoning. A learner's critical and creative thinking abilities will be put to the test when they have to create a suitable title for the story or text read. At this stage a learner should be given the opportunity to comment on the appropriateness of the pictures used and opportunity to evaluate their initial predictions about the given reading material.

2.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter considered selected literature about the current policies and practices available on teaching reading comprehension in English as an FAL. The three background structures used were contextual, conceptual and theoretical to capture the essence of the topic under investigation. The contextual background focused specifically on the policies and practices of teaching reading comprehension in EFAL in South Africa. The conceptual background emphasised language development; causes of poor reading comprehension; approaches to teach reading comprehension; assessment and evaluation that aimed to improve reading

comprehension; reading materials suitable for teaching reading comprehension; and, finally, a teacher's role in teaching reading comprehension in English as a FAL.

Chapter 2 made it clear that reading can be taught using one of three approaches, namely, the top-down approach, the bottom-up approach and the interactive approach. It draws attention to the need for learners to be guided in learning strategies to comprehend what they are reading. There are many language theories and each prescribes how a language can be learned at school. In this study, the assumption is that a learner has to be able to speak and understand a language before reading, and reading comprehension, can take place. It documents the causes of poor reading comprehension; provides various assessments and evaluations available to enhance reading comprehension; and looks at suitable reading material for the teaching reading comprehension. The chapter concluded by describing the reading process as a whole, dividing the process into three sections, before reading, during reading and after reading, each with a specified knowledge level and identified skills necessary to teach reading comprehension.

In Chapter 2, literature pertaining to the teaching of English reading comprehension to Grade 2 FAL learners was explored. The role of teachers during the process of reading was carefully analysed during each stage of reading. Apart from the numerous assessments available to evaluate and improve reading comprehension, the conceptual framework for reading comprehension was also introduced and explained accordingly.

The following chapter is devoted to outlining the research design and methods to be used in order to answer the research questions. The research approach and research paradigm will each be explored. Furthermore attention will be paid to the sampling criteria along with data collection and analysis strategies.

Chapter 3

Research design and methods

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 served as a platform to review literature about the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 2 learners in English as a first additional language (FAL). Three broad backgrounds, the contextual background, the conceptual background and the theoretical background were identified. This chapter commences with the methodological and the metatheoretical paradigms after which it describes the research design, progressing from the general to the specific. The sampling criteria for selecting participants and research sites, data collection, documentation and analysis procedures are discussed. Aspects regarding ethics are viewed before reaching the concluding remarks. Table 3.1 provides a generic overview of the study.

3.2 METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGM

3.2.1 Defining qualitative research

This study investigates qualitatively how teachers teach EFAL and gives recommendations on how the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL among Grade 2 learners can be enhanced. The qualitative approach is used to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups assign to a problem they experience (Creswell, 2013:4). The problem arises from the fact that the Annual National Assessments (ANA) results show that learners are performing poorly in reading and research (Klapwijk, 2015:2). Teachers are uncertain about how to teach English reading comprehension to Grade 2 FAL learners. Due to the better ANA results of independent schools, this study focuses on the teaching strategies that teachers from these schools implement. The emphasis of the qualitative approach is that of interpretation and [making] meaning (Maree, 2012: 72).

Qualitative research is defined by Van Maanen (1979:520) in Merriam (2009:13) as:

> "an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (Merriam, 2009:13).

Table 3.1: A generic method chapter layout (Hofstee, 2006:112; Van Heerden, 2012:63)

PARADIGMATIC ASSUMPTIONS	
Methodological paradigm	Qualitative research
Metatheoretical paradigm	Interpretive paradigm
RESEARCH DESIGN	
Instrumental case study	
Selection of cases	Four independent English schools in Gauteng
Selection of participants	Primary participants: Grade 2 teachers (purposive sampling)
	Secondary participants: Grade 2 EFAL learners (convenience sampling)
DATA COLLECTION	
Qualitative data collection techniques	**Qualitative data documentation techniques**
Individual interviews	Voice recordings of individual interviews
Classroom observations	Observation checklist
Reflection journal	Reflection journal
Examples of learners' work	-
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	
Individual interviews	Transcribe interviews and code into emerging themes
Classroom observations	Code checklists into respective themes
Reflection journal	Code contents of reflection journal into respective themes
Examples of learners' work	Code into respective themes
QUALITY CRITERIA OF THE STUDY	
Validity	Triangulation, member checking, clarify the bias the researcher brings into the study, present discrepant information beforehand
Reliability	
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	
Participants' identity	Anonymous at all times
Member checking	Going back to participants to confirm and comment on findings
Consent	Consent from Grade 2 parents
	Consent from Grade 2 teachers
	Consent from principals of research sites

The essence of qualitative research comes down to "understanding the meaning people have constructed…how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam, 2009:13). Qualitative research is described by Maree (2013:51) to be "concerned with understanding the processes and the social and cultural contexts which underlie various behavioural patterns and is mostly concerned with exploring the 'why'

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questions of research" (Maree, 2013:51). Maree (2012:72) also outlines a number of characteristics of the qualitative research:

> "Qualitative research includes a focus on meaning, it is interpretive, it is idiographic, it focuses on rich or deep description of a phenomenon, it is inductive and the researcher is the research instrument through which data is collected" (Maree, 2012:72).

The characteristics of the qualitative approach are presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: The qualitative approach (Creswell, 2014:185) and application to this study

Characteristics	Application to current study
Research takes place in a natural setting.	Research was conducted at teachers' and learners' natural setting: Grade 2 classroom. The individual semi-structured interviews took place at each of the respective research sites.
The researcher is the key instrument.	The researcher, collected data through conducting individual semi-structured interviews with the Grade 2 teachers of each respective research site. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. A reflection journal was kept where observation notes were made about interviews and classroom observations.
The researcher values the meaning participants hold about the phenomenon.	Each Grade 2 teacher's views about teaching English reading comprehension was valued and interpreted.
The researcher needs to see the parts of a whole and create a holistic picture.	Learners' ability to comprehend texts read was investigated in the context of English as the LoLT. The study was contextualised in order to create a holistic picture.

3.2.2 Criteria for selecting a research approach

Creswell (2014:19) along with Nieuwenhuis (2013: 47) highlight criteria for selecting a research approach. From the three research approaches, the quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approach, this study was bound to follow a qualitative research approach due to the quality and depth of information (Nieuwenhuis, 2013: 47). The nature of the research problem and questions, the researcher's personal experiences and the nature of the audience are three major criteria which influenced the choice of research design (Creswell, 2014:20).

3.2.2.1 The nature of the research problem and questions

Every study consists of a research problem which, in essence, is an issue or concern that needs attention (Creswell, 2014:20). Research problems can be generated by gaps in the literature, researchers' conflicting views, or a need to give the 'voiceless' members of society a chance to be heard. Creswell (2014:20) maintains that certain social research problems lend themselves for specific approaches. When a researcher faces research problems that "call for

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the identification of factors that influence the outcome, the utility of an intervention, or understanding the best predictors of outcome" (Creswell, 2014:20), a quantitative approach is the best suit choice.

> It is also useful if "the researcher does not know the important variables to examine…[it] may be needed because the topic is new, the subject has never been addressed with a certain sample or group of people, and existing theories do not apply with the particular sample or group under study" (ibid.).

Another research approach to be considered is the mixed methods approach. This approach is useful if neither the quantitative nor the qualitative approaches can be employed to understand a research problem (Creswell, 2014:20). Despite the fact that mixed methods approach to research is an all-inclusive approach, I have decided to use a qualitative research approach. I solely want to focus on the participants taking part in the study, without introducing alternative data collection instruments such as questionnaires. I believe that the qualitative approach to research is sufficient to answer the following posed research questions:

Primary research question

How is English reading comprehension taught to Grade 2 First Additional Language learners at independent schools?

Secondary research questions

1. Which strategies do teachers use when teaching reading comprehension to EFAL Grade 2 learners?
2. How do teachers view the teaching of EFAL reading comprehension?
3. What factors are likely to influence the teaching of EFAL reading comprehension?
4. What recommendations (from the findings) can be made to enhance teachers' strategies for reading comprehension in EFAL?

3.2.2.2 The researcher's personal preference for the choice of the research approach

The background knowledge of a researcher is very important in the process of selecting an appropriate research approach (Creswell, 2014:20). The researcher's interests and strengths are likely to point them in either a quantitative approach, qualitative approach or mixed methods approach to research. After evaluating my strengths and weaknesses as a researcher as well as the nature of this study, I decided it would be best to employ the qualitative research approach. When the context and background of the research questions are looked at, it becomes clear that my background knowledge as a learning support facilitator, interest in people and understanding of teaching reading comprehension in EFAL lean towards

the qualitative approach as the best-suited approach to answer the research questions. This is the approach to research that I feel most comfortable using in answering the research questions. I take pleasure in writing letters to friends, family and even documenting my thoughts and feelings in a journal. I have very strong interpersonal relationships and believe that I am able to 'read' people well. This realisation convinced me to follow my instincts and employ my strengths to the best of my advantage in the quest of answering the above-mentioned research questions. Creswell's (2014:20) view about which people are most likely to prefer the qualitative research approach, convinced me that I will make the right choice: individuals who take pleasure in "writing in a literary way or conducting personal interviews or making up-close observations may gravitate to the qualitative approach".

On the other hand, researchers who find it easier to stick to rules and adhere to strict regulations, may find it easier to make use of a quantitative research approach since "quantitative studies are the traditional mode of research, [with] carefully worked out procedures and rules" (Creswell, 2014:20).

Although I am a very methodical person and like to adhere to the rules of the game, I cannot see myself making use of the quantitative research approach, simply because it removes the interpersonal touch from the research process. I enjoy working with people, more than what I enjoy working with statistics. Researchers who are keen to integrate the strengths of both the quantitative and qualitative approach to research, may find it stimulating to make use of the mixed methods approach to research. I believe the mixed methods approach to research is a very handy research approach to employ since it covers a lot of ground at once. Having said this, I believe that my study does not require me to make use of both research methods at once. The mixed methods approach highlighted factors in the study, other than what I had planned to be highlighted. At this point in time, I am concerned that making use of the mixed methods approach might over complicate my study and hence remove the essence of my study.

3.2.2.3 Identification of the nature of the audience

It is critical for the researcher to identify the target audience for whom the researcher writes. Knowing who the research findings are aimed at, furthermore helped the researcher in selecting the appropriate research approach (Creswell, 2014:21). In this study, the nature of the audience is made up of individuals (teachers, parents, policy holders, curriculum planners, reading specialist) who are interested in gaining knowledge about how the teaching of reading comprehension in EFAL among Grade 2 learners can be enhanced. The audience was interested in strategies (rather than statistics) which could be used to teach reading

comprehension in EFAL to Grade 2 learners, along with knowing which factors are likely to influence the teaching of reading comprehension in EFAL.

3.2.4 The role of the researcher

Within qualitative research, the role of the researcher is very definite. The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009:13; Creswell, 2014:187). The human is the best-suited instrument for data collection and data analysis as Merriam (2009:15) explains, since they (humans) are able to adapt and respond to a situation. The role of the researcher as stipulated by Creswell (2013:18), entails that the researcher is likely to:

> "position him- or herself in the situation to gather more meaning from within, focus on a single concept or phenomenon, study the context or setting of participants, make interpretations of the data [and] collaborate with the participants" (Creswell, 2013:18).

The researcher has to "gain entry to a research site" (Creswell, 2014:187) and ethical issues need to be dealt with in a sensible and responsible manner. I formed a relationship with the participants by winning their trust, without deceiving them. When confidential information was made known to me, I took care to keep the information undisclosed as Creswell (2014:207) advocates. Once data had been collected and analysed, I presented the data in such a manner that the research questions could be answered. My ultimate aim with this study was to ensure that the research conducted, contributes to existing knowledge as Creswell (2014:207) advocates. Teaching English reading comprehension to Grade 2 First Additional Language learners in independent schools is the focus of this study.

Creswell (2013:19) adds that in the qualitative research approach "the researcher seeks to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of the participants." By means of determining how the teaching of English reading comprehension as FAL among Grade 2 learners can be enhanced, I gained a better understanding of how the gap between the theory and practice of teaching reading comprehension in EFAL is overcome.

Major emphasis gets placed on researcher's need to reflect. Hogan, Dolan and Donnelly (2009:7) explain the significance of researcher's role in constant reflection:

> "Researchers bring their own point of view, preconceptions and bias with them into the studies conducted. In an attempt to remain objective, researchers need to continually reflect as a manner to retain perspective in relation to their own "social position in the research process" (Hogan, Dolan and Donnelly, 2009:7).

Researchers' results can be affected (positively or negatively) based on the manner in which they reflect upon the progress and the role they play in the study.

Along with this responsibility of data collection and analysis, there are numerous advantages and limitations of which one should be aware.

> "The researcher can adapt his or her thinking and understanding through non-verbal as well as verbal communication, process information immediately, clarify and summarise material, check with respondents for accuracy of interpretation, and explore unusual or unanticipated responses" (Merriam, 2009:15).

Having said this, there are limitations to having the researcher as the primary instrument (Merriam, 2009:15). It is crucial for me to identify and monitor the 'biases or subjectivities'. These biases and subjectivities may have an impact on the collection and interpretation of the data.

Keeping the role and responsibility of the researcher as the main instrument in mind, Merriam (2009:17) identifies certain competencies which are desirable for me to have as indicated in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Competencies a researcher required

Competency	Description of competency
Being a careful observer	Conducting observations is a systematic process, not a causal occurrence, you can increase your skill in observing with practice
Asking good questions	Interviewing is often the primary data collection strategy in qualitative studies. Getting good data in an interview is dependent on you asking well-chosen open-ended questions which can be followed up with probes and requests for more detail
Thinking inductively	Data analysis requires the ability to think inductively, moving from specific raw data to abstract categories and concepts
Comfort with writing	Since findings are presented in words, not numbers as in qualitative research, a report of a qualitative study requires more writing; the final product is typically longer than a quantitative write-up

3.3   METATHEORETICAL PARADIGM

The interpretive paradigm is the most suitable metatheoretical paradigm for this study. An epistemological paradigm "provides a lens through which the results of the study can be interpreted" (Maree, 2012:35). The function of the paradigm is to "provide a frame of reference for acquitting and communicating knowledge to others" (Maree, 2012:35). Accordingly, the interpretive paradigm gave the researcher "insight into the experiences and perceptions of the participants" (Maree, 2012:35). The aim was to investigate which strategies teachers use to teach English reading comprehension to Grade 2 First Additional Language learners. As the

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researcher, the interpretivist paradigm allowed me to become part of the participants' life world and view the manner in which they went about teaching reading comprehension in EFAL. The paradigm on which the research was based, became the window through which I looked at the participants and interpreted their interviews and classroom practice. A lot of emphasis was placed on the role of the researcher as the main research instrument. I used the interpretivist paradigm to understand participants' theoretical understanding about teaching English reading comprehension. Similarly, the interpretivist paradigm was used to view the participants' classroom practice during classroom observations. Furthermore, the interpretivist paradigm was used as a lens to compare and identify possible discrepancies between participants' theoretical knowledge and practical classroom practice in teaching English reading comprehension. The interpretivist paradigm allowed me to interpret the way each participant went about teaching reading comprehension in EFAL, and gain insight from it in order to have answered the research questions. Although this paradigm asked of me to become part of the participant from within (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:17), every effort was made to remain objective and treat the participants in the same manner.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:17) assert that:

> "the interpretive paradigm…is characterised by a concern for the individual. [Additionally], the central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience. To retain the integrity of the phenomena being investigated, efforts are made to get inside the person and to understand from within" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011:17).

In this light, Cohen *et al.*, (2011:17) state that the interpretive approaches focus on action.

> "This may be thought of as behaviour-with-meaning; it is intentional behaviour and as such, future-orientated. Actions are only meaningful to us in so far as we are able to ascertain the intentions of actors to share their experiences. A large part of our everyday interactions with one another rely on shared experiences" (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:17).

3.3.1 Advantages, challenges and ways to overcome the challenges within the interpretive paradigm

Within the interpretative paradigm, there are advantages but also challenges which need to be overcome. The interpretive paradigm places the researcher in the middle. Data collected is based on the researcher's subjective experience and understanding thereof. Furthermore,

the researcher's perception of the participants is unique to circumstances. In essence, the concerned paradigm enables the researcher to understand the participant according to the experienced circumstances. There are, however, challenges when it comes to working from the interpretive paradigm. The subjective manner of the interpretive paradigm can make reports inaccurate and biased since it is only based on the researcher's perspective and experience. Background knowledge and preconceived ideas can influence the manner in which data is collected and reported on.

There are, however, various ways in which the researcher can overcome mentioned challenges. It is very important to keep a reflection journal where all shared experiences with participants can be documented. The researcher has to have a clear perspective and state biases early in the study. Meetings with the supervisors can be used as opportunities to report on findings. In conclusion, the researcher has to constantly evaluate their involvement by documenting experiences and then communicate it to the supervisors.

As a researcher, I believe one needs to consequently evaluate your progress and personal influence regarding studies. After evaluating my strengths and weakness regarding the use of the interpretivist paradigm, I came to the following conclusion: one of my greatest strengths is my ability to communicate with people and gather a general feeling regarding the person. I am quick to associate with the person and find common areas of interest which can be used in building a relationship, be it professional or personal. In my personal life, my emotions are quick to overrule judgement which has been known to influence relations, be it positively or negatively. I know myself to be a people's person. However, without realising, I have a tendency of becoming emotionally involved in matters which might not even be aimed at me.

Red lights are flashing at me warning me of the things I should be on the lookout for when using the interpretivist paradigm to answer the research questions. I documented formal and informal observations in my reflection journal to avoid the mistakes made in the past and to evaluate my stance as the researcher. I attempted to remain as objective as possible at all times, while reporting my findings in writing to my supervisors. Although I remained true to myself in my role as researcher, I have drawn a visible line and did not allow my position in research to be clouded by emotions. I have a responsibility to my supervisors, the university and myself to remain as objective as possible, to persevere and to draw conclusions from the interviews conducted and the classroom practice observed. Table 3.4 summarises advantages, challenges and ways to overcome challenges within the interpretivist paradigm.

Table 3.4: Advantages, challenges and ways to overcome challenges within the interpretative paradigm

Advantages	Challenges	Ways for the researcher to overcome the challenges
The interpretation of the data collected, is based on the researcher's subjective experience and understanding of the participants	Bernstein (1994) in Cohen *et al.* (2011:21) "suggests that subjective reports may be incomplete and misleading"	Keep a reflection journal and write down all the shared experiences concerned with the study and the participants
The researcher's perception of the participant is unique to the circumstances	Morrison (2009) in Cohen *et al.* (2011:21) suggests that research and findings will be very challenging to keep accurate, if the researcher's "perception is wrong"	Report to supervisor and co-supervisor on a regular basis to discuss findings
This paradigm will enable the researcher to truly understand the individual and develop a "concern for the individual" (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:17)	The researcher can become biased and develop preconceived ideas	The researcher has to constantly evaluate their own involvement by documenting experiences and reflect on it

Merriam (2009:8) explains that "Interpretive research, which is where qualitative research is most often located, assumes that a reality is socially constructed, namely, that there is no single, observable reality. Rather, there are multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event. Researchers do not 'find' knowledge, they construct it". Table 3.5 explores a variety of epistemological perspectives.

3.4   RESEARCH PROCESS

The research process to be followed in an attempt to answer the research question is outlined by Maree (2012:36). The research process is commenced by showing initial interest in a topic or problem at hand from which a research topic can be derived. Once a research topic has been decided upon, literature which supports the research topic can be reviewed to generate further background knowledge. The purpose of the study needs to be defined, after which research questions (primary and secondary research questions) need to be generated, along with the working assumptions. The researcher should evaluate the nature

Table 3.5: An overview of epistemological perspectives (Merriam, 2009:11)

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	Positivist/Post-positivist	Interpretive/ Constructivist	Critical	Postmodern/Post-structural
Purpose	Predict, control, generalise	Describe, understand, interpret	Change, emancipate, empower	Deconstruct, problematize, question, interrupt
Types	Experimental, survey, quasi-experimental	Phenomenology, ethnography, hermeneutic, grounded theory, naturalistic, qualitative	Neo-Marxist, feminist, participatory action research, critical race theory, critical ethnography	Postcolonial, post-structural, postmodern, queer theory
Reality	Objective, external, out there	Multiple realities, context-bound	Multiple realities, situated in political, social, cultural contexts (one reality is privileged)	Questions assump-tions that there is a place where reality resides; "Is there a there there?"

of the research to be conducted and consider their own strengths in order to decide on a research design. The study cannot proceed without a suitable case or participants from which data can be collected. Once a suitable research approach and paradigm has been chosen on which the study can be based, research can be planned to be conducted by means of fieldwork. Two vital components of the research process are data collection and data documentation techniques. After the data collection and documentation processes, the data needs to be analysed and interpreted accordingly. Member checking by participants is a very important way to ensure rigour to the study. This allows participants to comment and confirm the data gathered from them. The final step in the research process requires the researcher to write up the findings which meet quality criteria. Figure 3.1 provides a flow diagram which depicts the research process.

3.5   RESEARCH DESIGN: CASE STUDY RESEARCH

3.5.1   Defining case study research

The father of case study research, Yin (2014:16), defines case study research to be a realistic investigation aimed at looking at a current matter, or a case, in-depth.
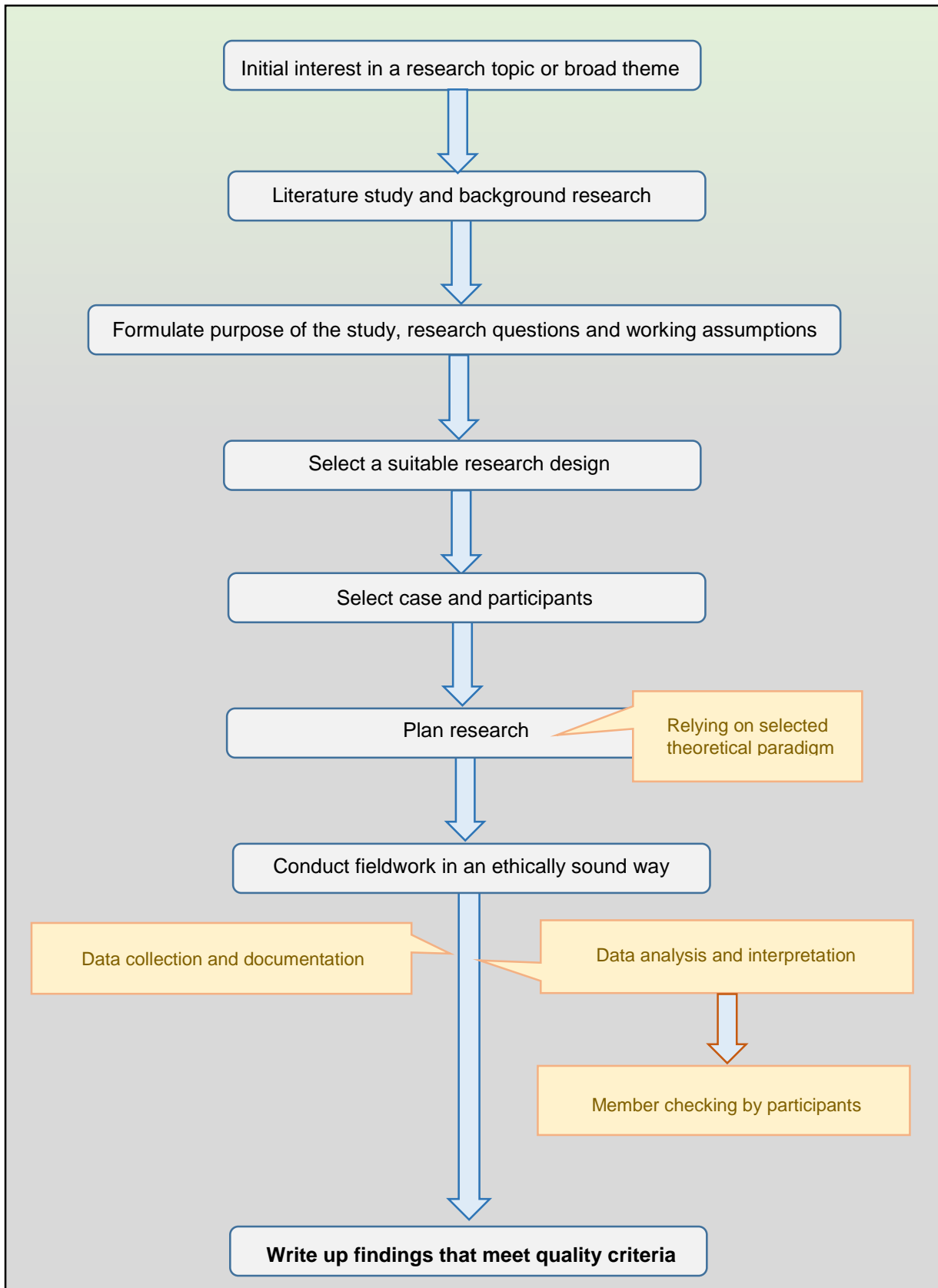
Figure 3.1: A flow diagram presenting the research process (Adapted from Maree, 2012:36

In this study, the phenomenon (the current matter), namely the strategies which Grade 2 teachers use to teach reading comprehension in English as FAL, was investigated in a "real world" environment (Yin, 2014:16). The context in which the study takes place cannot be separated from the phenomenon. Furthermore "a case study... relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion" (Yin, 2014:17).

Along with Yin (2014:16), Merriam (2009:40) adds to the definition of a case study: It is believed that a case study is "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system". Accordingly, Merriam (2009:40) elaborates on what a bounded system is: "the bounded system or case [to be studied] might be selected because it is an instance of some process, issue or concern [which is believed to need some change]".

In line with the above understanding of what a case study is deemed to be, Creswell (2014:14), defines a case study as an investigation where the researcher develops an in-depth interest in the case, which may consist of multiple individuals. The current matter under investigation, the case, may be concerned with a specific time or place, where multiple procedures are used to collect and analyse data.

Case studies are suitable to use as a research design "to explore a general problem or issue within a limited and focused setting" (Rule & John, 2011:7). When viewing the concerned phenomena within the case study, researchers have one benefit in the sense that they are able to "approach the phenomena under investigation from different ontological and epistemological perspectives within the case study design" (Maree, 2012:75). The case study was explanatory as the investigation of the cases of three independent schools enabled the researcher to determine how the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL among Grade 2 learners can be enhanced. The three schools are the cases where in-depth studies were made.

For my study, the criteria used to effectively conduct case study research correlates with the evident aspects. Case study research requires a phenomenon to be investigated, which, in my study, is the teaching of reading comprehension in EFAL. Yin (2014:16) requires case study research to take place in a real world environment. The setting where the research was conducted was at a school in a classroom with a teacher teaching a reading comprehension lesson in EFAL. Learners were not disadvantaged and taken out of the environment which they had grown used to. I was the only addition to the real world environment as an observing teacher.

3.5.2 Special features of case study research

Case study research has certain unique features that set it apart from other research designs. Merriam (2009:43) identifies three special features of case study research. Case study research is "particularistic, descriptive and heuristic". Case study research is particularistic in the sense that it focuses on a particular situation or phenomenon. The phenomenon on which this study focused was the teaching of English reading comprehension to Grade 2 First Additional Language learners in independent schools. This special feature of case study research, makes case study a good research design for practical problems that arise from the day to day interaction with people and situations (Merriam, 2009:44).

For case study research to be defined as being descriptive, it needs to live up to its initial definition of being a thick description of the phenomenon under study. Merriam (2009:43) elaborates on the meaning of the term 'thick description', meaning that it is "a complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated". The thick description being investigated in this study, is the manner in which teachers understand and teach English reading comprehension to Grade 2 First Additional Language learners. The meaning of 'understand' relates to teachers' theoretical understanding, while 'teach' relates to teachers teaching English reading comprehension in classroom practice, thus theory and practice are both attended to.

The final special feature of case study research is where case study research is characterised as being heuristic. This refers to the ability of the case study to highlight and enhance the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study. Furthermore, case study research has the capacity to "bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known" (Merriam, 2009:43). I believe case study research is the most suited research design to use. The selection of participants along with data collection instruments assisted me in generating an understanding of what it entails to teach reading comprehension in EFAL. As researcher and the key instrument to the study, I look forward to being enriched with such knowledge. The knowledge gathered is sure to focus on my field of interest: teaching reading comprehension in EFAL to Grade 2 learners.

Knowledge gathered from case study research is deemed to be different to knowledge gathered using other research designs. Stake (1981), as cited by Merriam (2009:44), elaborates on the characteristics of the knowledge gained by means of case study research compared to other research types. Case study research is more concrete, more contextual, more developed by reader interpretation and is based more on reference populations determined by the reader (ibid.).

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Table 3.6 lists the characteristics of knowledge gained by case studies and explains it accordingly (Merriam, 2009:44).

Table 3.6: The characteristics of knowledge gained by case studies

Characteristic of case study knowledge	Description of the knowledge
More concrete	Case study research links up with individuals' own experiences because it is "vivid, concrete and sensory than abstract"
More conceptual	Individuals' experiences are rooted in context, just like the knowledge from case study research is also rooted in context. It can be said that case study research is personalised, where knowledge derived from other research designs are said to be "abstract and formal"
More developed by reader interpretation	Individuals' own experiences and understanding are brought into the [interpretation of the] case study
Based more on reference populations determined by the reader	The reader has an activate role and "participates in extending generalisations to reference populations"

3.5.3 Limitations and strengths of case study research

Similar to life, there are limitations and strengths to every aspect dealt with. Case study research also has limitations and strengths, which need to considered. Both the limitations (Yin, 2014:19; Merriam, 2009:50) and strengths (Rule & John, 2011:7; Merriam, 2009:50) of using a case study as a research design are summarised in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7: Limitations and strengths of case study research

Limitations (Yin, 2014:21)	Strengths (Rule & John, 2011:7)
Case studies are not always done with precision and care	Case studies allow the researcher to zoom in on certain aspects of investigation, in great depth
Forms of bias, preconceived ideas and favouritism can be found	Case study research allows the researcher to be flexible
Case studies tend to take long; they seem very tedious and unmanageable	Case studies allow the generation of valuable information based on quality, not quantity
-	A wide variety of methods can be used
Limitations (Merriam, 2009:50)	**Strengths (Merriam, 2009:50)**
Unusual problems with ethics - unethical writers can select data to illustrate anything desired to highlight	Offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon.
Biases can affect the final product	Case study research is anchored in real-life situations
-	Case study research offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences

I am aware that a possible limitation in my study was that only a small number of teachers at each research site were used according to the sampling criteria. Furthermore, I am also aware that personal favouritism and biases might develop towards the teachers and the manner in which they answer the interview questions or teach English reading comprehension. However, care was taken to remain objective at all times. A strength can be the fact that more time was spent with each participant since there were only three research sites. This allowed me to explore certain expects of the teacher's knowledge and practice in great depth.

