

**Transition, text and turbulence:
factors influencing children's voluntary reading
in their progress from primary to secondary school**

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

THE ACT AND ART OF READING

1.1 RECKONING WITH READING	2
1.1.1 Prelude	2
1.1.2 Overview	4
1.1.3 The art of reading	6
1.2 READING: THE CLASS ACT	10
1.2.1 The act of reading	10
1.2.2 Adolescent reading	11
1.2.3 Voluntary reading and school	16
1.3 QUEST AND QUERY	20
1.2.4 Rationally researching reading	20
1.2.5 Purpose, plan and probes	23
1.2.6 Programme	24

CHAPTER TWO

YOUTHFUL READING

2.1 INTRODUCTION	29
2.2 ADOLESCENCE	30
2.1.1 The double-edged sword	30
2.1.2 Ebb and flow	36
2.1.3 Transition	39
2.1.4 Steps, scaffolds and stages	42
2.3 VOLUNTARY READING	43
2.4 MOTIVATION	47
2.4.1 Motivation and volition	47
2.4.2 Motivation and reading	48
2.4.3 Motivation and self-efficacy	52
2.4.4 Motivation and mastery	54
2.5 READING INTERESTS	55
2.5.1 Overview	55
2.5.2 Reading interests and engagement	58
2.5.3 The reading environment	59
2.5.4 Denying reading	61

CHAPTER THREE	
READING THE WRITING ON READING	64
3.1 LITERACY	65
3.1.1 Shifting benchmarks	65
3.1.2 Defining literacy	66
3.1.3 Acquiring literacy	72
3.1.4 Designing literacy	75
3.1.5 Declining literacy	82
3.2 LITERATURE	90
3.2.1 Literally	90
3.2.2 Textually	93
3.2.3 Analytically.	95
CHAPTER FOUR	
PERIODICITY AND PRACTICE	98
4.1 PERIODICITY	99
4.1.1 Introduction	99
4.1.2 Piaget and Vygotsky	100
4.1.3 A socio-cultural perspective	107
4.2 DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES	109
4.2.1 A rationale	109
4.2.2 An early reading stage scheme	113
4.2.3 Gates and Russell	114
4.2.4 The Ilg and Ames Reading Gradient	117
4.3 DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES: THEORY AND PRACTICE	119
4.3.1 Introduction	119
4.3.2 Stage transitions	125
4.3.2.1 The transition from Stage 2 to Stage 3	125
4.3.2.2 The transition from Stage 3 to Stage 4	125
4.3.2.3 The transition from Stage 4 to Stage 5	128
4.3.2.4 Transitioning the stages	128

CHAPTER FIVE	
METHOD IN THE MAKING	133
5.1 TEXTS IN TRANSITION	134
5.1.1 Introduction	134
5.1.2 Qualitatively researching reading	135
5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN	140
5.2.1 Design the paradigm	140
5.2.2 Theoretical parameters	142
5.2.3 Empirical parameters	147
5.3 METHOD	149
5.3.1 Making method	149
5.3.2 More questions than answers	150
5.3.3 Selections of participants	155
5.3.4 Instruments of measurement	159
5.3.5 Data collection	161
5.3.5.1 The respondents	161
5.3.5.2 The interviews	162
5.4 DATA ANALYSIS	165
5.4.1 The process of data analysis	165
5.4.2 Transcriptions	165
5.4.3 Further analytic procedures	169
5.4.4 Analysis and synthesis	172
5.4.5 Reliability, validity, generalisability	176
5.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	178
5.6 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS	182
CHAPTER SIX	
MOUTH OF BABES	185
6.1 SELECTION OF REFLECTION	186
6.2 ADOLESCENCE	188
6.2.1 Prefacing	188
6.2.2 Cognitive dimension	189
6.2.2.1 Overview	189
6.2.2.2 The work load	190
6.2.2.3 Qualitative change	193
6.2.3 Psychosocial dimension	196

6.2.3.1 Stresses and strains – emotions and perceptions	197
6.2.3.2 Socializing and school	120
6.2.3.3 Interests	206
6.3 VOLUNTARY READING	208
6.3.1 Motivation and voluntary reading	208
6.3.1.1 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation	209
6.3.1.2 Mastery learning	213
6.3.2 Leisure	216
6.3.3 Transitioning the stages	217
6.4 LITERATURE	220
6.5 INTERNALISED SPEECH	225
CHAPTER SEVEN	
READING IS AS READING DOES	227
7.1 INTRODUCTION	228
7.2 INTERTEXTUAL TRANSITIONING	229
7.2.1 A narrative of evidential statements	229
7.2.2 Text	230
7.2.3 Transition	232
7.2.4 Turbulence	235
7.2.5 Synthesis	236
7.3 LIMITATIONS	237
7.4 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	240
7.4.1 Overview	240
7.4.2 Voluntary reading: where there's a will, there's a way	240
7.4.3 Literature: an open book	243
7.4.4 Adolescence: they went with songs to the battle	245
7.4.5 Policy: a web of significance	247
7.5 WAY, WAY BEYOND	255
7.5.1 Reading the way	255
7.5.2 The last word	257
LIST OF REFERENCES	261
SUMMARY	272

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	Model of reading motivation	8
Figure 1.2	Theoretical framework	26
Figure 2.1	Conceptual framework of adolescence	37
Figure 2.2	Self-efficacy, motivation and achievement	53
Figure 3.1	Interactive literacy model	74
Figure 3.2	Chall's theory of changes in literacy instruction	76
Figure 4.1	Example of standard texts at stage levels	124
Figure 4.2	Synopsis of Chall's models of reading development	131
Figure 5.1	Excerpt from readership survey	137
Figure 5.2	Linking the theoretical and empirical fields	148
Figure 5.3	Transcription symbols	167
Figure 5.4	Coding applied during the second and third phase	170
Figure 5.5	Synthesizing final phase analysis	173
Figure 6.1	The refined theoretical framework	187

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	SAAL-E school-leavers applying for teacher training	19
Table 3.1	Literacy levels of applicants for tertiary education	86
Table 6.1	The reading of popular genres	220
Table 6.2	Gender difference in reading of popular genres	221

CHAPTER ONE

THE ACT AND ART OF READING

Education and reading are circular – the more a person has of one, the better the development of the other.

Chall 1996

The ability to read avidly may be regarded as the basis of education and communication and as an essential possession for success in life.

Martyn Goff, Director of the National Book League

We have, as teachers, as librarians, as parents, that terrifying obligation and proud privilege of making sure that our book-touch is benign and lasting. Our unremembered children will then be forever in our happy debt.

Trevor Dickinson 1994

Perhaps the most important feature of reading – especially the reading of fiction – is its ability to enable the reader to experiment with different identities and scenarios. Thus reading is instrumental in the way young people construct the world and the way they fit into it.

Kimberley Reynolds 1996

If in the mental development of the adolescent we do not distinguish between the process of habit formation and the process of the unfolding of interests, we will not at all be able to explain the fact, central to all of this age, that habits change in a very substantial way in the course of one or two years.

Vygotsky 1930/1998

These are the paired wonders of reading: the world-creating power of books, and the reader's effortless absorption that allows the book's fragile world, all air and thought, to maintain itself for a while, a bamboo and a paper house among earthquakes; within it readers acquire peace, become more powerful, feel braver and wiser in the ways of the world.

Nell 1988

1.1 RECKONING WITH READING

1.1.1 Prelude

Francis Bacon said, at the dawn of the Renaissance: “Reading maketh a full man”. The definition of a full man (or woman, for that matter) may have changed over the course of five centuries, and likewise even the description of reading, but the intimate relationship between intellectual, spiritual and emotional development, and reflecting on the ideas of great minds encountered in texts, have not.

How the reading *instruction* of the great minds of the Renaissance took place is open to conjecture. Shakespeare probably first learned to read Latin and Greek, before being instructed in English – if at all; and teaching Shakespeare to read according to the instructional paradigms of the sixteenth century was not an unqualified success, if his later confession that, as a young adult, he knew “little Latin and less Greek” is to be believed. Leonardo da Vinci never learnt to write effectively at all, if the mirrored scribbling in the margins of his sketches are true indicators of his literacy skills; however, another explanation for the illegibility of his writing is that his reading problems - possibly dyslexia - never received the ‘reading rescue’ interventions currently available. The preferred method of instruction during these auspicious times was probably an informal, whole language, outcomes-based, top-down affair. Or perhaps a vicious learning by rote and rattan from the bottom-up, like brickwork, as traditionally believed to be the preferred instructional method in Eastern madrassas.

