

# **PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN HOME READING ACTIVITIES**

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## ABSTRACT

The interaction between parent, child and book during story-book reading is considered as one of the fundamental instruments required for children to acquire the important elements needed to learn how to read. Parents of grade one children are unsure of their new role in the reading development of their children because their children enter a new phase in their literacy development and reading becomes the centre of their learning activities. The main aim of this research is to compare and describe how parents of grade one children without learning disabilities and parents of children with learning disabilities, perceive their children's participation in home reading activities. Thirty biological parents or legal guardians of grade one children without learning disabilities and ten of grade one children with learning disabilities were used to complete a questionnaire. The results indicated that although children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities have similar exposure to home literacy activities, children without learning disabilities become more fluent and efficient readers than their peers with learning disabilities. Children without learning disabilities prefer to be actively involved in the story-book reading act with their parents, whereas children with learning disabilities tend to be more passive and they prefer to engage less in reading activities due to their reading difficulties. The study highlights the importance of story-book reading for grade one children in both groups, as well as independent reading of story-books by these children. Suggestions for further research are provided.

## KEYWORDS

- Children with learning disabilities
- Home reading activities
- Home reading environment
- Independent reading
- Parent-child interaction
- Participation

## OPSOMMING

Die wisselwerking tussen ouer, kind en boek tydens storieboek-voorlesing word as een van die basiese middele beskou waartydens kinders die belangrike elemente benodig vir lees kan ontwikkel. Graad een-ouers is onseker van hul nuwe rol in die leesontwikkeling van hul kinders, omdat hul kinders 'n nuwe fase in hul geletterheidsontwikkeling betree waartydens lees die kern van hul leer-aktiwiteite word. Die hoofdoel van hierdie studie was om te vergelyk en te beskryf hoe ouers van graad een kinders sonder leerprobleme en kinders met leerprobleme hul kinders se deelname in tuisgebaseerde lees-aktiwiteite waarneem en ervaar. Dertig biologiese ouers of wettige voogde van graad een kinders sonder leerprobleme en tien van graad een kinders met leerprobleme het elk 'n vraelys voltooi. Die uitkoms van die studie toon dat, alhoewel kinders sonder leerprobleme en kinders met leerprobleme dieselfde blootstelling aan tuisgebaseerde lees-ervaringe het, kinders sonder leerprobleme in meer vlot en doeltreffende lesers as hul maats met leerprobleme ontwikkel. Kinders sonder leerprobleme verkies om aktief betrokke te raak tydens storieboek-voorlesing met hul ouers, terwyl kinders met leerprobleme verkies om meer passief te wees en in minder lees-aktiwiteite betrokke te raak as gevolg van hul lees-probleme. Die studie beklemtoon die belangrikheid van storieboek-voorlesing vir graad een-kinders in beide groepe, sowel as die onafhanklike lees van storieboeke deur hierdie kinders. Aanbevelings vir verdere navorsing is ingesluit.



## SLEUTELWOORDE

- Kinders met leerprobleme
- Storieboek-voorlesing tuis
- Storieboek-voorlesing in die tuis-omgewing
- Onafhanklike lees
- Ouer-kind interaksie
- Deelname

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## List of Abbreviations

DAM	Goodenough-Draw a Man Test (Goodenough, 1926)
LD	Learning disabilities
SCLD	Screening Checklist for Learning Disabilities

# Chapter 1 Introduction to the study

## 1.1 Orientation and Problem Statement

Parents are the most important role players in their children's lives. They are responsible for teaching their children certain skills while they are growing up. Parents are therefore regarded as their children's first (and lifelong) "teachers", who facilitate their children's cognitive and language skill development on their way to adulthood and should be open to their beginner reader's changing attitude towards reading (Baker, 2003). These parental responsibilities happen concurrently and unofficially while parents are playing with their children or singing, talking and reading stories to them. Research indicates that parents are aware of their responsibility to be actively involved in their children's literacy development (Anderson, 2000; Hawes & Plourde, 2005). They are, however, unsure of their new role in fostering their children's cognitive and academic growth once the children become readers themselves (McMackin, 1993). The development of reading skills of children with learning disabilities are further hampered by problems such as gross- and fine motor problems, visual-motor problems, poor concentration, auditory discrimination problems, etc. These difficulties, whatever they should be, need constant attention. Parents of children with learning disabilities therefore feel responsible for attending to their children's problems, so instead of reading to their children, they rather take them for therapy in an attempt to decrease their own responsibility in the process (Rashid, Morris & Sevcik, 2005). Their feelings of uncertainty of their role could thus influence the participation in story-book reading between parents and their children who have learning disabilities.

Once formal reading instruction begins, parents of grade one children have questions about the composition of the reading process and their role as parents in the process (McMackin, 1993). This results in a tendency of parents to develop different perceptions of what their roles are regarding story-book reading to their grade one children. Some parents continue reading stories aloud to their children, with a slight adaptation of the way in

which they do it. They may, for example, point to certain words while reading them. Some parents may feel that they take a reading opportunity away from their children should they continue reading story-books to their children. The result is that they prefer their children to either read stories aloud to them or read independently. Other parents, however, stop reading to their children because they simply no longer deem it necessary. Parents of children with learning disabilities may probably find it difficult to continue reading to their children because their children no longer show any interest or motivation to engage in story-book reading. This changing role during story-book reading is therefore a problem for the parents irrespective of the child's specific abilities. Popular magazines and academic literature do not address this issue in much detail, hence parents need support to address it.

The type of books parents read to their beginner readers may possibly change to books with fewer pictures and smaller print, which the children may not yet be able to read. During the pre-school years the parents' role was to introduce the children to stories while simultaneously guiding them to understand that print has meaning. With their newly acquired interest in the reading act, children will most probably not be willing to listen to the story or look at pictures only. They would rather choose to focus on the printed words in the story-book and try to read some of it independently (McMackin, 1993). "Children tune into the rhythms and structures of language through listening to stories long before they can read aloud. When they come to reading independently, they bring a wealth of language to the text" (Bloch, 1999, p. 47). Once the beginner reader realizes that he is able to read more than pictures and that he can also read some words and sentences, the role of parents may possibly change from active reader to active reader-listener or active listener. It is possible that children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities may engage differently in independent reading once their reading skills start developing. Parents are part of their children's literacy development and may thus have valuable insight into their children's reading development and abilities (Dickinson & DeTemple, 1998).

It is the aim of this study to determine what the perceptions of parents of grade one children without and with learning disabilities are of the nature of the home reading environment, what the role of the said parents is during story-book reading and what these children's responses are during these story-book reading activities. The nature of independent reading of grade one children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities as well as their reading abilities will also be explored. Throughout a comparison will be drawn between grade one children without learning disabilities and peers with learning disabilities.

## **1.2 Definition of terms**

The following frequently used terms need some clarification:

### **Children with learning disabilities**

For the purpose of this study, the term "children with learning disabilities" refers to children who experience problems in more than three of the following areas: visual and auditory discrimination, gross- and fine motor skills, visual-motor integration, spatial orientation, copying, reading and comprehension, spelling, obeying rules, attention- and concentration span, understanding mathematics and planning skills (Dowdy, 1992).

### **Children without learning disabilities**

For the purpose of this study, the term "children without learning disabilities" refers to children, who experience problems in less than three of the above-mentioned areas.

### **Home reading activities**

For the purpose of this study, the term "home reading activities" refers to the different situations where children come into contact with various reading materials at home. These activities may include observing others reading, listening to story-book reading, reading with someone else, participating



during story-book reading as well reading books or other printed materials on their own (Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; Stainthorp & Hughes, 2000).

### **Independent reading**

For the purpose of this study, “independent reading” refers to the act of children reading on their own without any support.

### **Participation**

For the purpose of this study, the term “participation” refers to the degree of involvement of the children in home reading activities: the children may read independently or join somebody (parents, legal guardians or literate others) in the reading activities. Participation implies interaction with the social and physical environment as well as the child’s motivation or desire to participate in reading activities (Law, 2002). Participation could be active (the child is actively involved) or passive (the child observes the activity without active involvement).

### **Perception**

For the purpose of this study, the term “perception” refers to the opinions or views of parents of grade one children of how they perceive their children’s home reading activities.

## **1.3 Outline of chapters**

*Chapter 1* provides the justification for the study, the outline of the chapters as well as the definition of the key terms used in the remaining chapters.

*Chapter 2* provides an overview of the home reading environment and the frequency of story-book reading, the role of parents in story-book reading, as well as responses of grade one readers to story-book reading. The independent reading of grade one readers is also addressed. The discussion is supported by the theoretical constructs on story-book reading as well as research conducted on reading with children without learning disabilities and reading with children with learning disabilities.

*Chapter 3* is a description of the methodology used. It includes a lay-out of the aims, the research design, the pilot study, the participants in the study, the materials used in the study, data collection procedures and finally the data analysis and statistical procedures.

*Chapter 4* presents a description and discussion of the results in accordance to the aims of the study.

*In Chapter 5* the study is critically evaluated in terms of its results, limitations and strengths.

## **1.4 Summary**

The chapter provided a justification for the study and highlighted the importance of the changing role of parents of grade one children without learning disabilities as well as parents of grade one children with learning disabilities during story-book reading. This chapter concluded with definitions of key terms, clarification of abbreviations as well as an outline of the chapters to follow.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the relevant literature concerning the participation in home reading activities of grade one children without learning disabilities and grade one children with learning disabilities. The focus is on home reading activities, the role of parents during story-book reading as well as the children's responses to these reading activities. Different models of literacy interaction are discussed. When discussing these models, different participation responses are identified. Finally, the nature of the independent reading and the reading abilities of the children are addressed.

### **2.2 The connection between school and home**

The home environment influences young children's literacy development as families provide children with various literacy enriched environments and activities. These literacy environments stimulate the children's awareness of the printed word. Therefore, many teachers try to create a classroom environment similar to that which the children are used to at home, a place where they can lie down or sit comfortably and enjoy reading their favourite books (Saracho, 2002). The deputy director-general of the National Department of Education of South Africa, Palesa Tyobeka, emphasizes that reading is a fundamental skill all children need to acquire. However, she states that assessments of the reading abilities of children indicate a shockingly high number of children who cannot read at the appropriate grade - and age-level (Momberg, 2006). Therefore, the National Department of Education of South Africa sent out letters to schools asking the schools to set aside half an hour each day to encourage the entire school's children to read (Momberg, 2006). In order to assist schools where there is a shortage of books, her department plans to donate 1000 books in the eleven different official languages to schools at the beginning of 2008 (Essop, 2007).

The successful development of literacy skills in children, who commence school, seem to be partly related to supportive literacy experiences within the home and school contexts (Koppenhaver, Evans & Yoder, 1991). Therefore, it is important to use the foundation established for literacy learning at home as a scaffolding on which to build instruction at school (Faires, Nichols & Rickelman, 2000).

### **2.3 Theoretical constructs on the nature of story-book reading**

The Social-Constructivist theory of Vygotsky emphasizes the important influence of the family and the nature of story-book reading on the child's literacy acquisition (Cook-Cottone, 2004; Dodici & Peterson, 2003; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Rashid et al., 2005). For constructivists, the child, other individuals (parents), social systems (family) and culture, play a role in the content, processing and organization of new knowledge (Cook-Cottone, 2004). The child's brain processes new experiences based on past experiences (Cook-Cottone, 2004). Sulzby (1986) describes the role of parents as mediators between the child and written language, as Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. Parents provide structure, order and the necessary scaffolding to ensure access to new knowledge for the child (Cook-Cottone, 2004).

The Vygotskian perspective states that children learn skills through adult-child interactions and by observing others engaging in printed materials (Sénéchal & Cornell, 1993). Stories enable children to experience more than the limits of their immediate environment. Through scaffolding, children develop a bigger picture of the world and build the necessary vocabulary to talk about it (Bloch, 1999). Stories have the potential of being a starting point for collaborative talk between children and parents (Bloch, 1999). Parents help children to explore their world in the light of what happens in the story and to use their own experiences to understand the significance of story happenings (Bloch, 1999).

Within the Piagetian traditions, the physical environment is also relevant to the development of reading and writing (Sulzby, 1985). The way parents interact with their grade one children during story-book reading (what is said and the affective context in which the interactions occur) may have positive or negative results (Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein & Serpell, 2001). Parents of fluent and competent readers use specific procedures, which include scaffolding, to assist children to comprehend stories, for example, by teaching them how to make predictions in a story (Saracho, 2002). These parents read the same story-book multiple times, talk less and assist the child to be more active in reading or telling the story (Saracho, 2002). In contrast, Saracho (2002) found that parents of poor readers apply uncreative procedures such as decoding and concealing the pictures to keep the child from guessing the word. Baker et al. (2001) agree that struggling readers may find this experience very unpleasant.

The spontaneous questions children ask during story-book reading focus on their level of understanding, which falls into the framework of the Piagetian perspective, where the focus is on the child's exploratory attempts to understand the nature of the written language (Yaden et al., 1989).

Adams (1990) considered reading aloud to children as one of the most important activities for building the skills needed for early reading. Young children are guided through the reading process by their parents (Leseman & De Jong, 1998). With the discussions during the story-book reading process, parents help their children to understand the meaning of what is being read. The latter could sometimes be unclear when children read independently (Leseman & De Jong, 1998). Parents usually use highly interactive language when they read a book to young children - especially when it is a new book. The adults try to bring in real-life knowledge which might be relevant to the understanding of the text (Bloch, 1999). As children become more advanced in literacy experiences, the parents read more sections of the book without interruption (Sulzby, 1985). It is also found that the reading efforts of children often have features of written language, which are not in the written text itself (Sulzby, 1985).

Sénéchal, LeFevre, Thomas and Daley (1998) also emphasize the importance of shared reading to develop word-knowledge, understanding meaning and promote an awareness of the printed word or written letters. As children are read to, they acquire new knowledge and learn more advanced vocabulary and strategies related to information processing (Leseman & De Jong, 1998). Through reading experiences with their parents, young children are directed into an understanding of the relationships between oral and written language within a social context (Sulzby, 1985). The children learn that words can form imaginary worlds away from the immediate here and now. They learn that written language has its own conventions and rhythms (Bloch, 1999).

Table 2.1 provides an outline of previous research on children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities. Research on the nature of the home reading environment, the role of parents in story-book reading, children's responses to story-book reading as well as independent reading of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities are discussed and emphasized. (In cases where there were no differences in the findings of the two groups, the results were presented in one column indicating both groups.)

**Table 2.1 Literature survey on the home literacy experiences of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities**

Description	Author	Date	Main finding(s)	
			Children without learning disabilities	Children with learning disabilities
1. Nature of story-book reading	Hughes, M.T., Schumm, J.S. & Vaughn, S.	1999	The home literacy environment of children with learning disabilities may be similar to those of children without learning disabilities in terms of frequency and type of reading activity.	
	Anderson, S.A.	2000	The model of parents reading magazines, newspapers or books, provides a positive stimulus for the children's reading.	
	Stainthorp, R. & Hughes	2000	Children learn about literacy through incidental learning, when observing their parents reading and writing in various contexts.	
				The experiences of children with learning disabilities may be unique because their reading problems may potentially influence their engagement in home literacy activities. The link between home literacy and reading level may be different for struggling readers. It may be that the child with reading disabilities engages in fewer home literacy activities due to his or her limited reading skills. It also may be the case that children with reading disabilities continue to have difficulty despite adequate exposure to literacy activities in their home.
	Van Steensel, R.	2006	Children become acquainted with the nature and functions of written language through observing and participating in literacy activities at home.	
Greaney, V. & Hegarty, M.	1987	Parental support includes factors such as the availability of reading materials in the home, parental reading patterns and frequency of reading to their children. Children from supportive home environments also have more positive attitudes toward reading and the enjoyment thereof.		
2. Parents' role in story-book reading  2.1 Parents' role in literacy development	Koppenhaver, D, Evans, D. & Yoder, D.	1991	Successful development of literacy skills seems to be partly related to supportive literacy experiences within home contexts.	
	Sénéchal, M., LeFevre, J., Thomas, E.M. & Daley, K.E.	1998	Parental support for literacy learning at home plays a role in the development of reading.	
	Bloch, C.	1999	Children experience more than the boundaries of their immediate environment through stories. They are able to develop a larger picture of the world and build up vocabulary to talk about it.	
	Hughes, M.T., Schumm, J.S. & Vaughn, S.	1999	Parents, who are aware of the importance of encouraging their children to read and write outside of school, display this awareness by structuring activities at home which allow their children to be actively involved in reading and writing.	
				Parents who place a high priority on the development of reading and writing skills, are more concerned with the development of their children's reading skills. However, many perceive their children's reading problems as a barrier to participation in reading activities.
Anderson, SA.	2000	Parents, who expect their children to do well at school, are		

Description	Author	Date	Main finding(s)	
			Children without learning disabilities	Children with learning disabilities
			more likely to provide books and academic games for their children and take them to the library.	
	Baker, L., Mackler, K., Sonnenschein, S., Serpell, R.	2001		The way in which parents interact with their grade one children during story-book reading (in other words, what is said and the affective context in which the interactions occur) may have positive or negative results. Struggling readers, who need considerable help in recognizing words, may find the experience unpleasant if their parents try to assist them in using decoding skills or other strategies to identify words they do not know.
	Baker, L. & Scher, D.	2002	Parents play a role in the fostering of literacy motivation. What they do and say are important in nurturing positive motivation for reading.	
			Parents, who perceive that their children are interested in reading, expect them to be fluent and competent readers.	Parents, with children with a reading difficulty, expect less from their children's reading abilities.
			Parents, who view reading as a source of entertainment, are more likely to have children who are skilled readers and who also enjoy reading.	
	Baker, L.	2003	Parents need to convey the perspective that reading is pleasurable and worthwhile.	
	Chapman, J.W. & Turner, W.E.	2003		The way in which parents respond to their struggling readers, influences their children's developing self-esteem.
	Saracho, O.N	2003	Parents of fluent and competent readers use different procedures, which includes scaffolding, to assist children to comprehend stories and how to make predictions in a story.	Parents of poor readers apply uncreative procedures such as decoding and concealing the pictures to keep the children from guessing the word.
	Rashid, F.L., Morris, R.D., Sevcik, R.A.	2005		Parents of children with reading disabilities do not emphasize literacy activities at home because of their children's reading problems. This may imply a possible difference between the home environments of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities.
2.2 Frequency of story-book reading	McMackin, M.C	1993	Since reading is a developmental task, the more children read, the more efficient they become at this task. Children who are just beginning to read need a great deal of encouragement from those around them.	
	Weinberger, J	1996	Children who have above-average reading skills receive more frequent story-book reading and play word games more often than children with below-average reading skills.	
	Anderson, S.A.	2000	For children to create higher reading levels and positive attitudes towards reading, parents should read to their children on a regular basis for 8 to 10 minutes at a time, four times per week.	