3.5.4 Misunderstandings regarding case study research

Five misunderstandings regarding the use of case studies as a research design are identified by Flyvbjerg (2011:301). "The five misunderstandings may be said to constitute the conventional view, or orthodoxy, of the case study" (Flyvbjerg, 2011:301). These five misunderstandings have been known to keep researchers away from the use of this research type, however, these five misunderstandings to follow, are just incorrect perceptions of this research type. In this study, I enjoyed making use of case study research as a research design. I enjoyed the different context each research site provided, as well as working with each participant. The context-based knowledge gathered during data collection was very valuable. I found that bias was not a problem at all. I remained objective and discussed my feelings about each research site with my supervisors. I was continually aware of the misunderstandings about case study research and continually referred to Table 3.8 as a guideline. Each of the five misunderstandings has a restatement as cited by Merriam (2009:53).

3.5.5 Research method: Instrumental case study research

Table 3.8: Misunderstandings and restatements regarding case study research

Number	Misunderstanding (Flyvbjerg, 2011:301)	Restatement (Merriam, 2009:53)
1	General, theoretical knowledge is more valuable than concrete case knowledge	Universals cannot be found in the study of human affairs. Context-dependent knowledge is more valuable
2	One cannot generalise on the basis of an individual case, therefore, the case study cannot contribute to scientific development	Formal generalisation is overvalued as a source of scientific development; the force of a single example is underestimated

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Number	Misunderstanding (Flyvbjerg, 2011:301)	Restatement (Merriam, 2009:53)
3	The case study is most useful for generating hypotheses, that is, in the first stage of a total research process, while other methods are most suitable for hypotheses testing and theory building	The case study is useful for both generating and testing of hypotheses but is not limited to these activities
4	The case study contains a bias towards verification, that is, a tendency to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions	There is no greater bias in case study towards confirming preconceived notions than in other forms of research
5	It is often difficult to summarise and develop general propositions and theories on the bias of specific case studies	Difficulty in summarising case studies is due to properties of the reality studied, not the research method

The proposed research method for this study was an instrumental case study. An instrumental case study, as Merriam (2009:48) explains is employed "to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalisation". I have chosen instrumental case study design since this design enables the researcher to shed light on a particular challenge that needs to be addressed. The issue to which insight was needed, concerned the investigation with recommendations for the enhancement of teaching reading comprehension in English as FAL among Grade 2 learners. The case study research design for this study included three cases. Three different research sites were chosen purposefully. As part of each case, qualified Grade 2 teachers from each selected school were approached to take part in individual interviews. For theory to link up with classroom practice, the same teachers who were interviewed, were observed during the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL. In the first instance, the purpose of the individual semi-structured interviews, was to determine each teacher's theoretical understanding and knowledge about teaching English reading comprehension. In the second instance, I wanted to see how teachers implement their theoretical knowledge and understanding in classroom practice. The Grade 2 teachers remained the primary participants and the Grade 2 learners served as the secondary participants.

3.6 PARTICIPANTS AND RESEARCH SITES

3.6.1 An overview of participants and research sites

Research was conducted at three independent English medium schools in the Gauteng area. Qualified Grade 2 teachers were selected purposively on two criteria: that they were teaching in EFAL; and that they had been teaching for more than two years. Teachers who complied

with these two sampling criteria were approached to be willing to participate in a semi-structured individual interview. Each qualified Grade 2 teacher who agreed to be interviewed, was requested to teach a reading comprehension lesson in EFAL that would be observed. This was done to ensure that the teacher's views and understanding of teaching reading comprehension in EFAL were in line with their actual teaching and classroom practice*. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with the sampled Grade 2 teachers to determine:

1. what strategies the teacher uses when teaching English FAL Grade 2 learners reading comprehension in their English lesson.
2. how the teacher views the teaching of English FAL reading comprehension.
3. what factors are likely to influence the teaching of English FAL reading comprehension.
4. what recommendations from the findings can be made to enhance a teacher's strategies for reading comprehension in EFAL.

* The concept 'practice' refers to the daily classroom activity, the teaching reality teachers find themselves in.

3.6.2 Selection of participants

Grade 2 teachers from each research site were chosen purposively according to the requirement that they were qualified to teach Grade 2 learners in English as the LoLT. Grade 2 teachers served as the primary participants. The Grade 2 learners served as the secondary participants when the Grade 2 teachers were observed in their teaching of reading comprehension in LoLT. The learners were selected by means of convenient sampling since they were already in the class when the teacher's teaching was observed. Learners' parents did provide consent for them to be part of the class when the teacher was observed. Table 3.9 provides an overview of the selection of participants and the research site.

Table 3.9: An overview of the selection of participants and research sites

Participants	Sampling technique	Criteria used for sampling	Participant category
Grade 2 teachers	Non-probability purposive sampling	Qualified Grade 2 teachers	Primary participant
Grade 2 EFAL learners	Non-probability convenience sampling	EFAL learners	Secondary participant
Independent schools in Gauteng where the LoLT is English			
School A	School B		School C

3.7 DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected in a number of ways. The data collection strategies included the making of voice recordings of the individual interviews with Grade 2 teachers; classroom observations that were documented using an observation checklist; and the researcher keeping a reflection journal. These methods shed maximum light on the difference between the theory and practice behind teaching reading comprehension in English as FAL. Table 3.10 represents the different data collection instruments employed as part of my study. There were two groups of participants: the learners (secondary participants) and the teachers (primary participants).

Table 3.10: The different data collection strategies applicable to each group of participants

Participants	Voice recordings	Observations	Reflection journals	Documents
Learners	n/a	Learners' understanding and responses were observed during the teaching of the reading comprehension lesson	Journal entries regarding classroom activities and learners understanding of English as FAL were recorded	n/a
Teachers	Semi-structured individual interviews	Teachers teaching strategies to develop reading comprehension in English as FAL	Journal entries were made about findings, thoughts and observations during and after the individual interviews.	Transcription of the individual interviews

3.7.1 Data collection procedures

There are certain steps which need to be followed in the collection of data. Creswell (2014:189) elaborates that data collection steps start with:

> "setting the boundaries for the study, collecting information through unstructured or semi-structured observations and interviews, documents, and visual materials, as well as establishing the protocol for recording information" (Creswell, 2014:189).

There are numerous data qualitative collection techniques to choose, however, one has to be reminded of both the advantages and limitations to each of these techniques. Table 3.11 summarises the data collection techniques and highlights the advantages and limitations to each of these data collection techniques (Creswell, 2014:191).

Table 3.11: A summary of the data collection techniques

Data collection type	Options within types	Advantages of the type	Limitations to the type	Data collection methods in this study
Observations	Complete participant: researcher conceals role. Observer as participant: role of researcher is known. Participant as observer: observation role secondary to participant role. Complete observer: researcher observes without participating.	Researcher has first-hand experience with participant. Researcher can record information as it occurs. Unusual aspects can be noticed during observation. Useful in exploring topics that may be uncomfortable for participants to discuss.	Researcher may be seen as intrusive. Private information may be observed that researcher cannot report. Researcher may not have good attending and observing skills. Certain participants (e.g. children) may present special problems in gaining rapport.	Complete participant: Record observations using observation checklist.
Interviews	Face-to-face, one-on-one, in person interview. Telephone - researcher interviews by phone. Focus group - researcher interviews participant in a group. E-mail internet interview (questionnaire).	Useful when participants cannot be directly observed. Participants can provide historical information. Allows researcher control over the line of questioning.	Provides indirect information filtered through the views of interviewees. Provides information in a designated place rather than the natural field setting. Researcher's presence may bias responses. Not all people are equally articulate and perceptive.	Semi-structured individual interviews. Interviews were voice recorded, along with using an interview schedule for each participant where I indicated subtle gestures and non-verbal communication.
Documents	Public documents - minutes of meetings or newspapers. Private documents - journal, diaries, or letters.	Enables a researcher to obtain the language and words of participants. Can be accessed at a time convenient to researcher - an unobtrusive source of information. Represents data to which participants have given attention. As written evidence, it serves a researcher the time and expense of transcribing.	Not all people are equally articulate and perceptive. May be protected information available to public or private access. Requires the researcher to search out the information in hard-to find places. Requires transcribing or optically scanning for computer entry. Materials may be incomplete. The documents may not be authentic or accurate.	Reflection journal was used to indicate subtle gestures and non-verbal communication tools during semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. This reflection journal served as a manner for me to voice my concerns, opinions and general thoughts about the research.
Audio-visual materials	Photographs Videotapes Art objects Computer messages Sounds Film	May be an unobtrusive method of collecting data. Provides an opportunity for participants to directly share their reality. It is creative in that it captures attention visually.	May be difficult to interpret. May not be accessible publicly or privately. The presence of an observer (e.g. photographer) may be disruptive and affect responses.	The interviews were voice recorded to refer back to each interview conducted with the respective participants.

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3.7.1.1 Observations

Observation was used as a data collection technique. Grade 2 teachers served as the primary participants, whom I observed during the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL. The learners in each class formed the secondary participants. I observed to see if and how learners understand and respond to the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL. I observed for effective strategies that were successful in teaching English reading comprehension in English as FAL. This served as a manner of triangulation. I also observed (and questioned) the teacher's view of the effectiveness of her strategies. Furthermore, the language theories, namely, cognitive constructivism, social constructivism and behaviourism, were important during my observations when I specifically noticed how EFAL learners learned to understand what they were reading and how the classroom situation was created for learning.

Using observation as a method to collect data requires an objective observer (Maree, 2013:84). Another important point to keep in mind is to be honest about what was observed and recorded. Maree (2013:84) supports this point and states that one should "be frank and truthful in your role as observer". I took on the role of observer and as a participant. This allowed me to have entered into the situation while being focused on my role as observer. Observations were recorded on the observation checklist shown below.

i) Observations: what to observe

There are several elements that influences what a researcher observes. As Merriam (2009:119) explains, a researcher's theoretical framework as well as their unique research problem are bound to influence what the researcher observes. There are, however, too many things to observe at once. Therefor Merriam (ibid.) suggests a checklist of elements likely to be present in any setting (Table 3.12).

Merriam (2009:122) mentions that, before observation can commence, the researcher and data collector should have prepared answers for the following questions in case they are asked as they are applicable to the researcher and those observed:

What are you actually going to do?

Were you disruptive?

What did you do with your findings?

What did you get out of this?

Table 3.12: A checklist of aspects to be observed during observation as a data collection technique

Element	Explanation of each element
The physical setting	What is the physical environment like? What is the context? What kind of behaviour is the setting designed for? How is space allocated? What objects, resources, technologies are in the setting?
The participants	Who is in the scene (people and their roles)? What brings people together? Who is allowed here? What are the relevant characteristics of the participants?
Activities and interactions	What is going on? Is there a definable sequence of activities? How do people interact with the activity and with each other? How are people and the activities connected?
Conversations	What is the content of the conversation in this setting? Who speaks to whom? Who listens?
Subtle factors	Differentiate between formal and informal activities Symbolic and connotative meanings of words Non-verbal communication such as dress and physical space Unobtrusive measures such as physical clues What does not happen?
Your own behaviour	Are you as much part of the scene as the participants? How is your role affecting the scene while observing? What do you say and do?

As the researcher and observer, I have compiled a checklist which serves as a guideline as to what I am going to observe. Table 3.12 served as inspiration and gave rise to the observation checklist in Table 3.13. A copy of the checklist was made available for each classroom where the Grade 2 teacher's teaching was observed.

Table 3.13: An observation checklist for classroom observation

Criteria to observe	Checked	Comments
Did the teacher activate the Grade 2 learners' prior knowledge?		How was this done?
Did the teacher point new words out to Grade 2 learners?		How was this done?
Did vocabulary instruction take place?		How was this done?
Were predictions made after looking at the cover of book and pictures?		
The context of the book is established		
Did only the teacher read during the lesson		
Did only learners read during the lesson?		
Did both Grade 2 teacher and learners read during the lesson?		
Time spent on teaching reading comprehension in EFAL:		
0 - 5 minutes		
6 - 10 minutes		
11 - 15 minutes		
16 - 20 minutes		
21 - 25 minutes		
26 - 30 minutes		
30 + minutes		
Was English the language spoken during the FAL lesson?		In which way?
Was questioning part of the lesson?		
Lower order thinking questions		What percentage of lesson was made up by these questions?
Were any or mostly higher order thinking questions asked?		What percentage of lesson was made up by these questions?
*Questions were asked before reading commenced		
*Questions were asked during the reading process		
*Questions were asked after reading		
Teacher interacts with learners during the lesson		
Learners are given a chance to speak during the lesson		
…….to speak to each other		
…….to the teacher		
Learners are given activities after reading		Mention activities:
*Scaffolding was visible during the process of teaching		
*Questions were asked according to Bloom's Taxonomy		
*Questions were asked according to the Revised Taxonomy		
Predictions are evaluated at the end of the book		
Inferences are made		
Learners are given an opportunity to elaborate about the book		
Learners are given opportunity to ask questions about the book		
Is reading comprehension in English as FAL assessed?		How is this done?
* Refer directly to the conceptual framework (Section 2.4.5)		

The conceptual framework combines the three stages of reading (*) with the levels of questioning according to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development theory and the revised taxonomy (Krathwohl & Anderson, 2010:64).

3.7.1.2 Individual interviews

Semi-structured individual interviews with the Grade 2 teachers of every research site were conducted in order to explore their understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The individual interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded.

i)   Characteristics of semi-structured interviews

There are three types of interviews to choose from for the purpose of data collection. Merriam (2009:93), along with Maree (2013:87) agree that the best way to decide which interview technique was best-suited for the task at hand, was to decide how much structure you as the researcher required. I decided to make use of semi-structured interviews due to the following characteristics of semi-structured interviews (Merriam, 2009:93):

- The interview schedule (the list of questions to be posed to the interviewee) includes a combination of more-and-less structured interview questions.
- The interview questions can be used flexibly.
- The data required from the participants is rather specific in nature in order to answer the research question.
- The majority of the interview is guided by list of questions or issues to be explored.
- There is no predetermined wording or order [of questions].

ii) Types of questions

There are different types of questions, as suggested by Patton (2002) cited by Merriam (2009:96). Table 3.14 illustrates the different categories of questions.

Table 3.14: A summary of the different categories of questions (Merriam, 2009:96)

Types of questions	Explanation
Experience and behaviour questions	This type of question is concerned with what a person does during the day; it is aimed at the person's behaviour, actions and activities
Opinion and values question	These questions are aimed at the person's interests or beliefs
Feeling questions	These questions are aimed at the "effective dimension of human life"
Knowledge questions	These questions are aimed at the person's factual knowledge about a particular subject or object being interviewed
Sensory questions	These questions are aimed at the sensory information a person gathers through their senses: what is seen, heard, touched, etc.
Background / demographic questions	This refers to the demographic information of a person, such as age, gender, area of residence, etc.

The interview questions which I used as part of the semi-structured interviews with the Grade 2 teachers are listed below (iii). These questions were generated directly from the primary and secondary research questions. I believed that these research questions would yield enough information to be able to generate sufficient knowledge to answer the research questions. I was confident that the manner in which the research questions were worded would make the participants comfortable enough to share their knowledge and skills with me during the interview. Individual semi-structured interviews gave me the flexibility to probe participants from whom I did not receive an adequate answer to the questions posed. The questions asked related to the participant's theoretical knowledge and understanding of what teaching English reading comprehension entails. The questions were drawn up in such a manner to progress from the known to the unknown, and hence from participants' general understanding to a specific understanding.

iii) Interview schedule for semi-structured individual interviews:

1. *How do you (as teachers):*
   a. Define reading comprehension?
   b. Understand English as FAL?
   c. Believe reading comprehension can be enhanced?
2. *Which strategies and techniques do you as a teacher use when teaching reading comprehension to EFAL Grade 2 learners?*
   a. Which resources do you use for the teaching of reading comprehension to EFAL learners?
3. *How do teachers view the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL?*
   a. How do you understand reading comprehension in English as FAL to be?
   b. What are your opinions about the teaching of reading comprehension in English to FAL learners?
   c. Are learners born with the ability to comprehend English reading, or should this skill be taught to them? If the latter, what skills should be taught to learners?
   d. Do you follow any steps or stages when teaching reading comprehension to EFAL learners?
4. *What factors are likely to influence the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL?*
   a. Factors at school?
   b. Factors at home?
   c. Socio-economic factors?
   d. Personal factors?
   e. Emotional factors?

5. *How do teachers influence the teaching of English Reading Comprehension to Grade 2 EFAL learners?*

3.7.1.3 Reflection journal

I kept a reflection journal documenting possible findings, thoughts and notes from each individual interview with a Grade 2 teacher from each research site. Similarly, possible findings, thoughts and notes regarding classroom observations, were also be documented (Merriam, 2009:223).

Aspects from both the core curriculum, as well as more subtle aspects from the hidden curriculum were recorded in the reflection journal. The hidden curriculum refers to aspects such as emotional well-being, body language and the finer detail that can only be identified from spending time with the participant and developing a relationship with them. There is, however, a danger, but I was aware of it, that notes recorded can be too subjective. The reflection journal was also used to document finer nuances regarding each participant as I observed them through the individual semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. This information relates to observation notes that were not necessarily documented on the observation checklist. My aim, as the researcher, was to document notes in an objective manner. Since reflection journaling can be viewed as biased, I intended to make use of member checking. I made use of member checking by going back to the participants where I gave them an opportunity to comment on and confirm the manner in which I had transcribed each interview. Once I had analysed the data and generated themes from the coded and transcribed interviews, I gave the participants an opportunity to comment on the validity of the findings.

3.7.2 Data recording procedures: Observation

Qualitative researchers often use observation as a data collection technique. Data collection cannot be separated from data recording procedures. Creswell (2014:193) emphasises that "observational protocol" is used for recording information while observing. The observation sheet or checklist used for recording observations may consist of a "single page with a dividing line down the middle to separate descriptive notes" (Creswell, 2014:193). Moreover, Creswell (2014:193) adds that the form of descriptive notes varies and examples are portraits of the participants, the reconstruction of dialogue, a description of the physical setting and accounts of particular events or activities. The data recording procedures can entail recording "reflection notes" (Creswell, 2014:194) that are. These reflection thoughts are the researcher's personal

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thoughts, such as "speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices" (Creswell, 2014:193). This information is in line with the discussion in 3.7.1.3. Demographic information should also be included on the observation sheet which documents the time, date and place of the setting where the observations are made (Creswell, 2014:193).

In my own study, I used an observation checklist (Table 3.13) and a reflection journal as a way of indicating which strategies teachers used when teaching a reading comprehension lesson I observed. Throughout the designing of the observation checklist, I left enough space to make brief notes about what I observed. These notes were brief as I was only able to jot down the most important comments as the observing teacher. The purpose of these brief notes was to find emerging themes during the study. Once the appropriate themes were analysed, they were discussed in conjunction with the classroom observations.

3.7.2.1 Data recording procedures: Interviews

When using interviews as a data collection technique, Creswell (2014:193) to state that an "interview protocol [should be used] for asking questions and recording answers during a qualitative interview". The manner in which researchers are to use such an interview protocol is rather simple. "Researchers record information from the interviews by making handwritten notes, by audiotaping or by videotaping" (ibid.). Having said that, Creswell (2014:193) suggests that although an interview may be recorded or videotaped, researchers are still advised to take notes in the event of a problem occurring with the recording of the interviews. A typical interview protocol should consist of the following elements (ibid.):

- A heading which contains the date, time, name of the interviewer and interviewee
- Instructions for the interviewer to follow to ensure consistency throughout
- Questions which are started with an ice-breaker, followed by the four to five research questions to be asked
- Probes for the four to five questions, to follow-up and ask individuals to explain their ideas in more detail, or to elaborate on what they have said
- Spaces should be left between the questions to allow the researcher to record responses
- A final thank you statement to acknowledge the time the interviewee spent during the interview.

The sequence and wording of the interview questions are available under section 3.7.1.2 iii. I decided not to physically record the participants' responses to the questions asked in writing. I was aware of my strengths and weaknesses, thus I decided to use a voice recorder and record the interviews with each participant. I ensured that the interview schedule adhered to

the criteria as Creswell (2015:193) set out. Although I used a voice recorder to record the respective interviews, I worked according to the set interview schedule. Each participant too had a copy to be familiar with the questions posed. I used a separate interview schedule for each participant where I recorded subtle gestures and body language.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

There are seven steps (Table 3.15) involved in the analysis of data (Creswell, 2014:197).

Table 3.15: A discussion of the various steps involved in qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2014:197)

Steps in data analysis	Discussion of the relevant step involved in qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2014:197)
Step 1	Organise and prepare the data for analysis. This step includes transcribing the interviews, optically scanning material, typing up field notes, cataloguing visual material, sorting and arranging the data into different types depending on the sources of information.
Step 2	Read through the data and gather a general feel for the data. Determine the general ideas said by participants; identify the tone used by participants.
Step 3	Start coding all the data. Coding is the process or organising the data by bracketing chunks and writing a word representing a category in the margin.
Step 4	Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes of analysis. These themes are the ones that appear as the major findings in qualitative studies and are used as headings in the reporting of a study's findings.
Step 5	Discuss the descriptions and themes as a narrative passage to convey the findings of the analysis.
Step 6	One of the final steps in data analysis involves making interpretations in qualitative research, asking questions such as "what was learned?" The interpretations in qualitative research can take many forms, be adapted for different types of designs and be flexible to convey personal, research-based, and actions meanings.
Step 7	Final interpretations of themes and descriptions.

Figure 3.2 is an illustration of what the data analysis process looks like. In this particular diagram, the data analysis process works from the bottom up, starting with the raw data.

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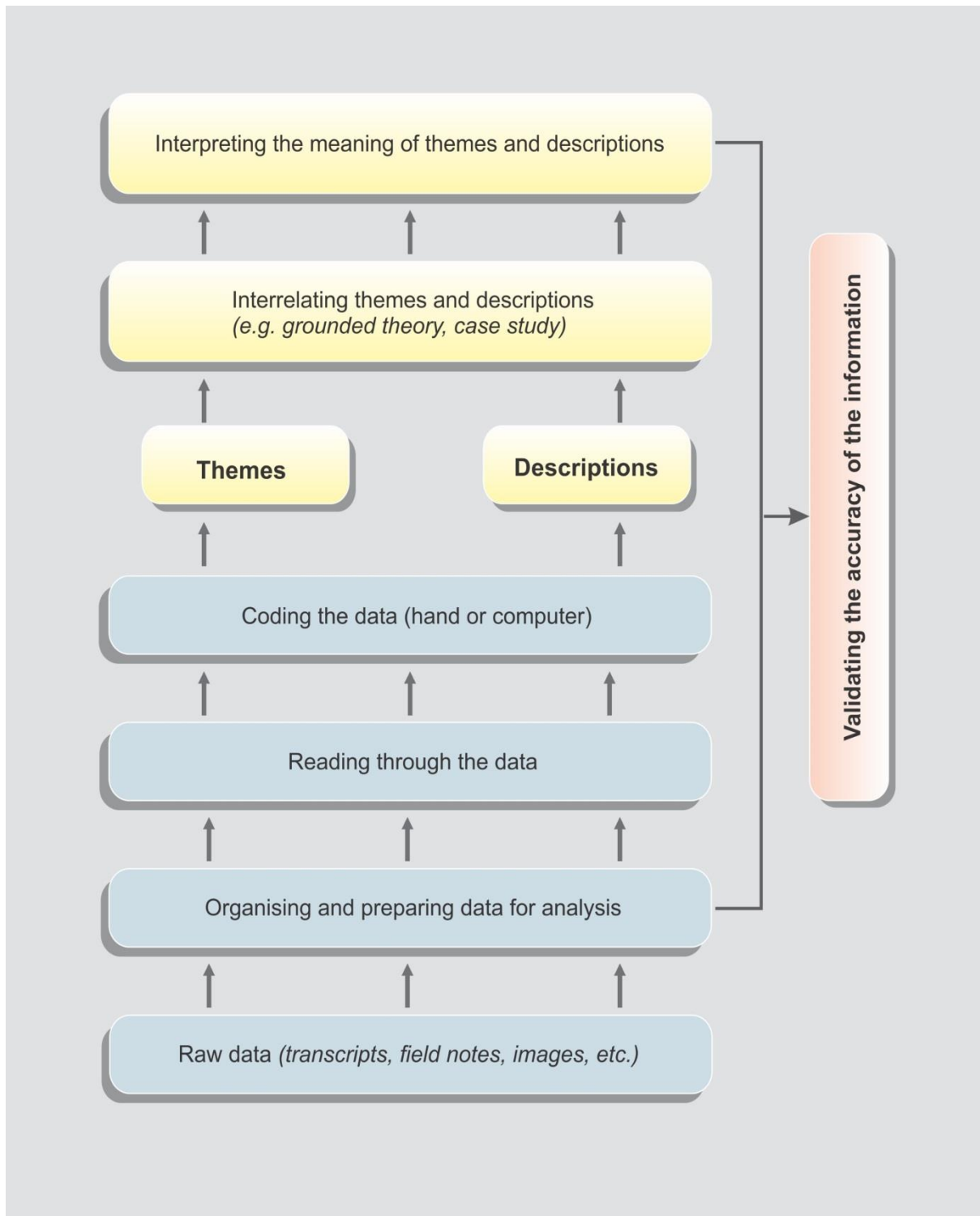
Figure 3.2: An illustration of the process of data analysis (Adapted from Creswell, 2014:197)
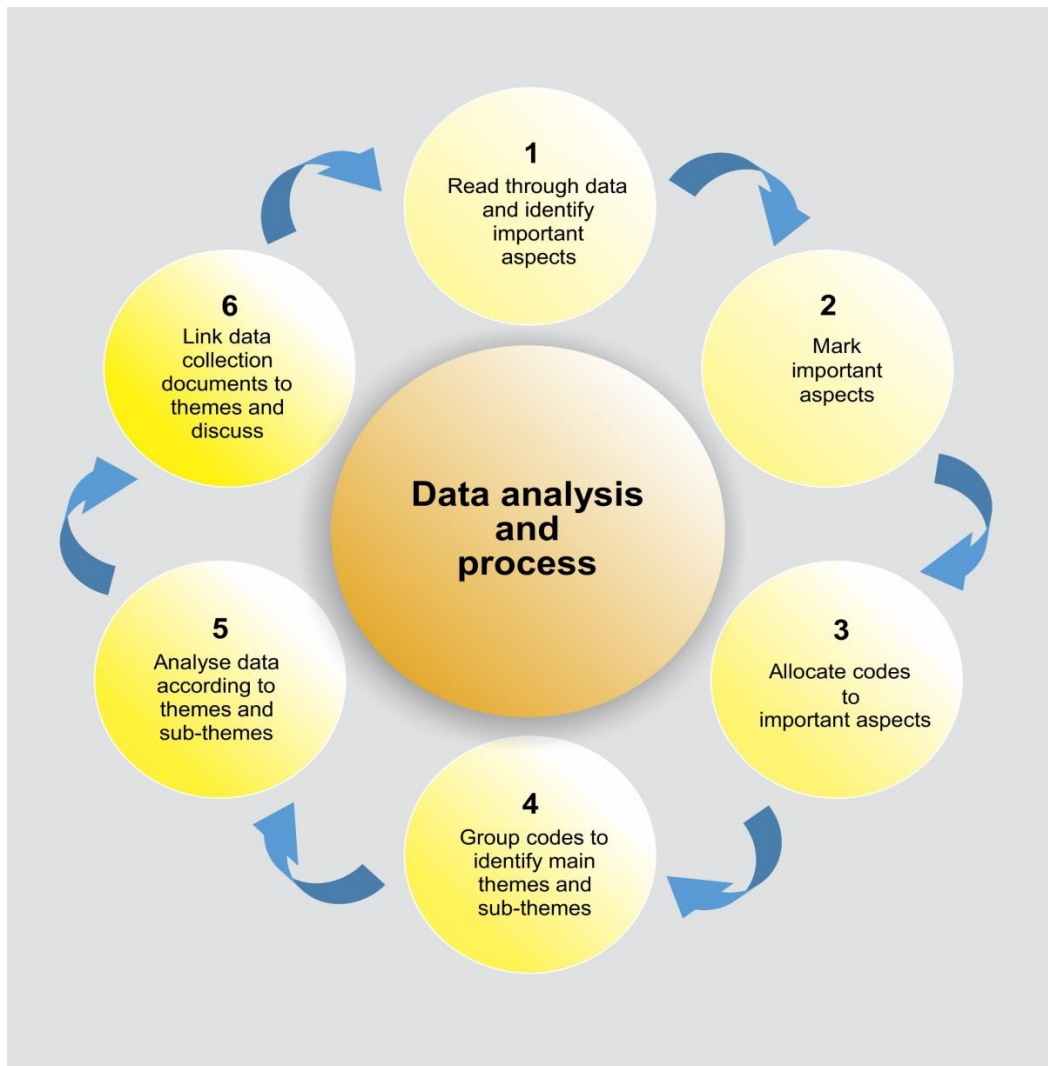
Figure 3.3: Data analysis process

3.8.1 Data analysis process

After data collection was completed, the data analysis process was started by reading through the interview transcriptions, classroom observation checklists and reflection journal. The first step was to acquaint myself with the data and identify important aspects in the data collection documents. Since data analysis was done manually, I worked with sticky-notes, highlighters and colour pens to mark important aspects such as direct quotes in the data. The next step was to allocate codes to the important marked aspects. I kept the codes universal and used the same codes in the interview transcriptions, observation checklists and reflection journal. After the codes were allocated, I grouped the codes to identify the five main themes and the twelve sub-themes.

Once the themes and sub-themes were finalised, the data from each interview transcription, observation checklist and reflection journal was analysed according to the themes and

compared to literature and four categories were created. These four categories were supportive evidence; contradictory evidence; silences in the literature; and new insights.

3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Validity and reliability are two concerns to be addressed in a research endeavour. The latter cannot be separated from conducting research in an ethical manner (Merriam, 2009:209). In order for an investigation to be deemed valid, Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002:457) state that the investigation should:

> "demonstrate truth value, it should provide the basis for applying it, it should allow for external judgements to be made about the consistency of its procedures and the neutrality of its findings or decisions" (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002:457).

Merriam (2009:210) agrees that "research must be conducted rigorously, presenting findings, insights and conclusions that ring true to readers, practitioners and other researchers". Alongside these scholars, Ary *et al.*, (2002:457) state that it is most important for a researcher to persuade their audience to pay attention to the findings of their investigation. Based on this vital question, standards of rigour for research have been summarised (Table 3.16) and represented by measures of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Ary *et al.*, (2002:457) note that within the qualitative approach to research these measures make a study valid and reliable. These concepts are discussed in the follow section. Credibility measures the study's truth value, whereas transferability measures the study's applicability. Dependability measures consistency and confirmability measures neutrality. To be comprehensive, the constructs for quantitative research are included in the accompanying table (Table 3.16).

Table 3.16: The standards of rigour for research (Ary *et al.*, 2002:457)

Construct	Quantitative	Qualitative
Truth value	Internal validity	Credibility
Applicability	External validity	Transferability
Consistency	Reliability	Dependability
Neutrality	Objectivity	Confirmability

3.9.1   Credibility

The aspect of credibility concerning the rigour of a study asks of the researcher "whether it [the research] rings true?" or not (Ary *et al.*, 2002:457). The credibility of the study involves

the compatibility between the constructed realities that exist in the minds of the researcher and the participants. Credibility, according to Merriam (2009:213), is concerned about how "research findings match reality, how congruent the findings are with reality, and whether the findings capture what reality is really about". There are a number of ways to ensure the credibility of the study. Ary *et al.*, 2002:457 suggest by means of prolong engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, referential adequacy, peer debriefing and member checks.