Nonetheless, in another auspicious age, namely the 21st century, the necessity to read, and read effectively, has not diminished in importance, but has increased exponentially with the flood of textual materials in a variety of forms – from the cybernetic to the graphic. The advances brought by the electronic age may have dispensed with other intellectual conventions (such as the making of sums, the writing of notes, the development of a cultured handwriting, the sending of messengers), but the need to read has remained, and has grown. Theories on reading instruction have been developed, advanced, and dispensed with, only to be rediscovered and advanced again for at least two centuries now. Research on reading has

enjoyed more attention than most other fields of educational discourse for at least the past thirty years. However, consensus remains to be reached on many issues, as theoretical models and definitions come to the fore, and recede into the background in pendulum-like fashion. A salient notion of the moment is the belief that reading is learned over a long period and that few people finally reach the highest echelons of reading skills. The German poet, Goethe, held this view, and when asked, when he was very old, when he had learned to read, he anecdotally answered that although he had spent a lifetime reading, he was still learning.

A more recent development in research on reading practice is the purported influence of motivation on the act and art of reading. Modes of learner volition did not form any part of instruction in the teacher-centred classroom of an authoritarian master. Individual competence and learner needs only became an issue during the previous century; before then, interests were considered secondary to graded benchmarks – if learner interests were considered at all. Current beliefs on achievement and motivation that include learner interests, prior knowledge, development, volition, goals, values, culture and background, now guide instructional approaches.

However, much still remains to be done. And much has been lost, for instance, according to some alarmists, even the Baconian conviction that reading is required for becoming a ‘full’ person. Fortunately, more pockets of enthusiasm for reading open up, since it is also a current belief that effective reading skills have become more important than ever before. This study’s basic premise arises from the notion that the promotion of voluntary reading is imperative for its civic, practical and intellectual benefits, in addition to the fact that it is personally enriching as one of the finest expressions of the human imagination. With regard to the study of the voluntary reading habits of early adolescent learners, the tenets of the International Reading Association (1999, online doc.) are hereby fully endorsed:

Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imaginations so they can create the world of the future. In a complex and sometimes even dangerous world, their ability to read will be crucial.

1.1.2 Overview

The promotion of voluntary and recreational reading emerged as a major educational concern in 1972 when UNESCO's general conference approved the fostering of the reading habit as one of four objectives included in its long-term plan of action under the heading *Books for All*. The importance of encouraging learners to read avidly, independently and voluntarily became a vital part of the celebration of the International Year of the Book. It was hoped that, through promotional endeavours, governments would come to recognize that the fostering of salient reading habits is as essential to the interests of a country as basic literacy programmes and primary education for all. Since the celebratory year, concerned governments have regularly launched and endorsed readership campaigns, idealistically postulating that a country does not only benefit economically and politically, but also morally, when its citizens read well. Following suit from time to time, educational and civic authorities promote readership practices publicly and actively. Thus active readership is now widely publicised to help all segments of the population become true participants in the development of a country.

The tenets advanced by UNESCO - acknowledging the fact that reading cultivates personal, moral and intellectual growth, in addition to being a principal source of inspiration, information, entertainment, and insight into ourselves and others – have long been enthusiastically endorsed by reading researchers (Anderson, 1993; Anderson, 1994; Blair, Turner & Schaudt, 1992; Chambers, 1985; Dubow, 1993; Irvin, 1998; Jones, 1999; Nell, 1988; Staiger & Casey, 1983; Styles, Bearne & Watson, 1994; Tucker, 1992; Zirinsky & Rau, 2001). It is, however, also believed that these benefits can only accrue optimally if learners choose to read freely and ardently during their leisure time, and if reading becomes a lifelong habit.

Unfortunately, readership surveys have shown that voluntary reading is certainly not a firm habit with by far the majority of South African adults. On the contrary, it is often considered an elitist pastime or only a marginal activity for, *inter alia*, people who do not participate in outdoor activities (Nell, 1988:28).

Regarding children, reading surveys have shown that voluntary reading is not a preferred activity for most of them either (Du Toit, 2001:131; Harris & Sipay, 1990:2, 669; Houghton-Hawksley, 1983:66; Irvin: 1998:49; Meek, 1984:19; Palmer, 1995:86; Purves & Niles, 1984:6-7; Whitehead, Capey, Maddren & Wellings, 1977:53, 178, 272, 285).

One of the reasons identified by researchers for this less than ideal state of affairs is that, simply, too little is done to promote children's voluntary reading. Although educators and governments agree that the acquisition of literacy is a fundamental right of learners and therefore a top educational priority, the promotion of readership *per se*, in other words the enthusiastic *exercise* of that right, is neglected both at home, at school and in the community. The fact that there is a direct correlation between reading education and motivation for reading has not received the attention it warrants, with the result that there is an assumed decline in the quality of both (D'Ath, 1994:13; Elley, 1992:xi). Such neglect impacts adversely on the literacy levels of any country, but is specifically detrimental to literacy development in a developing country.

Concerns about substandard literacy levels and apathetic reading habits have resulted in a call to action by numerous educational and other authorities, including the International Reading Association, the American National Right to Read Foundation, the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy Association, campaigns such as the Start Early, Finish Strong, the Read*Write*Now! project, the No Child Left Behind Act 2001 campaign, the America Reads Challenge, UNESCO, and, locally, the South African National Department of Education's Masifunde Sonke campaign, the Gauteng Department of Education and READ Trust.

Appreciation for the benefits of reading are found, surprisingly, not only in organizations such as the above, driven by concerned adults, but even in the core of adolescent life. Covington and Dray (2002:40-44), for instance, found in a study conducted with students at an American university an acknowledgement for, what one respondent termed, 'surplus knowledge' that is acquired through reading beyond the requirements for academic studies. It appears that these students (admittedly more academically oriented than many other adolescents since they are studying at a prestigious tertiary institution) have a high regard for the role reading plays in

“promoting valued personal perspectives”, for its usefulness “in enhancing the meaning of everyday events” and for its ability “to transform an individual for the better” (Covington & Dray, 2002:40).

1.1.3 The art of reading

Since most adults who read avidly discovered the joys of the activity when they were children, and since this study focuses narrowly on the reading practices of Grade Eight learners, the literature and reading motivation for early adolescents will feature more prominently here.

Some of the benefits of children’s voluntary reading - that also ultimately help to create reading adults – include the provision of opportunities for relaxation and recreation, the defining of their roles in the home, school and community, the acquisition of self-knowledge in addition to knowledge of the world, the developing of an understanding of their own culture and a respect for the culture of others, as well as a set of values which is in harmony with society. Finally, children’s reading activities help to create a sense of beauty and develop in them a permanent interest in literature (Palmer, 1995:8).

Although the above benefits are considered to be the result of ‘higher order’ voluntary reading,¹ indulging in escapist reading is not without merit. Nell (1988:xiii) employs the term *ludic* (derived from the Latin *ludo* which means to play) to denote voracious recreational reading with an overriding pleasure-seeking aim. Whereas the voracious escapist reader reads to dull consciousness, others read to heighten consciousness, and for these readers a book ceases to be “primarily an instrument for shifting attention from the self to the environment to block out self-consciousness and becomes instead a vehicle for involvement with the characters and situations in the book” (Nell, 1988:229). Such involvement may in turn lead to self-exploration through the awakening of personal memories and aspirations, which enlarges experience, allows readers to live more intensely and to solve problems through the vicarious experiences of the protagonists.

¹ The reading of ‘higher order’ texts is often called *aesthetic* reading (Sampson, Van Allen & Sampson, 1991:312), or even more quaintly, the reading of literature with *belletristic* value (Henne, 1949:xiv).