Description	Author	Date	Main finding(s)	
			Children without learning disabilities	Children with learning disabilities
			Parents with gifted children read 20 minutes/day on average.	
	Wood, C.	2002	Frequency of story-book reading appears to contribute to successful early reading development. Children who are reading “above-average” are exposed to more frequent story-book reading and play more word games than children who are below average.	
	Aulls, M.W. & Sollars, V.	2003	In literacy rich home environments, children were read to five or more times per week.	
3. Responses to story-book reading	Sénéchal, M., LeFevre, J., Thomas, E.M. & Daley, K.E.	1998	Parents distinguish between two different kinds of experiences with print at home. Some experiences provide more informal or implicit interactions with print, such as when parents read to the child. In this kind of experience, children are exposed to written language, but print per se is not the focus of the interactions. Other experiences provide more formal or explicit interactions with print such as when parents teach about reading and writing words and letters. These two experiences could happen within the same activity. Parents read and focus on the story and on identifying letters and words. The difference lies in the nature of the interactions – whether the focus is on the message included in the print or the print itself.	
	Anderson, S.A.	2000	Children experience an intimacy of sharing or enjoyment when parents show them how wonderful a book is during story-time.	
	Aulls, M.W. & Sollars, V.	2003	In literacy rich home environments, 73% of the children were reported to turn the pages frequently and to point to words or pictures whereas in literacy moderate home environments, only 20% of the children participated actively.	
4. Independent reading and reading abilities	Stanovich, K	1986		Poor readers do not enjoy reading and spend less time on it, which adds to the continuation of poorer reading skills – “the poorer get poorer”, also known as the Matthew effect.
	Greaney, V. & Hegarty, M.	1987	Children who enjoy reading are more likely to devote time to it. With increased proficiency in reading, they tend to develop more favourable attitudes to reading, and, therefore, are more likely to read for sheer enjoyment.	
	Adams, M.J.	1990	Children who acquire successful initial reading skills tend to remain fluent and competent readers.	Children with a reading difficulty tend to continue having problems in reading throughout their school years.
	Baker, L.	2003		Children, who experience reading difficulties, tend to label themselves as poor readers and as unable to learn to read. The result is that their motivation to read declines.
	Fiala, C.L. & Sheridan, S.M.	2003	Children who enjoy reading spend more time on reading and improve their reading skills.	The Matthew effect, in which the “rich get richer and the poor get poorer” occurs when the poor readers experience stress and fear of failure to a greater extent than fluent and competent readers. Poor readers do not enjoy reading and spend less time on it which adds to the continuation of poorer reading skills.
	Leppänen, U., Aunola, K. &	2005	Children’s reading skills contribute to their out of school	Children who are at the point of acquiring basic reading skills,

Description	Author	Date	Main finding(s)	
			Children without learning disabilities	Children with learning disabilities
	Nurmi, J.		reading. Fluent and competent readers read more books and magazines than less competent readers.	are not able to get involved in the kind of leisure reading that would benefit their reading competence later.
	Leppänen, U., Aunola, K. & Nurmi, J.	2005	Children, who already know the basics of reading at the beginning of grade one, begin to increase their reading of comics and magazines, which in turn strengthens their reading skills.	Children who experience difficulties in reading comprehension and word identification start to develop problems in early reading. Therefore they read less and fall behind in reading skill development.
	Rashid, F.L., Morris, R.D., Sevcik, R.A.	2005		Children with reading problems engage in fewer home literacy activities in relation to children with no reading problems. This may be because they have limited reading skills, or because their parents do not emphasize reading activities at home.

It is evident from the research literature that the nature of home reading activities of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities are alike. The role of parents of children without learning disabilities and parents of children with learning disabilities in story-book reading also tends to be similar. It is clear though, that parental perceptions could influence their reactions towards their children during story-book reading. Previous studies show that children's responses towards story-book reading may be the same within the two groups but the independent reading of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities differs. Above-mentioned results will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

## **2.4 The nature of the home reading environment**

A number of studies report the well-known fact that the home story-book reading environment plays an important role in the development of children's language and literacy skills during pre-school and school age years (Anderson, 2000; Goodman, 1986; Hawes & Plourde, 2005; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002).

The reading activity is characterized by the translation of symbols or letters from print into words and by sentences that communicate information and meaning to the reader (Adams, 1990). The aims of reading are to understand the meaning of a written text, evaluate its significance, and use what has been read to enhance knowledge, effectiveness or pleasure (Adams, 1990).

Literacy develops within a social context as an extension of interaction with other people (Neuman, Caperelli & Kee, 1998). Children learn incidentally about literacy when they observe their parents (or literate others) reading and writing in various contexts (Stainthorp & Hughes, 2000; Van Steensel, 2006). Home reading activities generally have been linked to participation in reading activities at home. This may include exposure to reading activities and print materials at home (Leseman & De Jong, 1998). Not only do these experiences include observing others reading, but it also depends on the

availability of reading materials at home, frequency of listening to story-book reading and reading with someone else, library visits, participation during story-book reading and the individual reading of books or magazines (Sénéchal & Cornell, 1993; Stainthorp & Hughes, 2000; Van Steensel, 2006).

Parents, who provide a natural home reading environment for their children, ensure that their children develop positive attitudes towards reading and therefore become motivated to read (Anderson, 2000; Baker & Scher, 2002). Reading becomes important to children when they frequently observe the most important person in their world reading (Anderson, 2000). Therefore, the model of parents reading magazines, newspapers, books or other reading materials in front of their children, contributes to their children's own reading motivation and attitude towards reading (Anderson, 2000). Greaney and Hegarty (1987) also agree that children from supportive home environments tend to react more positively towards reading and the enjoyment thereof.

Research expresses various views regarding the home literacy environments of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities: Hughes, Schumm and Vaughn (1999) are of the opinion that the home reading environment of the children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities may be similar in terms of frequency of reading activities and the type of reading activities. On the contrary, Rashid et al. (2005) emphasize that the experiences of children with learning disabilities may be unique. The reading difficulties these children experience may potentially influence their engagement in home literacy activities (Rashid et al., 2005): "It may be that the child with reading disabilities engages in fewer home literacy activities due to his or her limited reading skills. It also may be the case that children with reading disabilities continue to have difficulty despite adequate exposure to literacy activities in their home (Rashid et al., 2005, p. 10)."

The question arises if there is a difference between the nature of the home reading environment of children without learning disabilities and children with

learning disabilities.

## **2.5 Parents' role in story-book reading**

Parent-child story-book reading is useful because it teaches children the skills needed to become effective readers, but more importantly it influences whether or not children later choose to read (Baker et al., 2001). Parents have to be comfortable when assisting their children in the process of learning to read. Children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities should experience positive feelings during these shared story-book reading activities (McMackin, 1993).

Children need their parents' assistance to be able to understand the relationship between the printed word and oral language, because not all children grasp the link between print and words immediately (Ferreiro, 1986). Parents should realize that they stimulate their children's adult intelligence and lay the foundation for formal reading instruction during story-book reading with their children (Anderson, 2000). It is therefore important that the critical role parents play in providing a natural reading environment for their children should not be underestimated. "What parents believe, say and do, does make a difference (Baker, 2003, p. 87)."

Parents, who are aware of their role of encouraging their children to read and write outside school, display this awareness by structuring activities to allow their children to be actively involved in reading and writing (Hughes et al., 1999). Simultaneously, parents, for whom reading is part of their everyday life and who are interested in developing their children's reading skills, tend to make an effort to stimulate their children's reading development (DeBaryshe, 1995; Ferreiro, 1986). These parents ensure that they have enough books, magazines or other printed materials at home to read to their children or to motivate them to page through on their own or read independently.

Parents, who view reading as a source of entertainment, are more likely to have children who also enjoy reading and become skilled readers (Baker &

Scher, 2002). Positive affective interactions are associated with meaning related talk between parent and child during story-book reading. Negative interactions, however, are associated with parental attempts to have children use decoding skills or other strategies to identify words they do not know. Struggling readers need considerable help with word-recognition, and they may find the experience unpleasant rather than rewarding. This unpleasant experience may potentially have long-term implications for motivation and achievement, because the children tend to read less due to the unrewarding feelings they experience (Baker, 2003).

Research states that in homes where reading materials are freely available, parents read aloud to their children at least five or more times per week. On the other hand, in homes where reading materials are not as freely available, the majority of parents tend to read to their children only once or twice per week (Aulls & Sollars, 2003). Rashid et al. (2005) did research on the relationship between the home literacy environment and the reading achievement of children with reading disabilities and found that only 22% of the children with reading disabilities were read to between seven and nine times per week. The majority (60%) of the children in the study were read to less than three times per week. At least 50% of these children owned 30 or more books, and more than 50% of the children in the study read or paged through books independently at least once per day. Twenty percent of these children never read or paged through books independently at home. Rashid et al. (2005) found that a possible reason for the low frequency in reading activities may be that the parents of children with reading disabilities do not encourage home reading activities, because of their children's reading problems.

Parents' expectations of their children's abilities influence their support of their children and the provision of positive home reading environments. Children do better at school when their parents have high expectations of them (Anderson, 2000). If parents perceive that their children are interested in learning to read and trying to read, they are more likely to have the awareness that their children will be fluent and competent readers. On the contrary,

parents, who perceive that their children are not interested in learning to read or who are not yet engaging with the printed word in their interactions with books, do not have the same expectations of their children (Baker & Scher, 2002). Parents, who expect their children to do well at school, are more likely to provide books and academic games for their children and take them to a library (Anderson, 2000).

Parents of children with learning disabilities, perceive their children's problems with reading as one of their children's greatest obstacles when participating in reading activities (Hughes et al., 1999). They tend to use their children's learning or reading disability as an excuse for inadequate parental support in reading activities (Hughes et al., 1999). In their research, Rashid et al. (2005) found that parents of children with reading disabilities do not emphasize literacy activities at home, because of their children's reading problems. These parents may rather emphasize the development of self-help and communication skills than the development of reading and writing skills (Rashid et al., 2005). This may imply a possible difference between the home environments of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities.

The question arises what the role of parents of children without learning disabilities and parents of children with learning disabilities may be in story-book reading.

## **2.6 Children's responses to story-book reading**

Yaden et al. (1989) are of the opinion that, although parents provide initial scaffolding to support vocabulary and literacy development, it may be that the children's own contribution to the process, through questions asked or comments made during the reading activity, is more useful for the children to acquire new literacy knowledge.

Anderson (2000) found that the individual attention children experience during story-book reading, gives them a feeling of intimacy with their parents

(Anderson, 2000; Baker et al., 2001). This positive feeling of affection may also lead to different reactions from the children during the reading session with their parents.

Children's responses to story-book reading may differ from child to child, but neither of these responses may be necessarily more conducive to facilitate reading: some children sit back passively and listen to the parent reading the story aloud to them, while others are actively involved during story-book reading by frequently turning the pages, or pointing to words or pictures or asking questions related to the story (Aulls & Sollars, 2003; Yaden et al., 1989). Children from literacy "rich" home environments, tend to ask their parents (or an adult) to read stories to them more often. They also like listening to their favourite story repeatedly (Aulls & Sollars, 2003).

Children are exposed to different types of printed material: story-books with lots of pictures, books with large print or small print, non-fiction books, magazines, alphabet books with alphabet letters and words that begin with the specific letter, cartoons, rhyme books and children's bibles. With this variety of printed materials available, children have multiple opportunities to actively participate in home reading activities (Aulls & Sollars, 2003).

Grade one children develop from beginner readers to more competent readers and enjoy the shared reading experiences, which motivate them to attempt more challenging reading materials. Whereas discussions during story-book readings were previously more about illustrations, the emphasis now shifts to the reading of more challenging words or phrases for the grade one reader (Baker et al., 2001). The more the children engage in book reading, the more they realize that the messages in books are not only conveyed through the pictures but also through the printed word (Aulls & Sollars, 2003). The children become more aware of the printed letters and where the words start on a page (Aulls & Sollars, 2003; Rashid et al., 2005). According to Aulls and Sollars (2003), the print awareness and book and code knowledge of the first grader, are influenced by the quality of the home environment and the time spent in story-book reading by the children. The



study of Morris (cited in Yaden et al., 1989) provides evidence that even those children who are seldom read to at home, still ask questions during story-book reading.

Rashid et al. (2005) found that children with learning disabilities engage in fewer home reading activities due to their limited reading skills and the fact that their parents do not emphasize the importance of reading by motivating them to engage in these reading activities.

From the above-mentioned research, the importance of looking at the responses of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities during home reading activities, becomes clear.

## **2.7 Children's independent reading and reading abilities**

Reading out of school is an important factor which contributes to the development of reading performance (Leppänen, Aunola, Nurmi, 2005). In order to become a fluent and efficient reader, a substantial amount of reading practice is required to acquire automatic word-level analysis skills. Once these skills have become mechanical, the focus shifts to comprehension (Leppänen et al., 2005). Reading habits contribute to reading performance earlier than grade three (Leppänen et al., 2005).

Since reading is a developmental task, children become more efficient in reading when they read (practice) more (McMackin, 1993). Therefore, the frequency of children's story-book reading – whether listening to stories or reading independently – is beneficial to the children in the following ways:

- ü The frequency of story-book reading was found to increase the development of reading skills, vocabulary and short-term memory (McMackin, 1993).
- ü In both the studies of Wood (2002) and Weinberger (1996), they found that children who were above-average readers, were exposed to story-book reading and played word games more often than children who

were below-average readers. Leppänen et al. (2005) also found that a higher frequency of book-reading can indicate an increase in word recognition levels.

- ü Children achieve higher reading levels and develop positive attitudes towards reading when their parents read to them on a regular basis for 8 to 10 minutes at a time, at least four times per week (Anderson, 2000). Parents who have gifted children read to them for 21 minutes a day on average (Anderson, 2000).
- ü There is evidence that more frequent story-book reading may benefit children’s awareness of rhyme as well as improve their short- term memory (Wood, 2002).

The frequency of independent reading may result in the Matthew effect (Stanovich, 1986), indicating a possible difference between children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities. The Matthew effect (named after the disciple, Matthew, in the Bible who referred to the “rich get richer and the poor get poorer”) may occur when the poor readers experience stress and fear of failure to a greater extent than fluent and competent readers do (Stanovich, 1986). Poor readers do not enjoy reading and therefore spend less time reading, which results in poorer reading skills – “the poor get poorer” (Fiala & Sheridan, 2003; Rashid et al., 2005; Stanovich, 1986).

Rashid et al. (2005) are of the opinion that children with reading problems may continue experiencing difficulties, despite adequate exposure to reading activities at home. The children’s reading problems are seen as an obstacle when implementing reading related activities at home (Hughes et al., 1999). Furthermore, the underlying problems in comprehension may be due to an inability to recognize and decode words. These problems develop when children experience difficulties when they start reading. Owing to reading problems, the children “read less” and due to the lack of practice, they fall behind in reading skill development (Leppänen et al., 2005). Parents’ views of and lack of regard for their children’s reading skills, may also contribute to the

children's fewer encounters in home reading activities (Rashid et al., 2005). Rashid et al. also found that children with reading problems, prefer to spend time at home on a non-reading activity, such as watching television, rather than on reading activities (Rashid et al., 2005). They also found that more than half of the participants do not own a library card or ever visit a library. They accounted for possible socially desirable answers by stipulating that these numbers may even be smaller (Rashid et al., 2005).

On the contrary, children who enjoy reading, spend more time on reading and therefore improve their reading skills – “the rich get richer” (Fiala & Sheridan, 2003). Children, who are still at the point of acquiring basic reading skills, are not able to get involved in the kind of leisure time reading that would benefit their reading competence later on (Leppänen et al., 2005). Children, who already know the basics of reading at the beginning of their first grade, begin to increase their reading of magazines, comics and books, which in turn strengthens their reading skills (Leppänen et al., 2005).

Two questions thus arise: Firstly, what the nature of independent reading of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities is, and secondly if the said children's parents' perceptions could be used to give an objective evaluation of their children's reading abilities .

## **2.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter emphasis was placed on the nature of the home reading environment and the role of parents of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities regarding story-book reading. Children's participation and responses were discussed with reference to relevant research within the framework of different literacy interaction models. Finally, the nature of independent reading of children in both groups was addressed, stipulating that children with learning disabilities read less as a result of their reading problems.

## **Chapter 3      Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the research methodology is explained. It starts by identifying the aims, followed by a discussion of the research design. The pilot test is presented in terms of results and recommendations. Then the context of the schools and the participants as well as the material and equipment used, are described. Finally, the data collection procedures and analysis of data are presented.

### **3.2 Aim of the study**

#### **3.2.1 Main aim**

The main aim of this research is to compare and describe how parents of grade one children without learning disabilities and grade one children with learning disabilities perceive their children's participation to home reading activities.

#### **3.2.2 Sub-aims**

In order to address the main aim, five sub-aims were formulated, namely to describe the:

- (i) nature of the home reading environment of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities.
- (ii) parents' role in story-book reading to children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities.
- (iii) responses of the children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities during story-book reading.
- (iv) nature of independent reading of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities.

- (v) reading abilities of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities as perceived by their parents.

### 3.3 Research Design

A comparative research design was used, in order to address the aim of the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Two groups were selected to investigate a possible correlation between or variance in the participation in home reading activities of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities. Data was collected by means of a survey. A purposeful sample (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001) in a specific geographical area of biological parents or legal guardians of grade one children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities was used to complete the questionnaires.

### 3.4 Pilot testing

To finalize the measuring tool and to test the reliability of the selection procedure and questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted. The face validity and the understanding of the instructions were addressed during the piloting of the selection procedures and questionnaire.

#### 3.4.1 Participants for pilot test

In order to address the various aims for the pilot test, participants with diverse backgrounds were used. These participants are described in Table 3.1 according to their age and the reasons for inclusion in the pilot test.

**Table 3.1 Participants for pilot test**

Participant	Age	Reason
Remedial teacher	44 yr	More than 20 years experience as a teacher, of which 12 is in the field of learning disabilities – has insight in children with learning disabilities and commented on Screening Checklist for Learning Disabilities (SCLD) (Appendix A).



Participant	Age	Reason
Speech therapist	34 yr	Works in field of learning disabilities and has more than 10 years experience in this field – familiar with children with learning disabilities and commented on Screening Checklist for Learning Disabilities (SCLD) (Appendix A).
Occupational therapist	37 yr	Fifteen years experience in field of learning disabilities – familiar with children with learning disabilities and commented on Screening Checklist for Learning Disabilities (SCLD) (Appendix A).
Grade one teacher	40 yr	Eighteen years experience as teacher in foundation phase – familiar with grade one children and she completed and commented on Screening Checklist for Learning Disabilities (SCLD) (Appendix A).
Student teacher	21 yr	Three months practice teaching in the same grade one class of the teacher named above – has become acquainted with children in the class. Previously she also completed two months practice teaching in the foundation phase. Has theoretical understanding of learning disabilities therefore the two teachers tested face validity of the SCLD (Appendix A).
Grade one teacher	56 yr	Thirty-three years experience of teaching grade one children. Is an expert on reading. Has done research on reading and published academic articles on this topic. Evaluated and commented on the compilation and content of the questionnaire (Appendix B).
Five grade one children, randomly selected from the same grade one class	6 yr 10m – 7 yr 07m	Completed the Goodenough-Harris Draw-a-man-test (DAM-test) and tested the instruction “to give assent” by drawing the picture and “posting” it in the preferred box – a green box if they agree that their parents could participate in the research, or a red box if they disagree.
Psychologist	41 yr	Works in a specialized school, assisted in assessment of DAM-test. The formal test procedure and directions, as stipulated by Goodenough (1926) were used, and a shortened checklist based on Goodenough’s scoring list and revised by Harris, was used to score the drawings (Harris, 1963).
Five participants, who matched the selection criteria for the main study. (One only commented on the questionnaire and did not complete it.)	29 yr – 40 yr	The participants selected to complete the questionnaire during the pilot test, comprised of five married mothers of grade one children. Two participants have a B-degree and two have post-graduate qualifications. One participant is a full-time mother (“housewife”) while the remaining three work full-time. The husbands are in full-time occupations. There were between two and four children in each of these families.