Credibility by means of prolonged engagement can be ensured by staying in the field for as long as possible until a point of data saturation is reached. Persistent observation refers to constantly evaluating interpretations and looking for multiple influences. The researcher is also encouraged to search for what counts and what does not count. Triangulation requires the researcher to:

> "collect information about different events and relationships from different points of view. [Furthermore, as part of triangulation], the researcher is to ask different questions, seek different sources and utilize different methods" (Ary *et al.*, 2002:457).

Referential adequacy refers the importance of using different tools to document the findings. Peer debriefing is done with somebody "who is outside the context of the study and who has a general understanding of the nature of the study and with whom you can review perceptions, insights and analyses" (Ary *et al.*, 2002:457). Using the member check technique, means that a researcher would go to the source of the information to check both the data and the interpretation with the source itself. I went back to each participant and gave them an opportunity to confirm and comment on the manner in which the data was gathered and documented. Furthermore, I reported my findings and concerns to my supervisors in writing and verbally whenever I got to meet with them. This study followed the actions Ary *et al.*, (2002:457) suggest as the best way to implement member checking:

- To assess the intentionality of participants
- To correct errors
- To provide additional volunteer information
- To put the respondent on record
- To create an opportunity to summarise
- To assess the overall adequacy of the data in addition to individual data points.

3.9.2 Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which the findings can be applied in other contexts or other participants. Ary *et al.*, 2002:457, suggest two strategies for transferability: first, to have a thick

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description of data, which is "rich in detail and precision to allow judgements about transferability to be made by the reader". Second, to ensure transferability is to use purposive sampling so that the range of specific information is increased as data is gathered from locations and respondents that are selected purposively.

However, findings from the results of this study are not transferrable since the methodology chosen for its research design was a case study that focused on three independent English medium schools. These would differ from government schools, townships schools or rural schools. The findings apply to a specific context and participants thus generalisations cannot be made or used in other situations or studies.

3.9.3 Dependability

The aspect of dependability, as in the case of this study, is associated with the likelihood that if the study were to be repeated with the same or similar participants, the findings would also be the same (Ary *et al.*, 2002:457).

3.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings are the product of the focus of the investigation and not the biases of the researcher (Ary *et al.*, 2002:457). For confirmability to take place, an audit trail should be set up to determine if the conclusions, interpretations and recommendations can be traced to their sources and if they are supported by the investigation (ibid.; Merriam, 2009:222). An audit trail, according to Merriam (209:223), "describes in detail how data was collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry". The best way to ensure that an audit trail is left behind, is to make use of a reflection journal to record memos on the process of conducting the research as it is being undertaken (Merriam, 2009:223).

Del Siegle (n.d) identified six classes of raw record data as described in Table 3.17.

Table 3.17: Types of raw data (Ary *et al.*, 2002:457)

Type of raw data	Description of raw data
Raw data	Recorded videotapes, written field notes, documents, survey results
Data reduction and analysis products	Write-ups of field notes, summaries and condensed notes, theoretical notes such as working hypothesis, concepts and hunches
Data reconstruction and synthesis products	Themes that were developed, findings and conclusions, final report
Process notes	Methodological notes, trustworthiness notes, audit trails
Material relating to intentions and dispositions	Inquiry proposal, personal notes, expectations
Instrument development information	Pilots, forms and preliminary schedules, observation formats, surveys

3.9.5 Strategies to ensure validity and reliability

3.9.5.1 Triangulation

Triangulation occurs by "examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes" (Creswell, 2013:201). Multiple data collection strategies were used to gather information in this study. The data collection instruments included individual semi-structured interviews, classroom observation and a reflection journal. The individual semi-structured interviews were recorded on a voice recorder and each classroom observation was documented on an observation checklist.

3.9.5.2 Member checking

The process of member checking included all the participants. I went back to each Grade 2 teacher to give them an opportunity to confirm and comment on the findings as Creswell advises (2013:202). My results and concerns were reported in writing and verbally to my study leaders.

3.9.5.3 Clarify the bias the researcher brings into the study

This process serves an opportunity for self-reflection, which creates:

> "an open and honest narrative that resonated well with readers…good qualitative research contains comments by researchers about how their interpretation of the findings shaped their background" (Creswell, 2013:202).

I had worked at School A as a student teacher during my undergraduate studies as parts of supervised institutional training. Most of the staff who were at the school four years ago, still teach there. I do value the education system used at School A, however, I did my best to remain objective and treat all three schools with the same appreciation and respect. Without being biased and looking at the findings, I can objectively say that the system in place to teach English reading comprehension at school A, is the best out of the three schools used as the study sample.

3.9.6 Presenting negative or discrepant information

The study is sure to have positive and negative aspects to it, thus by highlighting the negative or discrepant information, the research was deemed more credible (Creswell, 2013:202). School A and School C are very similar in the sense that they both make use of Time2Read as a phonics program, and they have guided reading as part of the literacy development. However, guided reading at School A is done by specialised guided reading teachers. Thus,

guided reading is on a different level at School A. School C also makes use of guided reading, however the class teacher and the teaching assistant are responsible for guided reading. The only negativity I experienced was teachers who were unfriendly on the day of the classroom observations. The teachers at School B were rather cold towards me on the day of the classroom observations.

3.10 ADHERENCE TO ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to adhere to ethical considerations, I informed all the participants involved about the rationale of the study, and explained why respective participants were approached to take part in the study. I explained to the participants what was expected from each of them. Parents of the learners who were in the class while I observed the classroom practice, had to complete a letter of consent in which they allowed their child to be present in the class. The principal of each research site, had to sign a letter of consent in which he allowed me to include the Grade 2 teachers in individual interviews and observe the Grade 2 classes. Grade 2 teachers of each research site, had to sign a letter of consent in which they agreed to take part in the individual interviews and to be observation. All the consent letters are attached as Addenda D, E and F. Furthermore, all ethical considerations were in line with the specifications provided by the University of Pretoria. The process of data collection and analysis has been done in collaboration with my supervisors.

The conditions under which individual interviews took place included the following:
- Participants' identity remained anonymous at all times.
- The names of the respective schools remained confidential.
- Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time.
- Participation was voluntary.
- Findings were discussed afterwards to give participants an opportunity to confirm and comment on findings.

3.11 ETHICAL ISSUES TO ANTICIPATE

There are numerous ethical issues that arise when reporting, sharing, and storing data when conducting research. I have made sure that each of these has been addressed so that the credibility of the study done remains intact. Considering them contributes to "making an argument for the study" (Creswell, 2014:92). They should be applied to qualitative, quantitative

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and mixed method approaches from the onset of the research proposal, right through to the documentation of the findings. Ethical issues need more attention nowadays than in the past.

The researcher has a certain responsibility to:

"protect their research participants, develop a trust with them, promote the integrity of research, guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organisations or institutions, and cope with new, challenging problems" (Creswell, 2014:92).

Table 3.18 discusses ethical issues and how these issues can be addressed (Creswell, 2014:93).

Table 3.18:   Information sheet: ethical issues and how to address each type (Creswell, 2014:93)

Where in the process of research the ethical issue occurs	Type of ethical issue	How to address the issue	How I addressed the issue
Prior to conducting the study	Gain local permission from site and participants. Select a site without a vested interest in outcome of study. Negotiate authorship for publication.	Identify and go through local approvals, find gatekeepers or key personnel to help. Select sites that will not raise power issues with researchers. Give credit to work done on the project, decide on author order in future publications.	I applied for ethical clearance at the University of Pretoria. After obtaining ethical clearance, I approached English independent schools and invited the schools participate in the study. Principals, teachers and parents of Grade 2 learners (of the schools who accepted the invitation to participate in the study) were invited to take part in the study in a letter, explaining their rights in the study.
Beginning of study	Identify a research problem that will benefit participants. Disclose purpose of the study. Do not pressure participants into signing consent forms. Respect norms and charters of indigenous societies. Be sensitive to needs of vulnerable populations (e.g. children).	Conduct a needs assessment or informal conversation with participants about their needs. Contact participants, and inform them of the general purpose of the study. Tell participants that they do not need to sign the form. Find out about cultural, religious, gender, and other differences that need to be respected. Obtain appropriate consent (e.g. parents, as well as children).	I introduced myself to the principal of each research site, as well as each Grade 2 teacher who agreed to take part in the study. I explained the rationale of the study, along with the different data collection instruments and the process of member checking to them. The various participants had an opportunity to ask questions and inquire about the study. Dates were set for the interviews with the Grade 2 teachers.
Collecting data	Respect the site, and disrupt as little as possible. Make certain that all participants receive the same treatment. Avoid deceiving participants. Respect potential power imbalances and exploitation of participants (e.g. interviewing, observing). Do not "use" participants by gathering data and leaving site. Avoid collecting harmful information.	Build trust, and convey extent of anticipated disruption in gaining access. Put into place wait list provisions for treatment for controls (if appropriate). Discuss purpose of the study and how data will be used. Avoid leading questions. Withhold sharing personal impressions. Avoid disclosing sensitive information. Involve participants as collaborators. Stay to questions stated in an interview protocol .	During the interview, teachers were asked permission to voice record the interview. Each teacher had to sign a confidentiality agreement. Interview questions were made available to each participant on the day of the interview, and taken in afterwards. "Ice breaker questions" were asked before the interview commenced, to set the relaxed tone for the interview. The interviews were professional, yet relaxed and to the point. Participants' names/identities were not mentioned during the interview.

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Where in the process of research the ethical issue occurs	Type of ethical issue	How to address the issue	How I addressed the issue
Analysing data	Avoid siding with participants (going native). Avoid disclosing only positive results. Respect the privacy and anonymity of participant.s	Report multiple perspectives. Report contrary findings. Assign fictitious names or aliases, develop composite profiles of participants.	Transcriptions were typed exactly the way in which each participant spoke, indicating laughter, pauses and hesitation. Each participant was given a code, depending on the school and order of interview (Example PA4). Participants were given an opportunity to comment on and ask questions on the transcriptions during member checking. Interview transcriptions, observation checklists and reflection journal entries were analysed.
Reporting, sharing, and storing data	Avoid falsifying authorship, evidence, data, findings and conclusions. Do not plagiarise. Avoid disclosing information that would harm participants. Communicate in clear, straightforward, appropriate language. Share data with others. Keep raw data and other materials (e.g. details of procedures, instruments). Do not duplicate or piecemeal publications. Provide complete proof of compliance with ethical issues and lack of conflict of interest, if requested. State who owns the data from the study.	Report honestly. Use composite stories so that individual cannot be identified. Use unbiased language appropriate for audiences of the research. Provide copies of report to participants and stakeholders. Share results with other researchers Consider website distribution. Consider publishing in different language. Store data and materials for five years. Refrain from using the same material for more than one publication. Disclose funders for research. Disclose who will profit from the research. Give credit for ownership to research, participants and advisers.	After data analyses and stating research findings and recommendations, feedback sessions with the three research sites were organised were the research findings and recommendations were reported on. The research sites and participants were thanked for their participation and input unto the study. Data has been submitted to the relevant authorities to be stored for fifteen years. The study has been published, keeping the identity of all participants and research sites confidential.

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3.12   CONCLUDING REMARKS

A comprehensive review of selected literature concerning the methodology of research gave the researcher a broad understanding of the methodology and metatheoretical paradigms. A qualitative research approach was adopted to this case study. The interpretive paradigm was found to suit this study and led to a cautious awareness of subjectivity and bias interpreting the participants' views. The cases that comprised the sample allowed for the emergence of new meanings about teaching of English reading comprehension. Purposive sampling created an opportunity for the researcher to extract rich and interesting data from the participants. Appropriate principles of credibility were applied that substantiated the integrity of the study. The application of triangulation was possible as three data collection instruments were used, namely individual semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and a reflection journal. The use of member checking supported justifying the claim that the data collected was valid and reliable. The in-depth data analysis process used was facilitated by data that was recorded methodically.

In the following chapter, chapter 4, research findings will be presented after data collection and analysis procedures were completed. The selection of participants will be described after which an outline of the generated themes and sub-themes will be explored. Three schools were used as research sites where data was collected. Participants' direct quotations have been colour-coded in red, blue and green according to the research site they represent.

Chapter 4

Results of the study

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, the research design and methods were presented. This qualitative study, situated in the interpretivist paradigm, utilised a case study research design. The data collection instruments were individual semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and a reflection journal. The individual semi-structured interviews were recorded on a voice recorder and the classroom observations were documented on an observation checklist. The transcribed interviews, the observation checklists and entries in the reflection journal were analysed by hand into emerging themes in order to discuss the findings of the study.

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to present the research findings that have been coded into five themes and twelve subthemes. The chapter starts with a brief reflection of the data collection procedure, after which the selection of participants is described. Each theme, and subthemes, if applicable, is introduced and linked to teaching reading comprehension. The quotations in red, blue and green refer to a participant's own words as used in an interview. Red represents participants from School A, blue represents participants from School B and green represents participants from School C.

Participants were allocated a symbol to keep the source of specific information anonymous. The letter 'P' is short for participant. The number 1, 2, 3 or 4 indicates the participant's number from the school. For example: PB2 is the participant from School B; and its second participant from School B.

All three schools, A, B and C are independent English medium schools in the Gauteng Province, South Africa. The teaching experience of the selected participants ranged from a minimum of five years to a maximum of fifteen years. One of the sampling criteria was that participants were required to have taught for two years or more. School A had five Grade 2 teachers, but only four met all the required criteria. School A had one specialist guided reading teacher who was included into the sample. The specialist guided reading teacher devotes time solely to teaching Grade 2 learners to read and has a teaching qualification in foundation phase education. School B had three experienced female Grade 2 teachers who had taught for longer than two years at various schools. School C only has two Grade 2 teachers, both of whom are females and had taught for two years or longer. The participating schools have a

good reputation and enrol learners from different cultures, race and home languages. The over-arching similarity is that English is the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). All three schools are independent schools and are situated in high income urban areas. Independent schools are also referred to as private schools by many.

In my research journal, I documented the following entry regarding guided reading:

Reflection journal Entry 1:

"*After conducting the initial interviews with School A, and hearing how much emphasis teachers place on guided reading, I spoke to my supervisor and decided to include the guided reading teachers as well. Although school A makes use of two guided reading teachers in Grade 2, only one guided reading teacher adhered to my selection criteria of having taught for more than two years. I decided to apply for an amendment to my initial ethical application, in order to include the specialist teachers. I believe this inclusion will add a lot of worth and credibility to my data."*

4.2   REFLECTING ON THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Data collection was made possible by using three data collection instruments: individual semi-structured interviews; classroom observation of specific lessons Grade 2 teachers gave on reading comprehension; and a reflection journal. In several interviews, some teachers gave very short answers to questions specified in the interview protocol. (Refer to Addendum D). After further questioning, sufficient and useable rich data was collected. The three data collection instruments complemented each other well and the triangulation method was used. The participating teachers' understanding and knowledge of teaching reading comprehension could be documented. Discrepancies between theory and practice became obvious both during the interviews with the individual teachers and in lessons observed. Cognitive constructivism, social constructivism and behaviourism were important language theories identified. I noticed how EFAL learners learned to understand what they were reading and how the classroom situation facilitated learning.

Figure 4.1 below illustrates the relationship between the three data collection instruments.
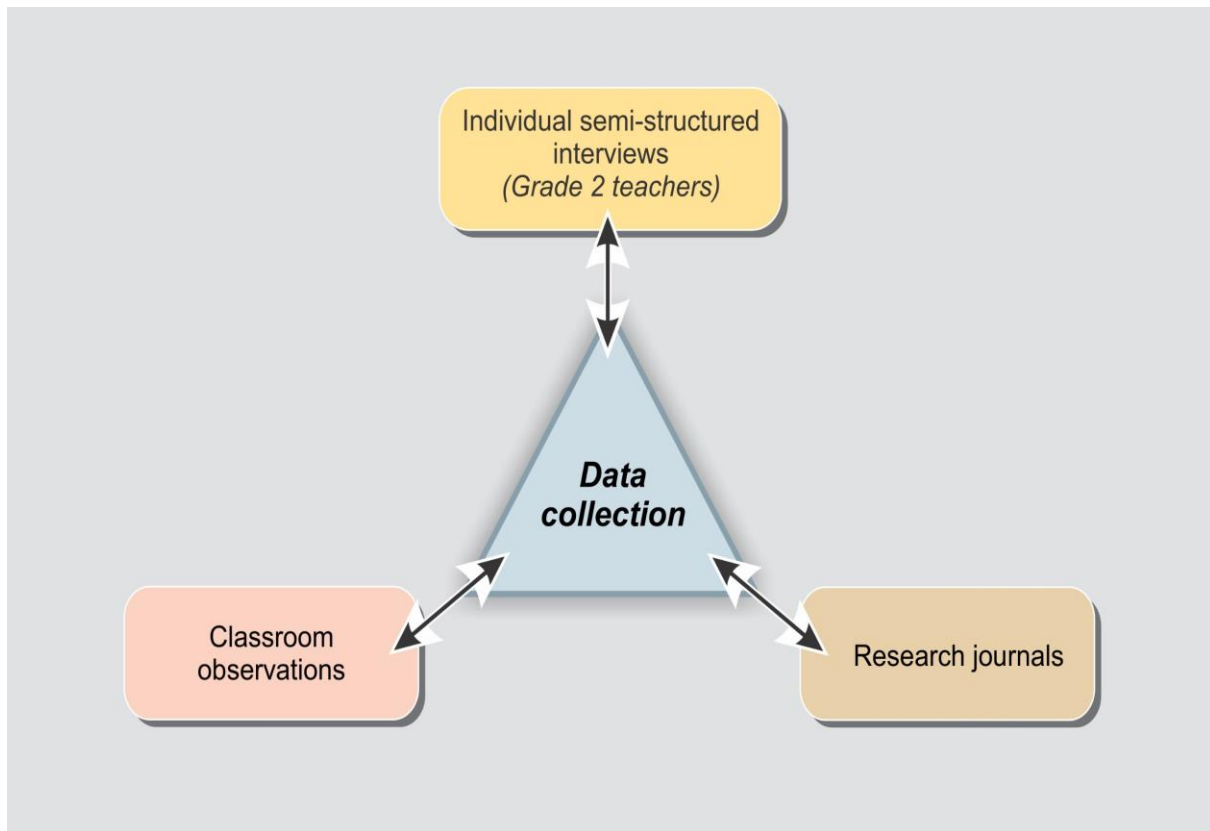
Figure 4.1: A visual presentation of the data collection process

4.3   REFLECTING ON THE PARTICIPANTS

The process of approaching English independent schools to participate in the study was not as easy as I imagined it would be. After approaching nine schools, only three schools accepted the invitation of taking part in the study. From the three schools, I had ten willing participants (Table 4.1). Each participant added value to the research. The participants who took part in the study were selected purposively according to the criteria that they had been teaching for two years or more and taught at an English medium independent school. Schools A and C used the phonics programme Time2Read and also incorporated guided reading as part of their reading and literacy development and School B Afriphonics. There is, however, talk that School B wants to adopt the Time2Read phonics programme. Interestingly enough, PB1, PB2 and PB3 are all experienced teachers with between twelve and fifteen years of teaching experience. Of the ten participants, seven participants were EFAL speakers and taught at the three schools used as research sites.

Table 4.1: Information about participants

Research sites (Independent English medium schools)	Participant code	Number of years' experience
School A	PA1	7 years
	PA2	5 years
	PA3	11 years
	PA4	9 years
	GR1	7 years
School B	PB1	12 years
	PB2	13 years
	PB3	15 years
School C	PC1	9 years
	PC2	7 years

Key:

P = Participant   A = School A   B = School B   C = School C

1, 2, 3, 4 = Participant number   GR = Guided reading teachers

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

On the day of the interview I asked each participant individually the same research questions as I had done when asking them to participate. If insufficient information was given I probed for more. To ensure confidentiality among participants at the same school I asked participants to sign a confidentiality agreement. The following questions I asked participants were on a laminated sheet and related to the study's primary and secondary research questions:

1. How do you (as teachers):
   a. Define reading comprehension?
   b. Understand English as FAL?
   c. Believe reading comprehension can be enhanced?
2. Which strategies and techniques do you as a teacher use when teaching reading comprehension to EFAL Grade 2 learners?

a. Which resources do you use for the teaching of reading comprehension to EFAL learners?

3. How do teachers view the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL?
   a. How do you understand reading comprehension in English as FAL to be?
   b. What are your opinions about the teaching of reading comprehension in English to FAL learners?
   c. Are learners born with the ability to comprehend English reading, or should this skill be taught to them? If the latter, what skills should be taught to learners?
   d. Do you follow any steps or stages when teaching reading comprehension to EFAL learners?

4. What factors are likely to influence the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL?
   a. Factors at school?
   b. Factors at home?
   c. Socio-economic factors?
   d. Personal factors?
   e. Emotional factors?

5. How do teachers influence the teaching of English Reading Comprehension to Grade 2 EFAL learners?

4.5   RESEARCH FINDINGS

The data collection and analysis procedures were undertaken with the conceptual framework in mind. The conceptual framework is based on the three stages of reading, before reading, during reading and after reading; and uses the different categories of knowledge Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) proposes along with the revised taxonomy. Refer to 4.6 for a discussion on the findings where the conceptual framework is integrated with the themes generated (Table 4.2) during data analysis.

4.5.1   THEME 1: Teachers' understanding of English reading comprehension

Theme 1 serves as the theoretical underpinning and lays the foundation for the remaining themes to generate an understanding of teaching English reading comprehension to Grade 2 FAL learners in English independent schools. The two subheadings, *Meaning of reading comprehension* and *Reading with understanding* form the two supporting structures used to uphold the general explanation of this theme.

Table 4.2: An overview of themes and subthemes that emerged from data (Van Heerden, 2012:181)

Theme 1: Teachers' understanding of English reading comprehension
Subtheme 1: Meaning of reading comprehension Subtheme 2: Reading with understanding
Theme 2: Strategies for teaching English Reading comprehension
Subtheme 1: Pre-comprehension strategies Subtheme 2: Classroom practice: steps and stages Subtheme 3: Resources used in teaching English reading comprehension Subtheme 4: Making reading fun Subtheme 5: Alternative strategies for teaching English reading comprehension
Theme 3: Teachers as stakeholders
Subtheme 1: Adding value to teaching reading comprehension Subtheme 2: Taking away value from teaching reading comprehension
Theme 4: Paradoxical views on teaching reading comprehension
Theme 5: Factors influencing the teaching of English Reading comprehension
Subtheme 1: Factors at home and school Subtheme 2: Personal and emotional factors Subtheme 3: Individual factors

4.5.1.1 Subtheme 1: Meaning of reading comprehension

Participants were asked to define reading comprehension and to state what their understanding is of English as FAL as stated in interview questions 1a and 1b. Based on participants' responses, it became evident that participants understand that reading comprehension entails that the reader should be able to read and then be able to go and look for the answer to a question in the text provided. A teacher from School B mentioned that:

> "Reading is not just reading; it is reading…understanding…giving it back…giving it correctly…with enough information". (PB3)

GR1 (Guided reading teacher 1) believed that reading comprehension starts with reading and understanding the meaning of individual words, before the text as a whole can be read and understood:

> "Reading comprehension is the ability to firstly understand the meaning of each word, which is important because you need that and then be able to understand and think about the meaning of the story or the book". (GR1)

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Learners cannot be expected to comprehend a text, if they are not able to place the text in a context, make predictions and evaluate the predictions. The nine participants with whom the individual semi-structured interviews were conducted, each had a clear understanding and a textbook explanation of what they understand reading comprehension to be. Many participants agree that once learners have read a text, they should be able to answer lower order thinking questions and then progress naturally to higher order thinking. Participants PA1 and PC2 emphasised that comprehension is neither an isolated activity nor an activity that you will excel in if you only do it once in a while. PC2 noted that reading comprehension is all around. An opportunity should be recognised and then worked with. PC2 stated that:

> "Reading comprehension does not only come down to reading on the carpet and your comprehension that you do in your book, there is a whole lot of other things that come into play in reading comprehension". (PC2)

PA1 mentioned that the teaching of reading comprehension 'enjoys too little time'. The participant's opinion was that far too much time is spent on teaching other aspects of language, like parts of speech. More time needs to be spent on reading. Furthermore, PA1 maintained that, if teachers could just teach learners to read well, and understand what they are reading, teachers would not have to teach learners anything else other than Mathematics. This emphasises how important the teaching of reading comprehension is. Learners can learn any other life skill just through reading.

PA3 explains that there are a number of strategies available to teach reading comprehension to learners. It is an essential but difficult life skill. There is no set way of teaching reading comprehension, but it is rather just a matter of over and over and over again. Reading comprehension cannot simply be taught once and then assumed that learners can do it. This skill should be developed continuously.

4.5.1.2   Subtheme 2: Reading with understanding

Linked to the responses gathered from the interview questions 1a and 1b, teachers agree that reading with understanding is a skill that should be developed over time. They understand that reading with understanding entails that learners should be able to make sense of what they are reading. Individuals who read with understanding are able to form a picture in their minds about where the story came from and where it could go. PC1 states that reading with understanding is being able to read between the lines. This implies that the reader should become one with the text and understand the humour in the text as well as the underlying meaning of the text. As a researcher, my understanding of reading with understanding, as analysed from the response of participants, is the ability to answer questions about the

passage and becoming one with the text. When reading with understanding, learners should be able to understand and appreciate the text so much that they are able to elaborate on the text and answer higher order thinking questions. During the individual semi-structured interviews conducted with the teachers, I found that teachers know what it means to read with understanding:

> "Reading with understanding [is] being able to read text aloud or quietly, and then making sense of it". (PA1)

> "…Reading comprehension would be the greater understanding of a text, not like regurgitation of what is in the text. I would say it is a deeper understanding of the whole context of the story behind it…". (PA2)

> "Reading comprehension, is that they should read a piece or a paragraph or whatever, they would be able to [answer] just the basic questions and then if you go further…answer the upper (higher order thinking) questions". (PB3)

> "So my understanding would be that they are able to tell me what they have read and are able to read between the lines…". (PC1)

However, during the classroom observation, it became clear that teachers struggle to bring learners to a point where the learners read with understanding, despite elaborating on the vocabulary and activating background knowledge. A good example of this is the lesson observation of PB1. The teacher initiated a class discussion about fish and gave learners an opportunity to add value to the discussion by telling the class about their experience of fish as pets. After the teacher elaborated on vocabulary such as "valuable", "schools of fish" and "Finland" and activated learners' background knowledge by means of the classroom discussion, learners battled to understand the fine humour behind the text. Hence they struggled to answer the questions that followed the text.

PC1 used guided reading books where the teacher had a teacher's book with the same story. The teacher's book had many questions to ask the learners. I enjoyed observing the learner's understanding of the text, as PC1 kept on asking two to three questions per page to ensure that the learners understood the text. The reading comprehension done at School B in PB1, PB2 and PB3's classes was a clear example of learners not reading with understanding. The comprehension consisted of jokes and puns with which learners could not identify. They could not become one with the text, and thus battled to answer the questions.

A general observation made during the semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, was that participants seemed to have little knowledge of EFAL concerns.

Participants had little knowledge about how to treat and teach an EFAL learner differently from learner whose home language is English as far as English reading comprehension is concerned. This observation relates to interview questions 1b and 3a.

4.5.2 THEME 2: Strategies for teaching English reading comprehension

Teaching English reading comprehension to FAL Grade 2 learners requires a multi-faceted approach that consists of many supportive strategies. Five subthemes are dealt with: *Pre-comprehension strategies; Classroom practice; Resources used in teaching English reading comprehension; Making reading fun; and Alternative strategies for teaching English reading comprehension.* This theme aims to explore the various ways learners can be accommodated and assisted to comprehend text read in learning English as an FAL. Interview questions 1c and 2 address participants' views about how they think reading comprehension can be enhanced. Additionally, this theme looks at the different strategies and techniques teachers use when teaching reading comprehension to EFAL Grade 2 learners.

4.5.2.1 Subtheme 1: Pre-comprehension strategies

i) Activating background knowledge

Reading comprehension starts long before learners are asked to take a passage to read and answer the questions that follow. GR1 states that part of the preparation which needs to be done to get learners ready to comprehend what they read, is to teach them phonics sounds.

> "I think part of the strategy would be their phonics sounds, so they'll need a good understanding…or understand that letters combined makes certain sounds, and then decoding of words obviously to sound it out…and then the meaning of those words which is very important. There is actually a number of steps you have to do before they can comprehend. So, if they can't read the word and then understand what it means, it is a bit tricky". (GR1)

From the analysed responses from the participants, I feel that there should be a definite introduction to the process of reading with understanding. Learners' background knowledge needs to be activated together with an apt introduction of the text. This process can be used as a baseline assessment for the teacher to determine what the learners know or don't know. This baseline assessment is in line with the 'before reading' stage of reading according to the ZPD and the revised taxonomy. Learners cannot be expected to engage with the content of the passage if they cannot relate to its content or have an idea what the text is about. PB1 illustrates that vocabulary development and activating background knowledge go hand-in-hand:

"Uhm I think for the Grade 2's, whenever we do comprehension, it is very important for me, after we have read it, to ask them…is there any words that you don't understand? We take that for granted as well. We read it and we think it is on their level and we go on. But for some of them, they don't even understand a word like for instance 'pan'". We have very rich children, we have very poor children, and we have different classes in our community, so what if they don't know what popcorn looks like. We have to think about everything, using reading comprehension. So, the reading comprehension is important yes, but every single word for that as well, so that they understand it". (PB1)

One way that School B ensures that learners can relate to the passage is by integrating their weekly comprehension task with the theme covered at school.

"Uhm, usually the comprehensions that we do is linked with a theme, so let's use the popcorn one again because that is what we are doing this week: popcorn is linked to the birthday theme that we are doing. We have a birthday theme with balloons and we have all the flashcards and we'll go through that, before or after the comprehension we'll read all the different flashcards and then we'll talk about that. Everything we do is linked to a theme. So the comprehension we are doing will obviously be linked to a theme as well, so it wouldn't be the first time that they see the word pan or popcorn or whatever, so we try and practice that so when we do the comprehension, it's the fifth or the sixth time that they see the word". (PB1)

During the interviews with the individual teachers, each one, PB1, PB2 and PB3, elaborated on the effectiveness of combining comprehension with the theme of the week. PB1 gave a recent example of a passage with popcorn as its theme. It fitted in with the birthday theme of the week. However, while observing a comprehension lesson given by each of the three teachers (PB1, PB2 and PB3), it was obvious that all the learners were battling to read with understanding as the text was not within their frame of reference. My conclusion is therefore that the focus of a lesson on reading comprehension should be clearly within the learners' experience so that they can relate to it and have a better understanding of the content of the text.

Learners in PB3's classroom were treated to a vivid and exciting experience of activating their background knowledge. PB3 is a good presenter and used her talents to engage learners in the lesson. In this case, the lesson started with a convex line drawn on the white board. The learners' eyes were fixed on the teacher all the time while she was drawing on the board. The teacher asked the class to tell her what they thought she was drawing. The answers she got were very sensible and varied from a semi-circle, an eye, lips, rugby ball and other ideas. Then the teacher drew a second line, this time a concave line. Learners' responses were impressive.