Wish fulfilment and vicarious imaginative satisfaction go a long way towards explaining the attraction of voluntary reading. For instance, for Bettelheim (1976:3) the ‘function’ of literature for children is to assist them in their “struggle for meaning”:

Today, as in times past, the most important and also the most difficult task in raising a child is helping him to find meaning in life. Many growth experiences are needed to achieve this. The child, as he develops, must learn step by step to understand himself better; with this he becomes more able to understand others, and eventually can relate to them in ways which are mutually satisfying and meaningful.

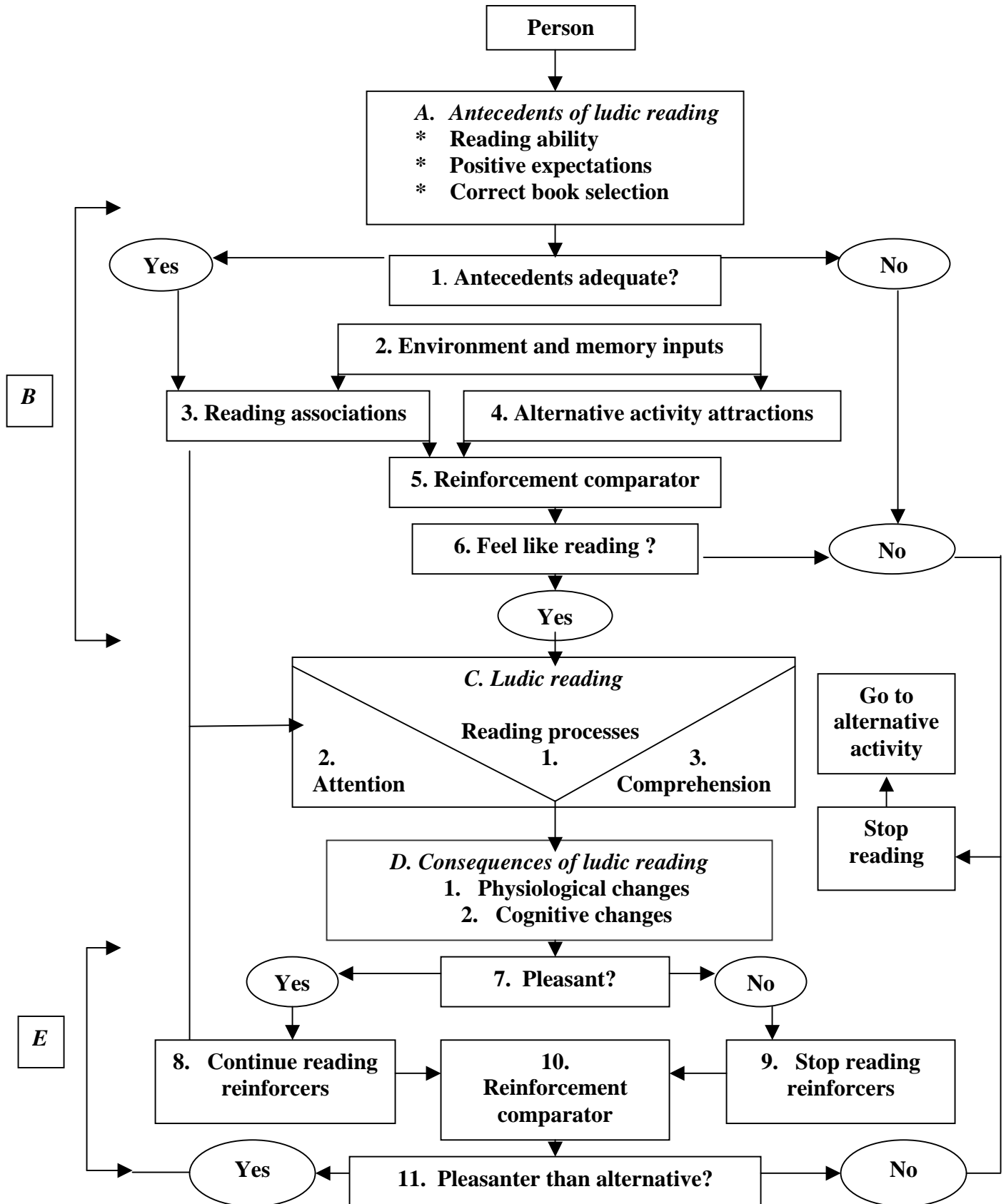
Encounters with literature – and from Bettelheim’s psychological stance, specifically fantasy as encountered in fairy tales – help the individual to find deeper meaning in life by transcending “the narrow confines of a self-centred existence” (1976:4).

Bibliotherapists employ the psychological slant on the reading of fiction and extend psychoanalytical practices to the “fantasies and feelings that were either inherited as part of the human condition or else were the inevitable outcome of the tensions inseparable from all family life, happy or unhappy” (Tucker, 1992:161). Analysis of fairy tales in the Freudian mode convinced Bettelheim that when children are young, it is literature that carries such information best (1976:4).

The reading of fiction, then, can vicariously help to resolve troubling issues or hidden feelings, doing so in an effective and harmless way. Ideally, educators (especially those who endorse a bibliotherapeutic perspective on voluntary reading) can help troubled children without clinical diagnosis, but merely by being sensitive and discerning while attempting to detect a learner’s emotional, social or psychological needs and tallying these with a comprehensive enough knowledge of books to be able to recommend the kind of reading or the specific books or authors that will be of most help to a particular individual (Green, 1987:62).

However, neither children nor adults normally read for psychoanalysis. They read voluntarily because the activity affords pleasure. Nell’s flowchart (1988; Figure 1.1; page 8) traces the sequence of events and the motivational forces that determine whether an individual finds reading pleasurable and sufficiently rewarding – and will consequently continue reading voluntarily and avidly. In the flowchart (Figure 1.1) the chain of reactions emphasizes the fact

Figure 1.1 Model of reading motivation (Nell, 1988:8)



that unless learners experience voluntary reading as a pleasurable activity, they will merely stop reading or choose alternatives that they regard as pleasanter.

It is clear that reading above all affords intellectual edification, and when it is fully optimized, its benefits are endless: thought and logic are stimulated, new ideas are generated, argument and counterargument develop, providing the reader, according to Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev and Miller (2003:94), with a most powerful tool to make increasingly complex meaning of our lives and the world around us. In addition, reading provides gratification on other levels, such as emotional delight and sensuous pleasure.

Reading can garner deep feelings of joy, sadness, hope, pity and other emotions vicariously experienced, giving rise to intense emotional pleasure. Words on paper can evoke strong responses, stimulating the senses imaginatively through imagery and aurally through rhythm.

The benefits of reading are not only personally edifying, as reading is also an *academic* necessity since, as Lyon (1997; online doc.) argues, reading serves as the “major avenue to learning about other people, about history and social studies, the language arts, science, mathematics, and the other content subjects that must be mastered in school”.

However, children cannot be *forced* to understand the importance of reading; they can only be guided, as Meek (1984:18) puts it, “to discover the fun of it”.

Helping learners to discover the benefits of reading through satisfying instructional literacy practices is a pleasant thought, but an overly simplistic one, if research evidence and grave concerns on general reading levels are considered. Current literacy instruction is too complex an issue to be measured merely in terms of a discovery of the ‘fun of reading’. The *art* of reading and the vicarious enjoyment of literature, after all, start with the *act* of reading, which is often termed, not without reason, the *mechanics* of reading. Although literature and literacy are twin vehicles in the reading experience, reading research explores them as separate entities. This practice has created an often dichotomous relationship between these double agents of reading, which has also complicated their very definition.

1.2 READING: THE CLASS ACT

1.2.1 The act of reading

Traditionally, children learn to read at primary school. At secondary school, they read to learn. It is argued that if the former takes place effectively, the latter will follow suit. However, that is not always the case, and this is reason for great concern. One solution advanced by reading researchers for the improvement of the older learners' reading practices is the promotion of voluntary reading at secondary school, and the belief that advanced reading instruction should continue long after traditional, formal reading instruction has ceased at primary school. If reading is the best way to learn to read, it is argued, reading more often and more challenging material is surely the best way to develop superior literacy skills.