The possibility of the above participants discussing the contents of the test material with the participants of the main study was considered. This was, however, dismissed as the participants lived in different comparable geographical areas. It was therefore not likely that they would come into contact with each other.

### **3.4.2 Aims of, methods for, results and recommendations obtained from the pilot test**

The aims of the pilot test were to test:

- a) the reliability of the selection procedure and the refinement of the questionnaire to ensure the validity of the planned data collection procedures and the suitability of the questionnaire (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).
- b) the face validity and user friendliness of the SCLD; and the children's level of understanding of the instructions to give their assent and perform a DAM-test.
- c) the relevance of the questions in the questionnaire.

These aims, as well as the methods, results and recommendations from the pilot test are presented in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2 Pilot test**

Aims	Methods	Results	Recommendations for main study
<b>Selection procedure</b>			
<p>To determine whether the <b>SCLD</b> (Appendix A) has face validity and is user-friendly.</p>	<p>Three professionals in the field of learning disabilities, namely a remedial teacher, an occupational therapist and a speech therapist were consulted to address the questions on the checklist.</p>	<p>All the professionals agreed that the SCLD addressed some of the most important aspects of learning disabilities. They suggested that some items (e.g. analysis and synthesis) could be excluded. The way the options were presented, had to be consistent in either positive or negative statements. An option for “other” should be included for children who may encounter “more serious problems” not listed in SCLD.</p>	<p>The following changes were made for the main study: The option of “analysis and synthesis” was excluded, because should children have problems in these areas, it would present itself in reading or spelling, which was already addressed in the list. Options listed were changed to positive statements. Options listed were not absolute therefore an option for “other” was added to the informal screening checklist.</p>
	<p>Two teachers – a grade one teacher and her student teacher - were asked to complete the informal checklist separately using the same five children who were selected randomly from the class. Results were then compared and discussed.</p>	<p>There were two incidences in which the student teacher did not notice all the problems that the children presented. During the informal discussion between the two teachers, it was agreed that the student teacher lacked experience and was therefore not skilled enough to notice that the children had gross motor problems. She focused on the more academic tasks and did not look at the children holistically.</p>	<p>The researcher discussed the SCLD with the class teachers prior to them completing it to ensure that the SCLD was interpreted in the same way by all the teachers involved, The pilot SCLD was done after the first term because it was important for the teacher to know the children in her class. The SCLD was a guide listing possible characteristics of learning disabilities and was only necessary to be used for subject selection of typically developing children. Those who exhibited more than three problems were excluded from the main study.</p>



Aims	Methods	Results	Recommendations for main study
<p>To determine whether the children understood the instruction: “<b>Draw-a-man</b>” and knew what was expected of them when they gave assent for their parents to complete a questionnaire.</p> <p>Analysis of the DAM-test (Goodenough, 1926; Harris, 1963).</p>	<p>5 randomly selected grade one children were asked to draw a man and to post their drawings in a green box to give permission for their parents to complete a questionnaire. Should assent not be granted, the drawings were posted in a red box. Thereafter, each drawing was discussed with a psychologist to determine if the screening tool could be used to analyze the drawing in order to determine gross intellectual abilities. Marks were allocated according to certain specified criteria on a screening checklist. All children had to score at least 14 marks/5,5 years on the checklist to ensure they are cognitively typically developing.</p>	<p>All the children understood what was expected of them and were able to draw a man. Four children gave permission that their parents could complete the questionnaire by posting their drawings in the green box. One child did not give permission, and posted her drawing in the red box.</p> <p>The psychologist and researcher evaluated the drawings according to the screening tool. All the children scored more than the minimum marks needed for inclusion in the study.</p>	<p>This method to get child assent was utilized in the main study. The DAM-test as selection method was used with the assistance of the qualified psychologist who carried out the screening process.</p>
<b>Material: Questionnaire (Appendix B)</b>			
<p>To determine the relevance of the questions when answering the research aims.</p>	<p>A grade one teacher with more than 30 years teaching experience was consulted to evaluate the first draft of the questionnaire and determine whether it addressed the main aim and sub-aims of the current research study.</p>	<p>In the first draft of the questionnaire the following questions about the literacy activities of the family were addressed, e.g. How many books do you read during a year? How many hours do you spend watching television per day?</p>	<p>Questions which did not address the main aim were removed from the questionnaire. Only questions with the focus on grade one children’s home reading experiences were included, e.g. “How often do you read <u>in the presence of your child?</u>” and “How often do you <u>read aloud to your child?</u>” The initial draft of the questionnaire was revised and adjusted accordingly.</p>
<p>To determine whether relevant <b>statistical issues</b> were addressed, such as the different options for the Likert-scale, and the numbering of the variables in the “For office use only” column, as well as to determine the <b>ease of data coding</b>.</p>	<p>The first draft was presented to a qualified statistician.</p>	<p>The issues of different options for the Likert-scale as well as the checklist options needed to be revisited.</p> <p>In the first draft it was unclear how the respondent should indicate desired options from a list of books.</p> <p>The questions regarding age should not be categorized, e.g. 25-30 years.</p> <p>The column “For office use only” was checked.</p>	<p>The format of the questionnaire was changed to make it more user-friendly, e.g. a variety of activities were listed to be ticked off by the participants; new category options such as “never”, “sometimes”, “often” were included in the questionnaire. A column was added in front of every item (in the list of books) wherein the desired options could be ticked off. The exact age of the parent was asked and in the “For office use only” column adjustments were made to the numbers allocated to each variable number. The initial draft of the questionnaire was revised and adjusted accordingly.</p>

Aims	Methods	Results	Recommendations for main study
<p>To determine whether the questions were clearly formulated and well-understood.</p>	<p>The second draft of the questionnaire was presented to the parents of five grade one children who matched the selection criteria. The same procedures suggested for the main study were followed. The participants were also requested to indicate questions which were difficult to understand.</p>	<p>One respondent did not complete the questionnaire, but only gave an overall comment after she had read through the questionnaire. Two of the participants suggested that the desired responses should be indicated with a cross. In Question B1 the age of the child has to be indicated in years and months. One participant indicated that in Question C9 there were two sentences which were indicated as opposites of each other: “listens attentively” versus “looks around and is not interested”. The participants stated that they completed the questionnaire easily and did not find any questions that they could not answer.</p>	<p>The participants were instructed to indicate their answers by marking the desired box with an <b>X</b>.  The birth dates of the children were asked to eliminate possible mistakes in the calculation of their ages. Question 9 was not changed to ensure that the participants rethink each question and their response. Where applicable, this draft of the questionnaire was revised and adjusted accordingly.</p>
<p>To determine estimated time needed to complete the questionnaire, to ensure it is short enough to maintain interest and motivation for completion.</p>	<p>The participants completed the questionnaire and were asked to indicate the time spent on completing the questionnaire.</p>	<p>The time for completion of the questionnaire varied from 5 to 20 minutes. The participants felt that the questionnaire was easily understood and quick to complete.</p>	<p>It was not necessary to shorten the questionnaire and the length remained the same for the main study. The time needed was noted in the letter, which the parents received when they were requested to participate in the project.</p>

It is thus clear from the above table that the SCLD (Appendix A), the DAM-test and the method of child assent could be used as part of the selection procedure for the main study.

The above table also shows that it took the four participants between 5 and 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. It was found that the participant, who completed the questionnaire in the shortest time-span, did not read to her child as frequently as the participants who indicated that they read to their children frequently. According to both the expert and the parents who completed the questionnaire, it was clear that the questionnaire would provide the necessary information needed to answer the main aim of the study. It was therefore recommended that the main study should commence once the recommendations from the pilot test have been implemented.

### **3.4.3 Conclusion from pilot**

After the completion of the pilot, minor modifications to the questionnaire were needed as discussed in Table 3.2. No changes were suggested to the selection procedure.

## **3.5 Main research study**

### **3.5.1 Context**

Two schools in the same geographical area (Pretoria East) were used. One school is a mainstream school and the other is a school for children with learning disabilities. Children who were enrolled at the school for learners with learning disabilities had earlier been identified as learners with special educational needs, who could not keep up with the tempo of mainstream education and who would therefore benefit from the smaller classes of the specialized school. The majority of these children had typical cognitive abilities, but they displayed learning disabilities such as attention deficit disorders, problems with visual and auditory discrimination, gross and fine motor skills, visual-motor integration, spatial orientation and planning skills (Dowdy, 1992). Children with a learning disability such as dyslexia (as

indicated in the children's profile) were identified and excluded from the current study because they would possibly show more resistance to engage in reading activities than their peers with learning disabilities (Rashid et al., 2005). The class teachers of the grade one children with learning disabilities selected the children who matched the selection criteria as stipulated in Table 3.3. Thirteen children were identified to match the selection criteria, but only ten parents or legal guardians of these children consented to take part in the research, because two of the 13 children changed schools and one parent preferred not to take part in the study. Parents or legal guardians were contacted telephonically after two weeks to encourage them to complete the questionnaire and return it to the school.

Children without learning disabilities were selected from a neighbouring mainstream primary school. These children had no previous diagnosis of learning disability. To exclude a possible learning disability, no children who had previously undergone any therapy (for example occupational therapy, speech therapy) were considered for the study. The class teachers completed the SCLD (Appendix A) to ensure the exclusion of children with possible characteristics of learning disabilities such as problems with attention, concentration, reading, comprehension, writing, spelling, visual and auditory discrimination, gross and fine motor skills, visual-motor integration, spatial orientation, obeying rules, understanding mathematics and planning skills (Dowdy, 1992). Children, who experienced problems in more than two of the areas mentioned in the SCLD were excluded. This checklist ensured that the children could be regarded as "typically developing", i.e. without a learning disability. Hereafter children, who passed the SCLD and who matched the criteria as stipulated in Table 3.3, were selected for the study. A possible 68 children from a cohort of 98 children were identified to match the selection criteria. The first 30 completed questionnaires handed in, were used in this study.

This selection process resulted in the inclusion of ten children in the selected school for children with learning disabilities, who met the selection criteria and whose parents consented. As this group was homogenous, it could be

compared to the other group of thirty children without learning disabilities.

The fact that these are two neighbouring schools in the east of Pretoria, ensured that the parents who completed the questionnaires were all part of the mid to higher socio-economic band.

### **3.5.2 Participants**

Parents of children without learning disabilities and parents of children with learning disabilities, who met the selection criteria outlined below, and who signed a consent form, completed a questionnaire. Their children assented to their parents completing a questionnaire about their home reading activities. One parent of a child with learning disabilities chose not to take part in the study.

#### **3.5.2.1 Participant selection criteria**

Firstly, participants' home language had to be Afrikaans because participants from different language groups could influence the overall results of the study, possibly caused by cultural and social differences (Gonzalez & Yawkey, 1994). Secondly, all participants had to be literate to enable them to complete the questionnaires and to ensure there was access to reading materials at home. Thirdly, all participants had to be either a biological parent or legal guardian of a child who met the following criteria:

**Table 3.3 Criteria, methods and justification of children selected**

Criteria	Method	Justification
1.1 Grade one children	School records	Grade one children enter a new phase in their literacy development. They show a readiness to apply their previously acquired knowledge to make sense of written or printed words or symbols (Mitchell, 1982). Most related research on literacy has previously been done on pre-school children, with a lack of literacy research done on beginner readers, such as grade one children. <i>Due to their learning disabilities, it may be possible that these children are in their second year in grade one.</i> However, a typically developing child, who had been retained before grade one or in grade one, was excluded from the research.
1.2 Typical cognitive functioning	All the participants performed a DAM-test (Goodenough, 1926; Harris, 1963), which was evaluated by a psychologist.	The participants in the two groups had to have comparable cognitive abilities.
1.3 Functional vision	The teachers knew the children, because they had been in their class for at least 5 months and would know after that period if the children in their class had functional vision, they also had sufficient knowledge and experience of the typical development of children (Van Staden, 1997). Therefore, the teachers were requested to assess the child's functional vision. If in doubt, these children were excluded from the study.	Children should be able to attend to (see) the pictures or words when reading independently, or during paired-reading. If they have problems with vision, there are other obstacles to overcome in the literacy learning process which is beyond the scope of this study.
1.4 Functional hearing	The teacher indicated if the children had functional hearing. If in doubt, these children were excluded from the study.	Hearing within the normal functional limits is important, as children will have to follow their parents' instructions, or they will have to be able to listen to a story when it is read to them.
1.5 Typical motor development	The teacher was asked to assess whether the child had typical motor development.	No apparent gross motor difficulties should be present, because physical difficulties may hamper the access of reading material.

As this is a comparative study all participants, who were parents of children who met the selection criteria outlined in Table 3.3 and attended the selected

two schools, were part of the study.

### **3.5.2.2 Reason for exclusion of participants**

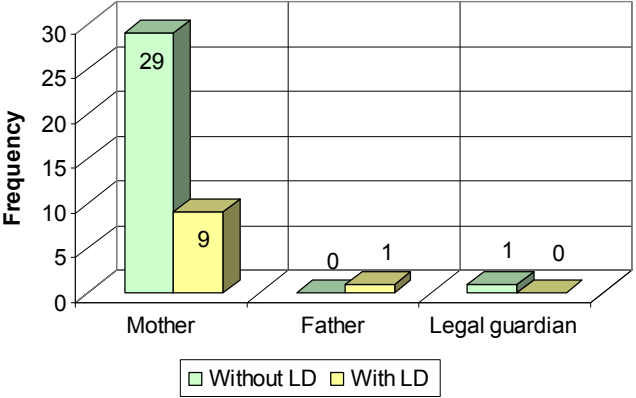
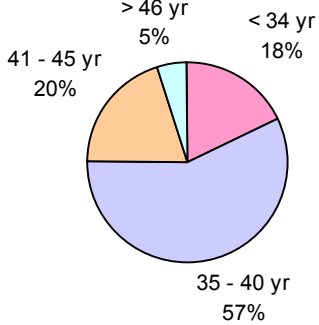
In the school for children with learning disabilities six children were excluded from the study: one was too old (10 years and 6 months), one had confirmed visual problems and one had diagnosed physical impairments. As discussed in section 3.5.1, two children met the selection criteria, but did not participate in the study as they changed schools before the actual study was conducted. Another child's parents indicated their unwillingness to complete the questionnaire, even after a telephonic request by the researcher. Ten children with learning disabilities, who matched the selection criteria, were included in the survey.

In the mainstream school 68 of a possible 98 children did not participate in the study. Of these 68 children, 36 children did not pass the SCLD because they experienced problems in more than three areas mentioned in the checklist; seven children did not match the selection criteria as stipulated in section 3.5.2.1 and Table 3.3 and were also excluded from the study, 25 children met the selection criteria but did not participate in the study. Of these 25 children, six did not participate because they preferred not to give assent for their parents to complete the questionnaires, three parents indicated on the request for participation tear slip that they were unwilling to participate, while six other parents never replied to the request for participation. The remaining ten parents, who indicated that they were willing to complete the questionnaire, did not complete or return the questionnaire to the school by the required date. In total, 30 children without learning disabilities were included in the current study. The exact profile of participants are given in Table 3.4.

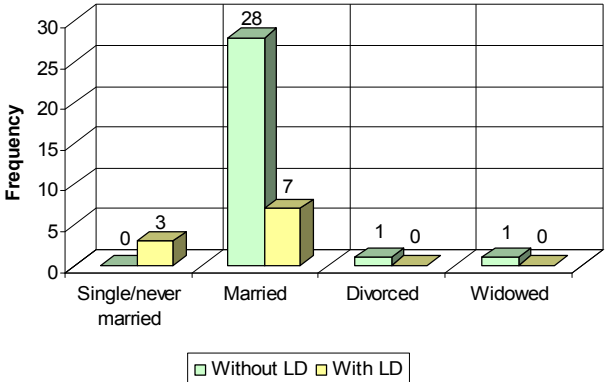
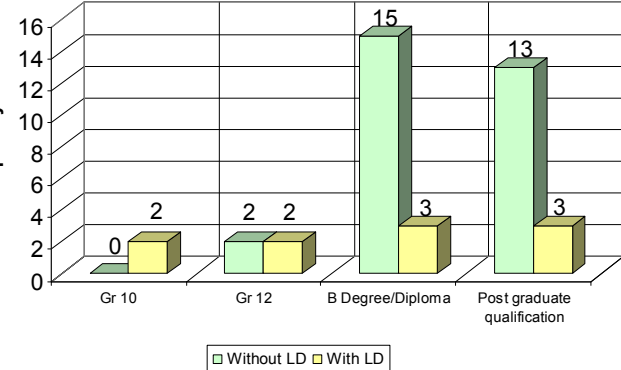
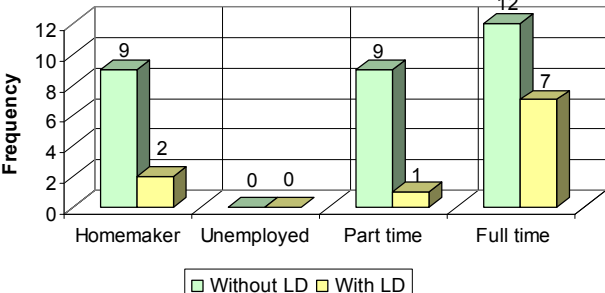
### **3.5.2.3 Description of participants**


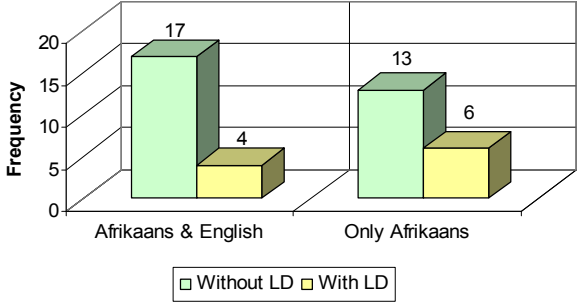
The descriptive information of the participants is presented in the table below. This data was obtained by using section A in the questionnaire (Appendix B).