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Then the teacher put a dot on the side of the shape, and learners started guessing that the teacher might be drawing a fish. Soon, the teacher started drawing in finer detail, including the fins, gills and tail. This brain storming activity was a very good strategy to use. Learners engaged actively and it kept their interest on the lesson being presented. The teacher spent a short time talking to the learners about fish. PB3 used an effective strategy to stimulate the learners by referring to something completely familiar and definitely part of their background knowledge. Starting a lesson by handing the comprehension text out during the introduction of the lesson is not the right way to start.

Another effective strategy that PC1 used was to instruct learners to read the blurb on the back of their readers to create background knowledge. This served as a preview of the book and enabled learners to make accurate predictions about what was likely to happen in the book.

ii) Vocabulary development

Based on the responses gathered from the participants, it has become clear that the development of vocabulary is another essential skill required to ensure reading comprehension. Often learners cannot comprehend the passage read because they do not understand what the words mean. PA1 highlights one way in which learners' performance in reading comprehension can be improved:

> "Comprehension can be improved by actually teaching it [the meaning of the words in the passage] and explaining terminology such as Bloom's Taxonomy, explaining those words, introducing text, in terms of what it is". (PA1)

PA1's reference to Bloom's Taxonomy includes the meaning of the words like identify, explore, compare and discuss. Participants, in general, placed so much emphasis on the end product being sound reading comprehension that they forgot about the fact the process leads to learners comprehending the words used in a passage. PB1 states that "reading comprehension is important yes, but every single word for that as well, so that learners understand it" (PB1). Vocabulary development is a constant component of reading comprehension. During the interviews, teachers mentioned that they introduced vocabulary development by providing synonyms for words learners did not understand; or drew a picture to illustrate a word; or explained the word in context.

> "We'll break it up so into, we call it chunking, which is basically like your syllables. First ask them what they think it might mean, you don't just tell them the answer. Some of them might have an idea, they might just be off-course, but they might have an idea, some of them might just be guessing. Then, explaining it, then you say 'read the whole sentence', what do you think it is saying?' Now you know what the words say, put it in context with the sentence, then ask what do you think it means? Some of them will often get the

understanding of it, even though they have never heard it before, because of the sentence. If not, we obviously explain, discuss or try and give synonyms for it". (PA4)

"I would highlight the words, even maybe - what I did in my previous school, I did, I had very, very weak kids, I would ask them, 'ok, what words don't you understand?' And because the majority was either Afrikaans or an African language, they would say this word…this word...this word. We would write it on the board, and then I would either like to try and draw a picture to try and illustrate it to them, or I would just try to explain it in a simpler way to them. Then we would go back in the comprehension and we would see, ok, in context what the words meant". (PC1)

"When the kids read, I like to go back and hone in on the words that they don't know, so we discuss the words that might be unfamiliar to them, the meaning of it so that it makes sense in the context and also just to discuss 'what we have just read about'". (PC2)

Teachers emphasised how important it is for learners to understand the meaning of words used in a passage. However, it was very interesting to that little time was, actually spent on vocabulary development during the lesson observed. Teachers handed out the comprehension text and expected learners to know what all the words meant. This was what happened during the observation of PA1. Without reading through the passage with the learners or identifying any specific words in the passage, learners each received a copy of the passage. They were told to read through it three times before answering the questions accompanying the text.

One effective strategy observed during a classroom observation, was when PC2 encouraged learners to underline the words in the passage that they did not understand using a ruler as they read the passage handed out to them. The teacher allowed enough time to explain each of the underlined words to the learners. In my reflection journal I wrote the following words:

> **Reflection journal Entry 2:**
>
> *"Brilliant, best way to ensure that all the learners know what the passage is about! I love the hands-on approach to vocabulary development!!"*

iii)   Differentiated teaching and learning

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Apart from activating learners' background knowledge, introducing the text and vocabulary development, differentiated teaching and learning is vital to ensure successful reading comprehension. Differentiated teaching and learning accept that not all learners learn at the same pace - and there is nothing shameful about that. Reading comprehension is such a vital life skill, that learners, irrespective of their reading ability, should be accommodated to comprehend text on their level. Learners should be assessed on what they are able to do. During the individual semi-structured interviews, teachers emphasised how learners should be given work that relates to their individual level of achievement. PA2 elaborated about each learner's success according to their ability: one learner (strong learner) might have done eight sentences whereas another (weaker) learner might have done three sentences, but when you look at where this one weaker learner has come from, those three sentences are fantastic. The best implementation of differentiated teaching and learning was in guided reading (PA2, PA3, PC1) and group reading (PA4).

Guided reading in School A and C really allows for differentiation. School A uses four levels, where learners on the first level do completely different work to those on the fourth level. Level one learners read almost perfectly most of the time, understanding what they are reading. The work they have to do is more challenging and focuses on enrichment. Level four learners have a limited understanding of what they are reading. PA4 explains that differentiation becomes evident in the type of text used, and although it is at an easier level, the deeper meaning of the text is still explored.

> "Differentiation is very important in guided reading "our four groups are strong to weak; our strong group will have bigger passages, same story, but with more details, whereas the weaker group will have half the amount, but they are still doing the same thing, so that they don't feel that they can't do anything". (PA4)

Differentiated teaching and learning, together with the availability of resources at a learner's specific level of reading, is important.

> "If learners don't get a chance to read on their own specific level, then you are going to miss something…you are going to push them to do something that they can't and they are going to lose interest, especially in reading. If you are going to make it too difficult for them, it is never going to work". (PB2)

When practising differentiated teaching and learning, care should be taken that learners are not labelled as slow learners. It works well if guided reading groups can change as the need arises as PC1 highlights. The groups in guided reading as PC1 explains are not fixed, they do alternate according to differentiated learning as the opportunity presents itself:

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"If we see 'ok, this child has improved', then you can after four weeks exchange the groups and move them into a different group if they have improved or if one has actually got weaker". (PC1)

Differentiated teaching and learning was evident in the group reading lesson as observed in PA4's class. Learners were divided into reading groups ranging from the strongest group to the weakest group to help them achieve at the level which they are supposed to achieve. Thus, the stronger learners can compete with other learners at their level of performance, while the weaker learners can experience success among their peers who perform at the same level. The strongest group finished their group reading assignment after a short while and challenged each other with higher order thinking questions. The weakest group remained with the teacher where she guided them to understand what was expected of them.

iv) Making predictions

Teachers often underestimate the importance of prediction as a strategy for teaching reading comprehension. Although this strategy appears to be insignificant, it goes hand-in-hand with activating background knowledge. It is very important to ensure that learners learn to predict what is likely to happen in a piece of writing when starting to read the text. Teachers are very quick to mention predicting as a strategy for teaching reading comprehension; however, this strategy was only seen used three times in lessons observed. When PA3 was prompted about the type of questions she asks learners, she mentioned some examples, some of which encourage prediction.

"What do you think will happen next / at the end of the story? At the beginning of the book, what do you think is going to happen?". (PA3)

PB3 explains the type of higher order thinking questions she asks learners before, during and after the reading of a book. Some of the questions she mentions are prediction type questions.

"What do you think would have happened if this and this happened? What do you think, what would you do if you were in that situation". (PB3)

As part of the observation, PB3 asked learners to look at the comprehension exercise given to them and predict what they thought the story would be about. While observing PC1, I noticed that many predictions were made right at the beginning of the reading comprehension lesson. Prediction comprises mostly higher order thinking questions. Learners can be asked the following questions as suggested by PA3:

"Tell me about this character, describe this character, and describe how the book make you feel…what do you think will happen next or at the end of the story?' Incorporate

predictions, ask learner at the beginning of the book what they think is going to happen". (PA3)

Furthermore, PA3 agrees that sequencing is an important aspect of teaching reading comprehension. She recommended asking sequencing questions such as 'what do you think will happen next or at the end of the story?'; incorporating predictions; asking learners at the beginning of the book what they think is going to happen.

When GR1 was asked to elaborate on the strategies and techniques she uses to teach reading comprehension, she explained this technique exactly the way in which she used it during the classroom observation.

"I think prediction is very useful, because it allows them to kind of use their imagination about what…or how would they end…so firstly prediction: what do we think the book is going to be about? So you will get children who will just look at the title and then predict what they think, and then you will get children who will look at the picture. So, prediction is important". (GR1)

4.5.2.2   Subtheme 2: Classroom practice

This section is devoted to looking at the strategies the sampled teachers implement to assist in the teaching of reading comprehension in class. The teacher is the main catalyst in teaching reading comprehension.

i)   Exposure to reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is a skill learners have to acquire. This happens more effectively if learners have a teacher as an example to follow and get enough exposure to the manner in which reading comprehension questions should be answered. Learners' reading comprehension can be enhanced if they have enough exposure to it (PA2, PA3). PA2 and PB3 agree that learners need to be exposed to reading comprehension. PA2 emphasises the importance of regular exposure to reading comprehension as follows:

"They need to be taught to think deeper into something, so they need to do it more and more…it doesn't help that they read a story once or twice a week, or once every second week and try to understand that while they are not being exposed to it all the time". (PA2)

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One aspect of exposure to reading comprehension which was highlighted by a number of teachers in the sample, is the importance of parent involvement. Although parents are not trained specialists in teaching reading comprehension, they can encourage their children to read and afterwards ask them questions. As soon as learners start getting into the habit of reading on a regular basis and answering questions about the passage verbally or writing them down, they will gain confidence and experience success. Before that, learners fear the unknown due to a lack of exposure. PB3 is of the opinion that the only way that learners can improve in reading comprehension, is by doing it to promote reading with understanding.

> "By doing it, to give them confidence…I think confidence is the one thing…if you think you can't do it, then you can't". (PB3)

ii) Verbal answers versus written answers

Allowing learners to give verbal answers before written answers is another strategy used to teach reading comprehension, especially for EFAL learners. It remains interesting that learners can answer reading comprehension questions quite easily if they are doing it verbally. PC2 notes that as soon as they write the answers to comprehension questions, it becomes a different story, they are thrown into a completely different situation. Allowing learners to voice their thoughts verbally before putting it on paper, allows them to sort through the details of the story and generate an understanding of the story as a whole. Learners need to be able to identify with the story and make it their own, as PC2 explained.

iii) Reading fluency

Reading fluency is a prerequisite for reading comprehension to take place. One of the environments where reading fluency can be addressed, is in the classroom. When learners' reading fluency is not up to standard, they have great difficulty telling the teacher what they have read, and reading comprehension will be in question. PA2 illustrates a case below of an EFAL boy who was struggling to understand what he was reading".

> "I had a child last year, who read beautifully like that, it was like an angel reading to you, but he could never tell me a thing about what he had just read. So his reading speed, everything, if you listen to this child's expression, it was fabulous. If you listen to him, it was amazing. But, as soon as you ask him anything about the story, he wouldn't understand. He knew the words, he didn't sound anything out, he could read the words perfectly, but he wasn't understanding what he was reading. I think there, maybe he wasn't challenged enough or asked enough, he hadn't practiced almost

enough to have been able to, because his reading was perfect, but you could see at home, nobody ever asked him what was the story about - even at School". (PA2)

Referring to the case above, the boy read fluently but could not comprehend what he was reading. The effect of poor reading fluency became evident during the observation of PA4. As part of a group reading lesson, the weakest group comprehended the text least effective as they battled to recognise the words in the book. Learners spent a long time trying to decode the words so their understanding of the text diminished. They were not fluent in their reading and, as a result, their reading comprehension was weak. Teachers can ensure learners' reading fluency and hence reading comprehension by giving learners books and reading texts that are on their level of reading.

Along with fluency, learners are taught reading cues to assist them in comprehending what they have read. Teachers go to great lengths to construct ways to help learners make meaning of the text read. Teachers encourage learners to go back to basics, and if there is a picture accompanying the text, learners are allowed to look at the picture to gather what the text is about. The term 'back to basics' refers to the building blocks of meaning making. Learners need to refer back to decoding and meaning making tools which work for them.

> "Considering the fact that they actually half the time can't pronounce the words, they [the learners] are looking at the picture, they look at what was said before and after and ask 'what do you think really happened here?'". (PA2)

Learners constantly need to make meaning of what they have read. During an interview, PB1 explained a strategy learners use to help them make meaning from what they read. I believe this is one of the most powerful meaning making strategies, and if used correctly, can unlock learners reading comprehension abilities.

> "There is a method called ITTM (I Think This Means). When a sentence is read in a comprehension, you go back to that sentence and you say "I Think This Means…" and you explain to yourself what you think is meant by the sentence. This really helps learners to make sense of what they are reading". (PB1)

iv) **Analysing text with reading cues and colour coding**

Picture cues are also helpful to generate an understanding of what the text is. "You can 'read' everything out of a picture" as PB1 explains. Furthermore, "the best way to make sense of information is to use all your senses". (PB1)

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There is much to be said about the manner in which reading comprehension texts should be read. Most of the teachers reported during their interview that they read the text aloud to the learners while the learners follow quietly, then read the questions in the same manner. Finally, the text is read together as a class.

An interesting strategy mentioned in an interview with an individual teacher and also observed in lessons, was the use of colour coding. Learners would use a colour, for example yellow to highlight the answer to the first question after reading the passage. Learners are encouraged to use different colours for the different sentences (PA4, PB1, PB3). This strategy was seen put to use in PB1's class and observed. This strategy helped learners to go back to the passage and find the correct answer. However, learners are made aware that they cannot simply just write down the answer as it appears in the text. They have to interpret the answer and give it in the correct context. Figure 4.2 illustrates the practical use colour coding in answering English reading comprehensions.

Fishy fun

Mandla loves fish and would like to have some of his own. He is reading a funny book about fish. Use the jokes in Mandla's book to answer the questions, but remember to answer in full sentences.

① Why are fish so smart?
Because they live in schools.

② Which fish is the most valuable?
A goldfish!

③ If fish lived on land, where would they live?
Finland.

④ Did you know fish sleep with their eyes open?
Zzzzzz

Questions

1. Why are fish so smart?

_____

2. Which fish is the most valuable?

_____

3. If fish lived on land, where would they live?

_____

4. Why doesn't the little fish in block 4 answer the big fish?

_____

5. Did you think the jokes were funny?

_____

6. Which joke did you like the best?

_____

Figure 4.2: A visual presentation of the use of colour coding in answering English reading comprehension

The corresponding question and answer have been highlighted in the same colour, namely yellow and blue.

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v) Sequencing

Learners should from an early age, start synthesising details about a story with the assistance of a parent, after a story was read to them (PA3). PA3 explains that learners should put together that you as the teacher are asking something about the text. This should lead learners to grasp that the text makes sense. Learners need to be able to understand and be able to relay information back to you. Only once learners have an understanding of what the text was about, can the process of formal or informal questioning start. Sequencing is another strategy which helps learners orientate themselves to the content of the passage. This strategy is an informal way of asking questions and evaluating your own understanding of the text. During PA2's semi-structured interview, she used natural sequencing to help learners determine what has happened, what could happen. This prepares the mind to know where the story came from and where it could go. Furthermore, PA3 agreed that sequencing is an important aspect of teaching reading comprehension.

> **"**I would say [reading comprehension] is a deeper understanding of the whole context of the story behind it, what has happened, what could happen, and being able to build that up in your mind of where the story came from and where it could go to". (PA2)

> **"**We discuss what we have read, about what happened, then what happened and also just sequencing of the events that took place". (PC2)

However, reflecting back to the classroom observation events, not a single teacher used the sequence strategy to evaluate a learner's understanding.

vi) Questioning

The essence of reading comprehension is to be able to fully understand the content of the passage read. Learners should always be aware of the reason why they do have to read. One way to evaluate learners' understanding of what they read, is to question them verbally or in a written format. The strategy of questioning is a very large part of teaching reading comprehension. Just as learners need to be taught reading comprehension, so should they be taught how to understand and answer comprehension questions correctly (PB1). As PB1 states, teachers never go back to basics and say 'ok boys and girls, let me teach you how to do this [answer a comprehension]' (PB1).

> PB1 states that: "teachers should train learners how to answer a reading comprehension, give it four to five practice runs and then do a proper comprehension test. Learners generally struggle with answering a reading comprehension because they don't get to practise it". (PB1)

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The number of questions and the manner in which learners answer the comprehension questions is progressive. It starts with fewer questions at the beginning of the year with more questions being given towards the end of the year. Teachers' assistance in answering the questions is also different in the beginning of the year to that of the end of the year as PA1 highlights.

"In the beginning like now in the first term, I'll read through the questions with them [the class] to make sure that they have full understanding and then they will answer it by themselves. But from the second term on, they should be able to read by themselves and answer it by themselves, especially if the hard words in the text have been explained". (PA1)

Peer learning and peer assessment is also very important in the classroom. PA2 likes to teach the learners how to question each other and themselves. This helps them to become independent and competent in this ability. PA3 states that parents generally wait too late to start asking children questions about the stories read to them.

"I think it [asking questions] should start much earlier when you start reading to them at home, it needs to be a thing to ask questions afterwards…even simple things like when you are reading a book about the farm…". (PA3)

Teacher-, peer- or self-assessment can be transformed into a fun activity. PA3 explains that she has a game that the learners play with dice and whatever numbers the dice lands on, there is a cue card that has the question on. Learners think they are playing a game, while they are actually answering questions about the text read.

PC1 notes that parents are requested to ask their children questions, both straight forward questions and higher order thinking questions. The emphasis here should be placed on the idea that parents should do this, every day, not just once a week.

"Something I always tell my parents is to constantly ask questions…and not to ask questions just straight forward ones like uhm "What is the dog's name?", ask things that are not maybe…not straight forward, so ask those, but get them to think further, to you know, ask them…I don't know, I can't think of an example now…get them to do a bit more higher order thinking. Do that every single day, not just once a week". (PC1)

This statement by PC1 highlights the importance of parent involvement and the exposure to reading comprehension and answering questions. During the classroom observation of PA2, the strategy of asking questions was demonstrated very well. The teacher asked questions based on the content of the book by means of probing and elaborative thinking (PA2). Another

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part of the guided reading lesson observed (PA2), was to see the type of questions the guided reading teacher asked learners once they each had a copy of the book in their hands. The questions asked activated learners' background knowledge and prepared them for the content of the book. The questions asked about reading the cover of the book were:

What is the title of the book?

Who is the author of the book?

What is the meaning of the word 'illustrator'?

How do we know there is an illustrator for the book?

The observation of PC1 was informative as she was the only teacher who constantly used questions through each stage of the group reading lesson. PC1 asked questions before, during and after reading. I could see how the constant questioning contributed to learners' holistic understanding of the text.

> ### *Reflection journal Entry 3:*
>
> "*Participant PC1 was the first participant whose manner of teaching English comprehension correlated with what she told me during the individual semi-structured interview. The aspects that she chose to discuss during the interview, were evident in her classroom practice. As I watched PC1 from a distance during her classroom observation, I could see how she leads the learners to understanding by making use of continuous questioning right from the beginning of the book (before reading) right through to the end of the book. It was magic - every learner knew what the story was about, and they could each answer the questions posed to them*".

Referring to an observation made in my reflection journal:
Teachers feel very strongly about the manner in which learners fail to answer in full sentences.

"That is the other thing…full sentences. If they ask 'how old is the girl?', then you say, 'the girl is…' and half of the answer is already in the question. Read the question and then you must know, what must I answer? I must answer: start with words that are in the question. And then you put the question and you put your full stop". (PB3)

One strategy that I liked to see in PC2's classroom was the manner in which PC2 assisted learners with the correct sentence starters for each question. The teacher asked random learners to give sentence starters to each question and started by using the words in the question. If the learner started the answer with 'because' the teacher pretended to faint.

During the individual semi-structured interview, GR1 noted how important it is to ask questions:

"Also, asking the kind of why, what, when, where, who questions - all of those kind of things gets them thinking a little bit broader about what they are reading. What are they reading about, who is in the story, where does it take place, as opposed to this is a story, and this is how it ends…or how it is". (GR1)

vii) Higher order thinking questions

Higher order thinking is an important aspect of the questioning strategy. PA4 explains how higher order thinking is integrated into the questioning activity after a learner has finished reading a book.

"I've got a reading card for their bonus books, there are ideas of twenty to twenty-five questions what the parents can ask. It is not just about the information, but 'what would you name this person', 'why do you think he is named this?' so it's about thinking about the story. It is not just the actual content, remembering but thinking out of the box and a bit broader. So for parents to be questioning, and focusing on what we do here is minimal pages, and it really be quality instead of quantity and getting through the work". (PA4)

Higher order thinking questions have no right or wrong answer as GR1 explains, so helping learners engage with their creativity through higher order thinking, builds a learners' confidence.

"So, really engaging with the learners, getting them involved and at the end, ask them if you were the author, how you would end it better. Because that is also going into the creativity kind of thinking. I think when they are asked what they think, there is no right

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A number of examples are explained which show that some teachers use of higher order thinking to assist learners in the process of understanding the content they read. This practice was done well during guided reading sessions offered at Schools A and C. It is very practical and provides opportunities and time for teachers to engage with smaller groups. Teachers do not always have time for usual classroom routines (PA3). Deeper higher order thinking questions can be asked and Bloom's Taxonomy followed in such a situation.

Questioning is a major part of the guided reading period as experienced when PA2 was observed. During the questioning of the guided reading lesson by PA2, there was a clear progression in the level of difficulty of the questions asked. The teacher started with clear knowledge questions about the book, and as the questions progressed, so did the level of reasoning and higher order thinking. An example of this was asking each learner to elaborate on their favourite and least favourite part of the story. Conducting the reading activity on the carpet allowed the learners to ask questions about the book more easily.

During PA3's lesson I observed, learners were involved in group reading done with the teacher. Question cards were also used as part of the activity. Learners each drew a question card, read the question and then had to answer the question in the group, giving each learner a turn in the group (PA3). The questions listed on the question cards were:

- From whose point of view is the story told?
- Make a text-to-text connection.
- What is the setting of the story?
- Use the events in the story to make a Mathematics word problem.
- Who is the author of the book?
- Why do you think the author chose this title for the story?
- Who is the illustrator of the story?
- Is there a problem in the story?
- Which main character in the book is most like you?
- How do you think the story is going to end?

Inferring a meaning became very practical in lessons observed. PA3 guided the learners to understand the text and, in doing so, drew conclusions. A number of higher order thinking

questions were used to help make the story more applicable to a learner's life world. The open-ended questions posed to learners allowed them to truly think deeply and to activate their critical and creative thinking processes. These questions were the following:

- What can they do to get his shoes back?
- What would you do if you were in the same situation?
- Look at the picture. What plan did they make?

Higher order thinking was evident as PC1 kept asking learners to refer back to the text with the words "which words in the story tell me that…" (PC1). Learners also had to have the answer ready if they were chosen to answer the question. The teacher often instructed the learners to "quote the words in the story that tells us that…" (PC1).

4.5.2.3 Subtheme 3: Resources used in teaching English reading comprehension

i) Access to resources

A reading culture can only be established when learners have access to appropriate resources to read. These resources include the kinds of texts available and parental involvement. School A is still a relatively new school. It does not have a library, but each Grade 2 class has a bonus book system in which learners in the class can take a book to read at their own pace. These books are available all the time. The bonus book system allows for differentiated teaching and learning. PA2 explains that there are learners who go through one bonus reader a day, but there are also children who spend two weeks reading one book. There is no limit to the number of books learners can take per day. The practice (the act of reading bonus books) serves as encouragement.

> "They can come and go with bonus books as they want because we just want to foster a love for reading…with that comes a love for comprehension". (PA3)

The bonus books system also extends a learner's fluency and ability to express themselves as it is simply just reading for practice (PA4). School B (PB1, PB2 and PB3) has book corners that are filled with books. The books are graded for different levels of reading. They are then swopped out at a set time of the day or as the teacher views an opportunity for the swopping of books. Books available for learners need to be interesting (PB2). The choice of books you have available for learners to read, also add as a motivating factor.

ii) Kinds of text

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The kinds of resources that are available to learners to read are of importance. It is important for learners to establish the context of the text. PA1 stated that when learners receive the text, she discusses the type of text with learners beforehand. Learners should be given a variety of texts on topics with which they are familiar, as they have to be able to describe the context [of the setting]. PB3 explains how strong she feels about the importance of this matter:

> "Reading material must come out of learners' environment. Not something about nuclear power…they are small kids, they are just eight years old. It should come from the home environment or the church environment…try to relate it to their life skills, Bible…just don't keep it isolated". (PB3)

One interesting example used for teaching reading comprehension was a text called 'Fishy fun' (Figure 4.3). It was used in PB1, PB2 and PB3's classes which I observed. Its appearance differed from the reading passages normally used, as it had speech bubbles and was presented as a comic strip. After PB2 had handed the comprehension exercise out to the learners, the class was first asked to comment on the layout and the context of the passage. The class came to the conclusion that the text was different to what they were used to as it was in the form of a comic strip. I enjoyed the manner in which the characteristics of the text were discussed with the class and how learners were led to see what was different.

Once the kind of reading material has been established, learners need to understand why they are reading the text. For the purpose of this study, only the kinds of text used during the classroom observations, have been inserted and discussed. The role of the teacher should be to assist them to determine if it is to gather information or for enjoyment (PA1).

> "Comprehension can be improved by … introducing text, in terms of what is it. Is it a poem, is it fiction, what type of fiction…that sort of thing? Do they understand exactly what it is what they are reading, and why they are reading? Is it to gather information, is it for enjoyment, that kind of thing…". (PA1)

Figure 4.3 illustrates two different kinds of texts given to Grade 2 learners to teach English reading comprehension.

iii) Reason for reading

The teacher is a source for reading. The teacher initiates the process of reading. In many cases, without the teacher motivating learners and encouraging them to read, learner fail to do so. Teachers, as the source of reading, needs to assist learners in giving them a reason to read. Furthermore, learners need to know why they are reading. PA1 states that:

"Reading comprehension is not just a matter of just slapping anything in front of learners and say 'read this and then you are going to get a bunch of questions'. Questions mean nothing if there is no prerogative". (PA1)

One of the roles of the teacher as the source for reading, is to help learners understand that the objective for reading and reading comprehension is to use the text afterwards (PA1, PA4). Learners need to ask themselves if the text is meaningful and valuable.

"[Reading]…is not just reading for the sake of reading, there is meaning behind it."
(PA4)

The guided reading period at School A is an important component of its literacy programme. When going to the guided reading teacher, the teacher creates an atmosphere in which learners gather meaning from the text, irrespective of what kind of text they are reading (A2). Although the classes are divided into ability groups and the groups go to guided reading one group at a time, the guided reading teacher attends to the whole class one group at a time.

Fishy fun

Mandla loves fish and would like to have some of his own. He is reading a funny book about fish. Use the jokes in Mandla's book to answer the questions, but remember to answer in full sentences.

1 Why are fish so smart? Because they live in schools.

2 Which fish is the most valuable? A goldfish!

3 If fish lived on land, where would they live? Finland.

4 Did you know fish sleep with their eyes open? Zzzzzz
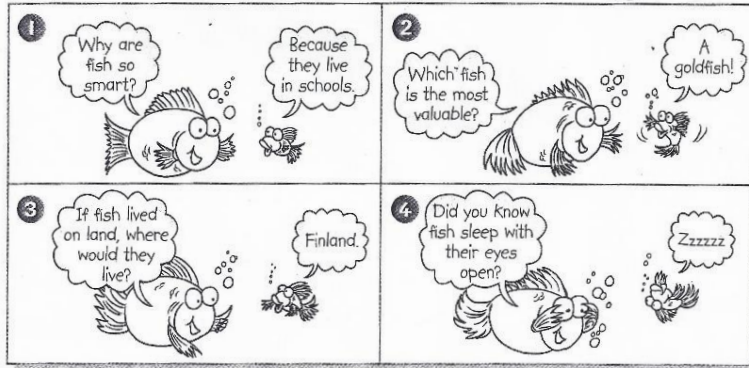
Questions

1. Why are fish so smart?

2. Which fish is the most valuable?

3. If fish lived on land, where would they live?

4. Why doesn't the little fish in block 4 answer the big fish?

5. Did you think the jokes were funny?

6. Which joke did you like the best?

Date: _____
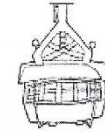
Joshua is a little boy from Centurion. He is a very lucky boy because he got to travel around South Africa with his dad. He got to meet Nelson Mandela when he was seven years old. He went up Table Mountain in Cape Town and he swam in the warm sea water of Durban. He also visited the Kruger National Park and saw the Big Five. What a lucky boy!

Questions:

1. Where is Joshua from? **Joshua is from**

   _____

2. Who did Joshua get to travel around South Africa with? **Joshua got to travel around South Africa with**

   _____

3. Who did Joshua get to meet? _____

4. How old was Joshua when he met him? _____

5. Where did he go to in Cape Town? _____

6. Where did Joshua swim? _____

Extension:

1. Can you name the Big Five? _____

Figure 4.3: A visual representation of different kinds of text

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Getting learners to want to read can be a challenge. However, PC1 mentioned that learners need to read. They need to read for a purpose and be motivated to do so. PC1 also shared her secret about motivating learners to read.

> "The easiest way to get them to read, is to get children to read books that they like, so that they'll want to read for enjoyment. I think as soon as you enjoy something, you're going to do it. You are going to want to read to understand what you are reading". (PC1)

iv) Parental involvement

According to all the participants, one incredibly valuable resource in teaching reading comprehension is parental involvement. Parents play a major role in enhancing the teaching and learning of reading comprehension. Parents are supposed to ask their children questions every single day (PA2, PC1). A major contributing factor to teaching reading comprehension is that parents take the time and show initiative when assisting their children to read with understanding (PA2).

> "You can see straight away in the kids whose parents put in time and buy books. You'll notice later on in the year when the book shop comes, you'll see those are the kids who come back with five or six books and they are the ones with chapter books and then you see it is definitely the parents who are encouraging that and putting on the pressure for that". (PA2)

Reading comprehension is an ability that can be acquired over time when there is parental involvement, as PA3 explains. Parental involvement in children's reading development is very important. Teachers can pick up who has read at home, who works with their mom at night, who read to their parent, whose mom questions them before they go to bed with them as PA3 explains. PA4 confirms that practice, practice and more practice combined with parental involvement is the key to enhancing reading comprehension.

> "A teacher can do so much, but you have a class full of kids and you need that one-on-one parental involvement time to assist them". (PA4)

Parents' attitude about reading is very important, it actually rubs off on the learners as PA4 explains.

> "Parents' involvement in reading... [is very important]. The enthusiasm parents have about reading…'ugh now we have to read'…they get that attitude; the kids pick up on the attitude very quickly". (PA4)

Teachers have often spoken to parents about the importance of showing interest in their children's lives.

4.5.2.4 Subtheme 4: Making reading fun

There are three vital components to helping learners to make reading fun: giving them confidence, providing constant encouragement and motivating learners along the way. The journey to making reading fun, is one where inner strength and intrinsic motivation are very important (PA2, PB2, PB3).

i) Confidence

Confidence goes hand-in-hand with encouragement and motivation as is evident in the sampled teachers' responses and understanding of reading comprehension. Learners need a head start to achieve success. Often learners need motivation to read in the form of a reward. As soon as they start experiencing success in their own reading, they start gaining confidence. Having such confidence enables learners to start enjoying reading, and then they read for pleasure and eventually keep enjoying it (PA2).