Not only has numerous studies found that good readers often (if only incidentally, since no conclusive research has been conducted in this respect) are the academically high achievers, research has unfortunately also discovered that poor readers are more prone to experiencing learning problems than fluent readers (Elley, 1992:xii; Olën & Machet, 1997:92; Snow, Barnes & Chandler, 1991; Whitehead *et al.*, 1977:276). There are many reasons why learners fail to make progress in reading. Barriers such as adverse home, community and economic environments (Elley, 1992:6), sensory deficits, insufficient language stimulation at home and at school, limited intellectual ability (Chall, 1996:2), learning disabilities, anxiety, depression and poor schooling all contribute to unsuccessful reading (Scheffel, Shroyer & Strongin, 2003:83; Whitehead *et al.*, 1977). Other studies investigate the close correlation between reading problems and emotional disorders, postulating that poor readers are almost four times as likely as other children to show signs of maladjustment in school (Irvin, 1998:19; Scheffel *et al.*, 2003:83; Snow, Barnes & Chandler, 1991)².

² These researchers, of course, do not imply that emotional disorders are caused by learners' inability to read effectively, but that the adverse conditions that create dysfunctional behaviour and emotional disorders in children are also not conducive to creating literacy rich environments that can inculcate a culture of reading.

In the light of these findings, it is understandable why reading research has expanded exponentially over the past three decades (Fletcher & Francis, 2004:60), affirming Chall's (1996:4) observation that more academic research on reading was published in the 1970s "in one year than existed from the late 1800s to the early 1960s". Reading research has also received more attention than most other fields in education, firstly, because it is the basis for most learning, and secondly, because there has always been dissatisfaction with some aspect of literacy instruction or another in some discipline or educational field or another. The central focus of this investigation, namely the factors that influence the specific area of adolescent voluntary reading, has received little academic attention, especially in South Africa.

1.2.2 Adolescent reading

The dire consequences of failing to create a reading culture are regularly paraded in academic reports and the popular press (Chisholm *et al.*, 2000:44; Hugo, 1999:93; National Assessment of Adult Literacy index, 2003; World Socialist Web Site, 2004). Whatever reasons adults have for being indifferent readers, the fact remains that for the most part reluctant young readers are the result of non-reading adults, or other adults – whether parents or teachers - who do not manage or trouble to foster a love of reading in their children or learners. For the first four or so years in a child's life, parents reading to their children (and their being seen to read themselves) is the most important influence on children's reading and will remain a major if a more indirect influence for many years to come. Early reading strategies are, like most children's habits, an imitation of adult behaviour. Therefore, if parents find reading a positive experience with a truly meaningful function, the child will most probably follow suit. After all, by school-going age, the young child has already mastered the momentous tasks of learning to speak, communicating messages and denoting meaning in imitation of the significant adults in their lives.

While it is widely acknowledged that a love of reading and the acquisition of salient reading habits start at home, teaching reading has traditionally been the domain of teachers and not

parents.³ Primary schools are responsible for teaching learners to read. Having mastered the skill, learners in later grades are expected to read independently, and to be able to learn through reading. However, according to Ivey and Broaddus (2001:350), pre-adolescent and adolescent readers may receive mixed messages regarding independent reading practices at school.

One of the most glaring inconsistencies is the fact that adolescent learners at secondary school are assigned increasingly complex materials to read, but teachers are spending little – if any – time showing them how to do this effectively. Another distinctive feature is that as learners progress from primary to secondary school, there is supposedly a greater emphasis on learners as individuals, yet teachers rarely differentiate instruction to address learner needs individually. While adolescent learners are expected to be able to read a wide range of texts, yet they are mostly limited to prescribed novels and textbooks. Although teachers require learners to be able to read critically, they seldom allow them to initiate conversations about books. Learners are expected to become independent readers, but are given few opportunities to explore their own interests in reading, to read at their own pace, or to make their own decisions about whether or not to read a book. If the goal of instruction is to create skilful, versatile, engaged readers, it is little wonder that reading instruction during this stage “may be missing the mark” (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001:350).

Concerned researchers and teachers have found that the enthusiasm and motivation that characterize much of the early reading experiences some children have, go amiss as they progress from primary to secondary school. Different researchers have different terms for this phenomenon: Chall (1996:6; 1991:144) calls it a “slump”, Ivey and Broaddus (2001:355) describe it as “a growing resistance toward reading”, Anderson (1994:180) describes children at this age as “apathetic readers”, and Reynolds (1996,) refers to the assumed reading decline as “book-dropping”. McGill-Franzen and Allington (2003:17-19) express concern over a “reading loss” or “setback” that occurs when learners do not read voluntarily over their three-

³ Parents, incidentally, were warned away from teaching their children to read by reading researchers in the 1970s and early 1980s who deemed early reading a ‘harmful’ practice if the child has not yet attained ‘reading readiness’ (Clark, 1976; Meek, 1984).

month summer holiday in the United States of America ⁴. After extensive research on the reading habits of pre-adolescents, Whitehead *et al.* (1977:53) found that there clearly is a consistent tendency for children to read fewer books as they grow older: “Not only is there a reduction at 12+ and 14+ in the average number of books read, but there is also, at these ages, a steep increase in the percentage of non-book-readers”.

The decline in voluntary reading should not only be attributed - as by Meek (1984:93, 160, 196), Sulzby (1993:58) and Trelease (1984:29) - to the deleterious influence of TV and other electronic media on the reading habits of adolescents. Almost half a century ago already, before the electronic media had become as pervasive as they have in the past twenty years, Gesell, Ilg and Ames (1956) identified a definite reading decline around the age of fifteen, which gives credence to the belief that intrinsic factors in addition to extrinsic factors influence the reading motivation of pre-adolescents. Research conducted by Chall (1996) not only displays evidence of a decline in voluntary reading taking place around the late primary school phase, but places the causes for it firmly in the teacher’s court. On the issue of maintaining or losing reading gains, she reminds her readers that a reading decline had already been investigated in studies between 1910 and 1960.

Although the phenomenon of reading decline has been observed (but not adequately investigated) by many reading researchers, there is some dispute regarding the specific age at which this purportedly takes place:

There has been a steady shift at 12+ and 14+ not only towards the lower book-reading categories but also into the non-book-reading category; and we are forced to conclude . . . that a substantial number of children abandon the book-reading habit as they grow older. Thus among the girls, while there were only 9,4% in the 10+ age group who had read no book at all during the sample month, this percentage has risen to 23,3% at 12+ and to 32,4% at 14+. At all ages, however, there are fewer non-book-readers among the girls than among the boys, and the corresponding figures for boys are indeed even more disturbing. The percentage of non-book-readers among the 10+ boys is itself by no means negligible at 15,8%, but

⁴ A dearth of reading experiences in the holiday period alone accumulates as a “crucial two-year gap” by the time learners arrive in Grades Eight and Nine. However, studies have shown that children who read as few as six books over the summer holiday period maintain the level of reading skills they achieved during the academic year. Reading gains are reported if children read ten to twenty books of their own choice during this period alone (McGill-Franzen & Allington, 2003:17).

by age 12+ the corresponding figure has already climbed to 33,2% and at age 14+ it actually reaches a staggering 40%. One certainly cannot feel happy about the situation thus revealed (Whitehead et al., 1977:53).

However, according to Chall, the slump begins to occur somewhat earlier, but continues unabated to the higher grades:

With regard to the many questions about practice, for example, one concerns many teachers. Why do the reading gains of children in the 4th and 5th grades, particularly children from homes of limited education and income, begin to decline? Why don't the significant gains in reading achievement found for primary grade children continue in the intermediate and upper grades? And in high school? (1996:5)

Chall, Jacobs and Baldwin (1991:144-6) note that the difference between children from disadvantaged homes and affluent ones, and learners who achieve below average and others who achieve well above average, has a marked influence on the timing of this 'slump'. Inadequate readers in the former group "slump earlier", while the successful and fluent readers not only slump later, but experience less of a decline.

Ivey and Broaddus (2001:350) find the early adolescents to be "apathetic, reluctant readers" and characterized by their negative attitudes and reading resistance. South African reading surveys (Du Toit, 2001; Houghton-Hawksley, 1985; Palmer, 1995) have also observed that there has been a definite decline in the numbers of books read by children in the past thirty years across-the-board; however, no specific age has been settled as being the age at which such a decline commences. Olën and Machet (1997:89) comment on the fact that South African school-based reading programmes provide little opportunity for learners to read for pleasure, resulting in the apathetic reading habits that Grade Seven learners display.