**Table 3.4 Descriptive information about the participants**

Description	Results (Without LD <i>n</i> = 30, With LD <i>n</i> = 10)																															
<p>According to the results, it is clear that in both groups mostly mothers completed the questionnaires. In one instance a father of a child with learning disabilities completed the questionnaire and in another instance a grandmother, who was the legal guardian of the child without learning disabilities completed the questionnaire.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Relation to child</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <caption>Data for Relation to child</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Relation</th> <th>Without LD</th> <th>With LD</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Mother</td> <td>29</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Father</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Legal guardian</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Relation	Without LD	With LD	Mother	29	9	Father	0	1	Legal guardian	1	0																			
Relation	Without LD	With LD																														
Mother	29	9																														
Father	0	1																														
Legal guardian	1	0																														
<p>The ages of the participants ranged from 29 to 69 years. 18% of the 40 participants were 34 years or younger. More than half of the total number of participants (57%) were between the ages of 35 to 40 years. Only 5% (2) of the participants were older than 46 years. This included the legal guardian who was a grandmother.</p> <p>When the above data is separated into the group without learning disabilities and the group with learning disabilities, the Mann-Whitney Test indicates no significant level of difference with a p-value of 0.1774. This implies that the ages of the two groups are comparable with a mean of 39,19 years for participants with children without learning disabilities and 36,90 years for participants with children with learning disabilities.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Age of participants</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <caption>Data for Age of participants</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Age Group</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>&lt; 34 yr</td> <td>18%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>35 - 40 yr</td> <td>57%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>41 - 45 yr</td> <td>20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>&gt; 46 yr</td> <td>5%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3" style="text-align: left;">Age of participants</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th style="background-color: #d9ead3;">Without LD</th> <th style="background-color: #fff2cc;">With LD</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Mean</td> <td style="text-align: center;">39.19</td> <td style="text-align: center;">36.90</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Std Dev</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6.74</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4.55</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Maximum</td> <td style="text-align: center;">69.00</td> <td style="text-align: center;">45.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Minimum</td> <td style="text-align: center;">29.00</td> <td style="text-align: center;">32.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Mann-Whitney p-value 0.1774</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age Group	Percentage	< 34 yr	18%	35 - 40 yr	57%	41 - 45 yr	20%	> 46 yr	5%	Age of participants				Without LD	With LD	Mean	39.19	36.90	Std Dev	6.74	4.55	Maximum	69.00	45.00	Minimum	29.00	32.00	Mann-Whitney p-value 0.1774		
Age Group	Percentage																															
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Mann-Whitney p-value 0.1774																																



Description	Results (Without LD $n = 30$ , With LD $n = 10$ )															
<p>Twenty-eight of the 30 participants with children without learning disabilities were married in relation to seven of the ten participants with children with learning disabilities. Three participants of children with learning disabilities have never been married and are single. In the group without learning disabilities, one respondent was divorced and one widowed.</p> <p>Fisher's Exact Test (<math>p</math>-value = 0.0873) indicated that there was no statistical significant difference between the marital status of the two groups.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Marital status</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <caption>Marital Status Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Marital Status</th> <th>Without LD</th> <th>With LD</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Single/never married</td> <td>0</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Married</td> <td>28</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Divorced</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Widowed</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Marital Status	Without LD	With LD	Single/never married	0	3	Married	28	7	Divorced	1	0	Widowed	1	0
Marital Status	Without LD	With LD														
Single/never married	0	3														
Married	28	7														
Divorced	1	0														
Widowed	1	0														
<p>Twenty-eight of the participants with children without learning disabilities had obtained a B-degree or post graduate qualifications and six participants with children with learning disabilities had obtained a B-degree or further qualifications. In both of the groups two participants each had passed grade 12 and two parents of children with learning disabilities left school after grade 10.</p> <p>Fisher's Exact Test (<math>p</math>-value = 0.0587) indicated that there was no statistical difference between the qualification status of the two groups.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Qualification</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <caption>Qualification Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Qualification</th> <th>Without LD</th> <th>With LD</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Gr 10</td> <td>0</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gr 12</td> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B Degree/Diploma</td> <td>15</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Post graduate qualification</td> <td>13</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Qualification	Without LD	With LD	Gr 10	0	2	Gr 12	2	2	B Degree/Diploma	15	3	Post graduate qualification	13	3
Qualification	Without LD	With LD														
Gr 10	0	2														
Gr 12	2	2														
B Degree/Diploma	15	3														
Post graduate qualification	13	3														
<p>Twelve of the 30 participants with children without learning disabilities and seven of the ten with children with learning disabilities were employed on a full time basis.</p> <p>Fisher's Exact Test (<math>p</math>-value = 0.2919) indicated that there was no statistical difference between the employment status of the two groups.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Employment status</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <caption>Employment Status Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Employment Status</th> <th>Without LD</th> <th>With LD</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Homemaker</td> <td>9</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unemployed</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Part time</td> <td>9</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Full time</td> <td>12</td> <td>7</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Employment Status	Without LD	With LD	Homemaker	9	2	Unemployed	0	0	Part time	9	1	Full time	12	7
Employment Status	Without LD	With LD														
Homemaker	9	2														
Unemployed	0	0														
Part time	9	1														
Full time	12	7														

Description	Results (Without LD <i>n</i> = 30, With LD <i>n</i> = 10)															
<p>Twenty-five of the spouses of the 30 participants with children without learning disabilities and eight of the ten with children with learning disabilities were employed on a full time basis.</p> <p>Given the high percentage of participants who have tertiary qualifications and the levels of employment, it can be concluded that the parents in both groups fall within the mid- to higher socio-economic band.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Employment status of spouses</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <caption>Employment status of spouses</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Employment Status</th> <th>Without LD</th> <th>With LD</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Homemaker</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unemployed</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Part time</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Full time</td> <td>25</td> <td>8</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Employment Status	Without LD	With LD	Homemaker	2	0	Unemployed	0	0	Part time	1	1	Full time	25	8
Employment Status	Without LD	With LD														
Homemaker	2	0														
Unemployed	0	0														
Part time	1	1														
Full time	25	8														
<p>Regarding languages spoken at home, Afrikaans is the home language and English is the only other language used by both groups. 17 of the 30 families of children without learning disabilities and four of the ten families of children with learning disabilities speak Afrikaans and English at home, whereas 13 families of children without learning disabilities and six families of children with learning disabilities only speak Afrikaans at home.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Languages spoken at home</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <caption>Languages spoken at home</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Language(s)</th> <th>Without LD</th> <th>With LD</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Afrikaans &amp; English</td> <td>17</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Only Afrikaans</td> <td>13</td> <td>6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Language(s)	Without LD	With LD	Afrikaans & English	17	4	Only Afrikaans	13	6						
Language(s)	Without LD	With LD														
Afrikaans & English	17	4														
Only Afrikaans	13	6														

It is clear from Table 3.5 that the two groups of participants were comparable. The majority of participants were older married mothers (35 to 45 years), who had tertiary qualifications. Either they or their spouses were in full time employment, indicating that the groups were part of the medium to higher socio-economic group. The languages spoken at home were either Afrikaans only or both Afrikaans and English.

### 3.5.2.3.1 *Descriptive information about the children of the participants*

This data was obtained by using section B of the questionnaire (Appendix B). The majority of the children (32 of 40) were between 80 months (6 years 6 months) and 92 months (7 years 6 months), the typical age of a grade one child. Four children with learning disabilities fell into the typical range of a

grade one child. Six children with learning disabilities were older, ranging from 104 months (8 years 6 months) to 124 months (10 years 3 months). These children commenced school in the year they turned 8 years, two of them were retained and are now in their second year in grade one.

Regarding the children's gender, there was a 60:40 (boys : girls) distribution in the mainstream school. This correlates with Statistics South Africa's census of 2001 (STATS SA, 2004) which indicated that there were more boys than girls in the age group for the current grade ones (then 0-4 years). Interesting though, in the school for children with learning disabilities the distribution of boys : girls was 70:30.

In 92% of the families there were at least two children whose ages ranged between a few months and 18 years.

### **3.5.3 Material and Equipment**

Only one instrument was used to collect data, namely a self-administered questionnaire (Appendix B). Construction of the questionnaire is discussed in Table 3.6. Consent forms and self-addressed envelopes were attached to the questionnaires.

#### **3.5.3.1 Questionnaire**

The questionnaire compiled was based on the questionnaires of Light and Kelford-Smith (1993) and Sénéchal et al. (1998). The compilation of the questionnaire, the reasons for inclusion as well as the theoretical justification of each question are presented in Table 3.6. The draft questionnaire was pilot tested. Recommendations derived from the pilot test (Table 3.2) were implemented. After final editing, the edited questionnaire was distributed to the participants. Only Afrikaans questionnaires were used. (English translation included for examination purposes only).

**Table 3.5 Development of Questionnaire**

Categories and section	Question #	Question area, # questions	Type of question	Reason for inclusion	Theoretical justification
<b>A</b> <b>Background information of parent</b>	1	Relation to child (1)	3 option checklist	To code respondent as a mother, father or legal guardian.	Research indicated that it did not make a difference if families consisted of two parents or a single parent, the provision of literacy time was just as limited in each case (Hughes et al., 1999). However, Anderson (2000) found that children from single parent homes tend to repeat grades more often and generally do not perform as well in school as children from two parent families. These problems are mainly due to economic deprivation, which is excluded from the present study, and would therefore not be considered. Highly educated mothers could be more attuned to indications of literacy in their children and provide more accurate information about their children's reading abilities (Dickinson & DeTemple, 1998). Mothers from the medium socio-economic groups, who are more educated, often go beyond the factual story in their discussions with their children in comparison to mothers from a lower socio-economic income group with less education, who do not (Leseman & De Jong, 1998). Females tend to report more positive attitudes towards literacy than males do (Anderson, 2000).
	2	Age (1)	Open-ended	To determine the average age of the participants.	
	3	Marital status (1)	4 option checklist	To determine the family structure.	
	4	Academic qualification (1)	4 option checklist items	To determine the level of education of the respondent.	
	5,6	Occupational status	4 option checklist	To determine the socio-economic status of the respondent.	
	7	Language spoken at home(1)	Open-ended	To determine if Afrikaans is the only language used at home or if there are other social or cultural influences.	
<b>B</b> <b>Background information of child</b>	1	Age of child (1)	Open-ended	To verify the age of the Grade one beginner reader.	Reading time was related to the number of siblings in a family; reading time between parents and their children decreased as the number of siblings increased (Yarosz & Barnett, 2001). However, other researchers found that if there were elder siblings, it could be very useful, because the younger children were exposed to story reading from birth (Stainthorp & Hughes, 2000).
	2	# children in family(2)	Yes/No option Open-ended	To determine whether family size influences home literacy activities.	
	3	Type of school (1)	2 option checklist	To classify children into groups without learning disabilities or with learning disabilities.	

Categories and section	Question #	Question area, # questions	Type of question	Reason for inclusion	Theoretical justification
<b>C</b> <b>Family and child's literacy activities</b>	1,2,3	Family reading; time of day for story reading (3)	Q1 4 option checklist Q2 5 option checklist Q3 9 option checklist	To describe exposure to home literacy activities, e.g. frequency of parental example of participation in reading activities, and frequency in the time of day somebody reads to child.	Children's experiences with literacy begin through observing and participating in literacy activities at home (Van Steensel, 2006). The home literacy environment (in terms of frequency and type of reading activities) of children without learning disabilities or children with learning disabilities may be similar (Hughes et al., 1999). More than 70% of parents read for recreation and more than 50% of parents read in front of their children every day (Anderson, 2000). The frequency of story-book reading develops reading skills, extends vocabulary and short term memory and contributes to the independent reading ability of the child (Wood, 2002). Many parents (54%) read to their children at least once a day while more parents (64%) read to their children at least 5 times per week (Aulls & Sollars, 2003; Stainthorp & Hughes, 2000). For children to reach higher reading levels and develop positive attitudes towards reading, Anderson (2000) found that parents should read to their children on a regular basis, 4 times a week for 8 to 10 minutes at a time.
	4,5,6	Child's interest in books (3)	Q4 Likert-scale Q5 5 options Q6 Open-ended	To determine if children have a desire to read independently. To determine how many story-books children possess and which are their favourites. Open-ended questions were used to ensure that relevant information would not be overlooked.	Children, who enjoy reading, are more likely to devote time to it (Greaney & Hegarty, 1987). "With increased proficiency in reading, they tend to develop more favourable attitudes towards reading, and, therefore, are more likely to read for sheer enjoyment." (Greaney & Hegarty, 1987, p.15) Children who experience difficulties in reading comprehension and word identification start to develop problems in early reading. Therefore they tend to read less and fall behind in reading skill development (Leppänen et al., 2005).

Categories and section	Question #	Question area, # questions	Type of question	Reason for inclusion	Theoretical justification
	7	Child's participation (1)	Q7 Likert-scale	To determine frequency of participation in story-book reading, listening to story-book reading, paging through books or magazines, retelling a story, reading books on his or her own, requesting/asking for favourite stories, lending or buying books, completing activity books.	Listening and responding to stories are the basic means by which children come to understand the functions and structures of written language (Sénéchal et al., 1998). There are different ways of participating in story-book reading activities at home: Firstly, children can learn passively through silent listening to the story (Aulls & Sollars, 2003). It was observed, however, that only 27% of the children tended to sit back and listen to parents reading to them. Secondly, children may actively participate in the reading activity by means of repeating some parts of the story (Sénéchal & Cornell, 1993), asking questions (Anderson, 2000; Yaden <i>et al.</i> , 1989) or turning pages (Aulls & Sollars, 2003). Sénéchal and Cornell (1993) came to the conclusion that active participation is only effective when children (and not adults) initiate the interaction. Anderson (2000) found in her research that 33% of grade 2 children asked questions about unfamiliar words in the stories. Children become more motivated to read when they are actively involved in the reading experience (Sénéchal and Cornell, 1993). Aulls and Sollars (2003) reported that 73% of children frequently helped to turn pages or point at words or pictures. They also accounted that 73% of the children often asked their parents to read to them and that 73% of the children wanted their favourite story to be read to them again. Anderson (2000) reported that more than a third of the children in her research sample preferred to read fairy tales.
	8	Type of books (1)	Q8 11 option checklist	To determine the variety of story-books children listen to during home reading activities.	
	9	Reaction to story reading (1)	Q9 Checklist items with 3 point Likert-scale	To determine children's reactions when listening to stories.	Many parents perceive their children's difficulty to read as one of their children's greatest barriers to reading participation (Hughes et al., 1999). These children tend to memorise the words and do not read them (Hughes et al., 1999).
	10	Parents' role in story reading (1)	Q10 Likert-scale	To determine if parents understand the importance of their roles as mediators between the child and the written language.	

Categories and section	Question #	Question area, # questions	Type of question	Reason for inclusion	Theoretical justification
					et al., 2001). Discussion of the written word itself promotes the mechanics of reading (Baker et al., 2001). The positive environment children experience during reading with their parents, may nurture their motivation for reading challenging materials which promotes further growth in reading achievement (Baker et al., 2001). However, the opposite could also be true, and may result in negative feelings about reading within the child.
	11	Independent viewing or reading of printed material and reading abilities(1)	Q11 Checklist items with 3 point Likert-scale	To determine the type of printed material children read independently and what their reading ability is. To determine a possible link between the number of literacy interactions and reading ability of the children as perceived by their parents.	The quality of the home environment could influence print awareness and book and code knowledge (Aulls & Sollars, 2003). Children learn that print signifies language (Purcell-Gates, 1996). In a rich print environment, there are multiple opportunities for children to engage in literacy events (Aulls & Sollars, 2003). These researchers indicate that 46% of the grade one children (from the higher socio-economic group) in their study often tried to read brand names, while 76% of the children read word-for-word during an assisted reading activity (Aulls & Sollars, 2003). Parents can provide valuable information about their children's reading development (Dickinson & DeTemple, 1998).
	12,13	Parents' views on story reading (2)	Q12 Checklist items Q13 Open-ended	To determine if parents are aware that their perceptions influence story-book reading activities with their children.	Research indicates that parents agree on the importance of story-book reading as being necessary for literacy development (Sénéchal et al., 1998; Stainthorp & Hughes, 2000). Supportive parents, who are committed to and enthusiastic about assisting their children in reading activities, are a contributing factor to developing these children's reading abilities (Faires et al., 2000).
<b>D</b> <b>Checklist of titles of Afrikaans story-books</b>	1,2	Recognition of story-book titles (2)	Q1 Checklist items Q2 Open-ended	To verify if parents answered the questionnaire honestly. If parents read frequently to their children, they would be able to recognize titles on the list and not tick the foils. A list of 42 titles were provided containing six foils distributed evenly among the real titles. If more than two foils were ticked, the questionnaire was excluded from the study.	Story-book exposure will be measured by using an alternative measurement of story-book exposure, as developed by Sénéchal et al. (1998). This measurement addresses the methodological problems with self-report measures of story-book readings. Society has norms of what is beneficial to children's development and what is not. Parents' answers may therefore have been affected by the desire to come across as 'good parents' (Van Steensel, 2006). Sénéchal et al. (1998) realised that parents tend to complete the questionnaire with "socially acceptable answers", leading to a Hawthorne effect (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Therefore, Sénéchal et al. developed the idea of a checklist with foils to verify the authenticity of the participants' answers.



From Table 3.6 it is clear that the reasons for the inclusion of each question in the questionnaire were well-justified and referenced. The focus of the main aim and sub-aims of the research was constantly taken into account during the compilation of the questionnaire.