> "You can see kids who have pushed through that [working for a reward], they get more confident, and once they get more confident, it is easier and they tend to read more". (PA2)

In addition, PB2 points out that the choice of books available serves as a motivating factor for learners to read willingly. Confidence is a major aspect highlighted by PB3 as well. She believes that when learners are exposed to reading comprehension and do it regularly, they become more confident about learning to read. Confidence comes from within and is a 'mind game' as PB3 explains: "if you think you can't do it, you can't do it". Learners should be given confidence in their reading by not making the reading material too difficult for them.

ii) Encouragement

The aspect of encouraging learners to read was illustrated during the observation of a lesson PA2 gave. While the learners had guided reading with the guided reading teacher, she constantly motivated and encouraged learners to participate in the lesson. If learners struggled to recognise or read a word, the teacher encouraged them to sound the word out. To ensure that all learners follow while a group member reads, the teacher asked the learners to point to the words being read.

iii) Motivation

Motivation is the third component of the attribute that makes reading fun. When learners read to their parents and have to concentrate so hard on breaking the words down to be able to read them, their fluency waivers. This effect interferes with their reading confidence and consequently their reading comprehension. Parents have therefore been advised to just say "perfect, just read that sentence again" (PA2). This serves as motivation for learners to continue reading despite the challenges they face when first learning to read. Motivation enhances the basic skill of reading. Intrinsic motivation comes into play when dealing with reading and creating a love for reading. Learners should be approached very carefully and be invited to participate in a reading activity, rather than to be forced to read, reading should never be forced.

> "If I force you to read, you are not going to like it. If I give it to you in a way that makes it fun, it is encouraging to read". (PB1)

PB1 explains that she is the teacher in the Grade 2 Dinosaur class. She has created a system of motivation. There are two dinosaur books in the class which she knows learners really like. Once they have finished their work, they can sit on the carpet and read one of the dinosaur books. Learners need to read, they need to read for a purpose, they need to be motivated. The easiest way to get them to read, is to create the 'need' to read into a 'want' to read. Motivation was visible throughout the teaching of reading comprehension during the observation lesson given by PB3. The teacher made a big fuss about the passage and over exaggerated in order for learners to relate to the text better. There was constant motivation and praise from the teacher as PB3 walked around the class offering assistance and guidance where needed.

iv) Integrating reading comprehension

It was evident from the interviews and the opinions of most of the participants that reading comprehension does not have to be an isolated activity as it is takes place in the course of a day's work and happenings. The value of reading should not be underestimated. As PB1 explains, reading is integrated into everyday activities and events that without being aware of it.

> "We read our tablets, our phones, we read every single day, and we need to teach that to children. They are not necessarily going to use sentences or how to construct the sentences, or sit in a meeting one day and go 'ok guys, let's decide what the verbs are in our meeting', it's not going to be that - it's going to be reading". (PB1)

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Often learners are blindsided by the idea of having to read during a formal reading lesson when they have to report on what they have read. However, reading is such an important skill that the same reading comprehension objectives can be achieved by integrating reading in other areas of learning as well (PA3). PA3 explains that when she goes through the homework sheet with the class, she uses it as a way to test learners' comprehension by making sure they understand what they have read.

According to PB1, too much focus is placed on language development and sentence construction, whereas the spotlight should move from language development and sentence construction to teaching more skills on how to comprehend the written word. The concept of language development refers to the teaching of parts of speech. Sentence construction refers to putting a sentence together with a variety of words relating back to parts of speech. PB2 explained that she expects learners to make and prepare speeches as part of their oral assessments. Comprehension is a necessary component of this exercise. A teacher will instruct a learner to either prepare and deliver a speech to the class or make a poster. Some children find these tasks challenging. In fact, they usually read the information from a piece of paper because they do not actually know what is going. They do not understand the content of their speech.

Reading is integrated in so many areas of development, especially into Mathematics as PC2 explains. "It [reading comprehension] applies to a lot of areas. Look at Mathematics for example: when you get to problem solving, they've got to read what the problem is, there again: they need to read and understand" (PC2). PB1 also comments that reading is integrated with Mathematics and a Bible lesson and should be prioritised. Therefor more time should be set aside for teaching reading comprehension in the different activities that they do, for example, Mental Mathematics (PB2).

v)   Love for books

Learners' love for books determines their connection with reading and later on their reading comprehension. Therefore, it is important for parents to facilitate learners' love for books at home. It cannot only be done by the teacher at School. PA2 feels very strongly that motivation for reading starts at home with parents encouraging their children to buy books and read them. "Learners actually go 'I get to choose my OWN book. I get to pay for it…it's MY book!'" (PA4). A love for books can be fostered if you expose learners to a variety of books rather than one type of book. "Give them interesting books, give them fact books, you know the themes they are doing…so keep it related" (PB3). The love for books was made very practical during the

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guided reading lesson where PA3's lesson was observed. The guided reading teacher explained the difference between fiction and non-fiction books, to assist learners to establish which kind of books they prefer to read. The 'f' for fiction stands for fake, thus fiction is a fake story, with fake characters and a fake story line. Whereas non-fiction is non-fake books, with real people, real stories and a real story line.

As noted in my reflection journal, I observed the following and wrote it down:

> ### Reflection journal Entry 4:
>
> *"Learners hang on the guided reading teacher's lips. They are focused and pay more attention to the content of her lesson compared to their class teacher. I did not think learners will be able to grasp the meaning of 'fiction' and 'non-fiction', but they did - and they were able to give examples. One boy got completely carried away and started talking about his 'non-fiction alien book'. Furthermore, one girl in the group was able to make the conclusion that the book that the teacher is reading with them, is a fiction book".*

Finally, the best way to enhance reading comprehension is just to make it fun (PA3, PA4), hype it up. Reading in class context can be a lot of fun and serve as a motivating element for learners. PB1 and PB2 said that they read together with the class and have class reading competitions:

"As a class we read together, we have a competition: boys versus girls, we have carpet reading, and we have a smaller group reading". (PB1)

"When we do sentences, when we do comprehension test, I do the same. I read it to them, I give them a chance to read it, we play a little game, let's see if the boys can do better than the girls". (PB2)

A reading competition was held between the boys and the girls in PB1's lesson I observed. Learners loved it, the competitive edge to it really gave learners increased joy and motivation.

4.5.2.5 Subtheme 5: Alternative strategies for teaching English reading comprehension

Although there are various alternative strategies to teaching English reading comprehension, group reading and guided reading were the only two of the alternative strategies used for teaching English reading comprehension.

i) Group reading

Group reading and peer teaching are techniques used by PA4 to teach reading comprehension. Learners read in their reading groups and the teacher has an A3 page with question ideas. The purpose of group reading is to ensure that learners are not just learning from the teacher, they are learning from each other as well. In the groups, each learner reads a little bit from text supplied, be it a reading card or book. Each group has a different book, but learners within the same group, read the same story. When the group has finished reading, each one gets an A3 size question sheet. Each learner in the group can then choose which question they would like to answer, then they pose a question to the group. Learners see whoever gets to answer the question first, and that person may ask the next question. Differentiation comes into play again: the stronger group finishes their book and answering the questions much quickly; the weaker group reads at a slower pace, taking more time to look through it first.

The observation of teaching reading comprehension in the class of PA4 was interesting in the sense that the primary strategy PA4 used to teach reading comprehension was group reading. This learner-orientated lesson took place inside and around the classroom. The class was divided into their reading groups. The reading ability of the reading group, influenced their position and distance from the classroom. The weakest group remained in the classroom, and the strongest group was situated quite a distance from the classroom. The other two groups were just outside the classroom. Each group had a different story which made differentiated teaching and learning possible. Each group was told to read the story aloud as a group. They had to turn the pages together and ensure that each group member participated. A group leader was assigned to each group to ensure that group members cooperate. Each group received an A3 laminated sheet with twenty higher order questions. The group leader asked the first question, and whoever got to answer the question correctly asked the next question.

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ii) Guided reading

School A and School C use guided reading where the classes are divided into ability groups. A lot of work takes place in the small ability groups which manifests as group work. PA4 explains that the value of small ability groups is most important as it creates an environment where learners can feel safe and learning then comes more natural. After reading a story in an ability group, a learner remains in that group to keep order. This prevents the whole class shouting the answer out and some learners getting lost. Posing the question 'How do you believe reading comprehension can be enhanced?', GR1 explained the value of guided reading in teaching reading comprehension at School A:

> "Since being here, I think that having guided reading sessions, because it is just a little bit more focused on comprehension and reading and understanding of words more than what the teachers can do in the classroom. I think time is a big factor, and having twenty-five children, it is quite difficult to focus primarily on reading, parts of speech and comprehending what is written, which is easier in the guided reading session. I can see the difference here, the standard and the level of comprehension that children have here, as opposed to every other School that I have been too, where you don't have a separate group". (GR1)

Guided reading is a very effective strategy which addresses different aspects of reading and literacy. Teachers (PA1, PA2, PA3 and PA4) explained that, during guided reading, the class is divided into four groups.

> "I think that is where guided reading comes in, we have four levels. Level one does completely different work to level four, because level four still needs to grasp that level of understanding, whereas our level one is being extended. It is really nice to have the four groups; they don't do the same things". (PA2)

These groups are ability groups. The teacher sits with the one group, doing word manipulation, understanding the words, playing with the words, exploring the meaning of words and looking at the rhyming of words. A Grade 2 teacher can also read a story in a small group situation. Differentiation is very important in guided reading as PA4 explains.

> "Our four groups are strong to weak; our strong group will have bigger passages, same story, but with more details, whereas the weaker group will have half the amount, but they are still doing the same thing, so that they don't feel that they can't do anything". (PA4)

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School C schedules guided reading once a week and the learners get into their guided reading groups (PC1). The guided reading groups in this school are like School A's ability groups. PC1 keeps asking questions on every single page, at least two to three questions per page. You have your strong readers, medium readers and weak readers. PC1 briefly explains how guided reading works in her class:

"After dividing the class into their ability groups, the teacher focuses on reading with a small group where higher order thinking, group and individual reading takes place. Thereafter, learners will go back to their desks and they have to do a worksheet. The worksheet will be about the story…then another group will be with the assistant playing a game where they will focus on the spelling words of the week". (PC1)

Thus, vocabulary development takes place; learners look at the meaning of the words and they break them up into their syllables (chunking) and the words are coded. All of these educational activities are done in a fun and interactive manner to make learning, and ultimately reading, enjoyable for the learners. The groups in guided reading are not fixed, they do alternate according to differentiated learning as the opportunity presents itself, as PC1 explains:

"Yes…they rotate. So we put them in ability groups, so you have your strong readers, medium reader and weak readers together and then as I see the one…it's not a…they are in that group for four weeks because we take four readers so that you don't have to listen to the same story four times and so that they can't copy from each other as well. Uhm, so we've got four reading groups, and if we see 'ok this child has improved', then you can after four weeks exchange the groups and move them into a different group if they have improved or if one has actually gotten weaker". (PC1)

A guided reading lesson was observed in PA2's class. Learners went from one station to another. The respective stations included guided reading with the guided reading teacher; carpet work with the Grade 2 teacher; and completing a language-related game and a worksheet in their own learner book. The class was divided into ability groups for reading purposes. The following features were noted during the guided reading slot with the guided reading teacher: the teacher read aloud to groups and individuals; for language development several aspects were explored, such as contractions and abbreviations, higher order and reasoning questions about grammar conventions like the apostrophe, contractions, abbreviations, vowels and the use of 'a' and 'an' as articles.

4.5.3   THEME 3: Teachers as stakeholders

Theme 3 deals with the role and responsibility teachers have when teaching English reading comprehension. One of the research questions is "How do teachers influence the teaching of English Reading Comprehension to Grade 2 EFAL learners?" Based on the responses from the participants during the individual semi-structured interviews and the classroom observations, participants highlighted factors that both influence the teaching of English reading comprehension positively and negatively. Teachers can either add value to teaching reading comprehension as seen in Subtheme 1, or they can hamper the teaching of reading comprehension. Subtheme 2 considers how this takes a learner's desire to learn and master reading comprehension. The teacher is thus an important stakeholder in the learning to read process. In essence, a Grade 2 learner's level of comprehension can only be as good as the teacher's influence.

4.5.3.1 Subtheme 1: Adding value to the teaching of reading comprehension**

Teachers have the ability to transform learners' thinking and guide them in knowledge, moving from the known to the unknown. Teachers set the example; their patience and guidance are extremely important in setting the correct atmosphere for learning. It is my belief that teachers need to be life-long learners, ensuring that they stay informed about the latest developmental changes with regards to teaching and learning. These aspects all contribute to a teacher adding value to a learner's' learning.

i)   Teachers set the example

The teacher sets the example, and can assist in creating a reading culture in the classroom. PA4 explains that when you are reading in your classroom, you should be doing it often with expression, because the children you teach learn from you. If they see you love reading, they will love reading.

> "Sometimes I'll just come and sit on the carpet. I have my own book and I'll show them that I can read as well". (PB1)

PB3 emphasised that the manner in which a lesson is presented either adds to learners' understanding of the text being read. She likes to be dramatic and believes this assists in accomplishing understanding.

> "I must tell you I am quite an actor in class. I like to… [participant imitates herself making big eyes to the learners in class and acting out a character] …with my eyes,

with my hands, let's read this through and make sure that everybody is looking and everybody is at the right page you know". (PB3)

PB3 comments that the better the teacher presents the lesson to the class, the more likely learners are to 'buy in' and take part in the passage being read. "The better you present it, you know, the better answers you get". (PB3)

The reading comprehension PB1, PB2 and PB3 covered with the learners, was a very light-hearted passage filled with puns about fish. In PB1's class the learners unfortunately did not appreciate the humour behind the puns. It could have been since the passage was above their level of understanding and their background or it can be that the teacher had not focused enough on conveying the full meaning of the text. This emphasises the fact that the manner in which the teacher presents a lesson and the sets a good example adds to a learner's understanding.

ii) Teachers' patience and guidance

Teachers' guidance and patience are essential factors that can influence the teaching of reading comprehension in a school situation. However, the teacher should not be that strict and introduce fear rather than respect which could prevent learners from asking for assistance.

> "You get your battlers, and I know you get impatient because you have explained and you've told, but it is important not to shout, because then they think…they become scared and then they don't want to ask you and then they just battle along instead of coming to you and asking for help". (PA4)

In PC2 's interview, she mentioned that she strongly feels that learners need a teacher's guidance. Learners cannot be left alone to answer the questions by themselves and need help in the right way.

This observation is an example where the teacher's guidance was inadequate and learners battled with understanding the nuances of the comprehension. In the case of PB2, I think the teacher was too rushed in the manner in which the reading comprehension was presented. The class as a whole did not understand the fine humour behind 'Finland', 'goldfish' or the double meaning of 'a school of fish'. Learners were able to answer the questions, but rather half-heartedly. On the other hand, PB3 read the reading comprehension passage with enough enthusiasm that the class was very quick to appreciate the humour behind the double meaning of the words as used in the passage. It was clear that PB3 enjoyed hearing the learners laugh and went on to explain the significance of the importance of the humour behind each speech bubble. Throughout the teaching of the reading comprehension, PB3 made a big fuss about

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the passage and over exaggerated it for learners to better relate to the text. In the case of PB1, learners understood the essence of the story, however I think considerable valuable information went lost due to a possible lack of enthusiasm, understanding and energy from the teacher. At the end of the lesson, I was not convinced that the class had understood the fine nuances. They were given a task and they completed it.

> ### *Reflection journal Entry 5:*
>
> *"It is clear that PB1 did not have the energy to teach reading comprehension and complete the cute comic comprehension of Fishy fun. It must be the colder weather moving in. It was a forced and superficial lesson; the learners clearly did not understand the humour behind the lesson. It is such a pity - there was an electric energy in the class, the learners were ready to learn".*

iii) Teachers' training

From the individual semi-structured interviews conducted, it is clear that teachers have a need to be trained in how to teach reading comprehension, how to run a guided reading group (as in School A) and what to expect. Teachers are unsure what to expect from their learners. These teachers (PB1, PB2 and PB3) are competent teachers, having taught for twelve, thirteen and fifteen years respectively. Despite their need for further training, I was able to learn aspects of teaching reading comprehension from them. PA3 feels that teachers need training to level the playing fields somewhat so that all teachers are aware of what is expected from them in effectively teaching reading comprehension (PA3). There is a general understanding from PB1 and PB2 that teachers need to go on many more courses regarding reading and comprehension.

> "I think that teachers need to go on a lot more courses regarding reading and comprehension. We need to be clued up, we need to know what is going on". (PB1)

> "Ok, I think I would definitely like to go on more courses that teaches us how to develop reading, I would like to do that, because sometimes we do what we think is right; we do what we have always been doing". (PB2)

Teachers should to be clued up and know what is going on. Teachers (PB2) want to go on more training because they have been in the teaching industry for so long, that they are not

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aware of new developments. Teachers feel that they can continually be equipped better to assist learners better.

4.5.3.2   Subtheme 2: Taking value away from teaching reading comprehension

i)   Teachers should know their learners

Teachers can take enjoyment and achievement away from the teaching of reading comprehension if their focus is incorrect. An incorrect focus may refer to teachers not knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the learners being taught or if the teacher's focus is more on non-academic responsibilities. Since learning is a holistic activity, the learner in totality has to be catered for. The teacher needs to know who is not having a good day or who came from a context where they were subjected to violence (PB1). These factors can and will influence learners' ability to learn. PB1 speaks about how teachers need to know who did not eat this morning, as it will affect the manner in which they learn. Teachers also need to know learners' strengths and weakness; who needs to sit in front of the class and who needs to sit close to the teacher.

ii)   Teachers' workload

Most of the participants indicated clearly that teachers have too much to focus on other than academic responsibilities. Life is so busy and teachers are forever expected to plan events like Valentine's Day and a 'Morning with Mom'. Schools and management are taking away from the foundation of reading and writing. This is the foundation that everything else builds on. Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3 are so involved in other aspects of schooling and socialising. PA4 states that teachers are so busy with administration and e-mail correspondence, which steals from teaching in the classroom. In essence, teachers' time to really get down and teach is being decreased with the overload of secondary responsibilities they have to get to.

4.5.4   THEME 4: Paradoxical views on reading comprehension

Theme 4 looks at the paradoxical views on reading comprehension. In this theme, attention is paid to the assumptions made by teachers about teaching English reading comprehension. Learners' concentration is weighed against their comprehension. The quest to determine whether comprehension is due to nature as a naturally acquired skill, or nurture through practice making something perfect, continues. Finally, policy, practice and the importance of quality time spent on teaching English reading comprehension is discussed in detail. The data

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generated to formulate Theme 4, originates from the responses gathered from interview questions 1b, 3a, 3b and 5.

i)   Assumptions about reading comprehension

Many teachers (PA1, PB3) have highlighted the assumptions made by other teachers (from the previous year when they were in Grade 1) and parents alike about learners' ability to read and then to automatically comprehend text. PA1 explains that people assume that if learners can read, they can automatically complete a reading comprehension exercise and do well. This assumption is detrimental to the teaching of reading comprehension. Learners still need to be guided and assisted in answering questions about what they have read.

> "Many people think children read and then they understand and then make sense of text when it is actually not really taught to them how to make sense". (PA1)

There is another assumption made by teachers and their role in teaching reading comprehension:

> "Since teachers have so much to get done each day the actual teaching of reading comprehension falls on the backburner, we figure that they [learners] are reading and understanding the whole time, when actually it is just sort of by default that they are learning to read and understand". (PA1)

Reading is often moved to the side and takes the backseat, because it is just a skill that needs to be developed and they will eventually get it. (PA3). Interesting assumptions are made about the manner in which we read and write as PB1 suggests:

> "We take for granted that we always read from left to right. You have to consider being left-eyed or right-eyed as well". (PB1)

ii)   Concentration versus comprehension

The paradox between concentration and comprehension takes place when learners have to concentrate so much on how they are reading by means of decoding and blocking out disruptive stimuli, that they lose track of what they have read. Learners are easily distracted by their friend in School or surrounding circumstances as PC1 explains. However, when learners manage to focus on the task at hand, they concentrate so much on how they are reading that they forget what they are reading about.

> "When they do focus, they try to focus on what they are reading, they are focusing on words, they are not focusing or understanding what they are reading, because they are trying to concentrate". (PC1)

Thus, it is a constant battle between concentration and comprehension. If learners experience a lack in reading fluency, it can affect their thoughts, since each word that comes their way, needs to be decoded and interpreted in order to read it, that reading fluency and hence reading comprehension goes out the window (PC2).

iii)   Nature versus nurture

The question regarding whether reading comprehension is a naturally acquired ability (nature) or whether it is to be acquired through practice (nurture) is one that can be explored using a number of examples. PA2 illustrates a scenario where a learner could read beautifully at the desired speed, with correct word recognition, pronunciation and expression. However, as soon as the teacher asked the learner anything about the story, the learner would not understand. This points to a lack of reading comprehension. In this case, it could be that nurture was rarely attended too.

> "I had a child last year, who read beautifully like that, it was like an angel reading to you, but he could never tell me a thing about what he had just read. So his reading speed, everything, if you listen to this child's expression, it was fabulous. If you listen to him, it was amazing. But, as soon as you ask him anything about the story, he wouldn't understand. He knew the words, he didn't sound anything out, he could read the words perfectly, but he wasn't understanding what he was reading. I think there, maybe he wasn't challenged enough or asked enough, he hadn't practiced almost enough to have been able to, because his reading was perfect, but you could see at home, nobody ever asked him what was the story about - even at School, I can't blame it all on home, there just obviously wasn't enough input on that side. So for me personally, I would think it…has to be nurtured…not quite nature". (PA2)

PA4 states that reading comprehension is definitely a skill that needs to be practised…some children are born with the ability to learn more easily than others; some are cleverer or smarter, but I think this is in their nature (PA4). Reading comprehension and the ability to comprehend is 50 per cent nature and 50 per cent nurture**.** PB1 uses the example of a child who gradually develops from birth to becoming a person in totality by learning to talk.

> "I think all of us have the ability, because we all learn to talk and we learn to read…I think 50 per cent is parents' responsibility (nature)…and then the other 50 per cent is what we teach them in School (nurture). It needs to be 50/50. We cannot take full responsibility for that and parents can't take full responsibility for that". (PB1)

PB2 agrees that learners are born with the ability to comprehend (nature), however, this natural ability needs to be developed. PB2 compares reading comprehension to learning a life skill.

"I think there is a part that they are born with the ability, but I think it needs to be developed. I think we as teachers need to help them and show them. It is just like a life skill - I think if, once they have mastered it, and see that they get it, the lights will go on and then you'll see ahaa, they can actually do it and understand it better. So, I think it is very similar to that". (PA2)

Some learners are naturally stronger in one area of development than others; for other learners the same skill needs to be taught. In a classroom situation where reading comprehension is concerned, PC1 explains that the teacher has to accommodate the whole class and present reading comprehension in such a manner that all learners will gain from the lesson.

iv) Policy versus practice

The paradox between policy and practice continues in the classroom. There are discrepancies between the content of the policy in the manner in which it is supposed to be applied in the classroom and the actual manner in which it is implemented in classroom practice. On the one hand, teachers feel that the content of the policy document (CAPS) is sufficient. However it is not applied efficiently:

"I just think what's in the policy at the moment is perfect, there is just no follow through the whole time". (PA1)

PB1 feels very strongly that the policy needs to be made more applicable to our current day and age. It should be revised on a regular basis so that teachers can look forward and help learners to be skilled when they go in to their jobs one day. Reading needs to be prioritised since everybody has to use it. One view about the curriculum is that CAPS is 'too busy'; there is not enough time for the development of literacy and reading comprehension. However, PB2 says that the curriculum is more relaxed at School B which is an independent school. This allows teachers (School B) to focus on one aspect at a time.

"I think that this is important with reading comprehension, as well so that they can get a feel of it and improve [their performance]". (PB2)

Linked to this paradox, is theory and practice. As learned during the interviews and lesson observations, teachers have a lot of theoretical knowledge about the manner in which reading comprehension should be taught. However, this means very little if it is not applied correctly in the classroom.

> ***Reflection journal Entry 6:***
>
> *"It is clear each participant included in my study know enough about reading comprehension in theory, but I find there is a difference in their under-standing of teaching reading comprehension and the manner in which it is taught. Just looking at the difference between teachers' interviews and the classroom observations, I can see they lack practical application know-how."*

There should be a clear link between those who set policy documents and the individuals teaching learners.

> "In all honesty, I don't think from a policy perspective, much can be improved. It is people who are not in the classroom, setting up these documents and who don't really understand how it really works in the classroom". (PA4)

v)   Time: Quality versus quantity

Much has been said about the limited time teachers have available to teach reading comprehension. PA3 argues that although the curriculum allows for the development of literacy and reading comprehension, there is never enough time in a curriculum for teaching reading comprehension. PA3 states that reading is often moved to the side and takes the backseat, because it is just a skill that needs to be developed and they will eventually get it (PA3). In an ideal curriculum, it would be good to make more time for reading and activities around reading (PA3/PB1). PB1 states that too much time is spent focusing on language, where comprehension is just taken for granted:

> "We don't spend enough time on comprehension and that would mean that we don't teach children how to do a proper comprehension, they don't have the skills". (PB1)

'Reading comprehension' as defined in this study, has to be done very often, in a written format or verbal format. However, PB3 feels that the curriculum does not allocate enough time for what is needed. The most difficult thing about enhancing reading comprehension, is actually finding time to read.

> "I think what makes it very hard is finding time, because I think the only way in which you can improve it, is by doing more, more group reading". (PC1)

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As the teacher, PC1 explains, you actually have to make time and allow the learners to think and reason their way about their thinking. This paradox is concluded by PC2.

"I think if we start taking time in everything that we do, to focus on it [teaching of reading comprehension], then definitely yes…and not just throwing away opportunities like I say in problem solving, there is reading comprehension in that opportunity as well - use it". (PC2)

4.5.5 THEME 5: Factors which influence the teaching of English reading comprehension

The last theme looks at factors which influence the teaching of English reading comprehension, ranging from factors at home and at school, to personal and emotional factors and lastly individual factors. Interview questions 4a through to 4e generated enough data to analyse and discuss the various factors which influence the teaching of reading comprehension.

4.5.5.1 Subtheme 1: Factors at home and School

i)   Factors at home

The home and school environments are the two environments in which learners find themselves most frequently. Questions 4a and 4b relate to these two prime areas. If learners are not attending school, they are at home, and vice versa. If neither of these environments allow the learner to function optimally, the teaching and learning of reading comprehension will be influenced negatively. Factors at home could include the way in which technology is used and becomes available to learners in the home. It tends to make them lazy as now they only have to read symbols and pictures. PA1 explains:

"Things like television and things like tablets, they are very visual - and specifically the use of apps; it's very picture orientated, so they [the learners] never have to understand text, they just have to understand the symbol or the picture or the image…they've become able to read symbols and pictures and not words and make out what those words mean". (PA1)

Television (TV) is labelled as the leading factor keeping learners from reading at home as PC1 explains. Learners get into a habit of getting home in the afternoons, and they choose to spend time in front of the TV or another similar technological device. PC2 in of the opinion that parents' willingness and availability to help with learning to read is deemed one of the most important factors contributing to the development of reading comprehension.

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ii) Factors at school

As stated by PA3, factors at school could include learners having access to books, other related resources and to people who can support them in fostering reading comprehension. The people learners should have access to, like the teacher, teaching assistants and the guided reading teacher should encourage them to read books. The guidance and patience of the teachers at a school are vital factor that influence effective teaching of reading comprehension. Friends easily distract leaners at school or in surrounding circumstances as PC1 explains. PC2 continues to explain that one of the most important factors contributing to the development and teaching of reading comprehension, is the assistance and the guidance provided by the teacher. Without a willing teacher, a learner will not receive appropriate guidance.

> "Factors at school I think would be positive because you have a teacher who has to guide and help you with everything you do". (PC2)

4.5.5.2   Subtheme 2: Personal and emotional factors

Personal and emotional factors are intrinsic barriers which can either hamper or encourage the teaching and learning of reading comprehension. In cases in which learners are not cared for emotionally, or if they have an off-day, learning will not be as easy as days when learners are well and happy. Similarly, learners' personal strengths and weaknesses should also be considered before teaching reading comprehension.

i)   Personal factors

Personal motivation is a personal factor that particularly influences the effectiveness of teaching reading comprehension. PA2 comments that learners want to be rewarded for everything they do:

> "Kids don't like to do things that are difficult, let's not lie. I've got all these chapter books and nobody ever picks them up, because I've got picture books lying next to it, and that is easier…you can definitely see, the kids of today, they need to be rewarded for everything…". (PA2)

Motivation leads to confidence and confidence to competence. PA2 suggests a strategy to make this progression possible by rewarding learners for every five books read. When considering personal factors that may influence the teaching of reading comprehension, the teacher should take the learner in totality into account and consider the context from which the child comes.

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> "Imagine you decide that you are teaching comprehension today, but the child's puppy died last night, then he is not going to be able to focus and be happy and get excited about what you are doing in class". (PA4)

Since everybody is different, it should be accepted that not everybody likes to read, neither does everybody like to read out loud as PB2 mentioned in an interview. This needs to be taken into account to decrease a learner's level of reading anxiety. Teachers should know their learners. Personal preferences and likes also come into play in reading comprehension.

> "…Comprehension is one of those things. If you don't like it, and if you don't like reading, you know, you are not going to like to do that. So you must read. The more you read, I'm telling you: reading, reading, reading…[it becomes easier]". (PB3)

Learners' (in)ability to read is definitely a personal factor which contributes either positively or negatively towards the teaching of reading comprehension. Some learners are more challenged when it comes to reading as PC2 points out. Some might still struggle with the words in the text, so when reading the words in the text, it is not as easy as for your strong learners.

ii) Emotional factors

Apart from personal factors are emotional factors. PA2 says that when a child either feels insecure, or that they cannot read, or if they do not feel confident to read, they cannot engage with the text as easily. PA3 draws attention to children's reading readiness. This could imply ready for a second book or not; whether feeling like reading a certain book; or if they are emotionally stable. If a child is not emotionally sound, they will not be able to read or even comprehend the text, in the view of PA3. A learner's self-image also matters a great deal when it comes to factors that influence the teaching and learning of reading comprehension:

> "If they know they are struggling with reading, they don't now want to read out loud and make a big deal out of this, so that does matter a lot". (PA4)

Furthermore, PA4 explains that learners who are emotionally insecure or are introverts, might not enjoy reading or asking questions or become involved in a lesson. Emotional maturity affects learners reading ability and vice versa. This, as PC2 points out, can have a negative effect on a learner's performance in reading and reading comprehension.

4.5.5.3 Subtheme 3: Individual factors

Individual factors that could influence the teaching and learning of reading comprehension are that some boys dislike reading; learners' readiness for learning; learners' reading ability; and giving introverted learners a voice (PA3). According to a number of participants, a personal factor which PA3 points out, and which needs to be kept in mind, is that boys generally do not like to read and girls do not mind it. As odd as this may sound, it has emerged as true in this study. Unfortunately, the choice of book and the time of day learners are expected to read too will have to be considered, especially if boys are also included in the equation.