The probability of reading decline has not been investigated rigorously and the reasons given for a decrease in reading motivation are the obvious, for instance, less time for reading as learners progress from primary to secondary school, more competing attractions such as the electronic media, more homework, more time-consuming extramural activities and 'hanging out with friends'.

That technological and cybernetic advances of the past two decades have made greater demands upon adolescent learners' reading proficiency than ever before, is undeniable. Ironically, reading research has shown that proficiency levels have declined instead of increased to meet the demand for more rigorous reading practices (Horne, 2001; PIRLS, 2001). One line of research (Brindley, 1993; Harris & Sipay, 1990) holds that the reason so many people read at a level well below their age or educational status is that more people have become reluctant readers or do not read at all if they can help it. The linguistic impoverishment of non-reading adolescents is a direct consequence of the fact that they do not read quantitatively or qualitatively enough – in other words, neither regularly enough, nor challenging enough texts - to give them effortless command of the printed word.

To redress this problem and maximize the benefits of reading, reading instruction should include a voluntary reading programme that will make reading so enjoyable that it is actively sought as a preferred activity. The revised South African National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 2002:10) commendably states that learners should be encouraged and supported “to do wide reading”; however, the document does not describe how or when this can be done, making the statement little more than lip service. Earlier South African policy documents did not even contain this enjoinder (DoE, 1997; DoE, 2001). This oversight has done little to help create the culture of reading that is so eloquently professed to be sought after by politicians and educators alike.

Another deleterious omission regarding reading is that it is actively taught as a subject at school only until learners are perceived to have mastered its ‘mechanics’ and then they are mainly left to their own devices. Teachers of adolescents rest on the assumption that the actual teaching of reading is done at primary school. According to Hunter-Carsch (1995:149), reading motivation would be facilitated if high school teachers also teach reading, observe, test and record the learners' reading development.

In spite of opposing views expressed by researchers such as Akira (2003: online doc.), Manzo (2003:654) and Krashen (2002b:749), the decline in voluntary reading has been shown to be a real and present problem, acknowledged not only by a concerned publishing sector, but also

by learners themselves. In a survey conducted with 700 Grade Eleven learners (Du Toit, 2001), the respondents were asked whether they had read more or fewer books when at primary school, and the overwhelming majority answered that they had read more. When asked to select from a list of options the reasons for this, eighty percent of the respondents declared that they had more time for reading then. The same number of respondents stated that homework took up more time at secondary school, and a busier social life left them with less time to read recreationally. Unsurprisingly, almost seventy percent of the respondents indicated that their primary school teachers had encouraged them more actively to read voluntarily than their secondary teachers did, confirming suspicions that secondary school teachers do not see the need for their taking responsibility for reading motivation.

It is furthermore alarming to note that this decline takes place during a crucial period in the lives of learners. Apart from being a transitional period emotionally and physically, it is the start of the final phase of learners' school careers which affords the last opportunity for teachers and policy makers to exert a positive influence on reading motivation.

1.2.3 Voluntary reading and school

In view of the fact that there is a paucity of research on reading promotion research in South Africa (Buthelezi, 2003: online doc.; Houghton-Hawksley, 1983:238; Olën & Mchet, 1997:86; Palmer, 1995:97; Pretorius & Mchet, 2004:47), such an investigation in local schools could be of considerable value to literacy development and reading. It is noteworthy that some changes regarding reading instruction have already been brought about in the ten years since South Africa's first democratic election, starting with policy shifts in the South African educational system. The first draft of the 1997 discussion document of the Department of Education on Curriculum 2005 attempted to bring about "major changes in education and training in South Africa in order to normalise and transform teaching and learning", and emphasised two key aspects of the Language, Literacy and Communication (LLC) learning area: the role of communication as being "intrinsic to human development and central to lifelong learning" and the "advancement of multilingualism as a major resource". Whereas

these aims – and the majority of the aims and outcomes in the document - are laudable for their advancement of social, emotional and cultural domains, reading *per se* was surprisingly short-changed; for instance, the word *reading* appears only three times in the document and in two of these instances the word is in inverted commas - cf. “the ‘reading’ of e.g. TV and film as cultural messages”, and “cultural, social and ideological values that shape our ‘reading’ of texts” (DoE, 1997:25).

Four years later the revised draft document of the National Curriculum Statement (2001) attempted to redress the discussion document’s neglect of reading by stating that Learning Outcome 3 will enable the learner “to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts” (DoE, 2001:17). The suggestion that a great variety of texts – ranging from the oral tradition to jokes and the “advice page of a teenage magazine” - be included “for information and enjoyment” is certainly one of the most salient features of the LLC learning area. It is vitally important to include early texts (including the oral tradition with praise poems and indigenous fables and nursery rhymes) in the reading programme at primary school since the pleasure they afford and the positive associations with home and primary caregivers serve as powerful motivators for the promotion of voluntary reading habits.

However, in spite of the inclusion of the pleasure principle with regard to reading, the urgency of the need to promote independent reading is still not a feature of a curriculum that acknowledges neither the role played by pre-school and home influences on literacy acquisition nor the secondary school’s responsibility in the fostering of a lifelong reading habit.

Notably, ‘reading’ in this document is always combined with ‘viewing’ to constitute Learning Outcome 2, just as ‘thinking and reasoning’ are linked in Learning Outcome 3. The emphasis on visual literacy is a logical development since it has become increasingly important for learners to decode the messages sent via modern technologies due to the proliferation of electronic media. However, reading becomes devalued if every reference to the reading act is accompanied by the alternative and equally important activity of viewing.

To ensure that learners fully internalise the reading process, it is imperative that enough sheer practice in reading is required. School curricula are designed to address the necessity of reading practice and the National Curriculum Statement suggests that learners “read lots of books” (DoE, 2001:91) as part of Learning Outcome 3. However, in spite of this positive, albeit nebulous statement and the fact that it is abundantly clear to all that functional reading is necessary for successful living, not everybody regards free voluntary reading as an equally important facet of their lives.

One of the reasons for the neglect of voluntary reading at school might be that teachers do not appreciate the fact that they play a pivotal role in the fostering of their learners’ reading habits. The lack of teacher training specifically geared towards reading motivation may contribute to this *laissez faire* attitude. It is little wonder that teachers and educational authorities in some sectors experience great dissatisfaction with the training of teachers. The *Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005*, for instance, acknowledges that, although training in reading instruction in the various South African provinces varies widely and most teachers receive at least some form of training, “the training was generally regarded as insufficient and at times inappropriate. This has a negative impact on the level of confidence of the teachers. Most expressed a need for training that was less theoretical and more sustained” (Chisholm *et al.*, 2000:80).

The problem of the inadequate training of language teachers with regard to reading is exacerbated by the fact that many teachers are unenthusiastic about reading themselves; for instance, Harris and Sipay (1990:670) cite a study that established that teachers know very little about children’s literature: only 9% of 571 respondents could name three children’s books written in the past five years. They also found that teachers did not know how to foster voluntary reading since only 11% could name three or more such promotional activities. Since there is also evidence that teachers lack knowledge of their learners’ interests, it is unlikely that teachers can adequately match children’s interests with suitable and relevant material.

D’Ath (1994:2) cites a South African study in which 30,5 % of 210 first year teacher training students who completed a survey about their own reading experiences at school, declared that they had never learnt to like reading. Pretorius and Machet (2004) conducted a reading survey with teachers from five disadvantaged schools in South Africa, and obtained alarming evidence that only ten percent of the teachers regarded themselves as skilled fluent readers. After analysing the less than ideal enthusiasm of teachers for their learners’ reading activities, Pretorius and Machet state that “it is disquieting that reading seems to play a fairly peripheral role in the lives of a class of professionals who are deeply engaged on a daily basis with developing literacy in young learners” (2004:57).