### 3.6 Data Collection Procedures

The procedures that were followed are outlined in Figure 3.1

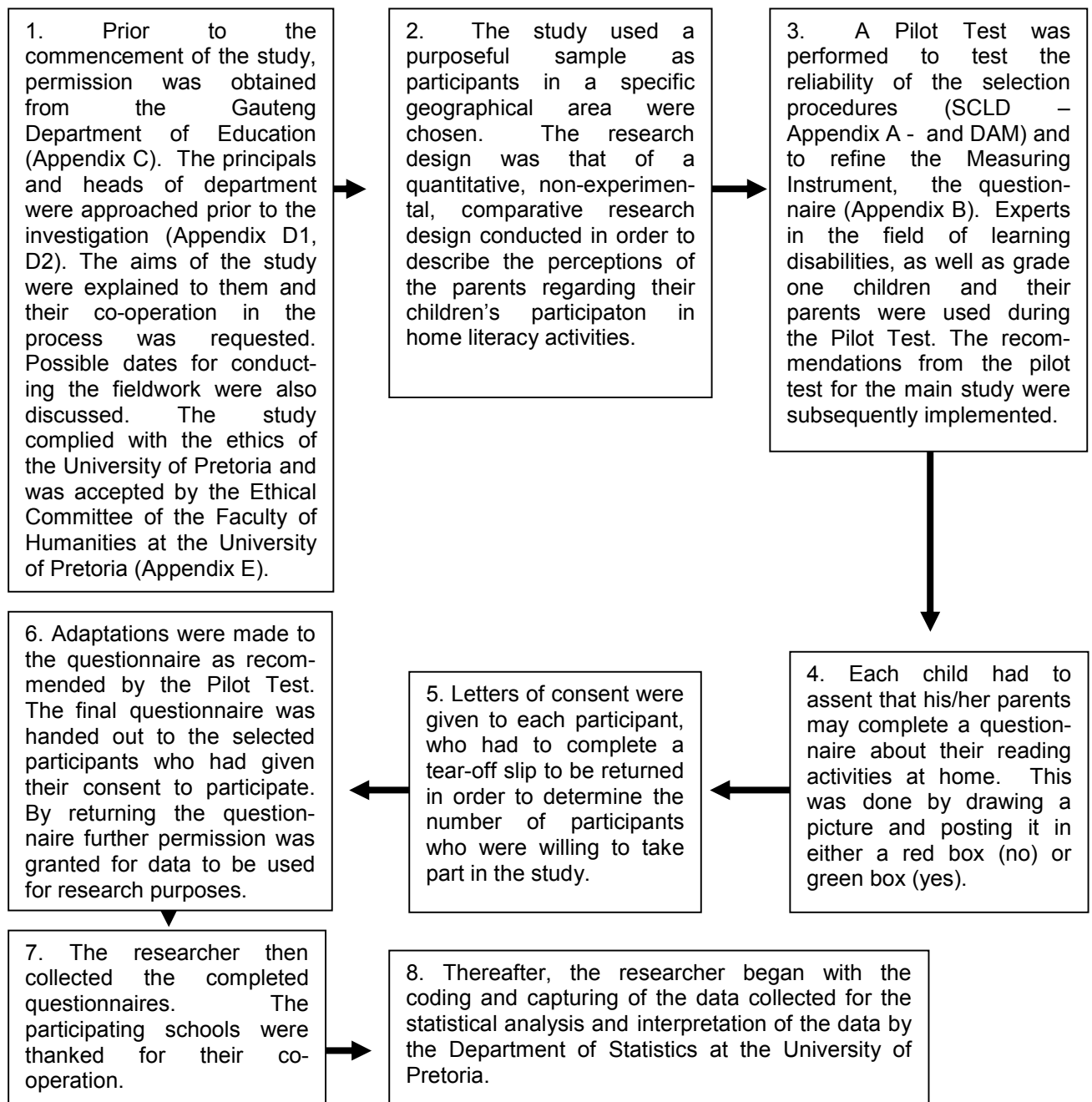


Figure 3.1: Schematic Representation of Data Collection Process



### 3.7 Analysis of Data

In order to meet the aim of the present study, data derived from the questionnaires was analyzed with the assistance of a qualified statistician and presented with descriptive statistics. A comparative analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001) was done between the children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities.

Descriptive statistics for each of the questions were calculated for the two groups, including frequencies and proportions of responses. Inferential statistical procedures (Fisher's Exact Test and Mann-Whitney Test) were used where relationships proved statistically significant. For each of the open-ended questions, responses were reviewed by the researcher and the statistical advisor and sub-categories of possible responses were determined and operationally defined. Comparisons were made between the responses of the group of children without learning disabilities and those of the children with learning disabilities. This coding procedure was also used for the follow-up questions, which formed part of the dichotomous-type questions.

For closed questions and multiple-choice questions, responses were coded according to pre-arranged codes. Once the codes were captured into the analysis software, they were analyzed to identify response patterns amongst participants. Frequency distributions were identified and visually presented.

The responses to the checklist-type questions were coded according to the categories presented in the questionnaire. Data was captured by computer and then analyzed to identify response patterns amongst participants. Frequencies of response patterns were visually presented. Different kinds of visual representations of the data were used, for example frequency distributions, pi-charts, histograms, tables and contingency tables (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

A semantic differential scale was used to indicate how parents perceived the level of understanding when a child listened to a story (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The frequency of reading requests (whether a child listens to a story or reads independently) was calculated and interpreted.

### **3.8 Summary**

This chapter described the methodology of this research project. The aims and sub-aims of the study were presented, followed by a description of the research design. The compilation of the questionnaire and pilot testing were discussed in detail. The criteria for subject selection and material used in the research process were presented. The background information on parents who participated in the study, was visually presented and discussed. This was followed by a description of procedures for data collection. Finally, the procedures for data analysis were outlined to form a basis for the presentation and interpretation of the results obtained.

## Chapter 4 Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the parental perception of home-based reading activities as obtained from questionnaires. Data is presented and analyzed according to the five sub-aims. Figure 4.1 provides a schematic outline for the presentation and discussion of the results.

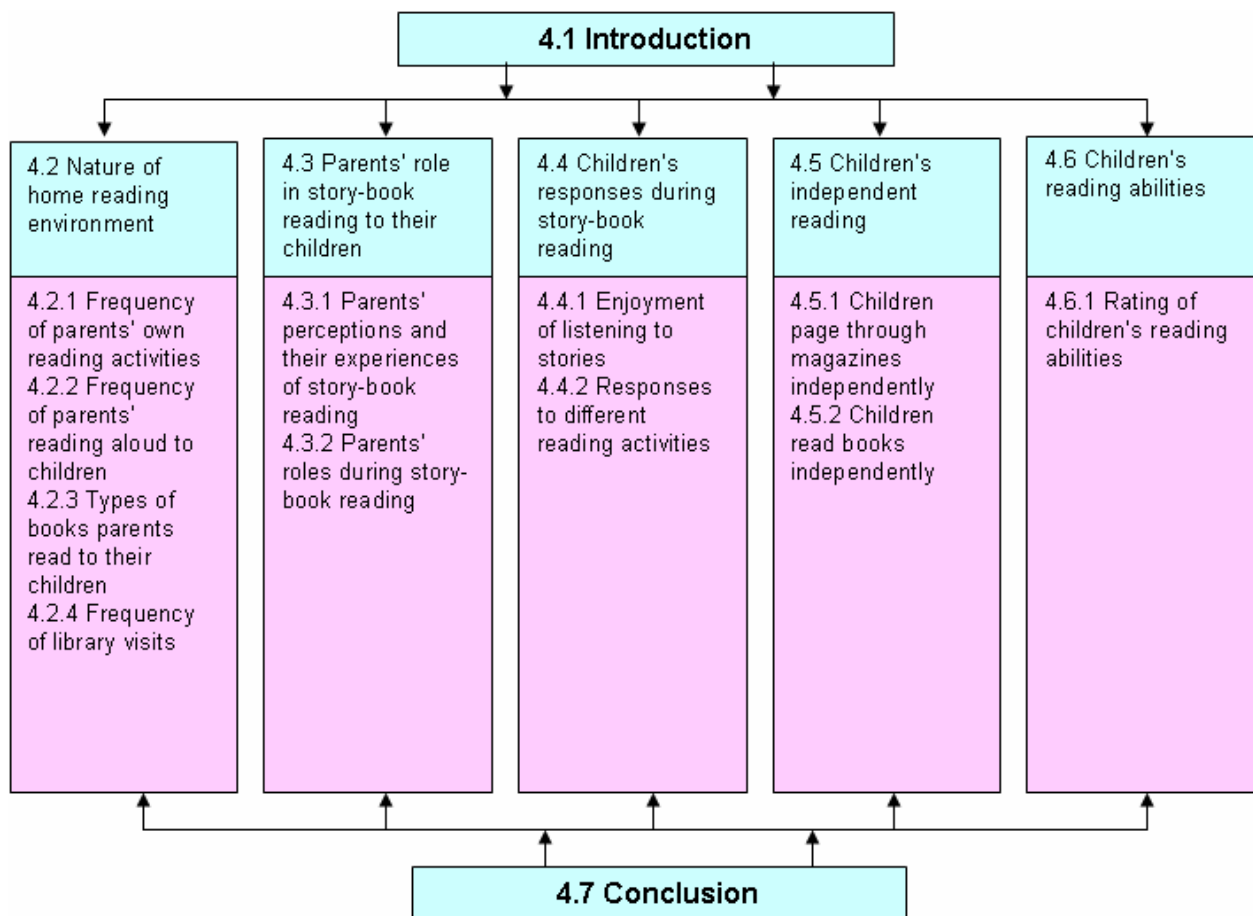


Figure 4.1: Outline for presentation and discussion of results

Figure 4.1 shows that this chapter firstly explores the nature of the home reading environment. Secondly, the role of parents in story-book reading and children's responses to the reading are discussed. Thirdly, an overview of the children's independent reading is given. Lastly, the children's reading abilities, as perceived by their parents is discussed. Throughout the chapter results are grouped

according to children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities. This discussion will be followed by the integration of the results, which will highlight the trends amongst the different areas discussed earlier.

To ensure that parents did not give socially acceptable answers, foils were built into the last section of the questionnaire. Parents had to indicate all the titles of Afrikaans story-books they could recognise. Results reveal that none of the parents indicated more than two foils. The researcher was therefore satisfied that parents' answers were true reflections of their perceptions of their children's reading activities at home.

Fisher's Exact Test was implemented to test for statistical significant relationships between the two groups. Only significance on the 5% level was discussed. In cases where the resemblance between the two groups was too much, the frequencies in some of the cells were too small and no test could be used.

## 4.2 Nature of home reading environment

The extent to which reading materials were available in the home as well as the nature of the family's reading activities is described (Van Steensel, 2006). Van Steensel (2006) emphasizes the need for literacy exposure to children as this provides them the opportunity to learn incidentally about literacy through observing their parents (or literate others) reading in various contexts.

### 4.2.1 Frequency of parents' own reading

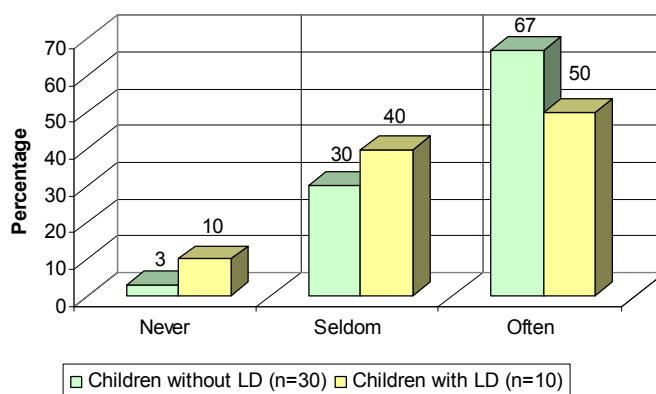


Figure 4.2 Parents' own reading

The results indicate that the majority of parents in both groups read at least once or more a day (often) in front of their children, whereas only one parent in each group never read in front of her children. This indicates that the children in both groups had similar exposure in terms of observing their parents reading at home. Fischer’s Exact Test ( $p=0.46$ ) indicated no statistical significance between the two groups. The study of Hughes et al. (1999) also found that the home literacy environment of the two groups were similar in terms of the frequency of exposure to home reading activities.

#### 4.2.2 Parents reading stories aloud to their children

Reading stories aloud to children is a daily routine in most middle- and higher class homes (DeBaryshe, 1995).

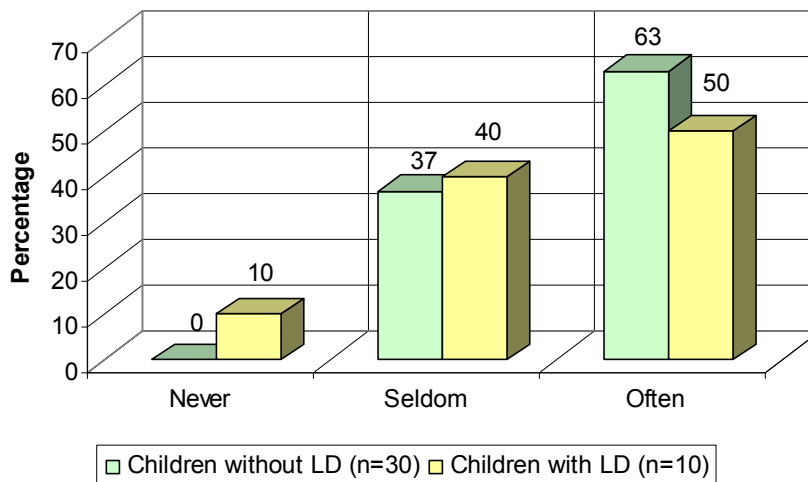


Figure 4.3 Parents reading stories aloud to their children

Results indicate that 63% of children without learning disabilities and 50% of children with learning disabilities listen to stories frequently (more than 5 times per week). One child with learning disabilities has never had the opportunity of listening to his mother reading a story to him. This parent is a single mother who left school after grade ten and who works full-time. It may be that she is either unaware of the importance of reading stories to her child or she simply does not have the time to read because she is a single, working mother with a single income.

To compare if frequency of parents’ own reading and frequency of reading stories

aloud to their children are related, a contingency table was created (Table 4.1) and the Fisher's Exact Test applied.

**Table 4.1 Parent's own reading in relation to parents reading stories aloud to their children**

		Parents reading aloud to their children	
		Seldom	Often
Parents' own reading	Frequency Row Pct		
	Never or 2-3 times per week	8 53.33	7 46.67
	Daily	2 15.38	11 84.62
	More than once a day	2 16.67	10 83.33
p-value = <b>0.0575</b>			

As there was no significant difference between the children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities, it was decided to treat these two groups as a whole. Fisher's Exact Test was administered to compare two dichotomous nominal variables (own reading and reading aloud) as the sample sizes were small [ $n=40$ ] (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Fisher's Exact Test indicated no statistical significance on the 5% level ( $p = 0.0575$ ). Significance was only noted on the 10% level of confidence and thus does not warrant a further discussion.

### 4.2.3 Types of books

The types of books parents read aloud to their children in the two groups are displayed in Table 4.2. Fisher's Exact Test could not be applied to the data as the parents could choose more than one option and, apart from some cells being too small in relation to the number of responses, the observations are not independent.

**Table 4.2 Types of books**

Type of book	Children without LD (n=30)	Children with LD (n=10)
Easy children's story-books	29 (97%)	8 (80%)
Picture books	18 (60%)	5 (50%)
Fairy tales and fantasy stories	17 (57%)	4 (40%)
Children's magazines	17 (57%)	5 (50%)
Rhyme books	14 (47%)	2 (20%)
Non-fiction books	12 (40%)	1 (10%)
Other magazines	10 (33%)	3 (30%)
Alphabet books	8 (27%)	4 (40%)
Number books	8 (27%)	2 (20%)
Comic books, e.g. Asterix	7 (24%)	2 (20%)

It is clear that parents of children in both groups tend to read the same type of books (mostly easy story-books and picture books) minimizing their children's exposure to number and comic books. This is followed by the reading of fantasy books and children's magazines. Parents of children without learning disabilities read non-fiction books and rhyme books to their children, whereas parents of children with learning disabilities read alphabet books. Alphabet books are picture books that illustrate specific alphabet letters by using key words, e.g. " 'A' is for apple" (Dixon, 2006). Alphabet books introduce children to the process of reading, whereas rhyme books introduce children to rhyme and sound patterns in a playful manner (Dixon, 2006).

The findings of Rashid et al. (2005) support the current study's results stipulating that the home reading environment of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities are similar in terms of frequency and type of reading activities.

#### **4.2.4 Frequency of library visits**

Other studies show that the frequency of library visits differs between children without learning disabilities and those with learning disabilities. In their study of children with learning disabilities Rashid et al. (2005) found that more than half the children in their research did not own a library card or never visited a library.

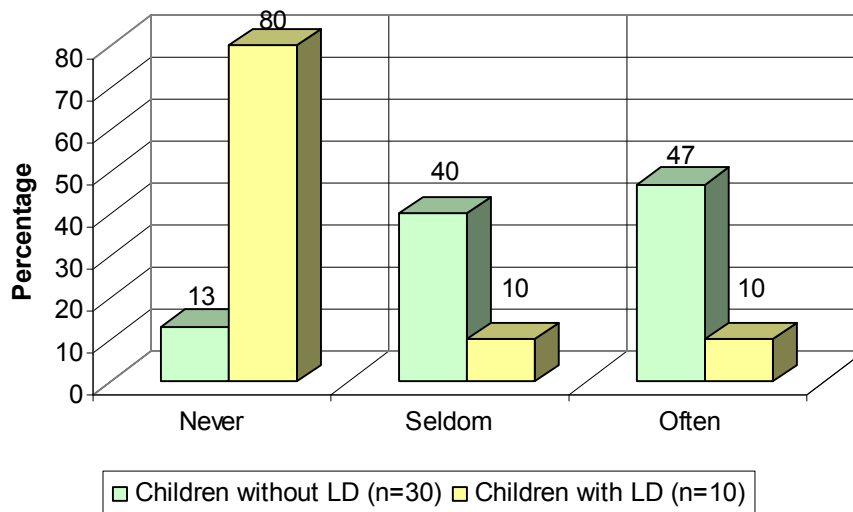


Figure 4.4 Library visits

In the current study 80% of children with learning disabilities have never visited a library according to their parents. Fisher’s Exact Test ( $p\text{-value} = <.0001$ ) indicates a highly significant relationship between this group and the frequency of library visits.

### 4.3 Parents’ role in story-book reading to their children

Parental support is influenced by parents’ perceptions about reading as well as their expectations of their children’s abilities, and could therefore indicate how parents engage with their children during story-book reading activities (Baker & Scher, 2002).

#### 4.3.1 Parents’ perceptions and their experiences of story-book reading

Parents’ perceptions and experiences of story-book reading differ. Table 4.3 portrays the opinions of the parents of children without learning disabilities and parents of children with learning disabilities regarding these perceptions and experiences. Fisher’s Exact Test was implemented to determine the possible relationship between the two groups and the various variables. The  $p\text{-values}$  are presented in Table 4.3.



**Table 4.3 Parents' perceptions and experiences of story-book reading**

Perceptions and experiences	Agree		Disagree		p-value
	Children without LD (n=30)	Children with LD (n=10)	Children without LD (n=30)	Children with LD (n=10)	
It is important that children and parents read stories together	30 (100%)	7** (70%)	-	1 (10%)	0.2500
It is easy to find suitable books to read to my child	23 (77%)	5 (50%)	7 (23%)	5 (50%)	0.1329
I know when my child does not understand what I'm reading	29 (97%)	8 (80%)	1 (3%)	2 (20%)	0.1488
I have enough time to read stories to my child	18 (60%)	5 (50%)	12 (40%)	5 (50%)	0.7166
It is important that my child becomes motivated and interested in books	24* (80%)	5 (50%)	5 (17%)	5 (50%)	0.0871
I use my voice to portray different characters while reading a story	28 (93%)	8 (80%)	2 (7%)	2 (20%)	0.2559
I enjoy reading stories to my child	30 (100%)	9 (90%)	-	1 (10%)	0.2500
I enjoy listening to my child reading stories to me	29 (97%)	8* (80%)	1 (3.3%)	1 (10%)	0.4130

(\*1 parent did not answer this question)

(\*\*2 parents did not answer this question)

The p-values presented in Table 4.3 indicate no statistical significance between the results of the two groups for any of the 8 items.

The majority of the parents in this survey indicated that it is important that parents read stories aloud to their children. All the parents of children without learning disabilities agreed on the importance of story-book reading by parents to their children in relation to only 70% of the parents of children with learning disabilities (p-value 0.2500). From the rest of the data it is evident that the responses of the two groups were similar.