Together with readiness to learn, comes a learner's readiness to read. PA3 elaborates on this matter. A child's readiness for reading should also be considered when it comes to the teaching of reading comprehension. It is of little use forcing the learner to be ready to read. Learners can be encouraged to read by the example set by the teacher or peers. However, much harm will be done if learners are forced to read without them being ready for it. The beauty of a Grade 2 classroom is the sheer diversity of learners' attitudes and personalities. PA2 states that there are learners who will never answer a question in the class despite the fact that they know the answer. They will never put their hand up in class due to a fear of failure. These learners should be encouraged to be confident and find a way to overcome this form of adversity.

> "I think if we could get that and build confidence…in my class I try to encourage learners that there is more than one answer…and if your answer is wrong - let's explore how you got to your answer". (PA2)

PC1 explains that when learners are asked to answer a question and it is not correct, she encourages them to reason their way about. This often leads to learners' reasoning being correct. In a classroom environment, with a multitude of personalities making up the learning climate, it is easy to forget about the soft-spoken learners who have all the answers but are seldom given an opportunity to answer due to the loud learners giving the answers.

> "You don't know if the weak kiddies are actually getting an opportunity to say what they are thinking". (PC1)

Therefore, quality time is needed to give the introverted learner a voice to experience their thinking and reasoning.

4.6   DISCUSSION

The data collection and analysis procedures were undertaken with the conceptual framework in mind. Its three stages are 'before reading', 'during reading' and 'after reading' to accommodate the different categories of knowledge according to Vygotsky's ZPD with the revised taxonomy (Table 4.2). The themes generated from data analyses illustrate the process of reading. It thus becomes evident that the strategies teachers use to teach English reading comprehension to Grade 2 FAL learners can also be divided into these three broad categories. Apart from the three stages of reading, each level of knowledge in the conceptual framework is linked to a theme and a subtheme generated by the overall analysis of data. Teaching reading comprehension takes place in a progressive manner (Table 4.3).

The study is based on the conceptual framework. After completing data collection and its analysis, while keeping the conceptual framework in mind, five themes and twelve subthemes were linked to the levels of knowledge as illustrated by the conceptual framework. The first level of knowledge, *ZPD 1 - Remember* links directly to Themes 1 and 2 with its Subtheme 1. The first level of knowledge is present in both the 'before reading' and 'after reading' stages of the reading process. In the second level of knowledge *ZPD 2 - Understand*, Theme 2 with its subthemes 2, 3, 4 and 5, is dedicated to looking at the strategies for teaching English reading comprehension, as part of the 'during reading' stage of reading. The third level of knowledge, *ZPD 3 - Apply* is connected to Theme 3. The subtheme, 'teachers as stakeholders' is connected to the 'during reading' stage of reading. The fourth level of knowledge, *ZPD 4 - Analyse* is concerned with Theme 4. This is the first level of knowledge and theme from the data analysis that falls under the 'after reading' stage of reading. The second last level of knowledge, *ZPD 5 – Evaluate* links to Theme 5 with its Subtheme 1. This theme relates to the factors influencing the teaching of English reading comprehension. It is the second level of knowledge that forms part of the 'after reading' stage of reading. The last level of knowledge, *ZPD 6 - Create* links to the last part of Theme 5 which includes its subthemes 2, 3 and 4.

Table 4.3: **Integration of the conceptual framework and themes according to the data analysis**

Before reading	During reading	After reading
ZPD 1 – REMEMBER Theme 1: Teachers' understanding of English comprehension *Subtheme 1, 2* Theme 2: Strategies for teaching English reading comprehension *Subtheme 1*		**ZPD 4 - ANALYSE** Theme 4: Paradoxical views on teaching reading comprehension
	ZPD 2 – UNDERSTAND Theme 2: Strategies for teaching English Reading comprehension *Subtheme 2, 3, 4, 5*	**ZPD 5 - EVALUATE** Theme 5: Factors influencing the teaching of English reading comprehension *Theme 1*
	ZPD 3 – APPLY Theme 3: Teachers as stakeholders *Subtheme 1, 2*	**ZPD 6 - CREATE** Theme 5: Factors influencing the teaching of English reading comprehension *Theme 2, 3*

4.7 CONCLUSION

Based on the information gathered from data collection and data analysis processes, it became evident that there is a difference in teachers' theoretical knowledge and their understanding of teaching English reading comprehension and the manner in which it is implemented in classroom practice. Teachers who did understand the theory and practice of English reading comprehension equally well, performed well in class. It is clear that the learners also benefitted from these teachers' reading comprehension lessons. Learners definitely understood the text.

Some of the most important aspects to keep in mind when teaching reading comprehension are to include reading comprehension instruction throughout the reading process. Since the amount of time spent on reading is important, as much time as possible should be given to it. Therefore, reading should be included in all reading and writing activities. Teachers should also attempt to make reading fun for all learners, while recognising there are different levels

of reading abilities. Differentiated teaching and learning should be integrated in reading lessons. The teachers taught English reading comprehension well, discussed the text and the questions that followed with learners. They also took time to define challenging words in the passage. Learners experiencing these methods were at ease as the context of the passage was analysed for them. Thus, teachers need to establish the context of the passage, develop vocabulary and assist learners to understand the content of the passage and the questions posed.

In the final chapter of the study, chapter 5, findings and recommendations will be presented after research results are compared with literature on teaching English reading comprehension. There are four sections which will be addressed with regards to teaching English reading comprehension to Grade 2 FAL learners, namely: New literature, gaps, silences and new insights. The chapter will conclude with answering the primary and secondary research questions.

Chapter 5

Findings and recommendations

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter four dealt with presenting the research findings according to the five themes and twelve subthemes which emerged after the data was analysed by means of coding by hand. In the following chapter, Chapter five, findings from the study will be interpreted by comparing the research results with the literature about teaching English reading comprehension. New literature, gaps, silences and insight into the topic of teaching reading comprehension in English as FAL have been highlighted. The chapter starts with an overview of the past chapters, after which, the chapter is concluded with answering the primary and secondary research questions and stating the limitations to the study.

5.2 REFLECTION OF CHAPTERS

5.2.1 Chapter 1

Chapter one serves as an introduction to the study. As part of the introduction to the study, the primary and secondary research questions were listed, after which the purpose of the study was described. A number of concepts related to the study were defined in the concept clarification. The concept clarification served as background knowledge to the study. Lastly, the methodology of the study was introduced, paying attention to the research approach, research paradigm, research design, participants and the research sites. Chapter 1 gave a background and orientation for dissertation and motivated the need and significance of the study.

5.2.2 Chapter 2

The second chapter of the study relates to reviewing existing literature on teaching English reading comprehension to Grade 2 learners in independent schools. The chapter is divided into three background sections, namely, the contextual background, the conceptual background and the theoretical background. The chapter started with defining reading comprehension, looking at this phenomenon from a global perspective to a current perspective, situated in South Africa. Three approaches to teaching reading comprehension, namely, the top-down approach, the bottom-up approach and the interactive approach were explored. The chapter is concluded with exploring the role of the teacher in the reading

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process in an attempt to teach reading comprehension, before the conceptual framework is addressed.

5.2.3 Chapter 3

Chapter three concerns the research design and methodology of the study. The chapter commences with defining the qualitative research approach and exploring the interpretive research paradigm on which the study is based. The primary and secondary research questions are listed, after which the instrumental case study as a research design is discussed and explored. The primary and secondary participants within each of the three of the research sites are discussed; after which attention is paid to data collection and analysis strategies. The chapter concludes with a reference to ethics and the means used to obtain ethical consent from the involved participants. The study is based on case study research. I chose to make use of case study research in order to study the phenomena of teaching English reading comprehension in detail. The chosen methodology thus does not make it possible to apply the findings generalisable to different contexts outside that of teaching English reading comprehension to English independent schools.

5.2.4 Chapter 4

Chapter four is a practical, hands-on chapter in which the data collected at the three research sites using three data collection methods are analysed. The chapter starts with demographic information about the participants and explores the data collection instruments, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and a reflection journal. The data was analysed by means of coding by hand into five themes. These themes were then subdivided into twelve subthemes. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how the data collection and analysis procedures were undertaken with the conceptual framework in mind. One very important finding is the value parental involvement has on the teaching of English reading comprehension. Another is the use of differentiated teaching. Each learner needs to be supported according to their ability to achieve. Consequently, the reading passages and questions have to be adapted to the learner's ability to comprehend.

5.2.5 Chapter 5

The final chapter highlights new literature, gaps, silences and insight into the topic of teaching reading comprehension in English as a FAL. The primary and secondary research questions are answered from the collected data. Recommendations are made for further consideration to conclude the completed study.

5.3 COMPARING RESEARCH RESULTS WITH RELEVANT LITERATURE

After comparing the literature reviewed on teaching English reading comprehension to Grade 2 First Additional Language (FAL) learners as found in Chapter 2 and research results as found in Chapter 4, it became evident that there are a number of aspects relating to teaching English reading comprehension could be identified. These can be divided into four categories: supportive evidence (Table 5.1), contradictory evidence (Table 5.2), silences in literature (Table 5.3) and new insights (Table 5.4). The comparison was done according to the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data analysis.

5.3.1 Comparing results to existing knowledge: supportive evidence

Table 5.1 summarises the correlation between literature and research findings. Existing knowledge (literature) is compared to research findings. Each similarity is accompanied by an interpretive discussion. In the columns, the 'existing knowledge (literature)' column, refers to the literature studied in Chapter 2 regarding the teaching of English reading comprehension. The 'findings' column refers to the findings from the individual semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. 'Interpretive discussions' were based on the interpretation of the differences and similarities between the literature and teachers' strategies. Each teacher's use of the proposed strategies was considered throughout the individual semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and reflection journal.

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Table 5.1:   Comparing results to existing knowledge: supportive evidence (Adapted from Ebersöhn, 2009)

Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
Theme 1: Teachers' understanding of reading comprehension *Subtheme 2:* Reading with understanding	Reading is of little value if there is no understanding (Joubert *et al.,* 2015:101). Reading "is a message-getting, problem-solving activity, which increases in power and flexibility the more it is practised" (Joubert *et al.*, 2015:101).	Participants agree that reading with understanding is a skill that should be develop-ed over time. Reading with understanding entails that learners should be able to make sense of what they are reading. An individual who has read with understanding is able to form a picture in his/her mind about where the story came from and where it could go.	Literature and research findings agree that reading with understanding is a problem-solving activity, where learners are constantly trying to make sense of what is read. There is limited literature available on reading with understanding.
Theme 2: Strategies for teaching English reading comprehension *Subtheme 1:* Pre-comprehension strategies	**Background knowledge and vocabulary development:** Teachers assist learners to go through the reading comprehension text to be read. However, learners lack knowledge and insight regarding the vocabulary and background knowledge necessary to comprehend the text (Macaro, 2003:123). "Researchers in reading have found that knowledge of word meanings has a strong relationship to reading comprehension skill" (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986:72). Phatudi (2014:98) is of the opinion that "extensive reading to learners will ensure that new words are learnt. The teacher must always identify new words and explain them to the learners". **Prediction making** Gunning (2010:312) identifies the preparational strategy as a top-down approach to reading comprehension. After learners have received the text and read it, teachers "prepare learners to construct meaning, by paraphrasing, summarising, clustering related words, noting and using the structure of the text. Furthermore, it includes previewing the text, activation of prior knowledge, setting a purpose and goals and making predictions".	**Activating background knowledge** Learners' background knowledge needs to be activated together with an apt introduction of the text. Learners cannot be expected to engage in the content of the passage if they cannot relate to the content thereof, or have no idea what the text is about. **Vocabulary development** I found that in the classrooms where vocabulary development was not done, learners could not comprehend the passage read because they do not understand what the words mean. However, the teacher went the extra mile and spent additional time to assist learners with understanding the text. **Prediction making** Prediction making is very important to ensure learners are engaged with the text from the beginning. Teachers were very quick to mention prediction making as a strategy used to teach reading comprehension; however, this strategy was only seen used during three classroom observations.	Literature and research findings agree that background knowledge has to be activated before reading can take place. Without vocabulary development and introducing learners to the context of the text, learners are less likely to relate to the text and hence understand it. Prediction making is another important aspect of reading comprehension emphasised in literature and research findings. It was found during classroom observations, in the cases where teachers did not engage in vocabulary development, learners really battled to comprehend the passage read.

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Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
<u>Theme 2:</u> Strategies for teaching English reading comprehension ***Subtheme 2:*** Classroom practice	**Exposure to reading comprehension and fluency** Not being able to read well, leads to developing a dislike in reading. Reading then becomes laboured and unsatisfying. Reading becomes an effort and learners read less. "When learners do not read much, they become unfamiliar with the vocabulary, sentence structure, text organization, and concepts of academic or conversational written language" (Barr *et al.*, 2010:107). Klapwijk (2015:1) supports the notion that reading comprehension is dependent of the ability to read effectively from an early age (fluency). Pikulski and Chard (2005:517) elaborates on the importance of fluency in the development of reading comprehension. "A reader who has not developed fluency, the process of decoding words drain attention, and insufficient attention is available for constructing the meaning of texts". **Reading cues:** Joubert *et al.,* (2015:135) discusses reading cues which can be used to "analyse and comprehend written test". The reading cues include semantic cues, syntactical cues, contextual cues, visual-phonetic images and picture cues (Oczkus, 2009). **Questioning** The strategies taught in the Concept-orientated reading instruction (CORI) model teach learners to "activate background knowledge, ask questions, search for information, summarise and organise [information]" (Guthrie *et al.*, 2004:13; Van Kraayenoord, 2010:288). As part of the Reading Rescue approach, "Students are asked literal, inferential, and evaluative questions after the text was read as a means to foster comprehension" (Ehri *et al.*, 2007: 426).	**Exposure to reading comprehension** Learners' reading comprehension can be enhanced if they have enough exposure to it. PA2 and PB3 agree that learners need to be exposed to reading comprehension. PA2 emphasises the importance of regular exposure to reading comprehension. **Reading fluency** Reading fluency is a prerequisite for reading comprehension to take place. Teachers can ensure learners' reading fluency and hence reading comprehension by giving learners books and reading texts which are on the learners' level of reading**.** **Analysing text with reading cues and colour coding** Picture cues are also helpful to generate an understanding of what the text is. "You can 'read' everything out of a picture" as PB1 explains. Furthermore, "the best way to make sense of information is to use all your senses" (PB1). One interesting strategy that I picked up in the individual semi-structured interviews and the classroom observations, was teacher use of colour coding. **Questioning** One way to evaluate learners' understanding of what they read, is to question them verbally or in a written format. I found that learners are more confident in answering questions posed to them when it is done in a verbal format. Learners battle to convey the 'essence' of the answer when they have to produce the answer in written format.	Literature and research findings agree that exposing learners to reading comprehension is very important in teaching reading comprehension. Reading fluency is another strategy highlighted by both literature and research findings as being important in the process of teaching reading comprehension. Although literature and research findings do not mention the same kind of reading cues, both sources highlight this as important practice in the classroom. In terms of practical application; the use of colour coding provides learners with a tool where a relatively abstract concept such as English reading comprehension is made more concrete. Learners felt more at ease with the use of colours, they seem to know where to find the answer to the respective question easier. Both literature and the research findings emphasise the importance of questioning as part of teaching reading comprehension, however, literature does not elaborate on the difference between answering questions in verbal or written format.

Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
Theme 2: Strategies for teaching English reading comprehension ***Subtheme 3:*** Resources used in teaching English reading comprehension	**Access to resources** Phatudi (2014:11) suggests books with predictable texts should be chosen as they are easy to read and understand. The relevance of learning material presented to learners, can either benefit or hamper learners' acquisition of English as FAL (Phatudi, 2014:42). Reading material for Grade 2 learners is arranged according to predictability, high-frequency and decidability. Gunning (2010:109) explains that books which focus on predictability use large pictures and learners' prior knowledge to make sense of the story and hence read it. **Kinds of text** Looking at the Grade 2 classroom practice, reading comprehension in English as FAL is dependent of the learners' reading level, together with the reading material learners are provided with. There can be detrimental effects to learners' reading comprehension development when learners are given reading material which is too easy or too difficult. The level at which the learning material is presented to learners, is also very important to ensure the effective comprehension of learning material (Phatudi, 2014:42). Dednam (2009:132) points out that there are three levels of reading according to which learner's reading ability can be measured to. These levels range from the independent level, the instructional level and lastly the frustration level.	**Access to resources** A reading culture can only be established when learners have access to appropriate resources to read. School A is still a relatively new school. The school does not have a library, but each class in Grade 2 makes use of a bonus book system where learners in the class can take books at their own pace. The bonus books system extends learners' fluency and their expression and just reading for practice (PA4). Bonus books may include predictable texts. Some books are aimed at creating a love for reading with easy to follow texts. School B (PB1, PB2 and PB3) has book corners that are filled with books. The choice of books you have available for learners to read, also add as a motivating factor. **Kinds of text** The kinds of resources that are available to learners to read are of great importance. The kinds of text which learners are given to read, should be familiar to them and be more or less from their background and a context which they can relate too**.**	Literature and research findings agree that the type of resources made available to learners are important in teaching English reading comprehension.

Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
Theme 2: Strategies for teaching English reading comprehension *Subtheme 4:* Making reading fun	**Confidence** Gunning (2010:106) explains that if the teacher selects reading material that is too easy, you will do injustice to the learner, whereas when you choose reading material that is too difficult, the learner may start to dislike reading very much. "Learners should know at least 95% of the words in the material they are asked to read. Furthermore, learners should have about 75% comprehension" (Gunning, 2010:107) of the words read. Learners' self-confidence and pride plays a very important role in the learning of English as FAL (Phatudi, 2014:11). Phatudi (2014:32) asserts that intrinsic motivation is very important for learning a new language. Language should be enjoyed (Phatudi, 2014:32).	**Encouragement** The aspect of encouraging learners to read was illustrated during the observation of PA2. While the learners had guided reading with the guided reading teacher, she constantly motivated and encouraged learners to participate in the lesson. The guided reading teacher's motivation and encouragement helps learners' confidence and belief in themselves. **Motivation** Intrinsic motivation comes into play when dealing with reading and creating a love for reading. Learners should be approached very carefully and be invited to take part in reading, rather than to be forced to read: Reading should never be forced. "If I force you to read, you are not going to like it. If I give it to you in a way that makes it fun, it is encouraging to read" (PB1).	Although literature only refers to confidence, and research findings refer to encouragement and motivation; both sources of information emphasise the importance of reading material building confidence and the role of encouragement to read and the role intrinsic motivation plays in reading and reading comprehension.
Theme 3: Teachers as stakeholders *Subtheme 1:* Adding value to teaching reading comprehension	**Teachers set the example** The teacher must be a good model worth following, by ensuring attention is paid to the correct pronunciation of words, using words in the correct context and paying attention to use descriptive words in the correct context. (De Witt, 2009:108) Effective reading comprehension facilitators (RCFs) should also be compassionate enough to pick up when the learner is not well, emotionally or physically. (Engelbrecht & Swanepoel, 2013:61). The RCF's attitude can easily hamper or support the learner's ability to learn. The RCFs positive attitude will create a sense of belonging for the child. Under the right conditions, the child is likely to thrive (Engelbrecht & Swanepoel, 2013:61).	**Teachers set the example** PA4 explains that when you are reading in your classroom, you should be doing it often with expression, because kids learn from you. If they see you love it, they will love it. The teacher very often sets the example, and can assist in creating a reading culture in the classroom. **Teachers' patience and guidance** Teachers' guidance and patience is a vital factor which can influence the teaching of reading comprehension at school. However, the teacher should not be that strict and introduce fear rather than respect to keep learners from asking for assistance. "You get your battlers, and I know you get impatient because you have explained and you've told, but it is important not to shout, because then they think…they become scared and then they	Literature and research findings are in agreement about the important role the teacher play in the process of teaching English reading comprehension. The teacher sets the example. It is a classic case of 'actions speak louder than words'. The teacher needs to provide enough guidelines for learners to know what is expected of them, however, teachers' guidance should be of such a nature that learners are not scared to ask for assistance. Lastly, it is clear that teachers are life-long learners, they wish to be instructed on effective strategies for teaching English reading comprehension.

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Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
		don't want to ask you and then they just battle along instead of coming to you and asking for help" (PA4). PC2 mentioned that she strongly feels that learners need teachers' guidance. Learners cannot be left alone to answer the questions by themselves, they need a bit of guidance to help them in the right way.	
	Teachers' training Teachers' training and "development seems focused on reading instruction and teaching learners to decode words" (Klapwijk, 2015:2).	**Teachers' training** From the individual semi-structured interviews conducted, it is clear that teachers have a need to be trained in how to teach reading comprehension, how to run a guided reading group (as in school A) and what to expect. Teachers are unsure what to expect from their learners. There is a general understanding from PB1 and PB2 that teachers need to go on a lot more courses regarding reading and comprehension.	
Theme 5: Factors influencing the teaching of English reading comprehension **Subtheme 1:** Factors at home and school	**Education situation** The manner in which parents communicate with their children, may influence the learner's linguistic development. The manner in which parents communicate with their children forms a relationship. The nature of the relationship can either hamper or enhance the learner's language development (De Witt, 2009:108) **Educative methods** This refers to the degree in which educators explain content to learners. If teachers are too prescriptive in their explanations and expectations, it could hamper a learner's confidence and consequently their language development. This may also influence the degree to which learners show initiative and grow in their creativity (De Witt, 2009:108).	**Factors at home** PC2 believes that parents' willingness and availability to help out is deemed as one of the most important factors contributing to the development of reading comprehension. PA2 and PA3 also agreed in this regard **Factors at school** I have found that learners require a sense of belonging. Learners need to be able to be accepted by the teachers as resources at school. The people learners should have access to, like the teacher, teaching assistants and the guided reading teacher should encourage them to read books. It became evident that teachers' guidance and patience is a vital factor which can influence the teaching of reading comprehension at school.	Although literature and research findings focus on different aspects of factors at home and at school which can influence the teaching (and learning) of English reading comprehension, both sources are clear on the support learners need in order to learn strategies for English reading comprehension. In essence, the learner in totality, whether at home or at school, needs to be feel accepted. At home, parents need to be available to the children. At school, teachers (teaching assistants and the guided reading teacher) should be available to the learners.

Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
Theme 5: Factors influencing the teaching of English reading comprehension ***Subtheme 2:*** Personal and emotional factors	**Affective factors** Learners' emotional states have an implication on how well and quickly learners are able to acquire English as FAL. These factors include the learner's level of confidence and attitude in learning English as FAL. "Negative emotions and attitudes" (Phatudi, 2014:41) which learners may experience regarding the learning of English as FAL, may act as a barrier preventing learners from acquiring the respective language. **Emotional factors** In terms of teaching English reading comprehension to Grade 2 FAL learners, emotional factors such as fear, or reading anxiety need to be taken into account. Ghonsooly and Loghmani (2012:334) state that reading anxiety is a reality which both learners and teachers should be made aware of. They furthermore assert that reading anxiety becomes one of the major emotional barriers foreign language learners have to face.	**Personal factors** Since everybody is different, it should be accepted that not everybody likes to read, neither does everybody like to read out loud as PB2 explained during the individual semi-structured interview. This needs to be taken into account in order to decrease learners' levels of reading anxiety. Teachers need to know their learners. I have seen the difference in learners' intrinsic motivation when the teachers know their learners. Learners feel appreciated and they know they belong to the learning environment. **Emotional factors** A child's readiness for reading should also be considered as PA3 states. This may include if they are ready for a second book or not, if they feel like reading that certain book, or if they are emotionally stable. If a child is not emotionally sound, they won't be able to read and hence comprehend as PA3 explains. Learners' self-image also matters a lot when it comes to factors which influence the teaching of reading comprehension: "If they know they are struggling with reading, they don't now want to read out loud and make a big deal out of this, so that does matter a lot" (PA4).	It is evident from literature and research findings that learners' emotional state is of essence in the process of teaching English reading comprehension. Aspects such as attitude, confidence, emotional security and anxiety can negatively influence learners' ability to comprehend texts read.

5.3.2 Comparing results to existing knowledge: contradictory evidence

The table below summarises the differences between literature and research findings. Existing knowledge (literature) is compared to research findings. Each contradiction is accompanied by an interpretive discussion. In the columns, the 'existing knowledge (literature)' column, refers to the literature studied in Chapter 2 regarding the teaching of English reading comprehension. The 'findings' column refers to the findings from the individual semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. 'Interpretive discussions' were based on the interpretation of the difference between literature and teachers' use of the proposed strategies. Each teacher's use of the proposed strategies was considered throughout the individual semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and reflection journal.

Table 5.2: Comparing results to existing knowledge: contradictory evidence (Adapted from Ebersöhn, 2009)

Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
Theme 1: Teachers' understanding of reading comprehension	Klapwijk (2015:2) investigates the possible reasons teachers are not engaged with comprehension instruction. Some of the answers which answer to this noteworthy question include a lack of teacher education in teaching reading comprehension strategies. Another reason why teachers seem disengaged with reading comprehension instruction, is the fact that "becoming a comprehension strategy instruction teacher is painfully difficult" (Klapwijk, 2015:2).	Based on participants' responses, it became evident that participants understand what reading comprehension entails. "Reading is not just reading; it is reading…understanding…giving it back…giving it correctly…with enough information" (PB3). Reading comprehension is the ability to firstly understand the meaning of each word, which is important because you need that and then be able to understand and think about the meaning of the story or the book" (GR1) During the individual semi-structured interviews conducted with the teachers, I found that teachers know what it means to read with understanding. I found during a number of classroom observations, teachers struggled to bring learners to a point where the learners read with understanding. Vocabulary development along with activating background knowledge activation took place.	The discrepancy between what teachers believe reading comprehension to be and the manner in which teachers teach English reading comprehension becomes clear. Teachers have a good theoretical understanding of what teaching English reading comprehension is like. In certain classroom observations it became apparent that teachers battle to integrate theory with practice.
Theme 2: Strategies for teaching English reading comprehension *Subtheme 5:* Alternative strategies for teaching English reading comprehension	**Top-down approach** The focus is on how whole text is accessed and understood by the learner. The reader samples words and strings of words, predicting and inferring the meaning underlying them. Meaning can only be activated by accessing prior semantic, syntactic and discourse knowledge" (Long & Zimmerman, 2008:12). Alternative top-down approach strategies to foster reading comprehension, include Informed Strategies to Learning (ISL), Reciprocal Teaching (RT), Direct Explanation of Strategies (DES), Transactional Strategy Instruction (TSI) and Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR).	**Group reading** Group reading and peer teaching are techniques used by PA4 to teach reading comprehension. Learners read in their reading groups and the teacher has an A3 page with question ideas. The purpose of group reading is to ensure that learners are not just learning from the teacher, they are learning from each other as well. **Guided reading** School A and school C make use of guided reading where the classes are divided into ability groups. A lot of work takes place in the small ability groups which manifests as group work. Guided reading is a very effective strategy which addresses different aspects of	Participants do not make use of other alternative strategies to teach English reading comprehension, other than group reading or guided reading. Literature is clear about a vast number of alternative strategies to teach English reading comprehension; however, these strategies were not seen during data collection.

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Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
	Furthermore, The *CORI* (Guthrie *et al.*, 2004:ix; Van Kraayenoord, 2010:288) and The Four Blocks "Working with words" (Kramer, 2000:13) strategies are also included among the alternative top-down approach. **The bottom-up approach** "Learners to first decode individual letters and words before there is any focus on comprehension" (Long & Zimmerman, 2008:12). This approach suggests that learners start building their way to reading comprehension from the basics of language. Reading Rescue (RES) as "a reading intervention model more encompassing than a reading program, is focused on curriculum materials and instructional procedures. The instruction involves one-to-one tutoring" (Ehri, *et al.*, 2007:416). **Interactive approach** This approach "refers to the reading process which is supported by an interaction between the text information and the learner's background knowledge, as well as interaction between different types of metacognitive reading strategies" (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2013:238).	reading and literacy. Teachers (PA1, PA2, PA3 and PA4) explained that during guided reading, the class is divided into four groups. "I think that is where guided reading comes in, we have four levels. Level one does completely different work to level four, because level four still needs to grasp that level of understanding, whereas our level one is being extended. It is really nice to have the four groups; they don't do the same things" (PA2).	

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5.3.3 Comparing results to existing knowledge: silences in literature

Table 5.3 should be read and understood in this way: The 'silences in literature' refer to aspects which were highlighted in the findings gathered from data collection and analysis which were not originally considered in the literary review in Chapter 2. In this section, there are only three columns instead of four columns. The 'silences in literature' are listed according to trends within themes and subthemes. The 'findings' column refers to the findings from the individual semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The 'interpretive discussion column' addresses the 'silence in literature' by evaluating the findings and looking at the listed trend holistically. The table summarises the silences in literature. Research findings are discussed briefly and is accompanied by an interpretive discussion.

Table 5.3: Comparing results to existing knowledge: silences in literature (Adapted from Ebersöhn, 2009)

Trends within themes and subthemes	Findings	Interpretive discussion
Differentiated learning **Theme 2**: Strategies for teaching English reading comprehension *Subtheme 1:* Activating background knowledge	Differentiated teaching and learning is vital to ensure successful reading comprehension. Differentiated teaching and learning accept that not all learners learn at the same pace - and there is nothing shameful about that. Learners should be assessed on what they are able to do. Differentiated teaching and learning was mentioned during the individual semi-structured interviews and it was applied by PA2, PA3, PA4, PC1 and GR1 in the teaching of English reading comprehension during the classroom observations.	There is a silence in literature about the role of differentiated teaching and learning. This concept is highlighted by numerous participants as an important aspect to teaching reading comprehension. Learners should each be given work at their level of understanding. Learners should also be allowed to read books on their level of reading. Instead of expecting all learners to answer the same number of questions, allow the weaker learners to answer less, and still experience success.
Verbal answers versus written answers **Theme 2:** Strategies for teaching English reading comprehension *Subtheme 2:* Classroom practice	Allowing learners to give verbal answers before written answers is another strategy used to teach reading comprehension, especially for English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners.	Literature does not elaborate on allowing learners to answer reading comprehension questions verbally. It is assumed that reading comprehension questions are answered in a written format.
Sequencing **Theme 2**: Strategies for teaching English reading comprehension *Subtheme 2*: Classroom practice	Sequencing is another strategy which helps learners orientate themselves in respect of the passage. This strategy is an informal way of asking questions and evaluating your own understanding of the text. During the individual semi-structured interview, PA2 noted that she makes use of natural sequencing to help learners determine what has happened, what could happen and being able to build up in your mind of where the story came from and where it could go. Furthermore, PA3 agreed that sequencing is an important aspect of teaching reading comprehension.	There is a silence in literature about the use of sequencing as a strategy to teaching reading comprehension. The research findings make it very clear that sequencing is a technique used to effectively assist learners in orientating themselves with the order of the text.
Higher order thinking **Theme 2**: Strategies for teaching English reading comprehension *Subtheme 2:* Classroom practice	Higher order thinking is an important aspect of the questioning strategy. Higher order thinking questions have no right or wrong answer as GR1 explains, so helping learners engage with their creativity through higher order thinking, builds their confidence. Guided reading as offered in Schools A and C is very practical as it offers the teachers opportunities and time with smaller groups to ask deeper (higher order thinking) questions, more of the Bloom's Taxonomy questions that teachers do not always have time for in the classroom (PA3).	Despite higher order thinking being such a population phenomenon among participants, very little has been said about the role of higher order thinking in teaching reading comprehension in literature. Literature mentions the role of questioning, but does not discuss the strategy or the role of higher order thinking.