A lack of enthusiasm is not the only concern regarding reading motivation. Teachers with inadequate reading skills pose another dilemma. Teachers who are hardly functionally literate cannot teach reading adequately, let alone foster a lifelong reading habit in their learners. An alarming South African study conducted by Horne (2001:3), reveals an underlying cause of poor reading skills. In a mostly rural area of South Africa, almost 800 matriculants who successfully applied for teacher training and qualified as teachers at the end of 1998, had the profile displayed in Table 1.1:

Table 1. 1 SAAL-E school-leavers applying for teacher training

	FUNCTIONAL SKILLS LEVEL IN ENGLISH			
	Below Grade 8	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10
Number of learners	728	23	8	7
Percentage	95%	3%	1%	1%

Although the statistics in Table 1.1 exclusively reflect the reading and writing skills levels of what could be described as a rural SAAL-E contingent, they clearly affirm the report published by the President’s Education Initiative (quoted by Horne, 2001:5), stating that these students are products of teachers who are poorly trained and who themselves experience difficulties in basic English reading and writing. Horne reflects:

We all know the maxim: “Readers are achievers.” We also know that our learners, in particular our SAAL-E, don’t read because they can’t, won’t, or don’t have books

to read. How can we turn our learners into readers? Should language-of-learning reading be incorporated into the school curriculum as a full-fledged school subject and made compulsory up to Grade 12? If not, why not? (2001:7).

South Africa, however, is not alone in omitting to make reading a pleasurable but crucially important educational endeavour through proper teacher training. Teachers trained in the United States of America felt that, since their initial teacher training was inadequate, they did not enter the profession as properly equipped teachers of reading and after years of practice they still felt the need for training in the more crucial areas of reading instruction (Lambley, 1992:22). In South Africa, as elsewhere, most teacher training programmes are rightly criticised for their lack of adequate or continuous preparation in literacy instruction and reading promotion. After a study conducted at five less affluent schools in South Africa, Pretorius and Machet (2004) report that practicing teachers fail to actively engage their classes in the kind of reading activity that will have a positive impact on their learners' literacy accomplishments. It appears that the teachers lack a full understanding of their learners' reading problems, and Pretorius and Machet (2004:58) attribute this to a number of factors, namely a "naiveté about what reading entails, the tendency to equate reading skill with decoding, a lack of adequate training, and the need for a broader frame of reference in terms of which to evaluate their learners' literacy achievements". Under these circumstances it is only too easy to adopt a bleak outlook on the state of reading in South Africa, and to assume that there are more reading problems than there are rescue remedies.

1.3 QUEST AND QUERY

1.3.1 Rationally researching reading

Reading researchers have commented on the fact that there is a distinctive decline in recreational reading as children progress from primary to secondary school. Moreover, according to studies conducted in South Africa and abroad (Chall, 1996; Du Toit, 2001; Houghton-Hawksley, 1983; Palmer, 1995, Whitehead *et al.*, 1977), most children also indicate that they read fewer books for recreational purposes as they progress from primary to secondary school. In a quantitative research study on the reading habits of South African

adolescents (Du Toit, 2001; cf. Section 1.2.2) which indicated a decline in the number of books read, respondents were asked to specify reasons for this phenomenon. An increased homework load, a busier social life and more extra-mural activities are the reasons most often cited for the lacklustre state of reading. Further evidence from reading surveys shows that these are indeed relevant factors, as well as other extrinsic factors, such as secondary school teachers' neglect of their learners' voluntary reading due to ignorance or disregard of the role played by reading in learning, to inadequate teacher training with regard to reading in general and voluntary reading in particular, to the diminished role allocated to independent reading in literature and language classes due to policy oversight, to a disregard of the pleasure principle in school-based reading, and especially to the fact that education authorities pay little more than lip service to the fostering of a lifelong reading habit in learners.

The impact of intrinsic factors, however, has not been adequately researched, although some research has suggested the influence of motivational forces on continued voluntary reading practice (cf. Nell's model of reading motivation, Figure 1.1; also Section 2.6.2). Whitehead *et al.* (1977:290), for instance, also cite as one of the powerful intrinsic motivators for learners over the age of twelve, and another reason for reading decline, the influence of peers.

It has also been argued that although researchers and educators agree that excellent reading skills are a prerequisite for adequate learning to take place, secondary school focuses too narrowly on the importance of reading for information, with the pleasure that reading may afford a luxurious and at times even superfluous bonus. However, reading researchers argue that the effects of recreational reading are 'good' for the individual as well as for the creation of a society with a culture of reading. To generate and maximize these benefits reading instruction at school should include a recreational reading programme that will make reading so enjoyable that it is actively sought as a preferred activity. This has not been the case in South Africa, as readership surveys are fond of pointing out.

Research on the literature used in voluntary reading practices is often polarized between the two arbitrarily imposed divisions of children's literature and youth or young adult (YA) fiction, which may contribute to the fact that the problem of a sometimes radical decline in

voluntary reading taking place in the passage from the one to the other goes undetected, and hence remains mostly not investigated. There are few research studies to lead the way due to the fact that recreational reading has attracted little serious research beyond readership and interests studies, not only in South Africa, but also abroad. San Antonio (2004:19) remarks that American research on transition and adjustment from primary to secondary school does not examine these phenomena from the learners' perspective, nor pay attention to school or community contexts. Palmer (1995:97) comments on this phenomenon as well as Houghton-Hawksley (1983:238), who states that research on recreational reading from the learners' perspective in South Africa and investigations in schools could be of considerable value to help redress the problem. Palmer (1995) suggests that research done co-jointly by primary and secondary school teachers can be most valuable since it can link all the developmental variables involved in voluntary reading habits and promotional patterns between the two sectors.

The majority of South African research studies in voluntary reading have been of a quantitative nature, and with the paucity of rigorous reading research projects, they contain a valuable reflection of reading-related practices in South Africa. The predilection for quantifiable studies in voluntary reading research is shared by other countries, and other times. Even Vygotsky (1998) reflects that in his day more research in this field was conducted in quantifiable areas. He also states – and this is pertinent to this study - that the 'dynamics of transitions' from one age level to another should be researched more rigorously,⁵ reflecting further that 'stable age periods' have been studied "significantly more fully than those that are characterized by another type of development – crises. The latter are disclosed purely empirically and thus far have not been brought into the system" (1998:191). The group under scrutiny in this study are dynamically engaged in transitioning, and as adolescence has traditionally been considered fraught with abrupt and critical changes, it is this turbulence that forms the setting of this study.

⁵ Vygotsky's theories on transitions and child development are discussed at greater length in Chapter Two.

1.3.2 Purpose, plan and probes

The research study aims to investigate factors that influence the voluntary reading of some South African children, especially at a so-called critical age when they reputedly undergo considerable emotional, intellectual, social and physical changes which all, to a greater or lesser extent, influence their habits, experiences, attitudes and choices – of which voluntary reading is but a part. The study comprises a qualitative exploration and description of the experiences of a small number of South African adolescents' voluntary reading habits after their transition from primary school.

The study may serve to identify fundamental influences on voluntary reading at a crucial stage in a child's life. A study of this nature may to some modest extent contribute to the body of knowledge on the voluntary reading habits of learners in a country that lacks a reading culture. Adolescence is a critical time of life (in all senses of the word). Regarding reading development more specifically, adolescence is a critical phase because learners are still at secondary school and educators have a last opportunity to intervene positively, promote reading and aid the acquisition of advanced reading skills. After identifying the factors that influence adolescents' voluntary reading, the study will endeavour to use the information to clearly identify areas for the promotion of voluntary reading specifically at secondary school. Prediction and guidance, rather than prescription and intervention, are the ultimate outcomes of the findings.

The investigation closely focuses on the factors that influence early adolescents' voluntary reading practice. Changes in reading habits are reported to occur in the 'grey area' between the last years of 'childhood' (represented by Grades Six and Seven) and the emergence of puberty and adolescence (represented by Grades Eight, Nine and Ten). The learners' responses to probes and their description of the transformation that may or may not occur in their reading habits in the months between primary and secondary school may serve to throw light on the factors that precipitate the changes in their voluntary reading.

An in-depth exploration of these factors, followed by a description of respondent experiences and an analysis in rich detail of aspects that influence adolescent reading habits, will attempt to answer the following research question:

How do Grade Eight learners experience reading in general and their voluntary reading in particular?