### 4.3.2 Parents' roles during story-book reading

When children start to read, they need support from their parents. Parents should therefore feel comfortable when assisting their children in their acquisition of reading skills (McMackin, 1993). Table 4.4 indicates the different roles played by parents during story-book reading as well as the difference, if any, between the parents of the two groups of children. The p-value of Fisher's Exact Test is also presented in the following table.

**Table 4.4 Parents' roles during story-book reading**

Roles	Never		Seldom		Often		p-value
	Children without LD (n=30)	Children with LD (n=10)	Children without LD (n=30)	Children with LD (n=10)	Children without LD (n=30)	Children with LD (n=10)	
Reads words in book	-	-	2 (7%)	3 (30%)	28 (93%)	7 (70%)	0.0893
Pages through book with child	2 (7%)	-	9 (30%)	4 (40%)	19 (63%)	6 (60%)	0.8378
Shows words in book and reads them	3 (10%)	-	17 (57%)	6 (60%)	10 (33%)	3* (30%)	1.0000
Points to picture and tells own story	7 (23%)	1 (10%)	13 (43%)	5 (50%)	8** (27%)	3* (30%)	0.7803
Asks child to name pictures	8 (27%)	1 (10%)	17 (57%)	5 (50%)	3** (10%)	3* (30%)	0.2338
Asks child to guess what will happen next	7 (23%)	2 (30%)	21 (70%)	6 (60%)	-**	1* (10%)	0.3825
Asks child to explain why something happens in story	4 (13%)	3 (30%)	21 (70%)	6 (60%)	4* (13%)	1 (10%)	0.5356
Asks child to look for certain words on a page	13 (43%)	5 (50%)	11 (37%)	3 (30%)	4** (13%)	1* (10%)	1.0000
Asks child to read certain words on his own	3 (10%)	2 (20%)	19 (63%)	6 (60%)	8 (27%)	2 (20%)	0.7470

(\*1 parent did not answer this question)

(\*\*2 parents did not answer this question)

From Table 4.4 it is once again evident that in relation to these variables there are no significant differences between the two groups. Aulls and Sollars (2003), who also did research on grade one children's home environment, indicated that 73% of the children in their study turned pages frequently or pointed to words or pictures.

Interestingly almost half of the parents in each group point to pictures and tell their own stories to their children (p-value = 0.7803) or ask their children to identify

pictures ( $p$ -value = 0.2338). 70% of parents of children without learning disabilities and 60% of parents of children with learning disabilities seldom ask their children to guess what is going to happen next in the story or to explain why something happened in the story.

The majority of parents in both groups never ask their children to look for certain words on a page while they are reading aloud to them, and 60% of the parents in both groups seldom ask their children to read certain words on their own. Asking children to look for or to read some of the words while they are reading aloud to their children, may be perceived to be a more didactical act and parents do not consider this as part of their role during story-book reading.

The above table thus shows clearly that the children without learning disabilities and the children with learning disabilities were exposed to the same input by their parents when they were listening to stories read aloud by their parents.

#### **4.4 Children's responses during story-book reading**

The more often children engage in book reading, the more they understand that the messages in books are also conveyed through the printed word and not only through pictures alone (Aulls & Sollars, 2003). As discussed in Chapter 2, children's responses may differ from child to child during story-book reading: some children are actively involved during the story-book reading session by turning the pages frequently, pointing to words or pictures, or asking questions related to the story, while others sit passively and listen to the parent reading the story aloud to them.

##### **4.4.1 Children enjoy listening to stories**

It is clear that the majority of the children in each group enjoy listening to stories. Three parents – one of a child without learning disabilities and two of children with learning disabilities - chose not to answer this question.

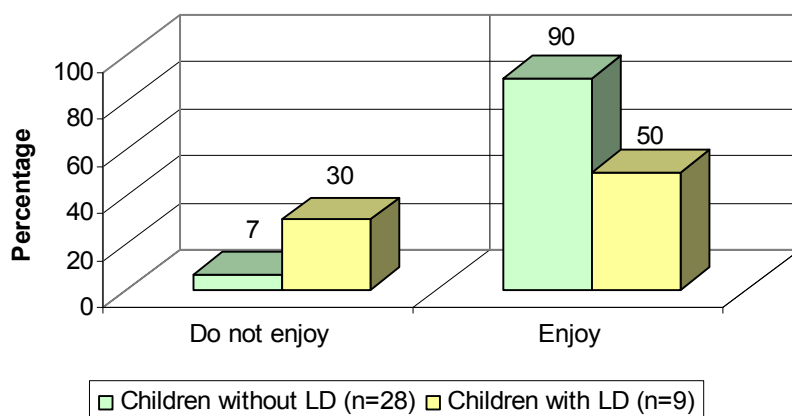


Figure 4.5 Children enjoy listening to stories

Fisher's Exact Test (p-value = 0.0569) indicates statistical significance only on the 10% level and thus it does not warrant further discussion.

#### 4.4.2 Children's responses during reading activities

The above-mentioned data shows clearly that both children without learning disabilities and those with learning disabilities enjoy listening to stories. The exposure to home reading activities is also similar. However, Table 4.5 shows that their responses during story-book reading activities differ in various ways.

Table 4.5 Children's responses during story-book reading activities

Responses	Never		Seldom		Often		p-value
	Children without LD (n=30)	Children with LD (n=10)	Children without LD (n=30)	Children with LD (n=10)	Children without LD (n=30)	Children with LD (n=10)	
Do not listen, look around	23 (77%)	4 (40%)	5 (17%)	5 (50%)	-**	-*	0.1903
Listen attentively	-	-	5 (17%)	4 (40%)	25 (83%)	6 (60%)	<b>0.0408</b>
Turn pages	8 (27%)	3 (30%)	16 (53%)	5 (50%)	4**	1*	1.0000
Look at, point to pictures	1 (3%)	-	12 (40%)	-	17 (57%)	9*	<b>0.0460</b>
Ask questions about pictures	1 (3%)	-	14 (47%)	4 (40%)	13**	5*	1.0000

Responses	Never		Seldom		Often		p-value
	Children without LD (n=30)	Children with LD (n=10)	Children without LD (n=30)	Children with LD (n=10)	Children without LD (n=30)	Children with LD (n=10)	
Ask about words	1 (3%)	2 (20%)	13 (43%)	4 (40%)	16 (53%)	4 (40%)	0.2652
Ask the meaning of words	1 (3%)	-	16 (53%)	6 (60%)	12* (40%)	4 (40%)	1.0000
Read some words on their own	-	4 (40%)	14 (47%)	2 (20%)	14** (47%)	3* (30%)	<b>0.0038</b>

(\* 1 parent did not answer this question)

(\*\*2 parents did not answer this question)

(All highly significant p-values are highlighted in **bold**)

Children with learning disabilities find it difficult to listen attentively to story-book reading in relation to children without learning disabilities. Fisher's Exact Test (p-value = 0.0408) indicates a statistically significant relationship regarding the two groups' attentive listening to story-book reading.

There is also a statistically significant relationship (p-value = 0.0460) regarding the two groups' looking at pictures. However no significant relationship is found between the children of the two groups and turning of pages (p-value = 1.000) and questions asked about pictures or words (p-values = 1.000 and 0.2665 respectively).

It is interesting, however, that the majority of children without learning disabilities often or seldom try to read some of the words in the story independently in relation to children with learning disabilities who never or seldom try to read words independently. A highly significant relationship (p-value = 0.0038) between the children of both groups and reading of certain words independently, is noted. It is thus clear that children without learning disabilities tend to be more involved spontaneously in reading along with their parents in relation to those with learning disabilities. Their engagement in more reading activities results in children without learning disabilities getting "richer" according to the Matthew effect (Stanovich, 1986).

#### 4.5 Children's independent reading

This section looks at two aspects, namely, how frequently children page through

books or magazines independently and whether they read books independently.

#### 4.5.1 Children page through books and magazines independently

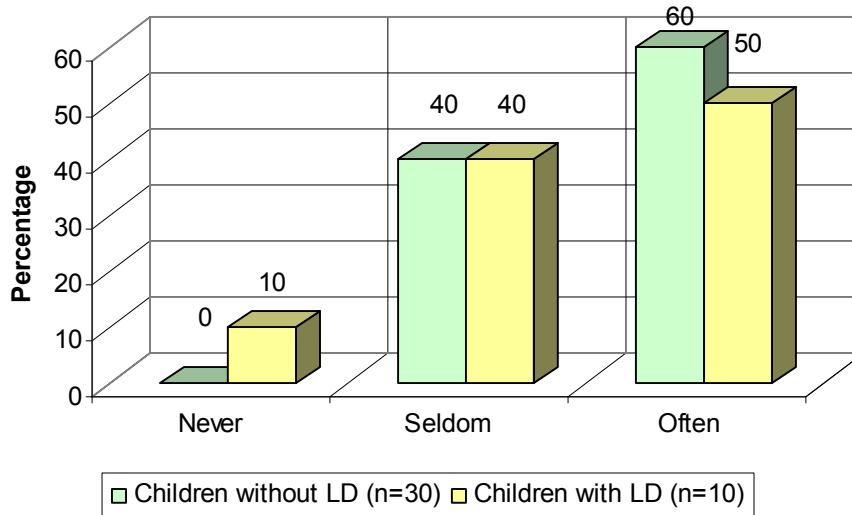


Figure 4.6 Children page through books and magazines independently

The majority of children without learning disabilities often page through books or magazines (60%) although a noticeable percentage (40%) seldom page through books or magazines. Half of the children with learning disabilities often page through books or magazines (50%), whilst the other half seldom or never do. As expected, Fisher's Exact Test ( $p$ -value = 0.7166) indicates no significant relationship between the two groups regarding this aspect.

#### 4.5.2 Children read books independently

In the Rashid et al. study (2005) it was found that children with learning disabilities prefer to spend more time on non-reading activities (for instance watching television) than engaging in independent reading (Rashid et al., 2005). These researchers stipulate that children with reading difficulties engage in fewer home reading activities because of their limited reading abilities or the fact that their parents do not emphasize home reading activities due to their children's reading difficulty.

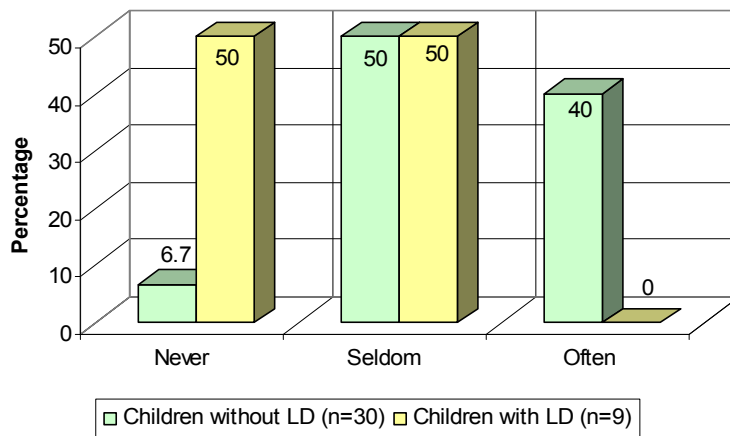


Figure 4.7 Children read books independently

The results of the current study support the findings of Rashid et al. (2005) and indicate that children without learning disabilities read books independently more often than children with learning disabilities. Findings on Fisher's Exact Test ( $p$ -value = 0.0648) only indicate a significant relationship on the 10% level of confidence thus it does not warrant a further discussion of the two groups regarding their independent reading.

#### 4.6 Children's reading abilities

This section addresses the rating of reading abilities of children without learning disabilities and those with learning disabilities. It is important to note that these ratings were done according to the perceptions of the parents and no norm-based reading test was administered to test the children's reading abilities. However, Dickinson and DeTemple (1998) are of the opinion that parental reports in the area of literacy development are valuable, because parents play a central part in their children's literacy development and therefore are aware of their children's reading abilities. In addition, follow-up studies showed that responses about parents' perceptions of their children's reading abilities were generally consistent (Dickinson & DeTemple, 1998). Furthermore, they also found that highly educated mothers, similar to the majority of participants in the current study, provided more accurate information because they were more attuned to indications of literacy in their children (Dickinson & DeTemple, 1998). Fisher's Exact Test was used to determine the relationship between the reading abilities of the children and questions asked

about written words, as well as parents indicating printed words while reading them, and finally the reading motivation of the children.

#### 4.6.1 Rating of children's reading abilities

Table 4.6 presents parents' perceptions of their children's reading abilities according to how the children read different types of printed material. Fisher's Exact Test was again implemented to determine the significant relationship between the reading abilities of children in the two groups. The p-values are included in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6 How parents perceive their children's reading abilities**

Printed material children are exposed to and read on their own	Fluent and competent		Average		Poor		p-value
	Children without LD (n=30)	Children with LD (n=10)	Children without LD (n=30)	Children with LD (n=10)	Children without LD (n=30)	Children with LD (n=10)	
Labels	15 (50%)	-	15 (50%)	6 (60%)	-	4 (40%)	<b>0.0002</b>
Names of shops	21 (70%)	4 (40%)	9 (30%)	4 (40%)	-	2 (20%)	<b>0.0479</b>
School reading-cards	27 (90%)	1 (10%)	3 (10%)	8 (80%)	-	1 (10%)	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
Picture books without printed words	21 (70%)	5 (50%)	5 (17%)	4 (40%)	2** (7%)	-*	0.2239
Picture books with one or two words on a page	27 (90%)	2 (20%)	3 (10%)	8 (80%)	-	-	<b>&lt;.0001</b>
Books with pictures, large print	27 (90%)	2 (20%)	3 (10%)	5 (50%)	-	2*	<b>0.0001</b>
Books with pictures, large print, short sentences	24 (80%)	2 (20%)	6 (20%)	5 (50%)	-	3 (30%)	<b>0.0004</b>
Story-books with large print, hardly any pictures	17 (57%)	-	12 (40%)	4 (40%)	1 (3%)	5* (50%)	<b>0.0002</b>
Story-books with smaller print, lots of pictures	15 (50%)	1 (10%)	13 (43%)	2 (20%)	2 (7%)	7 (70%)	<b>0.0002</b>
Story-books with smaller print, hardly any pictures	5 (17%)	-	18 (60%)	1 (10%)	7 (23%)	8* (80%)	<b>0.0023</b>
Books with very small print, hardly any pictures	3 (10%)	-	15 (50%)	1 (10%)	12 (40%)	8* (80%)	<b>0.0383</b>
Non-fiction books	6 (20%)	-	13 (43%)	1 (10%)	9** (30%)	7** (70%)	<b>0.0292</b>
Magazines	3 (10%)	-	14 (47%)	2 (20%)	12* (40%)	6** (60%)	0.3107

(\* 1 parent did not answer this question)

(\*\*2 parents did not answer this question)

(All highly significant p-values are highlighted in **bold**)

From the results depicted in Table 4.6 it is evident that there is a statistically



significant relationship between the specific group and the parents' perception of their children's reading abilities in almost all of the above-mentioned examples of printed material.

Results from Fisher's Exact Test indicate highly significant differences in the reading abilities of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities regarding the reading of school reading-cards ( $p < .0001$ ), picture books with one or two words on a page ( $p < .0001$ ) and books with pictures and large print ( $p = 0.0001$ ). The reading abilities of both groups when reading labels, story-books with large print as well as story-books with smaller print and hardly any pictures, also indicate highly significant differences ( $p = 0.0002$  in all cases). The reading of non-fiction books ( $p = 0.0292$ ) as well as shop names ( $p = 0.0479$ ) indicates statistical significance between the two groups.

There was a highly significant correlation between the reading abilities of both groups and the type of books reported as being enjoyed by children, e.g. books with pictures, large print and short sentences ( $p = 0.0004$ ). Children without learning disabilities are furthermore better readers of story-books with smaller print and hardly any pictures ( $p = 0.0023$ ) and of story-books with very small print and few pictures ( $p = 0.0383$ ).

However, no statistical significance is noted between the reading abilities of the two groups regarding easy reading material, namely picture books without the printed word ( $p = 0.2239$ ) or the reading of magazines ( $p=0.3107$ ).

Above-mentioned results show clearly that children without learning disabilities are more fluent and efficient readers of printed materials in relation to those with learning disabilities. To determine the relationship between the children's learning ability/disability and their reading ability, Fisher's Exact Test was implemented with results displayed in Table 4.7.

**Table 4.7 Reading abilities of children without LD and children with LD**

Frequency Row %	Fluent or competent reader	Average reader	Struggling or poor reader
Children without learning disabilities (n=30)	20 66.67%	10 33.33%	- 0%
Children with learning disabilities (n=10)	1 10%	6 60%	3 30%
Total	21 52.50%	16 40%	3 7.50%

(p-value <0.0001)

Results indicate that according to their parents' perceptions, all children without learning disabilities are either average to fluent or competent readers in relation to the children with learning disabilities who are either average to poor readers (p < 0.0001).

Fisher's Exact Test was implemented to determine the relation between the reading ability of the children and different responses of the children or parents during story-book reading. Results are displayed in Table 4.8.

**Table 4.8 Relation between children's reading abilities and different responses of children or roles and responses of parents during story-book reading**

Responses or roles	Frequency Row Pct	Children's reading abilities			p-values
		Fluent or competent reader	Average reader	Struggling or poor reader	
Children ask questions about written words	Seldom	6 28.57	13 81.25	1 33.33	<b>0.0036</b>
	Often	15 71.43	3 18.75	2 66.67	
* Children ask questions about meaning of words	Seldom	8 28.57	14 84.25	1 33.33	<b>0.0051</b>
	Often	12 71.43	2 18.75	2 66.67	

Responses or roles	Frequency Row Pct	Children's reading abilities			p-values
		Fluent or competent reader	Average reader	Struggling or poor reader	
* Parents indicate word in story and read it.	Seldom	10 47.62	14 93.33	2 66.67	<b>0.0077</b>
	Often	11 52.38	1 6.67	1 33.33	
* Parents find it easy to keep their children motivated to read	Seldom	1 5.00	7 43.75	2 66.67	<b>0.0046</b>
	Often	19 95.00	9 56.25	1 33.33	
* Parents use different voices during story-book reading	Seldom	0 0.00	2 12.50	2 66.67	<b>0.0039</b>
	Often	21 100.00	14 87.50	1 33.33	

(\* one parent did not answer this question)  
(All highly significant p-values are highlighted in **bold**)

From results on Fisher's Exact Test as displayed in Table 4.8 it is evident that the relationship between the reading ability of the children indicates a statistical significance on the 5% level of confidence with a p-value of 0.0036. It is clear that 71% of the fluent and competent readers often ask questions about written words in relation to 81% of the average readers and 33% of the struggling readers who seldom or never ask questions about written words. Fluent readers are more interested in text and thus engage more with print. Their active participation assists them to learn more about the story, the pictures and the words, in relation to the struggling readers whose progress is hampered by their passive participation. This finding supports the Matthew effect (Stanovich, 1986) discussed earlier.