Reason for reading **Theme 2**: Strategies for teaching English reading comprehension *Subtheme 3:* Resources used in teaching English reading comprehension	Learners need to know why they are reading. During the semi-structured interview, PA1 and PA4 elaborated that there is a reason for reading. Learners need to understand that the objective for reading and reading comprehension is to use the text afterwards. Learners need to ask themselves if the text is meaningful and valuable.	There is no mention in the literature that learners need to be familiar with the reason for reading. Based on the research findings, once learners understand the reason for reading, they are more likely to understand the text and hence comprehension.
Parental involvement **Theme 2**: Strategies for teaching English reading comprehension *Subtheme 2:* Classroom practice	According to all the participants, one incredibly valuable resource in teaching reading comprehension is parental involvement. Parents play a major role in enhancing the teaching and learning of reading comprehension. A major contributing factor to teaching reading comprehension is parents taking the time and showing initiative in assisting their children in reading with understanding (PA2). Parents' attitude about reading is very important, it actually rubs off onto the learners (PA4).	There is a silence in literature regarding parental involvement in teaching learners English reading comprehension. Literature does not mention the responsibility parents have in setting an example of the value of reading skills to motivate their children.
Integrating reading Comprehension **Theme 2**: Strategies for teaching English reading comprehension *Subtheme 4:* Making reading fun	It was evident from the interviews and the opinions from most of the participants that reading comprehension does not have to be an isolated activity, it can be integrated into the day's work and events, and be made fun. Teachers mentioned that they enjoy integrating an element of fun into the teaching of English reading comprehension.	Furthermore, integrating reading comprehension in other areas of learning such as Mathematics, is not mentioned in the consulted literature. Participants reported that since time to only teach reading comprehension is limited. It works best when integrated with other areas of learning.

5.3.4   Comparing results to existing knowledge: new insights

The table (Table 5.4) below summarises the new insights gained from the research findings that are interpreted and discussed briefly. In the table below, new insights gathered after completing data collection and data analysis are discussed. The new insights are listed according to the themes and subthemes from which they emerged. The 'description' column provides an explanation of the new insight. The last column titled the 'interpretive discussion' provides an overview of the context of the new insight and the relationship it has with teaching English reading comprehension.

Table 5.4: Comparing results to existing knowledge: new insights (Adapted from Ebersöhn, 2009)

Theme and subthemes	Description	Interpretive discussion
Theme 2: Strategies for teaching English reading comprehension *Subtheme 4:* Making reading fun	**Rewards build confidence** Confidence goes hand-in-hand with encouragement and motivation as reflected in the teachers' responses and interpretation of their understanding. Learners need a head start to achieve success. Often learners need motivation in the form of a reward to read, and as soon as they start experiencing success in their reading, they start gaining confidence.	This is new knowledge generated from the study. Learners need a reason or objective before doing a task. Furthermore, learners will only engage in what is expected of them, if they know what they will gain. The behaviourist approach becomes evident.
Theme 4: Paradoxical views about reading comprehension	**Assumptions about reading** Interesting assumptions are made about the manner in which we read and write as PB1 comments. "We take for granted that we always read from left to right. You have to consider being left-eyed or right-eyed as well" (PB1).	New knowledge is generated about the role of eye dominance in reading and reading comprehension. This is something I do not known anything about.
Theme 5: Factors influencing the teaching of English reading comprehension *Subtheme 3* Individual factors	**Individual factors: Boys' dislike reading** Individual factors which may influence the teaching and learning of reading comprehension include boys' dislike in reading, learners' readiness for learning, learners' reading ability and giving introverted learners a voice. A personal factor which PA3 points out and which needs to be kept in mind is that boys generally don't like to read and girls don't mind it.	Although I have assumed that boys generally do not like reading for some time, this is new insight and definitely contributes to literature of teaching English reading comprehension.

5.4 ANSWERING OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

5.4.1 Primary research question

How is English reading comprehension taught to Grade 2 First Additional Language learners in independent schools?

The above mentioned question will be answered by addressing a number of sub-categories as identified below:

What about guided and group reading?

- **Approaches (bottom-up, top-down or interactive) to teaching English reading comprehension**

Schools A and C use the interactive approach for teaching English reading comprehension to Grade 2 FAL learners. In School A as well as in School B, guided reading is used as an alternative strategy to teach English reading comprehension. Both these schools pay attention to aspects relating to the bottom-up approach and the top-down approach. Since there is a balance between the use of these approaches, it can be said that the interactive approach is used to teach reading comprehension. In the case of School B, the interactive approach is also used. However, there appears to be more emphasis on the top-down approach than the bottom-up approach. Teachers rely more on background knowledge and analysing the text in separate parts. The approaches a teacher uses for presenting English reading comprehension lessons relates to their personal understanding of English reading comprehension (see Theme 1). It also links to 'ZPD 1 - Remember' according to the conceptual framework (see section 2.4.5).

- **Importance of parental involvement**

In all three schools, the interviewed teachers emphasised the importance of parental involvement in assisting teachers with the teaching of English reading comprehension. Parents are required to assist learners with reading, by asking learners' questions and ensuring that learners understand what they have read. Parents can assist teachers by ensuring that they ask learners questions about the content of the books read.

- **Access to resources**

Teachers have indicated that the teaching of English reading comprehension cannot take place without access to reading material that is relevant to a learner's background and prior knowledge. Similarly, teachers need to have different kinds of texts available that are relevant and that learners can relate to so that they are able to understand what they are reading. The

reading material learners have access to must be able to spark their interest and motivate them to question what they are reading to understand the reading material. The reading material seen in the classrooms where lessons were observed adheres to this criterion. Most importantly, teachers should draw learners' attention to the reason for reading. Learners do need to develop a love and respect for books, as this is bound to add to the intrinsic motivation and encouragement that is necessary for them to start reading for pleasure. Once learners show interest in the relevant types of reading material, reading will also become easier for them to start reading with greater ease and to understand more quickly what they are reading. These elements are all part of making reading fun.

- **Teachers set the example**

Teachers play a very important role in teaching English reading comprehension to Grade 2 FAL learners. The teacher is the agent of change, and the prime example of what reading should be like. A teacher's attitude, enthusiasm and the manner in which they guide learners through a passage are very important. The way a teacher presents the content, answers learners' questions and guides their understanding of the text allows them to either flourish or shy away from reaching their English reading comprehension potential. This was evident in a number of classes observed. Participants (PA4, PB3, PC1) set the atmosphere and a good example for successful learning. This is in line with Theme 3 as derived from the data analysis procedure and corresponds with the 'ZPD 3 - Apply' element in the conceptual framework.

- **Integrating reading comprehension**

Since the responding teachers pointed out that the curriculum leaves so little time for the pure teaching of English reading comprehension, they started integrating purposeful teaching of English reading comprehension with other areas of learning areas in the Foundation Phase in which includes Grade 2. The integration of reading comprehension refers to areas of learning such as Mathematics in problem solving and Life Skills in Bible Education. It is also accommodated in general administrative matters such as reading the homework sheet with learners in the class, while testing that they have understood the text.

- **Teachers need to know their learners**

Teachers can only teach English reading comprehension to Grade 2 FAL learners effectively if they know them well. Teachers have to be informed about their background, their state of mind, emotional and physical well-being as well as barriers that hinder them from achieving to the best of their ability in class. It was evident that PB1 and PC2 were prime examples of what it meant to know their learners. Both participants asked learners in each of their classes to

move closer to the teacher for assistance. One learner had visual impairment and another learner was emotionally unstable.

5.4.2 Secondary research questions

5.4.2.1 Secondary research question: Number one

Which strategies do teachers use when teaching reading comprehension to Grade 2 English FAL learners?

The three stages of reading in the conceptual framework are before reading, during reading and after reading. Teaching English reading comprehension depends on integrating the different strategies each stage has (refer to Section 4.6). The strategies used to teach English reading comprehension to Grade 2 FAL learners are: pre-comprehension strategies, classroom practice and alternative strategies for teaching English reading comprehension. Three out of five categories (refer to Theme 4.5.2) use them.

i) Pre-comprehension strategies

The strategies teachers use in the early stages of teaching English reading comprehension to Grade 2 FAL learners are strategies in which teachers activate Grade 2 learners' background knowledge and introduce and develop vocabulary. 'ZPD 1 - Remember' requires the teacher to activate prior knowledge, make predictions and develop vocabulary. The conceptual framework links to this strategy that is also in line with the first subtheme of Theme 2.

ii) Classroom practice

As part of classroom practice, teachers expose Grade 2 learners to a great deal of English reading comprehension as a way to familiarise them with the skill of reading and answering English reading comprehension texts. Teachers allow learners to answer the English reading comprehension exercises through verbal and written answering techniques. As part of literature control, it was confirmed by both the research findings and literature that reading fluency has a directly proportional effect on reading comprehension. Teachers assist learners to improve their reading fluency by giving them suitable reading material. Teachers also teach learners to use colour coding by means of circling the corresponding reading comprehension question to the answer in a specific colour. This enables learners to link the reading comprehension question to the answer in the passage provided.

Through sequencing, teachers train learners to analyse the story by placing the different parts of the story in sequence. This is believed to help learners identify their stance. Questioning

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and higher order thinking questions play a major role in teaching English reading comprehension. Higher order thinking is an opportunity for learners to think out of the box and use their critical and creative thinking abilities. The ultimate goal of reading comprehension is for learners to be able to answer questions about the passage they have read with insight. According to the conceptual framework, 'ZPD 2 - Understand' supports the strategies suggested for classroom practice. This also corresponds with Theme 2. Furthermore, ZPD 2 is part of the 'during reading' section of the reading process, which creates a platform for the teacher to effectively ask learners questions related to the conceptual framework.

iii) Alternative strategies to teaching English reading comprehension

The two alternative strategies to teaching English reading comprehension which teachers use are group reading and guided reading. Guided reading and group reading worked as alternative strategies to teaching English reading comprehension to the secondary participants throughout the three stages of reading as emphasised by the conceptual framework: before reading, during reading and after reading.

5.4.2.2   Secondary research question: Number two

How do teachers view the teaching of English FAL reading comprehension?

It has become clear that teachers view teaching of English reading comprehension as very important. Teachers used in the study are aware of the poor state of South Africa's English reading comprehension. Sampled teachers have a good understanding of the theories about teaching English reading comprehension. They are even aware of the causes of poor reading comprehension. However, there is a discrepancy between some teachers' knowledge and understanding about teaching reading comprehension and their classroom practice in teaching English reading comprehension. A number of teachers used in the study, feel that they need further training regarding the effective teaching of English reading comprehension.

Based on the research findings, teachers' understanding about what EFAL concerns, seems to be limited. Teachers have limited experience about how to treat and teach an EFAL learner differently to an English Home Language Learner. Thus, teachers teach English reading comprehension in EFAL the same as English reading comprehension in Home Language. Teachers need additional guidance and support in understanding the fine nuances regarding teaching English reading comprehension to Grade 2 FAL learners.

5.4.2.3 Secondary research question: Number three

What factors are likely to influence the teaching of English FAL reading comprehension?

According to Theme 5, there are three sub-headings which discuss the various factors likely to influence the teaching of FAL reading comprehension. These headings include factors at home and school, personal and emotional factors and individual factors. The factors likely to influence the teaching of English reading comprehension will be discussed individually.

i) Factors at home

The manner in which technology is used at home can influence learners' motivation to read and comprehend negatively. Technology has become freely available to learners at home. Often, technology is made available to learners so frequently, that learners do not read books or other related materials, they spend all their time with technology. Learners hence become lazy, since technology requires learners to merely read symbols (such as apps) instead of reading words and sentences and having to make sense of the meaning of the words. Television is labelled as one of the major factors which keeps learners from reading at home. Learners use TV as an easy way to pass time: learners become passive and spend a lot of time in front of the TV.

Parental absence in the literal and figurative sense also plays a big role. The literal meaning refers to parents physically not being around, while the figurative meaning implies that parents are around, but emotionally absent. Parental involvement is seen as one of the biggest factors to teaching English reading comprehension at home. A partnership is formed between the teacher and the parent. The partnership referred to here, implies that the parent works along with the teacher to reinforce strategies and skills learners learnt at school. This partnership can also refer to parents taking time to question learners about the content of the book they have read. Effective English reading comprehension instruction is made possible when the parent reinforces and therefore supports what the teacher does at school.

ii) Factors at school

Learners' success in learning English reading comprehension depends on their access to books and other related resources, as well as to specialists who can support and assist them in learning English reading comprehension. Specialists such as teachers, teaching assistants and guided reading teachers should encourage learners to read books. Teachers have a responsibility to learners to set the correct example about what reading comprehension entails. The conceptual framework, more specifically 'ZPD 5 - Evaluate' emphasises that teachers need to ask learners questions in such a way that they make the text applicable to learners. The teacher's involvement in analysing the text and making it accessible for learners is one of the biggest factors of teaching English reading comprehension as the conceptual framework suggests. This is in line with what was found when analysing the data collected.

i) Personal factors

Personal motivation plays a major role in teaching learners English reading comprehension. A new finding according to the literature control confirms learners' need to be rewarded for the effort they put into a task. Thus, learner motivation is partially dependent on rewards. This rewards-driven behaviour can end up building confidence in learners. Reading anxiety is another personal factor that should be considered. Not all learners are comfortable with reading aloud in class. The teacher therefore needs to know learners well enough to identify which learners need to be called to a private area when reading aloud to the teacher. The same can be said about learners' reading ability: if the teacher is aware that the learner struggles to read, the learner should also be given the choice to read to the teacher privately instead of having to read in front of the class.

ii) Emotional factors

Emotional insecurity plays a significant role in teaching English reading comprehension. Teachers need to know learners well enough to pick up if something happened at home or before school. In the case that learners are displaying abnormal behaviour such as crying, lying on their arms, looking pale or constantly wanting to lie down and sleep, could alert teachers that all is not well. Teachers should be able to identify this behaviour and act accordingly. Abnormal behaviour can be linked to learners not eating enough before school or not having a proper night's rest. This behaviour can hamper learners' ability to learn. Emotional insecurities should be addressed first before learners can be expected to achieve to the best of their ability in English reading comprehension.

iii) Individual factors

Apart from the mentioned factors that might influence learners' ability to learn English reading comprehension, boys' dislike of reading, learners' readiness for learning and learners' reading ability also need to be considered. The teacher needs to be aware of introverted learners and use reading comprehension instruction as a manner to give them a voice. This implies that when the quiet learners do not give an answer, the teacher should not assume that they do not know the answer, these learners should be asked what their thought about the matter is. Individual learners' readiness to learn and readiness to read should also be considered. Learners should be motivated to pick up a book and read, learners can also be encouraged and praised according to their performance. However, care must be taken not to force learners to read. Within the conceptual framework, more specifically 'ZPD 6 - Create' is linked to the personal, emotional and individual factors that influence learners' eagerness to read and the

teaching of English reading comprehension. Theme 5, subthemes two and three, that deals with personal, emotional and individual factors to teaching English reading comprehension.

5.4.2.4 Secondary research question: Number four

What recommendations (from the findings) can be made to enhance teachers' strategies for reading comprehension in EFAL?

The following recommendations from the findings can be made to enhance teachers' strategies for reading comprehension:

i) Reading comprehension consultant

Based on the research findings, the responding teachers mentioned that they wish to have a 'go-to person' other than the head of department or the principal from whom they can seek advice about teaching English reading comprehension to Grade 2 FAL learners. Many teachers are unsure how to guide learners to understand what they read. They also want to know how they can improve their knowledge and skills in teaching English reading comprehension. Thus, my recommendation would be for schools who are serious about improving the quality of their English reading comprehension instruction, should consider employing a reading comprehension consultant who can train teachers on a regular basis about the latest proven strategies in this field. This reading comprehension consultant should have access to classes when they are being taught reading comprehension and offer suitable advice. The reading comprehension consultant should also have working space, where time can be spent with individual learners who really battle in class and who need individual assistance to gain confidence in reading comprehension.

ii) Differentiated teaching

Teachers should use differentiated teaching, where learners are given work according to their abilities. Engelbrecht and Swanepoel (2013) give sound advice on the practice of multi-level teaching. PA4 incorporated differentiated teaching in group reading. Her methods are in line with what Engelbrecht and Swanepoel (2013:139) suggest. Engelbrecht and Swanepoel (ibid.) group the class into four categories (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5: Modification to the content through clustering

Learning group (clusters)	Modification
Enhanced/enriched learning	Knowledge, concepts and skills are attained on an advanced level. The knowledge concepts and specific skills of the specific grade are expanded

Unmodified learning	Includes age/grade-appropriate knowledge, concepts and skills; learning allows for attainment of grade-appropriate knowledge, concepts and skills
Unwinding/scaffolding learning	Includes knowledge, concepts and skills being grouped and structured; learning support allows for scaffolding by breaking down the task into steps and going one step at a time
Straddled learning	Includes learners working on the same thematic knowledge, concepts and skills, but at a lower grade/phase level; learning can be attained on a lower grade/phase level

Clusters are important as all learners in the class are helped to reach their potential and blossom in success as the strongest to the weakest learner is included. Learners should be guided and accommodated accordingly. Allow gifted learners to do more than what is expected of them, and reward them accordingly. However, encourage and praise the weaker learners for completing whatever questions they manage to accomplish. All learners, ranging from the weakest to the strongest learner should be rewarded and praised accordingly. The conceptual framework with its three stages was designed in a manner to allow every learner to achieve success and realise their potential in English reading comprehension. Throughout the three stages of reading, before, during and after reading, learners are guided to move from the one level of understanding to the next. Differentiated teaching and learning echoes this notion.

iii) Resources

The recommendation of differentiated teaching is linked to the type of resources available for teachers of English reading comprehension who should have access to suitable reading material for each learning group or cluster (Engelbrecht and Swanepoel, 2013:139). It should range across various genres and interests to stimulate learners interest in reading different kinds of text to foster English reading comprehension. Differentiated teaching requires that the reading material for each learning group or cluster (ibid.) can be adapted to a specific level of understanding. However, each group will still have to have the same story line and plot, although the amount of detail will vary.

iv) Guided reading

Schools A and C have guided reading programmes. This ensures that there is a good balance between bottom-up and top-down strategies to teaching English reading comprehension. From the three schools from which the data was collected, School A's instruction to reading comprehension stands out above that of the other two schools. This is because guided reading is taken very seriously, and there are specialised guided reading teachers overseeing the guided reading lessons at the school. These specialists ensure that learners reach their

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potential. In the case of learners who have challenges in literacy, these specialists are quick to be made aware of the challenges in literacy and provide additional guidance and support. My recommendation is for the schools to employ specialist guided reading teachers to whom groups of four to six learners at a time go to for guided reading. This ensures that another teacher helps the class teacher identify problems with teaching English reading comprehension. This will relieve the class teacher's workload and allows for reading comprehension to be taught with a balanced interactive approach.

v) Questioning throughout the reading process

The asking of questions should not be left until the end of a reading comprehension passage or exercise. Learners should engage with questions from the very beginning of the reading process. Questions should be asked before, during and after reading a passage. This was evident in PC1's teaching of English reading comprehension. She used the method of asking questions throughout the lesson. The implementation of the stages of the conceptual framework could make this strategy possible. It would also make it easier for a learner to move from the one level of knowledge to the next; to excel and achieve success at a particular level of knowledge. A teacher's question prompts during the acquisition of reading comprehension are helpful at each respective level of knowledge and stage of reading. Success in English reading comprehension then becomes a systematic process. All learners should be able to answer the given questions both in a written and a verbal format so that teachers can determine which learners are able to make the text their own.

5. 5 LIMITATIONS

My initial plan was to collect data from four schools. I did not realise how difficult it was going to be to get schools to agree to take part in the study. After approaching nine schools, only three schools accepted the invitation to participate. The sampling criteria were specific: the schools had to be English medium independent schools in the Gauteng area. Limited time was available to approach more schools to include a possible fourth school as some are four term schools and others three term schools. The data collection period was February and March 2016. In the end, I settled for the three schools that accepted the invitation to take part in the study.

From the schools approached, there were only two teachers who could not take part in the study. Both teachers were from School A. The one Grade 2 teacher had only been teaching for a year, and the other was a specialist guided reading teacher who had also only been teaching for a year.

Another limitation is that this study was conducted in English independent schools in Gauteng. The findings generated from this study, do not necessarily depict the state of teaching English reading comprehension in the government or other independent schools across the rest of the country. To verify the relationship between teaching English reading comprehension in independent English schools and government schools, a follow-up study is recommended.

5.6   CONCLUSION

Findings from the analysis of the data gathered from individual semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and entries in the reflection journal were compared to the existing literature as reviewed in Chapter 2. The purpose of this literature control is to highlight areas where the literature either supports or contradicts the findings; areas where the findings shed light on silences in the literature; and lastly, areas where the findings provide new insights. The literature and findings in this study confirm the importance of vocabulary development and activation of prior knowledge. Furthermore, some literature found and the findings of this study support the notion of learners being exposed to reading comprehension as a means to foster reading fluency. Literature and research findings seem to contradict each other regarding the alternative approaches used to teach English reading comprehension. Research findings do not elaborate on such a wide variety as literature does. From their experience in practice the participating teachers focused on guided reading and group reading. Teachers found that these two alternative strategies are successful methods. There are silences in literature concerning the use of differentiated teaching and the use of allowing learners to give verbal answers instead of written answers. Finally, new insights are provided regarding the use of rewards to contribute to building a learner's confidence. It was also found that an individual factor can influence a boy's ability to comprehend texts read, for example, boys' disliking reading.

The final part of the chapter answers the primary and secondary research questions. The primary research question is answered by exploring how English reading comprehension is taught to Grade 2 FAL learners in independent schools. In an attempt to answer the four secondary research questions, attention is paid to the strategies the teachers in the study use to teach English reading comprehension; and participating teachers' views regarding the teaching of English reading comprehension. A variety of factors, related to being at home, at school or of a personal, individual and emotional nature, can influence the teaching of English reading comprehension and these were discussed. Though there are many strategies to implement in the teaching of English reading comprehension to Grade 2 FAL learners in

independent schools, the study concludes by recommending to schools that are serious about improving their English reading comprehension instruction, should consider having a reading comprehension consultant appointed in a permanent or temporary capacity; integrating differentiated teaching; and making guided reading part of the literacy instruction of the school.

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Faculty of Education

22 January 2016

Dear (Name of Principal of an Independent school)

RE: Provision of consent for school to take part in study

I am a registered Master's Degree student at the University of Pretoria. The proposed title of my study is "*Teaching reading comprehension in English as First Additional Language to Grade 2 learners*". I want to invite your school, a renowned independent school, to take part in the study.

The study will comprise of working with Grade 2 teachers in the form of individual semi-structured interviews and observing Grade 2 teachers during the teaching of a reading comprehension lesson in English as First additional Language (FAL). I will particularly observe whether teachers' understanding of the theory to teach reading comprehension in English as FAL meets their classroom practice. Grade 2 learners will be involved as secondary participants during the observation of the teacher.

Would you consider taking part in this study? Please note that the school's name as well as that of the teachers and learners, will remain confidential at all times. The individual semi-structured interviews will be recorded on a voice recorder for data collection purposes. I will make use of an observation sheet and research journal to record findings during the observation of the respective reading comprehension lesson.

Participation in this activity is voluntary. Teachers and learners are free to withdraw from the study at any point. You are most welcome to contact me or my supervisor, Dr. J.C. van Heerden, if you wish to know more about the study. The contact details are supplied below.

Nadia Swanepoel   Dr. J.C. van Heerden
nadia.swan@hotmail.com   judy.vanheerden@up.ac.za

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

Please consider taking part in this study, in order to equip the learners of today to become literary explorers of tomorrow.

Yours sincerely

_____   _____

N. Swanepoel (Miss)   Date:

_____   _____

Dr. J.C. van Heerden   Date:
Supervisor

_____   _____

Principal of independent school   Date

Faculty of Education

2 February 2016

Dear Grade 2 teacher

RE: Provision of consent for teachers to take part in study

I am a registered Master's Degree student at the University of Pretoria. The proposed title of my study is "*Teaching reading comprehension in English as First Additional Language to Grade 2 learners*". One of the data collection strategies which I will employ, is an individual semi-structured interview. Grade 2 teachers from every school approached to participate in the study, will be interviewed individually. Furthermore, Grade 2 teachers will be observed during the teaching of a reading comprehension lesson in English as First Additional Language (FAL). I will particularly observe whether teachers' understanding of the theory to teach reading comprehension in English as FAL meets their classroom practice.

As a foundation phase teacher, your assistance is highly valued in this regard. Please note that the school's name as well as your own identity, will remain confidential at all times. The individual semi-structured interviews will be recorded on a voice recorder for data collection purposes. I will make use of an observation sheet and research journal to record findings during the observation of the respective reading comprehension lesson. Participation in this activity is voluntary. Choosing not to take part in the study, will not disadvantage your position in the working environment in any manner. You are free to withdraw from the study at any point.

You are most welcome to contact me or my supervisor, Dr. J.C. van Heerden, if you wish to know more about the study. The contact details are supplied below.

Nadia Swanepoel   Dr. J.C. van Heerden
nadia.swan@hotmail.com   judy.vanheerden@up.ac.za

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

Please consider taking part in this study, in order to equip the learners of today to become literary explorers of tomorrow.

Yours sincerely

Swanepoel
_____   2 February 2016
N. Swanepoel (Miss)

van Heerden
_____   2 February 2016
Dr. J.C. van Heerden
Supervisor

_____   _____
Participant   Date:

Faculty of Education

18 February 2016

Dear Grade 2 parents

RE: Provision of informed consent for learners to take part in study

I am a registered Master's Degree student at the University of Pretoria. The proposed title of my study is "*Teaching reading comprehension in English as First Additional Language to Grade 2 learners*". The focus of my research is to investigate strategies to improve reading comprehension in English as First Additional Language among Grade 2 learners. Your school, with specific reference, Grade 2 teachers, has been approached to participate in the study.

For this study, I will observe Grade 2 teachers while teaching an English reading comprehension lesson. I will particularly observe whether teachers' understanding of the theory to teach reading comprehension in English as FAL meets their classroom practice. Grade 2 learners will act as secondary participants during the observation of the Grade 2 teacher teaching reading comprehension. Learners would be expected to go about in the same manner as all other lessons taught. I will however observe learners' response as a way of observing the teacher's effective teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL. Please note that the school's name as well as your child's identity, will remain confidential at all times.

Participation in this activity is voluntary. Choosing not to allow your child to take part in the lesson, will not disadvantage you or your child in the school environment in any manner. Your child is free to withdraw from the study at any point. You are most welcome to contract me or my supervisor, Dr. J.C. van Heerden, if you wish to know more about the study. The contact details are supplied below.

Nadia Swanepoel   Dr. J.C. van Heerden
nadia.swan@hotmail.com   judy.vanheerden@up.ac.za

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Lefapha la Thuto

Please consider allowing your child to take part in this study in order to equip the learners of today to become literary explorers of tomorrow. Please complete the tear-off slip below and send it back to your child's teacher as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

_____   18 February 2016

N. Swanepoel (Miss)

_____   18 February 2016

Dr. J.C. van Heerden
Supervisor

_____   _____

Grade 2 parent   Date:

- -

Name of learner: _____

Grade 2: _____

Please tick one of the options below:

☐ My child is ALLOWED to take part in the study.

☐ My child is NOT ALLOWED to take part in the study.

_____   _____

Signature: Grade 2 parents   Date:

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TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH AS FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE TO GRADE 2 LEARNERS

Interview protocol*

Date	
Time of interview	
Interviewer	
Interviewee	

Ice-breaker questions

- Every teacher has a special gift which is used to make their class the best class ever. What would you consider your special gift to be?
- If you could choose between the following special gifts to enhance your teaching, would you rather be invisible or be able to read minds?
- If you could choose one learner in your class to exchange roles with, who would it be?
- Think of a learner in your current class. If you were to meet him/her in ten years' time, what is the one sentence you would like to hear from him/her?

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Interview schedule for semi-structured individual interviews:

1. **How do you (as teachers):**

    a. Define reading comprehension?

    b. Understand English as FAL?

    c. Believe reading comprehension can be enhanced?

2. **Which strategies and techniques do you as a teacher use when teaching reading comprehension to EFAL Grade 2 learners?**

3. **How do teachers view the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL?**

    a. What do you understand reading comprehension in English as FAL to be?

    b. Are learners born with the ability to comprehend English reading, or should this skills be taught to them?

4. **What factors are likely to influence the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL?**

    a. Factors at school?

    b. Factors at home?

    c. Socio-economic factors?

    d. Personal factors?

    e. Emotional factors?

5. **How do teachers influence the teaching of English Reading Comprehension to Grade 2 EFAL learners?**

*Adapted from Creswell (2015:193)

Faculty of Education

18 Februray 2016

Dear Grade 2 teacher

The contents of the interview conducted is deemed as confidential. In the event that the topics and questions are discussed with fellow participants, the outcome of the study can be negatively affected.

I hereby urge you as a participant in the data collection process not to discuss the contents of our discussion until all the interviews have been conducted in your school.

I, _____ understand that the content of the interview conducted is confidential in nature. I acknowledge this and agree not to discuss the interview questions or the content of the discussion with any of the participants in my work environment.

_____   _____

N. Swanepoel (Miss)   Date:

_____   _____

Participant   Date:

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Data Collection Phase 2 - Classroom Observation	Coding
School: **A** B C D **Class:** 1 2 3 **4** 5 **Date:** 2 March 2016 **Type of lesson:** **Group reading lesson** This lesson was different from what I expected, however I asked the teacher that I would like to sit in during a lesson where she makes use of one strategy to teach English reading comprehension in EFAL. This was a learner-orientated lesson where the class was divided into their respective reading groups, ranging from strongest to weakest groups. Each learner in the group had their own reader. Each group had a different reader. The four groups were scattered in and around the classroom, with the weakest group in the classroom on the carpet with the teacher. The instructions to each group were clear and simple: Read the book as a group (aloud), turn the pages together and ensure that each group member participates. The teacher assigned a group leader in each group who had to make sure that the group members cooperate. Each group was issued with an A3 laminated sheet with twenty thinking questions which had to be worked through after reading the book. The group leader asked the first question, and the person who got the answer correct, was allowed to ask the following question. The strongest group was situated far from the class where they read through the book very quickly. They spent most time answering the questions. The weakest group took most of the time to get through the book. The teacher spent the most time with them. Interestingly enough, the strongest group made the most noise since the manner in which they all try to answer the questions, becomes more of an argument than an attempt to engage their knowledge. These learners try to reason the answers out with each other, which eventually ends in tears. The weakest group only managed to	

1

answer a few questions with the help of the teacher. After spending some time observing the dynamics in the weakest group, it become clear that there is a lack of reading fluency due to the inability to recognise the words in the book. Learners spend a lot of time trying to decode the words that their understanding of the text gets less and less.

The teacher does not stagnate with a single group while the other learners have to cope by themselves during the activity. The teacher moves around the groups checking to see if each group is managing to answer the questions. The questions learners have to ask are known to them. These questions are pasted in their reading record which an adult can use to ask them the same questions about any book they have read.