To elucidate the main question, the following sub-question will be addressed:

How do Grade Eight readers explain the change - if it occurs - in their voluntary reading habits after their transition from primary to secondary school?

These questions can only be answered by means of a qualitative research design. A qualitative approach presupposes greater reflexivity, and since the protagonists in this inquiry are early adolescents (which reputedly is the first age at which sincere and candid reflection becomes apparent), their experiences are best explored, narrated, described and analysed in a qualitative investigation.

In a qualitative paradigm, an in-depth exploration also implies an attempt to study the context in which a phenomenon occurs in addition to the highly personal experiences described by the respondents. No precise measurement - which can give rise to statistical relationships and generalisable findings - is possible or attempted. Although it is overly simplistic to argue that qualitative research is more closely related to *words* in the pursuit of meaning, as opposed to quantitative research's reliance on *numbers* and issues of generalisability, in practice, however, the research questions in this thesis can only be answered by the former and not the latter for these very reasons. Whereas quantitative research deductively tests hypotheses with data, a qualitative investigation attempts to inductively generate new hypotheses from collected data. No quantifiable controls are possible, or even desired in qualitative research; instead, human behaviour, attitudes, experiences and phenomena are examined in as much depth as possible to supply a rich and authentic representation of a specific, focused, deliberately delimited reality. While quantitative studies collect data through instruments such as rating scales, or Likert-scale responses, qualitative research (as in this case) collects data through in-depth interviews and field notes, with the researcher as the principal data

collection instrument. Generalised findings are the desired result of quantitative research; qualitative research attempts to present multiple, contextualised perspectives. Since narrative descriptions (rather than statistically significant reports) are a major outcome of qualitative research, direct quotations from the respondents are highly valued, especially since they are considered subjective, highly individual and their experiences embedded in a psychosocial construct. Qualitative research explores themes holistically in an attempt to trace patterns; it does not attempt to generalise.

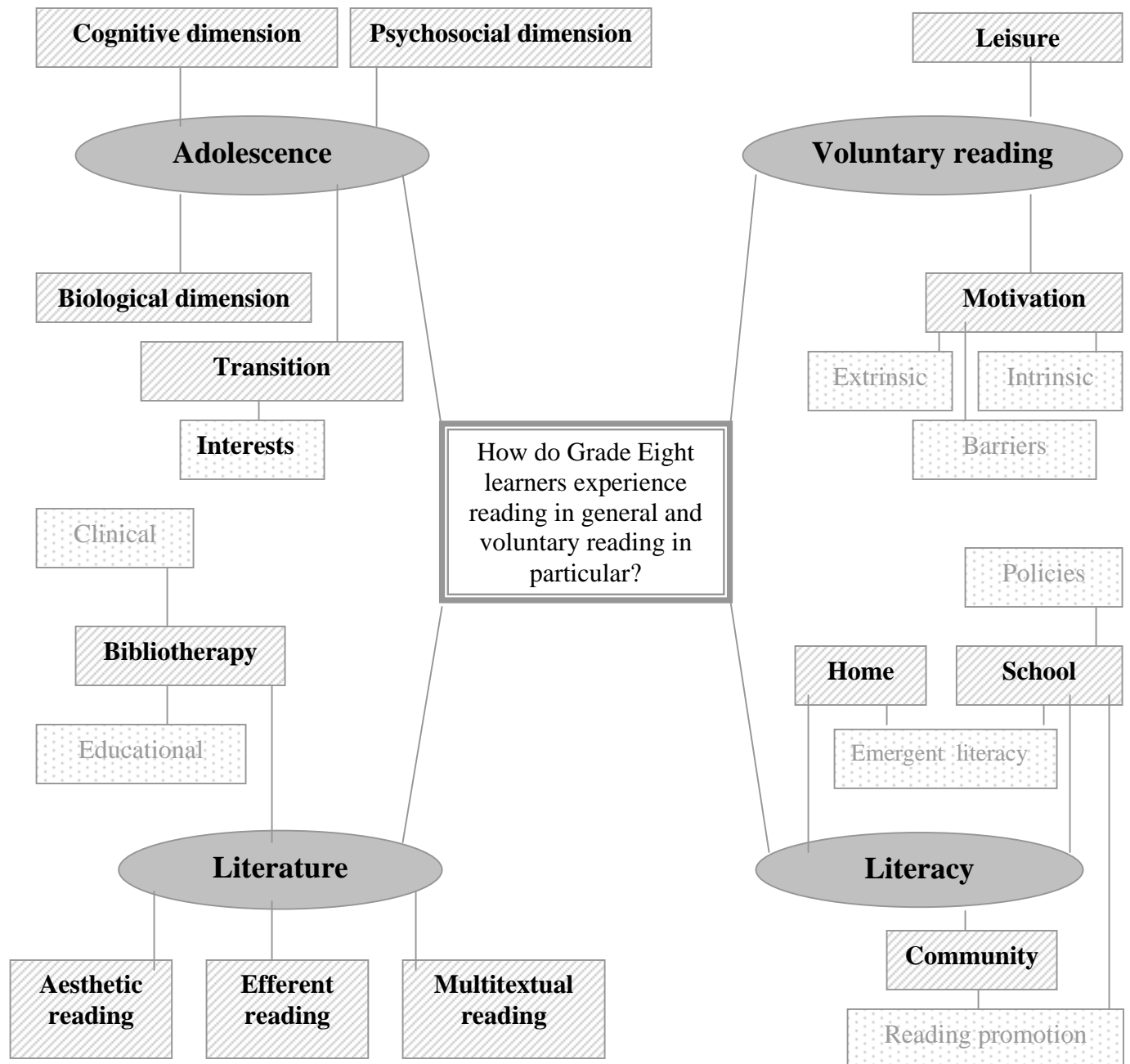
By its very nature – namely as an attempt to describe learner experiences during a time of transition – this is a retrospective study. The respondents will be required to recall their experience of a specific occurrence that has taken place during the preceding six months. It is expected that some distancing is already possible (since six months consisting of momentous changes may represent a significant phase in the life of a twelve-year old), yet the learners' experiences are recent enough to be recalled with great lucidity. The respondents describe their own experiences with reflexivity and retrospectivity. These descriptions are examined against a multiplicity of theories in an attempt to generate patterns and explanations of the phenomena set by the research questions. Through this theoretical triangulation, the researcher's subjectivity is curbed and internal validity established.

In its attempt, then, to fully describe the voluntary reading practices of a small group of early adolescents and ground the interpretation of the findings in the study, a theoretical framework comprising four domains from diverse fields of discourse will be employed. Figure 1.2 (p. 26) delineates the four spheres of influence, namely adolescence, voluntary reading, literature and literacy, as well as their interrelatedness with regard to factors and aspects of the research question.

1.3.3 Programme

Since the study will be conducted to explore the multiplicity of factors that affect Grade Eight learners' reading habits, the domains of adolescence, voluntary reading, literature and literacy,

Figure 1.2 Theoretical framework



branch out into spheres and agents of influence, such as motivation, leisure, changes, interests, school and policy, which are all represented individually in the framework, but inevitably interrelate and overlap. Various fields of interest are required to inform the study,

for instance the discourses of reading research, literacy education, literary development and educational psychology, since much remains to be investigated with regard to voluntary reading activities and their relation to basic reading skills. A qualitative approach is required since it more readily accommodates multiple and diverse aspects of adolescent experience and it lends itself to a closer focus on the participants' perspectives within their specific context.

Whereas the first chapter attempted to set parameters for the theoretical framework, the second chapter will address the first two domains, namely adolescence and voluntary reading. Two fields of influence (namely a facet of the Vygotskian notion of the development of interests and qualitative change, and the forces of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation) that underscore adolescent development will also be examined. In the third chapter the other domains of the theoretical framework, namely literacy and literature, form the basis of the network of transitional changes that inform adolescent voluntary reading practice. The concept of periodicity is addressed through an examination of various stage-environmental fit theories in Chapter Four, with a closer focus on Chall's theory of stage transitioning that traces reading development. The methodology is delineated in the fourth chapter and a description of the course of this qualitative research study includes a report on the data collection, data analysis strategies and research instruments. The strengths and limitations of the study will be addressed, as well as issues of reliability, validity and generalisability.