Similar results to those above were found when the relationship between the reading ability of the children and the questions they ask about the meaning of words were determined with Fisher's Exact Test (p-value = 0.0051). Results also indicate that fluent readers actively ask more questions about the meaning of words than less competent readers.

Furthermore, the relationship between the reading ability of the children and parents indicating a word in a story-book while reading it, was determined using Fisher's

Exact Test. Results displayed in Table 4.8 indicate a statistical significance (p-value of 0.0077) between these two variables. Results show that 52% of the parents of fluent and competent readers often show a word to their children during story-book reading and then read it themselves. In relation to this, 93% of the average readers' parents and 67% of the poor readers' parents seldom show the words and then read them to their children. This response of the parents during story-book reading could possibly be because the parents of fluent and competent readers expect more of their children and therefore try to introduce new sight words to their children concurrently during the story-book reading session. These results support the research findings of Anderson (2000) who also found that parents' expectations of their children's reading abilities influence their support of them.

Finally Fisher's Exact Test was implemented to determine the relationship between the reading ability of the children and how easy it is for parents to keep their children motivated to read. From the results displayed in Table 4.8 it is thus clear that it indicates a statistical significance on the 5% level of confidence with a p-value of 0.0046. It is evident from the results that 95% of the fluent and competent readers are motivated to read in relation to 56.25% of the average readers and 33.33% of the struggling readers who are not. This again reflects the Matthew effect (Stanovich, 1986) indicating that fluent and competent readers are more motivated to engage in reading activities, implying growth in competency. However, average and struggling readers become less motivated to read implying slower growth if any, in reading proficiency.

To conclude, it is evident from above-mentioned results that children without learning disabilities are better readers and are more actively engaged in reading activities than children with learning disabilities.

## **4.7 Conclusion**

Based on the preceding discussion, the following important aspects should be highlighted:

- a) Children with learning disabilities and children without learning disabilities

have similar exposure to home reading experiences. The frequency of parents reading on their own and parents reading aloud to their children are similar for both groups. The types of books the parents read aloud to their children are similar, although it appears as if parents of children without learning disabilities tend to read more rhyme books, non-fiction and family magazines with their children whereas parents of children with learning disabilities read more alphabet books to their children. The only difference between the children of the two groups is the frequency of their library visits. 47% of children without learning disabilities frequently visit libraries with their parents whereas only 10% of children with learning disabilities do.

- b) Parents of children with learning disabilities and parents of children without learning disabilities perceive their roles similarly during story-book reading. Parents' perceptions and experiences of story-book reading are also similar. Although parents of children with learning disabilities find it more difficult to motivate their children to read in comparison to parents of children without learning disabilities. This tendency is possibly affected by the Matthew effect (Stanovich, 1986) and parents' expectations of their children's reading abilities (Rashid et al., 2005) as discussed in detail in Chapter 2.
- c) Except for both groups of children enjoying listening to stories, their responses are different during story-book reading. 80% of children without learning disabilities listen attentively to stories in relation to 50% of children with learning disabilities, who do not. 50% of parents of children with learning disabilities also indicate that their children find it difficult to concentrate and sit still during story-book reading. 46% of children without learning disabilities try to read words independently during story-book reading in relation to 30% of children with learning disabilities who do not. The active participation of children without learning disabilities in relation to the more passive participation of children with learning disabilities was highlighted in results discussed earlier.
- d) The independent reading of the children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities was different. However, the frequency with

which children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities often paged independently through books and magazines was similar (50% and 60% respectively). 40% of children without learning disabilities often read books independently whereas children with learning disabilities did not attempt to read books independently.

- e) Children with learning disabilities fall into the groups of average to struggling readers while children without learning disabilities fall into the groups of fluent and competent to average readers. Fisher's Exact Test indicates a statistical significant relation between the two groups. We can therefore deduct from this survey that children without learning disabilities read more fluently and are more competent readers in relation to children with learning disabilities. Furthermore Fisher's Exact Tests reveal statistical significant relations between the reading abilities of children and the questions they ask during story-book reading about written words or the meaning of words. Significant statistical relationships are also indicated between children's reading abilities and parents' roles and responses during story-book reading, such as parents indicating words in stories while reading, motivating their children to read, as well as using different voices during story-book reading. These results imply that parents of more fluent and competent readers tend to give attention to the above-mentioned aspects more often in relation to parents of children who are average to poor readers.

## **4.8 Summary**

The results obtained from the 40 questionnaires, which were completed by the participants in this research were presented and interpreted with reference to the five sub-aims, which were identified in Chapter 2 and forms the foundation of the methodology presented in Chapter 3. The results were subsequently discussed with reference to current literature. Finally, the core results obtained from the various contexts were presented.

## **Chapter 5      Summary and Conclusion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a summary of the results of the study and the conclusions reached. The critical evaluation of the study is followed by the clinical implications of the study. Finally, recommendations for further research are made.

### **5.2 Summary and integration of results**

The purpose of the study was to determine the home reading experiences of grade one children without learning disabilities and grade one children with learning disabilities, as perceived by their parents. The data was obtained from 40 participants who completed a questionnaire.

Various studies support the fact that story-book reading at home contributes to the development of children's language and literacy skills (Anderson, 2000; Hawes & Plourde, 2002; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002). Children learn incidentally about literacy through the observation of others who are engaged in reading activities (Stainthorp & Hughes, 2000; Van Steensel, 2006). The results of the current study, show that the exposure to home reading experiences of the children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities are similar. The two groups' exposure to seeing parents reading on their own and hearing parents reading aloud to them are similar. These results are similar to the findings of Hughes et al. (1999). The parents of the children in both groups read similar types of books aloud to their children, although parents of children without learning disabilities read more rhyme books, non-fiction books and family magazines to their children while parents of children with learning disabilities read more alphabet books to their children. With regard to library visits a difference is, however, reflected: 47% of children without learning disabilities visit libraries in relation to only 10% of children with learning disabilities. These findings are supported by the study of Rashid et al. (2005) who also noted the same tendency.

Parents of the children in both groups perceive their roles and experiences similarly

during story-book reading. Literature regarding this, shows that parents, who are aware of the importance of encouraging their children to read and write outside of school, display this awareness by structuring activities at home to allow their children to be actively involved in reading and writing (Hughes et al., 1999). However, it seems as if parents' expectations of their children's abilities have an influence on how they motivate their children. In the present study parents of children with learning disabilities stated that they found it difficult to motivate their children to read. It could be that parents perceived their children's reading problems as an excuse for inadequate parental support in reading activities (Hughes et al., 1999) or that they actually did not know how to provide their children with the necessary scaffolding (Baker, 2003). It may also be possible that the children with learning disabilities did not want to engage in reading activities due to their limited reading skills (Rashid et al., 2005). The fact that they were less involved in reading activities resulted in the Matthew effect (Stanovich, 1986), which indicates that these children do not develop their reading skills because they do not have enough reading practice.

The results of the current study clearly show that both children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities enjoy listening to stories, however, their responses to story-book reading differ. Children with learning disabilities find it difficult to sit still and listen attentively to story-book reading, in comparison to children without learning disabilities, who are able to do so. Furthermore, children without learning disabilities are more actively involved in the story-book reading activity than those with learning disabilities, which implies that the aforementioned learn more during the reading activity (Yaden et al., 1989). The children without learning disabilities try more often to read words on their own during story-book reading with their parents, they also ask more questions about the printed words in relation to children with learning disabilities. The latter deduction is supported by the findings of Aulls and Sollars (2003) as well as Yaden et al. (1989).

Although children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities may be exposed to similar home reading environments and their parents may perceive their roles similarly, it is clear that children without learning disabilities are more engaged in independent reading activities than children with learning disabilities. These findings are supported by the research of Rashid et



al. (2005), who also found that children with learning disabilities engage in fewer home reading activities because of their reading problems. The result is that children without learning disabilities develop into better readers than children with learning disabilities, because they have more exposure to reading activities thus enabling them to develop their reading skills. Results indicate that children without learning disabilities are better readers of almost all printed matter presented in the questionnaire, that includes labels, school reading-cards, books with large or small print and non-fiction books. Aulls and Sollars (2003) confirm the fact that more reading exposure leads to improved reading skills because new reading strategies are acquired through continued exposure to reading activities.

This research supports findings of previous studies that home reading environments of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities and their parents' role in story-book reading are similar. The main finding of the current research is that children's responses during story-book reading, as well as their engagement in independent reading differ. Children without learning disabilities are more involved in the reading process and independent reading than children with learning disabilities.

### **5.3 Critical evaluation**

Both the positive and the negative aspects of the study are discussed below.

- The in-depth Pilot Test, in which different role players with experience in the field of learning disabilities (occupational therapist, speech therapist, remedial teacher, grade one teacher, and psychologist) were asked to either complete the SCLD or questionnaire and give their opinions on the selection procedures and material used as well as the data gleaned from the questionnaire, is a positive aspect of the study.
- The participants, namely parents of children with learning disabilities and children without learning disabilities were comparable and therefore the two groups could be compared statistically (refer to Table 3.4).

- The participants were from the same geographical area which reflected positively on their socio-economic band, but it did however limit the number of possible participants and also limited the generalization of the results to this group only. This also highlighted the comparison possibilities.
- Rigorous selection procedures to ensure that the two groups were comparable, however, resulted in a smaller group ( $n = 10$ ) of children with learning disabilities in relation to the group of children without learning disabilities ( $n = 30$ ). Yet, it was decided to rather use a smaller group of children with learning disabilities, who were from a neighbouring school of the mainstream school used in the study, and who matched the selection criteria, than to use children with learning disabilities from another geographical area. Such children might possibly not have been from the mid - to higher socio-economic band which could encompass other issues beyond the scope of the current study. This decision, however, hampered the comparison between the two groups of children because it had an impact on the statistical analysis that could be performed. Some of the data was so limited that Fisher's Exact Test was the only suitable measure to test for statistical significance between the two groups. If the groups had consisted of the same number of children, other tests could have been administered.
- Parents were asked to complete a questionnaire. Valuable information was obtained from their responses. An in-depth research study was done to verify the inclusion of all the questions in the questionnaire and to determine whether the research questions were applicable to the aims and sub-aims of the study. Foils were built into the questionnaire, and it was clear that parents answered the questionnaire openly and honestly, which also gives a true reflection of the perceptions of the parents used in this survey as none had marked more than two foils. However, the parents' answers remain their perceptions and it is possible that what they think and what they actually do may differ slightly.

- A limitation of this study was that the children's reading abilities were not tested with a norm-based test before-hand and therefore the current study had to rely on the perceptions of the parents only.

## 5.4 Clinical implications

- Children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities are exposed to similar home reading activities.
- Parents of grade one children are aware of their own roles during story-book reading, possibly due to the emphasis placed on story-book reading in the media. Parents also realize that they have to continue reading aloud to their children, however, the emphasis on the reading could change slightly to encourage their children to join them in reading the printed words. Parents need assistance from schools on how to involve their children (especially those with learning disabilities) more actively in the story reading process, because parents are aware of the importance of story-book reading, but do not always know how to assist their children positively.
- Parents of children without learning disabilities and children with learning disabilities indicated that they enjoyed listening to their children reading aloud to them. Children in both groups often paged through books and magazines on their own. It is recommended that children should have more exposure to different types of books and different activities during story-book reading in order to enrich their reading skills.
- The most important finding of this study is that children without learning disabilities read independently more often than those with learning disabilities. Intervention should focus on assisting parents to facilitate their children with learning disabilities to engage in reading activities in positive ways.

## 5.5 Recommendations for further research

Recommendations for further research based on the present research results are as follows:

- To ensure that the groups consist of more or less the same number of children in order to facilitate the comparison of results.
- To use a norm-based test for reading ability - such as the “ESSI lees- en speltoets” (Esterhuyse, 1997) standardized for the specific group. This would give a more accurate indication of the actual reading abilities of the children and it could verify the parents’ perceptions of their children’s reading abilities.
- To investigate the question of how children’s reading problems affect parental engagement and support during reading activities, is recommended. It has become clear from previous (Baker et al., 2001), as well as current research, that parents are not sure how to assist their children who have reading problems, which results in either no support from the parents or an unpleasant experience for these children.
- To investigate whether parental beliefs about their children’s reading abilities are a factor in generating the Matthew effect. The current study shows clearly that children with learning disabilities are not as motivated to engage in reading activities as those without learning disabilities.
- To follow the progress of the children used in the current study in a longitudinal study to ascertain if the strong readers are still strong readers after three to five years and if so, what possible factors influence them to sustain or further develop their reading competency.
- To extend the same process to investigate the development of the reading skills of second language learners and so establish if reading competence in the first language is an indication of reading competence in the second language.

## 5.6 Summary

The conclusions of the research regarding the aims of this study are presented at the beginning of the chapter. The clinical implications of these conclusions are then discussed, and followed by a critical evaluation of the study. Finally, recommendations for future research are stated.

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## **Appendix A: Screening Checklists for Learning Disabilities (SCLD)**

Important Note: Only the Afrikaans Checklist was used. It was translated for examination purposes only.

## Appendix A1 : SCLD in Afrikaans

### SIFTING VIR LEERPROBLEME (SCLD) Identifisering van moontlike leerprobleme

Naam van leerder \_\_\_\_\_ Geboortedatum \_\_\_\_\_  
Onderwyseres \_\_\_\_\_ Gr \_\_\_\_\_  
Datum \_\_\_\_\_

Merk asb **alle blokkies** waarmee die leerder na u mening probleme ondervind:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Fyn-motoriek</b> , bv handskrif (korrekte syfer- en lettervorming), knip
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Groot-motoriek</b> , bv klimraamaktiwiteit (hang aan pale)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Visio-motoriese integrasie</b> , bv touspring, balspele soos tennis, krieket
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Ruimtelike oriëntasie</b> , bv links-regs, bo-onder, omkerings kom voor (b/d, ook syfers soos 3 of 7 omgedraai, lees pal ipv lap)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Ouditiewe klankonderskeiding</b> (bv voorgrond/agtergrond; klankopeenvolging)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Kopiëring</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Hardop lees</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Verstaan wat gelees is</b> (voorlees/self lees)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Onthou wat gelees is</b> (voorlees/self lees)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Spelling</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Toepassing van reëls</b> (bv klasreëls, kompetisiereëls)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Pas items op</b> (bv pas boeke/potlode op en dit is gewoonlik by die skool)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Aandagspan en konsentrasie</b> , bv bepaal aandag by werk of sit stil en luister
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Begryp maklik Wiskunde en wiskundige begrippe, onder andere tyd en ruimte</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Beplanningsvaardighede</b> (tafel netjies, werk meestal korrek in boeke, werk vinnig, redelik netjies en is gewoonlik betyds)

Het die leerder al **voorheen enige terapie** gehad? Indien ja, noem watter : \_\_\_\_\_

**Ander probleme** wat leerder nog huidiglik ondervind: \_\_\_\_\_

**Belangrike Nota:** Hierdie sifting is nie bedoel vir diagnostiese doeleindes nie en moet daarom nie 'n gekwalifiseerde professionele persoon vervang nie. Dit mag wel vir u 'n aanduiding gee of 'n aanbeveling gedoen moet word vir 'n professionele diagnose.

**Bronne:** Dowdy, C.A. (1992) Identification of Characteristics of Specific Learning Disabilities as a Critical Component in the Vocational Rehabilitation Process. Journal of Rehabilitation, 58 (3), 51-54  
Harper, A. UCLA Learning Disabilities Program  
Horowitz, S.H & Stecker, D. LD Checklist  
[www.ncl.org/images/stories/downloads/parent\\_center/ldchecklist](http://www.ncl.org/images/stories/downloads/parent_center/ldchecklist)  
Silver, L.M. [www.dyscalculia.org/LDcklist.html](http://www.dyscalculia.org/LDcklist.html)  
Singler, G. [www.ldpride.net/ldcheck.htm](http://www.ldpride.net/ldcheck.htm)

**Appendix A2: SCLD in English**

**SCREENING CHECKLIST FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES (SCLD)**  
**Identification of possible learning disabilities**

Name van learner \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_  
 Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Gr \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please mark **all the blocks** of possible problems the learner may experience:

	<b>Fine motor skills</b> , e.g. hand writing (correct formation of numbers or letters), cutting with scissors
	<b>Gross motor skills</b> , e.g. jungle gym activities
	<b>Visual-motor integration</b> , e.g. skipping with rope, play with a ball
	<b>Spatial orientation</b> , e.g. does not confuse left and right, above-under, experiences no problems with orientation (b/d, numbers such as 3 or 7, does not reverse letter order, eg reads saw in stead of was)
	<b>Auditory sound discrimination</b> (e.g. grasps association between sounds and letters)
	<b>Copying</b>
	<b>Reading aloud</b> (remembers sight words easily, enjoys reading books/stories)
	<b>Comprehension</b> of what was being read (listens to story/reads independently)
	<b>Remember</b> what was being read (listens to story/reads independently)
	<b>Spelling</b>
	<b>Obeys rules</b> (e.g. class rules, competition rules)
	<b>Takes care of belongings</b> (e.g. take care of books/pencils and remembers to bring it to school)
	<b>Attention deficits and concentration span</b> (sustains attention on one's work/ sits still and listen attentively)
	<b>Grasps/understands Mathematics easily</b> (simple counting, mastering number knowledge, basic calculations – addition and subtraction)
	<b>Planning skills</b> (table is organised, work mostly correct in books, works fairly neatly in books, finishes work and is usually on time for school/classes)

Did the learner previously attend any **therapies**? If so, name it:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
**Other problems** the learner may currently experience: \_\_\_\_\_

**Important Disclaimer:** This checklist is not designed for diagnostic purposes and should not replace a qualified professional. It may, however, give you an idea whether or not you should be seeking diagnosis.

**References:** Dowdy, C.A. (1992) Identification of Characteristics of Specific Learning Disabilities as a Critical Component in the Vocational Rehabilitation Process. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 58 (3), 51-54  
 Harper, A. UCLA Learning Disabilities Program  
 Horowitz, S.H & Stecker, D. LD Checklist  
[www.nclid.org/images/stories/downloads/parent\\_center/ldchecklist](http://www.nclid.org/images/stories/downloads/parent_center/ldchecklist)  
 Silver, L.M. [www.dyscalculia.org/LDcklist.html](http://www.dyscalculia.org/LDcklist.html)  
 Singler, G. [www.ldpride.net/ldcheck.htm](http://www.ldpride.net/ldcheck.htm)

## **Appendix B : Questionnaires**

Important Note: Only the Afrikaans questionnaire was used. It was translated for examination purposes only.