After moving from group to group, first listening the groups' reading abilities and then their ability to answer the questions afterwards, I believe reading comprehension had taken place judging by the learners' responses. The learners are familiar with this technique of group reading as the teachers in the foundation phase at this school, often makes use of this type of reading lesson. Learners are very honest and will correct a group member if the answer given to a question is not correct.

Looking back, I felt disappointed because I did not see the teacher teaching reading comprehension to the learners. I could not use my checklist as much as I wanted to as a way to evaluate the manner in which the teacher assists to teach reading comprehension in EFAL. However, this lesson proves that this teacher is confident in using this peer assessment, learner orientated manner of teaching reading comprehension. Learners are divided into groups which help them to achieve at the level which they are meant to achieve. The teacher actively engages with the groups while walking around and seeing participates.

This type of learner-orientated lesson did not allow the following aspects to be highlighted:

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- Teacher activating learners' prior knowledge
- Pointing out new words
- Vocabulary instruction
- Predictions to be made at the beginning of the book
- Establish the context of the book at the beginning of the lesson
- Teacher and learners read the book as a way to teach reading comprehension
- Questions were not asked before reading started
- Questions were not asked during the process of reading
- Predictions were not evaluated at the end of the story.
- No inferences were made
- There was no concrete assessment of the reading comprehension that took place.

Positive aspects about the lesson:
- Learners read to each other in their reading ability groups
- English was used at the LoLT
- Questioning (higher and lower order thinking questions) were used as part of the lesson
- Questions were asked after reading the book
- Teacher interacts (informally) with the learners during the activity
- Learners have a chance to speak during the lesson (to each other and to the teacher when she is around)
- Learners were given an activity to complete after reading
- Learners were given a chance to elaborate about the book
- Learners are given an opportunity to elaborate about the book.

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ADDENDUM G: EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

Interview transcription

Date	3 March 2016
Time of interview	09:00
Interviewer	Nadia Swanepoel
Interviewee code	PB2

Interview question and response	Coding
1. How can the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL among Grade 2 learners be enhanced? a. What is your definition of reading comprehension? "Reading comprehension is very important because everything we do in class, revolves around comprehension. They have to understand what they read, especially even in maths, if they can't understand the word problems, they won't be able to do it. So reading comprehension is very important, it plays a big role." b. What is you understanding of English as FAL? "Ok, English…for children in our school, English is not their first language, they come from homes and they speak Zulu, Sotho and so on, but I think it is important to…to teach them how to speak, teach them to understand it, to pronounce it, to explain themselves better, and also sometimes it is difficult, even because I am Afrikaans, I say things like because I'm thinking in Afrikaans, so also sometimes it is a challenge to help these children to explain and express themselves in a different language, especially we are teaching them first language, but we understand it is not their first language. But at school sometimes it is a challenge, because they come from home with a different language than we have. We treat them as if it is their traditional language."	

1

Researcher: In your class, percentage wise, how many English as First Additional Language learners do you have?	
"I think about…in a class of twenty-two, I would say I have about 6 learners, so it is a fair amount. I have a lot of Zulu and Sotho speaking children and also Afrikaans first language at home."	
c. *How do you believe reading comprehension can be enhanced?*	
"I think, from my experience from previous schools, because I started at a special needs school, and it is important to understand that every child is reading at a different level. Every child. Even in Grade 2, they are all eight years old, but they read at a different level. And I think we have to accommodate most of them by looking at where they are at, helping them with that, and then progress. I think also it is important to have books available in class for them to read, and interesting books as well. I know from my previous schools, we didn't have the most…a lot of books for them to give out, but here we are really privileged to have a lot of books. They take home a new book every day. Ok, so every term, every day they take a new book home and it is divided into different levels. I think it makes it easier to motivate them to read as well, also we have Friday readers, it is like a library book, it is not on a specific level, but it is a nice, interesting book with beautiful pictures in and whatever…and then we also have class readers, where we read together. We have the same book and we focus on pronouncing, reading with expression and…ja…I think the more you read, your comprehension…practice makes perfect."	
2. *Which strategies do teachers use when teaching reading comprehension to EFAL Grade 2 learners?*	
"We use it in different activities we do, for example when we do maths, and we have mental maths, they have to write, I will read the question and I will let them read the question as well, then	

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we will circle the most important words so that it makes it easier for them to understand what to do…and uhm ja…When we do sentences, when we do comprehension test, I do the same. I read it to them, I give them a chance to read it, we play a little game, let's see if the boys can do better than the girls. So I usually let them read it also, because there is no use for me just to read everything, and I can see that they don't understand what they are doing. Especially when we do comprehension test, I let them read it, like three times, sometimes I will give them a little assignment; they have to colour in all the 'sh'-words red, all the…so the sounds, so that I can make sure they are actually reading it. Some children just scan it and they think that it is good enough. And then I will let them read the questions, I'll read the questions with them, and then I'll tell them go read the comprehension, the story again. Then we do it orally, answer the questions and then are they only allowed to write it in their books. So we do it a few times, that I actually know that they understand what they are doing, so they are not going to write a lot of nonsense in their books. When we do the reading, most of the times we use the busy bees, uhm, I don't know what the…I'll show you…we use that type of books in class, I hand out the book to everybody who has the same book, we usually sit on the carpet, it is more relaxed. Uhm, I can see that my children struggle to read quietly, by themselves, so sometimes when I give them a task to read on their own, I hear whispers, so they read out loud. I don't want that, because we do at different levels, different exercises. Sometimes we will sit on the carpet and we will read it all together. Usually when I give them a new book, I will read sentence by sentence, so I read the sentence and they repeat after me. They have to look into their books, its not only…some children tend to want to listen, and then they don't actually see the word itself in the reader. Ok, so we take sentence by sentence, later in the year, I will take a whole

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paragraph on that page, I'll read everything and then they have to do it. At the end of the year, they have to read the whole book."	
Researcher: You mentioned sometimes about your different reading levels: Can you elaborate about what the different reading levels entail?	
"In class, when they read to us for a mark in the report and so on, you can get an idea where they are at. Unfortunately there is a specific standard they have to read, when they get to Grade 2, so we start with the easiest books, and if I see this child finds it easy, he reads it with no problem, I will give him a level higher. Ok, so I have to be constantly aware of where they are at. When I am handing out the books, when we swop, I know this boy will not be able to read this book, so I give him an easier one, so we just continue…ja…individually based assessment."	

3. How do teachers view the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL?	
a. What do you understand reading comprehension in English as FAL to be?	
"Uhm, like I said, I think the language part is very important and they have to understand the words, they have to understand what they are reading, they have to explain what they have read, they have to tell a story, they have to reflect on what they have read. I think that is the biggest thing of comprehension, they have to express themselves and understand what is going on."	
b. Are learners born with the ability to comprehend English reading, or should this skills be taught to them? Why do you say so?	
"I think there is a part that they are born with the ability, but I think I think it needs to be developed. I think we as teachers need to help them and show them. It is just like a life skill - I think if, once they have mastered	

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it, and see that they get it, the lights will go on and then you'll see ahaa, they can actually do it and understand it better. So, I think it is very similar to that."	
c. *What are some of the techniques used to foster English reading comprehension in your class?* "Ok, we…uhm…usually do comprehension tests, reading in class and like I said, we use it in other subjects as well, maths, life skills and whatever. We also do it orally, we expect them to do speeches, they have to be…they have…to have a prepared speech, poster or whatever and they have to tell the class. Uhm, so I think that is also a way of expressing themselves in their language and I think also…uhm…for some children it is difficult - they read from the paper…ok, and I think that is also where comprehension comes in. They want to read, because they don't know actually what is going on, they don't understand, that is why they are reading is from the paper. We teach them and don't want them to, but at this stage, it is still difficult for them."	
4. *What factors are likely to influence the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL?* *a.* *Factors at school?* "Factors at school - it can be the class setup, where the child is sitting, maybe the friend sitting next to him, he is intimidating him, he feels shy in the class setup. I think it is important to have resources available to them. We usually…uhm…ja…also answered in your previous question, we usually also ask them to read the labels on our theme boards. So if you look for example this week, we are doing birthdays, so that is also allowed, we ask them to read the flashcards, so they will go 'happy birthday, magician, clown, …' all those words, and then later on, they can use that in sentences and that is also going to help them use the language better. So we do that, so I think we need to have resources available, but also what can influence it, is if they don't have those resources…if the teacher is not teaching it properly. If they don't get a chance to express themselves. They don't get a chance to read on their	

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own specific level, then you are going to miss something. Because you are going to push them to do something that he can't and he is going to lose interest, especially in reading. If you are going to make it too difficult for them, it is not going to work."

  b. *Factors at home?*

"Factors at home can be emotional things, if they have problems maybe at home, they are also going to struggle at school…because maybe mom and dad had a fight this morning and they are feeling emotional about it and they have to come to school, it is definitely going to affect them in the way that they read."

  c. *Socio-economic factors?*

"I think it will also affect them if they don't have books available, if they come from a poor family, if they don't necessarily have everything that other children have. Also, the schools you are going to, not all schools have the same type of readers and books available and quality teachers and all that, so I think that can also influence it."

  d. *Personal factors?*

"Yes, I think it can be a personal thing as well. Not everybody likes to read, not everybody likes to read out loud. I used to have a little girl in my class like three years ago, she was very shy, she didn't want to read in front of the children, and she was so anxious doing that, I started to let her read next to my table, I never asked her to read in front of the children because she was so anxious, but I think it is definitely a personality thing as well. She knew she could not read that good and that affected it as well. But it was also a personality thing, because she was so shy".

  e. *Emotional factors?*

"Emotional factors, yes it can also affect reading comprehension, like if you are not feeling good that day, if there is something else troubling you, then your attention will not be all there. You will not feel good and you will not be able to do what you need to do."

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5. How can teachers' strategies for teaching reading comprehension in English as FAL be enhanced according to policy and practice?	
"Ok, I think I would definitely like to go on more courses that teaches us how to develop reading, I would like to do that, because sometimes we do what we think is right; we do what we have always been doing. We can see it is working, but I think some days we can do more. I think they need to equip the teachers better to help the learners, because this is a very important thing. If they can't read, they can't do anything else. So I think they need to send us on more courses, they have to have resources available, games we can play, things we can do with children so that we can help these children."	
Researcher: Would you say the curriculum allows enough time for the teaching of literacy and reading comprehension as it is?	
"I think…because I have CAPS experience as well, I think in CAPS there is not a lot of time. It is too busy. Too many things, too many concepts they have to do at the same time, so it is very difficult. Here in the more private school environment it is easier because our curriculum is more relaxed. We do CAPS, we do more than CAPS, but we focus on one thing at a time. I think that is important with reading comprehension as well so that they can get the feel of it and improve."	

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After conducting the initial interviews with school A, and hearing how much emphasis teachers place on guided reading, I spoke to my supervisor and decided to include the guided reading teachers as well. Although school A makes use of two guided reading teachers in Grade 2, only one guided reading teacher adhered to my selection criteria of having taught for more than two years. I decided to apply for an amendment to my initial ethical application, in order to include the specialist teacher(s). I believe this inclusion will add a lot of worth and credibility to my study/data.

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Today I saw a brilliant way to ensure vocab development as part of PC2's classroom observation. The way she made use of a ruler and the way in which she asked learners to identify words that they are not familiar with. I thought to myself brilliant! This is the best way to ensure that all learners know what the passage is about! I love the hands-on approach of vocabulary development!

The classroom observation of PC1 was the first observation that truly correlated with what I experienced during her interview. Participant PC1 was the first participant whose manner of teaching English reading comprehension correlated with what she told me during the interview. The aspects that she chose to discuss during the interview were evident in her classroom practice. As I watched PC1 from a distance during her classroom observation, I could see how she leads the learners to understanding by making use of continuous questioning right from the beginning of the book [before reading] right through to the end of the book. It was magic - every learner knew what the story was about, and they could each answer the questions posed to them.

Observing a guided reading teacher's lesson was wonderful. Learners hung onto the guided reading teacher's lips. They are focused and pay more attention to the content of her lesson compared to their class teacher's lesson. I did not think learners will be able to grasp the meaning of 'fiction' and 'non-fiction', but they did - and they were able to give examples. One boy got completely carried away and started talking about his 'non-fiction alien book'. Furthermore, one girl in a group was able to make the conclusion that the book that the teacher is reading, is a fictional book.

Today I saw how a lesson sort of fell flat although the teacher doing her best under circumstances. It is clear that PB I did not have the energy to teach reading comprehension and complete the 'cute comic comprehension' of fishy fun. It must be the colder weather moving in. The lesson was forced and supervicial - the learners clearly did not understand the humour behind the lesson. It is such a pity - there was an electric energy in the class, the learners were ready to learn.

There appears to be a difference between theory and practice when it comes to teaching English reading comprehension. It is clear that each participant included in my study know enough about reading comprehension in theory, but I find there is a difference in their understanding of teaching reading comprehension and the manner in which it is taught. Just looking at the difference between teachers' interviews and the classroom observations I can see they lack practical application know-how.

Data analysis codes Interviews.

Freq.	Abb.	Description	
IIII III	RwU	Reading with understanding	1
III	Ass	Assumptions	6
III III	TRC	Teaching reading comprehension	1
I II IIII	VD	Vocab development (explain words/terms)	2
I		Introduce text	2
IIII	RwR	Reading for/with reason	
II	Q	Questions	2
I		Word recognition/pronunciation	2
I		Kinds of text	3
II	PvP	Policy vs. Practice	6
II		Lack in consistency	7
I		Interpret text with context	2
		Strongest L's : EFAL	
		Exposure	2/3

Freq:	Abb:	Description:	
I III	PmP	Practice makes perfect	2
		Consistency	7
I		Questions – q words	2
I		Questions – ask q.	2
II IIII	PI	Parental Involvement	4.2 8
II		Reading fluency	2
II	HOT	Higher order thinking (thinking deeper)	2
I		Sequencing	2
		Reasoning	2
		Interpretation	2
II II	GR	Guided reading	2
II	GW	Group work	2
IIII II	NvN	Nature vs Nurture	6
		Learning to read ⇔ Reading to l...	2
I		Encouragement T	5

Freq	Abb	Description	
I I	L₄B	Love for books	5
I I	M	Motivation (Personal motivation) T	5
I		Rewards	5
		Confidence	5
I I \ I \ I I	DT	Differentiated teaching (differentiation) /Individual develp.	2
I \ I	BK	Backgrand knowledge	2
		Retell story	2
I I	Rep	Repetition	2
		Synthesise details	2
I I \ I I	Res	Resources	3
		Games	5
I \ I	FUN	Make reading FUN	5
		Prediction	2
I	IEA	Integration into everyday activities	5

Freq	Abb	Description	
		Access → resources	3
		Access → people	3
		Boys' dislike reading	7
		Readiness for reading	7
I	T Tr	Teachers' training	4
		Teachers are unsure	4
I I I I I I	T:QvQ	Time: quality vs quantity	6
		Colour-coding	2
		Teachers' patience + guidance	4
		Emotional / Personal factors	7
₹		Theory vs Practice	6
		Teachers: too much to focus on	4
		Scurred focus / Incorrect focus	2
I		Relate reading to everyday activities	5
I I I I	HMRC	Holistic meaning of comprehension	I

Freq	Abb	Description	
		Access → resources	3
		Access → people	3
		Boys' dislike reading	7
		Readiness for reading	7
I	TTr	Teachers' training	4
		Teachers are unsure	4
I I I I I I	T:QvQ	Time: quality vs quantity	6
		Colour-coding	2
		Teachers' patience + guidance	4
		Emotional / Personal factors	7
7		Theory vs Practice	6
		Teachers: too much to focus on	4
		Scurred focus / Incorrect focus	2
I		Relate reading to everyday activities	5
I I I I	HMRC	Holistic meaning of comprehension	I

② ①

Codes: Observations
General:
① Discrepancy btwn interview and observations:

② Policy vs Practice

③ Teacher's role in teaching E R C.

Vocab development

Backgrand related - practical activity

Activate backgrand Knowledge

FUN, enjoyable

Lack of differentiation

Lack of explanation of instructions

Lack of support

Context - not established

No peer reading

Independent learning

Assistance + guidance

Full sentences

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- Guided reading
- Ability groups
- Group vs Individual reading
- Vocab development
- Higher order thinking
- Grammar instruction
- Thinking beyond text
- Apply reading to real-life situations
- Q's -
- Game element
- Word recognition
- Integrate reading into other Lang areas
- Role of teacher: provide
- Provide support / encouragement
- Resources
- Phonics / sounds

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Group reading

Verbal answers

Make inferences

Learner-orientated

Reading groups

Motivation

Reasoning

Reading fluency

Concentration vs comprehension

Differentiated learning

Theory vs practice

Establish context

Source of text

Reading: T reads, L follow

Full sentences

Outcome of lesson

Presenting the lesson

Humour

Answer verbally

Atmosphere

Class discussion

Engage learners

Define R C meaning

Predictions

Role of teacher →

Resources

Stakeholders : Teacher + Assistant

Instructions

Inferences

Higher Order Thinking.

Rhyming words.

③ Theme 1: Defining, teaching reading comprehension:

- Reading with understanding
- Holistic meaning of comprehension
- Background knowledge   ⎤ 2
- Vocab development   ⎦
- Differentiated learning / teaching   ⎤ 2
- Nature vs nurture.   ⎦ 6

Theme 2: Strategies for teaching reading comprehension

- Backgrand Knowledge   - Diff teaching
- Vocab development
- Practice makes perfect
- Questions
- Higher order thinking
- Guided reading
- Group work
- Integration - Interpretation
- Verbal answers vs written answers
- Change your attitude
- Positive reinforcement
- Introduce text
- Word recognition/pronunciation
- Exposure
- Fluency
- Sequencing
- Reasoning
- Interpretation
- Learning to read vs reading to learn
- Retell story
- Repetition
- Synthesise details
- Prediction
- Colour - coding
- Incorrect focus
- Reading levels

Theme 3:   Resources + stakeholders

- Parental involvement
- Resources
- Kinds of text
- ~~Exposure~~   2
- Kinds of text
- ~~Interpret text with context~~ (vocab dev)
4 - Love for books
4 - Rewards
4 - Games
  4 - Integrate into everyday activities. ⎞
- Access to resources |
- Access to people |
4 - Relate reading to everyday activities ⎠
4 - Integrate reading with maths

Theme 4: Stakeholders
Teachers as stakeholders: Teachers' truths
- Teachers' training   about teaching R.C.
- Teachers are unsure
- Teachers' patience + guidance
- Teachers: too much to focus on
- Teachers set the example
- Teachers need to know

4.1 - Teachers as stakeholders

4.2 - Parents as stakeholders

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Theme 5/4:   Make reading FUN

- Make reading fun
- Rewards
- Encouragement
- Motivation
- Integrate — every day events
              — maths
- Games
- Love for books
- Wants vs needs
- Confidence

Theme 6:   ~~Overcoming assumptions~~
Dual-views on   Just for the record...
teaching reading comprehension

- Assumptions.
- Policy vs Practice
- Nature vs Nurture
- Time : Quality vs Quantity
- Theory vs Practice
- Concentration vs comprehension
- Wants vs needs   5
- Verbal answers vs written answers 2

Theme 67   Good is the bad
                            Final word.

                    Factors which influence the
                    teaching + learning ERC.
- Consistency
- Lack in consistency
- Boys' dislike in reading
- Readiness for learning
- Emotional /Personal
- Factors at school
    - Giving introverted L's a voice
    - Reading ability
    -

Interview transcription

Date	3 March 2016
Time of interview	09:00
Interviewer	Nadia Swanepoel
Interviewee code	THHH 2

Interview question and response	Coding
1. *How can the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL among Grade 2 learners be enhanced?* a. *What is your definition of reading comprehension?* Reading comprehension is very important because everything we do in class, revolved around comprehension. They have to understand what they read, especially even in maths, if they can't understand the word problems, they won't be able to do it. So reading comprehension is very important, it plays a big role. b. *What is you understanding of English as FAL?* Ok, English… for children in our school, English is not their first language, they come from homes and they speak Zulu, Sotho and so on, but I think it is important to…to teach them how to speak, teach them to understand it, to pronounce it, to explain themselves better, and also sometimes it is difficult, even because I am Afrikaans, I say things like because I'm thinking in Afrikaans, so also sometimes it is a challenge to help these children to explain and express themselves in a different language, especially we are teaching them first language, but we understand it is not their first language. But at school sometimes it is a challenge, because they come from home with a different language than we have. We treat them as if it is their traditional language.	*Reading with understanding* *Integrated into Maths*

Researcher: In your class, percentage wise, how many English as First Additional Language learners do you have?

I think about… in a class of twenty-two, I would say I have about 6 learners, so it is a fair amount. I have a lot of Zulu and Sotho speaking children and also Afrikaans first language at home.

c. *How do you believe reading comprehension can be enhanced?*

I think, from my experience from previous schools, because I started at a special needs school, and it is important to understand that every child is reading at a different level. Every child. Even in Grade 2, they are all eight years old, but they read at a different level. And I think we have to accommodate most of them by looking at where they are at, helping them with that, and then progress. I think also it is important to have books available in class for them to read, and interesting books as well. I know from my previous schools, we didn't have the most…a lot of books for them to give out, but here we are really privileged to have a lot of books. They take home a new book every day. Ok, so every term, every day they take a new book home and it is divided into different levels. I think it makes it easier to motivate them to read as well, also we have Friday readers, it is like a library book, it is not on a specific level, but it is a nice, interesting book with beautiful pictures in and whatever…and then we also have class readers, where we read together. We have the same book and we focus on pronouncing, reading with expression and…ja…I think the more you read, your comprehension….practice makes perfect.

2. *Which strategies do teachers use when teaching reading comprehension to EFAL Grade 2 learners?*

We use it in different activities we do, for example when we do maths, and we have mental maths, they have to write, I will read the question and I will let them read the question as well, then

Handwritten annotations:

- Every child has a diff reading level → Differentiation
- → Establish each learners level of development and work from there
- resources (interesting)
- → Interesting books sent as motivation to read
- Practice makes perfect
- Integrate reading with maths
- → Teacher reads
- → Learners read

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we will circle the most important words so that it makes it easier for them to understand what to do....and uhm ja...When we do sentences, when we do comprehension test, I do the same. I read it to them, I give them a chance to read it, we play a little game, let's see if the boys can do better than the girls. So I usually let them read it also, because there is no use for me just to read everything, and I can see that they don't understand what they are doing. Especially when we do comprehension test, I let them read it, like three times, sometimes I will give them a little assignment; they have to colour in all the 'sh'-words red, all the...so the sounds, so that I can make sure they are actually reading it. Some children just scan it and they think that it is good enough. And then I will let them read the questions, I'll read the questions with them, and then I'll tell them go read the comprehension, the story again. Then we do it orally, answer the questions and then are they only allowed to write it in their books. So we do it a few times, that I actually know that they understand what they are doing, so they are not going to write a lot of nonsense in their books. When we do the reading, most of the times we use the busy bees, uhm, I don't know what the...I'll show you...we use that type of books in class, I hand out the book to everybody who has the same book, we usually sit on the carpet, it is more relaxed. Uhm, I can see that my children struggle to read quietly, by themselves, so sometimes when I give them a task to read on their own, I hear whispers, so they read out loud. I don't want that, because we do at different levels, different exercises. Sometimes we will sit on the carpet and we will read it all together. Usually when I give them a new book, I will read sentence by sentence, so I read the sentence and they repeat after me. They have to look into their books, its not only...some children tend to want to listen, and then they don't actually see the word itself in the reader. Ok, so we take sentence by sentence, later in the year, I will take a whole

[Handwritten annotations:]
Circle key words strategies
① Teacher reads
② Learner read
③ Game boys vs girls
Let class read it 3 times
- colour code certain words
Answer compreh orally, only afterwards allowed to write it
Group reading Sentence by sentence

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paragraph on that page, I'll read everything and then they have to do it. At the end of the year, they have to read the whole book.

Researcher: You mentioned sometimes about your different reading levels: Can you elaborate about what the different reading levels entail?

In class, when they read to us for a mark in the report and so on, you can get an idea where they are at. Unfortunately there is a specific standard they have to read, when they get to Grade 2, so we start with the easiest books, and if I see this child finds it easy, he reads it with no problem, I will give him a level higher. Ok, so I have to be constantly aware of where they are at. When I am handing out the books, when we swop, I know this boy will not be able to read this book, so I give him an easier one, so we just continue....ja....individually based assessment. (09:12)

3. *How do teachers view the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL?*

   a. *What do you understand reading comprehension in English as FAL to be?*

   Uhm, like I said, I think the language part is very important and they have to understand the words, they have to understand what they are reading, they have to explain what they have read, they have to tell a story, they have to reflect on what they have read. I think that is the biggest thing of comprehension, they have to express themselves and understand what is going on.

   b. *Are learners born with the ability to comprehend English reading, or should this skills be taught to them? Why do you say so?*

   I think there is a part that they are born with the ability, but I think I think it needs to be developed. I think we as teachers need to help them and show them. It is just like a life skill - I think if, once they have mastered

[Handwritten annotations:]
Different levels based on reading ≠ ability groups

Language- part is NB in comprehen.
→ Need to understand the words
→ explain what they have read
→ tell a story
→ reflect on what they

Main idea of comprehension read.
→ express themselves
→ understand what is going on

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it, and see that they get it, the lights will go on and then you'll see ahaa, they can actually do it and understand it better. So, I think it is very similar to that. c. *What are some of the techniques used to foster English reading comprehension in your class?* Ok, we…uhm…usually do comprehension tests, reading in class and like I said, we use it in other subjects as well, maths, life skills and whatever. We also so it orally, we expect them to do speeches, they have to be…they have…to have a prepared speech, poster or whatever and they have to tell the class. Uhm, so I think that is also a way of expressing themselves in their language and I think also…uhm…for some children it is difficult - they read from the paper…ok, and I think that is also where comprehension comes in. They want to read, because they don't know actually what is going on, they don't understand, that is why they are reading is from the paper. We teach them and don't want them to, but at this stage, it is still difficult for them.	Nature vs nurture → born with the ability, but it needs to be developed. → Comprehending is a life skill, once mastered, they will gain confidence + understand it better
4. *What factors are likely to influence the teaching of reading comprehension in English as FAL?* a. *Factors at school?* Factors at school - it can be the class setup, where the child is sitting, maybe the friend sitting next to him, he is intimidating him, he feels shy in the class setup. I think it is important to have resources available to them. We usually…uhm…ja…also answered in your previous question, we usually also ask them to read the labels on our theme boards. So if you look for example this week, we are doing birthdays, so that is also allowed, we ask them to read the flashcards, so they will go 'happy birthday, magician, clown, …' all those words, and then later on, they can use that in sentences and that is also going to help them use the language better. So we do that, so I think we need to have resources available, but also what can influence it, is if they don't have those resources…if the teacher is not teaching it properly. If they don't get a chance to express themselves. They don't get a chance to read on their	Intimidation resources

NB

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own specific level, then you are going to miss something. Because you are going to push them to do something that he can't and he is going to lose interest, especially in reading. If you are going to make it too difficult for them, it is not going to work.	Importance of differentiation
b. *Factors at home?* Factors at home can be emotional things, if they have problems maybe at home, they are also going to struggle at school…because maybe mom and dad had a fight this morning and they are feeling emotional about it and they have to come to school, it is definitely going to affect them in the way that they read.	personal problems at home
c. *Socio-economic factors?* I think it will also affect them if they don't have books available, if they come from a poor family, if they don't necessarily have everything that other children have. Also, the schools you are going to, not all schools have the same type of readers and books available and quality teachers and all that, so I think that can also influence it.	resources quality teachers.
d. *Personal factors?* Yes, I think it can be a personal thing as well. Not everybody likes to read, not everybody likes to read out loud. I used to have a little girl in my class like three years ago, she was very shy, she didn't want to read in front of the children, and she was so anxious doing that, I started to let her read next to my table, I never asked her to read in front of the children because she was so anxious, but I think it is definitely a personality thing as well. She knew she could not read that good and that affected it as well. But it was also a personality thing, because she was so shy.	personal preference.
e. *Emotional factors?* Emotional factors, yes it can also affect reading comprehension, like if you are not feeling good that day, if there is something else troubling you, then your attention will not be all there. You will not feel good and you will not be able to do what you need to do.	Teacher needs to know learned strengths/ weaknesses.

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5. How can teachers' strategies for teaching reading comprehension in English as FAL be enhanced according to policy and practice?

Ok, I think I would definitely like to go on more courses that teaches us how to develop reading, I would like to do that, because sometimes we do what we think is right; we do what we have always been doing. We can see it is working, but I think some days we can do more. I think they need to equip the teachers better to help the learners, because this is a very important thing. If they can't read, they can't do anything else. So I think they need to send us on more courses, they have to have resources available, games we can play, things we can do with children so that we can help these children.

Researcher: Would you say the curriculum allows enough time for the teaching of literacy and reading comprehension as it is?

I think....because I have CAPS experience as well, I think in CAPS there is not a lot of time. It is too busy. Too many things, too many concepts they have to do at the same time, so it is very difficult. Here in the more private school environment it is easier because our curriculum is more relaxed. We do CAPS, we do more than CAPS, but we focus on one thing at a time. I think that is important with reading comprehension as well so that they can get the feel of it and improve.

Teacher's training

Data Collection Phase 2 - Classroom Observation

				Coding
School:	A	B	C	D	
Class:	1	2	3	4	5	
Date:	15 March 2016	
Type of lesson:	Written comprehension test	

The atmosphere in which I was received the morning of the observation was not as comforting as the day I went to conduct the interviews. The teachers are overloaded with work and responsibilities and then they were 'surprised' by my visit. I could see that all three Grade 2 teachers were flustered and not entirely sure how to cope with the situation, despite having a comprehension available for them to teach while I observe.

The observation of this lesson was very quick, as it was in the last half an hour before first break. Due to the cooler weather learners were becoming hungry and hence restless, however the teacher still did a very good job of teaching the content of the comprehension to the class.

After the teacher handed the comprehension passage to the learners, she asked them to look at the layout of the passage and comment on the layout and the context of the passage. The class came to the conclusion that this passage has speech bubbles and reminds you more of a comic strip than a reading passage.
— establish the context
— class effort /activity
— establish source

The teacher started reading the passage and the learners had to follow. After reading the passage, the teaching went through the questions with the learners and reminded them that they should start the answer to the question in a full sentence without using the word 'because' as the first word.
— teacher reads
— learners follow with 'torch'
— answer in full sentences

Throughout the lesson, the teacher walked around the class, making sure the learners were following. Learners were then given a chance to read the passage by playing game: The first round, the girls were the big fish and the boys the little fish, and the second round, the boys and girls swopped places, ensuring that reading the passage is done in a fun and interactive manner.
— teacher is involved/able
— read by means of a game
— reading is fun

After the passage was read by the learner, the teacher read the questions and asked learners to answer the questions verbally. The teacher made sure that the learners do not start their full sentence answers with because.
— teacher reads q's
— answer verbally

Unfortunately, I think this lesson was too rushed. The class as a body did not understand the fine humour behind "Finland", "gold fish" or "a school of fish". Learners were able to answer the questions, but half-heartedly.
— outcome: too rushed
— humour
— Presentation

— Role of the teacher