## Appendix B1 : Questionnaire in Afrikaans

### Navorsingsvraelys

**Beantwoord asb al die vrae.** Merk elke keer die **blokkie van u keuse met 'n kruisie (x)**.

#### Afdeling A:

**Agtergrondgegevens van die persoon wat die vraelys voltooi.**

		Slegs vir kantoorgebruik
1. Wat is u verwantskap met die kind?		v1 <input type="checkbox"/>
		v2 <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Moeder		
<input type="checkbox"/> Vader		
<input type="checkbox"/> Wetlike voog		
2. Wat is u ouderdom? _____ jaar		v3 <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Wat is u huwelikstatus?		v4 <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Enkel en/of nooit getroud		
<input type="checkbox"/> Getroud		
<input type="checkbox"/> Geskei		
<input type="checkbox"/> Wewenaar/weduwee		
4. Wat is u hoogste akademiese kwalifikasie?		v5 <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> St 8/Gr 10		
<input type="checkbox"/> Matriek/Gr 12		
<input type="checkbox"/> B-graad/Diploma		
<input type="checkbox"/> Nagraadse kwalifikasie		
5. Wat is u huidige beroepstatus?		v6 <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Tuisteskepper		
<input type="checkbox"/> Geen betrekking		
<input type="checkbox"/> Deeltydse betrekking		
<input type="checkbox"/> Voltydse betrekking		
6. Indien van toepassing, wat is u huweliksmaat se beroepstatus?		v7 <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Tuisteskepper		
<input type="checkbox"/> Geen betrekking		
<input type="checkbox"/> Deeltydse betrekking		
<input type="checkbox"/> Voltydse betrekking		
7. Watter ander tale, behalwe Afrikaans, praat u tuis met u kinders? Noem asb almal.		v8 <input type="checkbox"/>
		v9 <input type="checkbox"/>





**Afdeling B:  
Agtergrondgegevens oor u kind**

1. Wat is u kind se geboortedatum? \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_\_

v10

2. Het u kind broers of susters wat by u in die huis woon?

v11

- Ja  
 Nee

Indien ja, wat is die ouderdomme van die ander kinders in u huishouding?

Naam van boetie/sussie	Ouderdom

v12   
v13   
v14   
v15   
v16   
v17

3. Watter soort skool woon u kind by?

- Hoofstroomskool  
 Skool vir buitengewone onderwys

v18

**Afdeling C:  
Inligting oor leesaktiwiteite by die huis**

1. Hoe gereeld lees u of 'n ander lid van die gesin in die teenwoordigheid van u kind?  
(Merk slegs een blokkie).

- Nooit  
 2-3 keer per week  
 Een keer 'n dag  
 Baie keer per dag

v19

2. Wat is die grootste rede waarom u lees? Merk slegs een moontlikheid.

- Beroepsredes  
 Studiedoeleindes  
 Om inligting te bekom  
 Vir ontspanning  
 Ander: spesifiseer asb \_\_\_\_\_

v20



3. Hoe gereeld en wanneer lees u of 'n ander lid van die gesin **vir u kind voor**?  
(Merk slegs een blokkie).

<input type="checkbox"/>	Nooit	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Net voor slaapyd :	1-2 keer per week
<input type="checkbox"/>		3-4 keer per week
<input type="checkbox"/>		5-6 keer per week
<input type="checkbox"/>		7 of meer keer per week
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ander tye as slaapyd :	1-2 keer per week
<input type="checkbox"/>		3-4 keer per week
<input type="checkbox"/>		5-6 keer per week
<input type="checkbox"/>		7 of meer keer per week

v21

v22

4. Behalwe vir huiswerkdoeleindes - probeer u kind ook om ander leesstof **self te lees**?

- Nooit  
 Soms  
 Dikwels

v23

5. Hoeveel boeke besit u kind?

- 0 boeke  
 1-5 boeke  
 6-10 boeke  
 11-20 boeke  
 21 of meer boeke

v24

6. Noem die titels van u kind se gunstelingboeke. (Noem ongeveer drie titels asb.)

---



---

v25

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

v26

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

v27

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

v28

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------



7. Dui asb aan hoe gereeld u kind **aan elk van die volgende aktiwiteite** deelneem. Trek asb 'n kruisie (x) in die toepaslike blokke.

Aktiwiteit	Nooit	Soms	Gereeld	
My kind luister na 'n storie wat deur my of 'n ander gesinslid voorgelees word				v29
My kind blaai deur boeke of tydskrifte saam met my of 'n ander gesinslid				v30
My kind vertel vir my of 'n ander gesinslid 'n storie uit 'n boek oor				v31
My kind blaai op sy/haar eie deur 'n boek of tydskrif				v32
My kind lees boeke op sy/haar eie				v33
My kind luister ook na boeke in 'n ander taal as Afrikaans.				v34
My kind versoek dat sy/haar gunsteling storie weer gelees word.				v35
My kind neem boeke by die biblioteek uit				v36
My kind vergesel my na boekwinkels om deur boeke te blaai en boeke te koop.				v37
My kind voltooi takies in aktiwiteitsboeke				v38


8. Wanneer u of 'n ander gesinslid vir u kind voorlees, **watter soort boeke lees u gewoonlik?**

(Merk asb. al die toepaslike blokke met 'n kruisie(x).)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Eenvoudige storieboeke	v39
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prenteboeke	v40
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feëverhale	v41
<input type="checkbox"/>	Boeke met kinderrympies	v42
<input type="checkbox"/>	Boeke met strokiesprente, bv Asterix , Kuifie	v43
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kindertydskrifte	v44
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ander tydskrifte	v45
<input type="checkbox"/>	Getalboeke	v46
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nie-fiksie boeke vir kinders	v47
<input type="checkbox"/>	Alfabetboeke	v48
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ander: _____	v49








**Afdeling D:**  
**Titels van Afrikaanse kinderstorieboeke**

1. Merk slegs die titels wat u **herken** met 'n kruisie (x).

Titel van storieboek	Titel van storieboek
Babalela	Mia se ma
Die Balkieboek	Mia speel klavier
Die donker nag	Miesiemuis gaan op vakansie
Die Geheime wêreld van feë	Miesiemuis teken
Die Goorgomgaaï	Miko: Bad? Ag Nee!
Die Mooiste Dierefabels	Miko: Dit was ek, Mamma
Die nagkat	My ouma is 'n rockster
Die nare heks en haar towerstaf	My sussie se tande
Die outjie wat wolf geskreeu het	Net een slukkie padda
Die skoenlapper wat baie honger was	Noag se Ark
Die soen wat verdwaal het	Otto gaan stap
Die storie van die molletjie wat wou weet wie op sy kop gedinges het	Otto hou partytjie
Diep, diep in 'n donker bos	Parmant
Droombos se nuwe Prinsessie	Raai hoe lief is ek vir jou
Julle is almal my gunsteling	Reënboogfeëttjie en die motorfiets
Klaas Vakie se lang Nag	Reënboogfeëttjie se ongeluk
Klassieke sprokies	Slaapydstories vir kinders
Liewe Heksie omnibus	Stoutsterte van Texel tot Tafelbaai
Lili die modepop	Talienkie Tandmuis en die Dief
Lili se pajamapartytjie	Waar is Nemo?
Lulama se towerkometers	Wirrel-warrel-legkaartboek

D1-2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D3-4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D5-6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D7-8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D9-10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D11-12	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D13-14	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D15-16	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D17-18	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D19-20	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D21-22	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D23-24	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D25-26	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D27-28	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D29-30	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D31-32	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D33-34	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D35-36	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D37-38	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D39-40	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D41-42	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Is daar enige ander titels wat u wil byvoeg?

---



---

D43	<input type="checkbox"/>
D44	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Verklaring:** Deur die feit dat ek hierdie voltooië vraelys terugstuur, gee ek toestemming dat hierdie inligting vir navorsingsdoeleindes gebruik mag word.

U is welkom om enige tyd die navorser te kontak vir verdere inligting rakende die vraelys.

Nogmaals baie dankie vir u deelname aan hierdie navorsingsprojek.

Ensa Johnson (082 458 8084)  
Sentrum vir Aanvullende en Alternatiewe Kommunikasie  
Universiteit van Pretoria



## Appendix B2 : Questionnaire in English

### Research Questionnaire

Please answer all the questions. Mark the box of your choice with a cross (x)

#### Section A:

#### Background information of the person completing the questionnaire.

For office use only

1. How are you related to the child?

- Mother
- Father
- Legal guardian

2. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_ years

3. What is your marital status?

- Single and/or never married
- Married
- Divorced
- Widower/widow

4. What is your highest academic qualification?

- Std 8/Gr 10
- Matric/Gr 12
- B-degree/Diploma
- Post graduate qualification

5. What is your current occupational status?

- Home executive ("housewife")
- No job
- Part-time job
- Permanent job

6. If appropriate, indicate the occupational status of your spouse?

- Home executive ("housewife")
- No job
- Part-time job
- Permanent job

7. What other languages, except Afrikaans, do you use when speaking to your children. Please name all of them.

v1   
v2

v3

v4

v5

v6

v7

v8

v9



**Section B:**

Background information about your child

1. What is your child's date of birth? \_\_\_\_\_19\_\_\_\_\_

v10

2. Does your child have brothers or sisters that stay in the house with you?

v11

- Yes  
 No

If so, what are the ages of the other children in your family?

Name of brother/sister	Age

v12   
v13   
v14   
v15   
v16   
v17

3. What type of school does your child attend?

- Mainstream school  
 School for children with special needs

v18

**Section C:**

**Information about reading activities at home**

1. How often do you or another member of your family read in the presence of your child? (Only mark one block).

- Never  
 2-3 times a week  
 Once a day  
 Many times during the course of the day

v19

2. What is the most important reason for your reading? (Mark only one possibility.)

- Professional reasons  
 Studies  
 To acquire information  
 For relaxation  
 Other: specify please \_\_\_\_\_

v20





3. How often and when do you or a member of your family **read to your child?**  
(Mark only one block).

<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Just before bedtime:</i>	1-2 times per week
<input type="checkbox"/>		3-4 times per week
<input type="checkbox"/>		5-6 times per week
<input type="checkbox"/>		7 of times or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Instances other than bedtime:</i>	1-2 times per week
<input type="checkbox"/>		3-4 times per week
<input type="checkbox"/>		5-6 times per week
<input type="checkbox"/>		7 of times or more

v21  
v22

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Besides reading for homework purposes, does your child also **try to read** other reading matter **on his own?**

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often

v23

<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------

5. How many books does your child possess?

- 0 books
- 1-5 books
- 6-10 books
- 11-20 books
- 21 or more books

v24

<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------

6. Name the titles of your child's favourite books. (Name at least three titles please.)

---



---

v25  
v26  
v27  
v28

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



7. Indicate how often your child participates in **each of the following activities**.  
(Draw a cross (x) in the appropriate blocks.)

Activity	Never	Sometimes	Often	
My child listens to a story that is read by me or another family member				v29
My child pages through books or magazines with me or with another family member				v30
My child tells me or another family member a story from a book				v31
My child pages through a book or a magazine on his or her own				v32
My child reads books on his or her own				v33
My child also listens to stories in another language other than Afrikaans				v34
My child requests that his or her favourite story is read again				v35
My child takes books out from a library				v36
My child accompanies me to bookshops to page through books or to buy books				v37
My child completes tasks in activity books				v38


8. **What types of books** do you or a member of your family usually read to your child?  
(Mark all the appropriate blocks with a cross (x).)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Simple story-books	v39
<input type="checkbox"/>	Picture books	v40
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fairy tales	v41
<input type="checkbox"/>	Books with children's rhymes	v42
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cartoons, e.g. Asterix , Tin-Tin	v43
<input type="checkbox"/>	Children's magazines	v44
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other magazines	v45
<input type="checkbox"/>	Number books	v46
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-fiction books for children	v47
<input type="checkbox"/>	Alphabet books	v48
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: _____	v49








**Section D:  
Titles of Afrikaans story-books**

1. Only mark the titles that you **recognise** with a cross (x).

	<b>Titel van storieboek</b>		<b>Titel van storieboek</b>
	Babalela		Mia se ma
	Die Balkieboek		Mia speel klavier
	Die donker nag		Miesiemuis gaan op vakansie
	Die Geheime wêreld van feë		Miesiemuis teken
	Die Goorgomgaai		Miko: Bad? Ag Nee!
	Die Mooiste Dierefabels		Miko: Dit was ek, Mamma
	Die nagkat		My ouma is 'n rockster
	Die nare heks en haar towerstaf		My sussie se tande
	Die outjie wat wolf geskreeu het		Net een slukkie padda
	Die skoenlapper wat baie honger was		Noag se Ark
	Die soen wat verdwaal het		Otto gaan stap
	Die storie van die molletjie wat wou weet wie op sy kop gedinges het		Otto hou partytjie
	Diep, diep in 'n donker bos		Parmant
	Droombos se nuwe Prinsessie		Raai hoe lief is ek vir jou
	Julle is almal my gunsteling		Reënboogfeëttjie en die motorfiets
	Klaas Vakie se lang Nag		Reënboogfeëttjie se ongeluk
	Klassieke sprokies		Slaapydstories vir kinders
	Liewe Heksie omnibus		Stoutsterte van Texel tot Tafelbaai
	Lili die modepop		Talienkie Tandmuis en die Dief
	Lili se pajamapartytjie		Waar is Nemo?
	Lulama se towerkometers		Wirrel-warrel-legkaartboek

D1-2

D3-4

D5-6

D7-8

D9-10

D11-12

D13-14

D15-16

D17-18

D19-20

D21-22

D23-24

D25-26

D27-28

D29-30

D31-32

D33-34

D35-36

D37-38

D39-40

D41-42

D43

2. Are there any other titles that you would like to add?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Declaration:** By returning the completed questionnaire, I give permission that the information may be used for research purposes..

You are welcome to contact the researcher at any time for further information.  
Thank you for your participation.

Ensa Johnson (082 458 8084)  
Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication  
University of Pretoria



## Appendix C : Letter from Gauteng Department of Education

23-06-'06 11:27 FROM-

T-113 P02/03 U-336



UMnyango WezeMfundo  
Department of Education

Lefapha la Thuto  
Departement van Onderwys

Date:	01 June 2006
Name of Researcher:	Johnson Ensa
Address of Researcher:	757 Tipperary Way Faerie Glen 0043
Telephone Number:	(012) 9911390
Fax Number:	(012) 9911390
Research Topic:	Parents' perceptions of their children's participation in literacy experiences at home: A comparative study between grade one children with and without learning disabilities
Number and type of schools:	1 Primary & 1 LSEN Schools
District/s/HO	Tshwane South

### Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

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

Permission has been granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met, and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted:

1. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
3. *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*

Office of the Senior Manager – Strategic Policy Research & Development  
Room 525, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001 P.O.Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000  
Tel: (011) 355-0488 Fax: (011) 355-0286



4. *A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.*
5. *The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.*
6. *Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Senior Manager (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*
7. *Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year.*
8. *Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*
9. *It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.*
10. *The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.*
11. *The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.*
12. *On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Senior Manager: Strategic Policy Development, Management & Research Coordination with one Hard Cover bound and one Ring bound copy of the final, approved research report. The researcher would also provide the said manager with an electronic copy of the research abstract/summary and/or annotation.*
13. *The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.*
14. *Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Senior Manager concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.*

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

Kind regards

ALBERT CHANEE  
ACTING DIVISIONAL MANAGER: OFSTED

The contents of this letter has been read and understood by the researcher.	
Signature of Researcher:	<i>E Johnson</i>
Date:	2006-10-10

## Appendix D: Letters from Schools

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## Appendix D1: Letter from School A



✉ Tiendestraat Menlopark 0081 ☎ (012) 460 7201  
Faks: (012) 460 2304  
Epos: [menlolaer@menlolaer.co.za](mailto:menlolaer@menlolaer.co.za)  
[www.menlolaer.co.za](http://www.menlolaer.co.za)

30 Mei 2006

Me E Johnson  
Tipperaryweg 757  
**FAERIE GLEN**  
0043

Geagte Me Johnson

### NAVORSINGSPROJEK TE LAERSKOOLO MENLOPARK

Hiermee word toestemming verleen dat u met u voorgestelde navorsingsprojek te Laerskool Menlopark mag voortgaan.

Ek benodig die volgende van u:

- Toestemmingsbrief van die GDO dat u die navorsing mag doen.
- Voorlegging van die brief wat u aan ouers van die steekproef gaan stuur om hul toestemming tot hul kinders se deelname te verleen.
- Afskrif van u finale bevindinge vir kennisname deur ons personeel.
- Vriendelike en kollegiale samewerking met ons personeel (u kollegas).

Ons wens u alle sêen en sterkte toe met u verdere studie. Ons besef dat die pad nie altyd maklik is nie maar weet dat u 'n aanhouer is wat sal wen.

Vriendelike Parkiegroete

  
**F.L. Marais**  
HOOF



## Appendix D2: Letter from School B



13 Junie 2006

Me E. Johnson  
Tipperaryweg 757  
FAERIE GLEN  
0042

Geagte me. Johnson

Insake: Toestemming vir navorsingsprojek

In beginsel is dit in orde. Voorsien my asseblief van die Departementele toestemming wat verleen is. (Afskrif daarvan).

U moet asseblief ook die geïdentifiseerde leerders se ouers se skriftelike toestemming verkry en spesifieke reëlings met die betrokke departementshoof (me. Nicky Fourie) tref vir u projek.

Nadat u bogenoemde voorsien het, kan u met die projek voortgaan. Sterkte met u navorsing en studie.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
J N Stapelberg  
Waarnemende Hoof

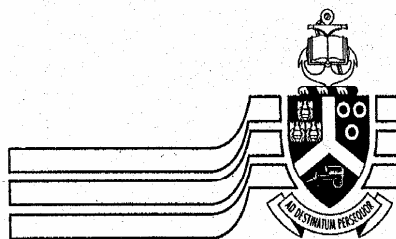
Kontrakpersone: Me. Nicky Fourie (Departementshoof) 346-2127/8 x 136  
Mnr. Leon du Preez (Hoof: Hulpdienste) 346-2127/8 x 110

NS. Jammer u ontvang nou eers ons antwoord – u versoek het op meer as een tafel beland.



## Appendix E: Letter from Research Proposal and Ethics Committee

**Members:**  
**Research Proposal and Ethics Committee**  
Prof P Chiroro; Dr M-H Coetsee; Prof C Delpoit;  
Dr JEH Grobler; Prof KL Harris; Ms H Klopper;  
Prof E Krüger; Prof B Louw (Chair); Prof A Mlambo;  
Prof D Prinsloo; Prof G Prinsloo; Mr C Puttergill;  
Prof E Taljard; Prof C Walton; Prof A Wessels;  
Mr FG Wolmarans



University of Pretoria

Research Proposal and Ethics Committee  
Faculty of Humanities

14 July 2006

Dear Prof Alant

**Project:** *Parents' perceptions of their children's participation in home literacy activities*  
**Researcher:** E Johnson  
**Supervisor:** Prof E Alant  
**Department:** Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication  
**Reference number:** 84355370

Thank you for the positive response to the Committee's requests of 5 May 2006.

I have pleasure in informing you that the Research Proposal and Ethics Committee formally approved the above study at an *ad hoc* meeting held on 13 July 2006. The approval is subject to the candidate abiding by the principles and parameters set out in her application and research proposal in the actual execution of the research.

The Committee requests you to convey this approval to Mrs Johnson.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

*Brenda Louw*

**Prof Brenda Louw**  
**Chair: Research Proposal and Ethics Committee**  
**Faculty of Humanities**  
**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**