The inquiry will continue along the course set by the theoretical framework. Face-to-face, partially structured interviews will be conducted with purposively selected Grade Eight learners to obtain their views on voluntary reading and transition. The empirical results will be processed in a four-tiered analysis structure and some findings will be reported in the sixth chapter. The final chapter will offer a synthesis by linking the theoretical outline with empirical findings.

CHAPTER TWO

YOUTHFUL READING

It takes a village to raise a child.

African proverb

The most characteristic feature of the modern psychology of the adolescent is its attempt to understand the personality of the adolescent not as a thing, but as a process, that is, to approach it dynamically and not statically, and this is inevitably connected with distinguishing separate phases and periods in the development of the interests of the adolescent.

Vygotsky 1998

If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth.

Holden Caulfield in J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The current proliferation of investigative studies in the field of reading research is a potent indication that educators and researchers are deeply concerned about learners' reading practices. Until the 1980s research on independent reading practices was mostly done peripherally and by way of other fields of knowledge, for instance, as a component of children's literature courses in language departments, in media studies and librarianship, information technology, linguistics, literary theory, education (mostly as an aspect of teacher training), and, to a lesser extent, in the fields of psychology (as a corollary of bibliotherapy and child development) and anthropology. A narrower focus arrived in the 1990s with an increase in empirical research and readership studies conducted by institutions and committees such as Britain's National Centre for Research in Children's Literature (NCRL), America's National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) or the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and The International Reading Association. More attention, consequently, has been paid in the last decade to learners' reading interest and collaboration between the diverse fields of expertise has begun to bear fruit.

The focus of this investigation is the independent reading practice of early adolescents. This is an area that has received very little attention compared to other areas in the field of reading research, such as beginning reading, emergent literacy or remedial reading. Numerous studies have been conducted internationally, but in South Africa a paucity of research is a distressing indication of the relative lack of interest in the field (Houghton-Hawksley, 1983:237; Olën & Machet, 1997:86). Furthermore, empirical research in voluntary reading in South Africa has mostly been conducted in the fields of library science and children's literature and has also been predominantly quantitative in nature. Neither psychology - apart from studies on bibliotherapeutic practices - nor education has adequately investigated the role played by independent reading practices on the acquisition and advancement of literacy.

The often turbulent transition from primary to secondary school has been receiving academic attention only in the past twenty years or so. Seidman, Lambert, Allen and Aber (2003:167), for instance, refer to the "scant literature" on the phenomenon of "stressful ecological

transitions during early adolescence” and the “declines in self-esteem and academic performance often associated with the school transition”. San Antonio (2004:19) concurs, adding that a literature review of this transition reveals that researchers have especially not examined the experience from the learners’ perspective, nor considered it in the context of school and community. Anderman, Austin and Johnson (2002:213) also refer to the “surprisingly little research” that has thus far examined what they identify as “changes in achievement goals across the transition” from primary to secondary school. When, for instance, in the fields of psychology and education, some investigations on adolescent ‘transitions’ had indeed been conducted by respected researchers, (such as Erikson, Vygotsky and Chall), they are often on matters peripheral to learners’ progress from primary to secondary school.

To attempt to fully investigate the voluntary reading practices of the early adolescent learner, the theoretical framework in Figure 1.2 with its four central domains from diverse fields will be used. In this chapter the first two domains, namely adolescence and voluntary reading, as well as the influence of motivation, will be addressed.

2.2 ADOLESCENCE

2.2.1 The double-edged sword ⁶

For various reasons adolescence is considered one of the most complex developmental phases in human life. The phase’s complexity does not only reside in its nature, but also in its very definition. Saying that adolescence roughly corresponds to a ‘critical’ phase between childhood and adulthood, does little to conceptualise the unique nature of the phase. It is important to note that adolescence is not the only critical phase in childhood. Vygotsky

⁶ The International Encyclopaedia of Education (Husen & Postlethwaite, 1994:83-88) warns that “adolescence is a double-edged sword” since it is commonly defined as a period potentially harbouring a myriad of social problems. However, the dictionary does not dwell on the reputed *sturm und drang* of the period, but also consolingly points out that most adolescents harbour a growing sense of self or identity which will soon allow them to make responsible decisions and commitments.

(1998:15), in fact, identifies two distinct transitional periods during which the child rejects the ‘old’, namely at the age of around three, and at approximately thirteen, which is the beginning of sexual maturation.⁷

Vygotsky (1997, 1998) frequently substitutes the concept of “transitional age” with “adolescent age” and often refers to the “turbulence” around adolescence as a “thirteen-year crisis”. One of the reasons for the turmoil manifesting in negativity is the ‘crisis’ around the issues of sexual maturation, but there are others:

As the very name indicates, the negative content of the period is most prominent and with superficial observation seems to be the whole idea of development in this period. The decrease in success, decline in capacity for work, lack of harmony in the internal structure of the personality, contraction and dying off of systems of previously established interests, and the negative, protesting character of behaviour led Kroh to describe this period as the stage of such disorientation in internal and external relations in which the human ‘I’ and the world are more divided than at any other period (Vygotsky, 1998:193).

Vygotsky is not the first educator or psychologist to remark on the ‘negativity’ of the adolescent phase. Another is Erikson (1968)⁸ whose contribution to adolescent research is especially relevant for its delineation of the dynamics of the phase. He reflects on the various identity crises and the *sturm und drang* that traditionally characterize adolescence and comments on ‘their’ recalcitrance as follows:

Are they truly dominated by their negative identities as their display of irreverence seems to indicate? I would not think so at all. True, it gratifies them that parents are dismayed by their appearances, for the display is really a declaration insisting on some positive identity not primarily based on the parental type of conformism or pretension. That such nonconformism, in turn, is a plea for fraternal confirmation and thus acquires a new ritualised character is part of the paradox of all rebellious identity formation (Erikson, 1968:28).

⁷ Other researchers add the period between birth and about two years of age as another important transitional phase.

⁸ The fact that Erikson wrote his seminal work during the Vietnam War may, to some extent, explain his biased polarization of “us” and “them” (meaning adults and adolescents), his calling “them” a “subrace” (1968:26) and references to “peaceniks”. However, in spite of cavalier remarks such as these, Erikson greatly advanced research on adolescence by, *inter alia*, arguing that individuals have dramatically different needs – psychologically and otherwise – at various times in their lives.

Theorists in many different fields agree that the various transitions that accompany the life change known as adolescence have the potential for anxiety and distress (San Antonio, 2004:259; Grolnick, Gurland, Jacob & Decourcey, 2001:164). However, psychologists adroitly explain the ‘negativity’ that characterizes many manifestations of anxiety, attributing it mostly to the fact that with the exception of the first three years of life, more physiological and psychological changes occur during early adolescence than at any other time in an individual’s life. Irvin (1998:15) argues persuasively from a sympathetic perspective:

Consider how most adults would react if they were to undergo three years of radical changes in stature, sexual development and interest, and other bodily changes. Add to this list the fact that they will tend to be moody, physically awkward, and have numerous skin blemishes. Under such circumstances, most adults would likely become egocentric and self-conscious just as most adolescents do.

Early childhood educators axiomatically caution teachers to take into account the physical constraints of their learners in the early grades, to expect, *inter alia*, restlessness, brief concentration spans and divided foci. Teachers at secondary school, however, have even less reason to expect their class of adolescents to be homogenous. Not only are there differences between individual learners, but the individual adolescent learner also experiences a fluctuation between great physical activity and fatigue. This results in their reacting differently, not only from day to day, but in the course of a single day, from morning to afternoon, as a result of the vacillation of hormonal changes in their bodies (Irvin, 1998:18).

In his groundbreaking work, *Pedology of the Adolescent* (1998), Vygotsky cites numerous researchers who agree that there is a negative phase at the start of a transitional age. Busemann is quoted who, according to Vygotsky, investigated “the problem of the reflection of basic traits of youth in the opinions of young people themselves”, and noted that “particularly in girls, the onset of symptoms of discontent occurs at approximately thirteen years of age, and in boys, at approximately sixteen years of age” (Vygotsky, 1998:21). Hetzer is also cited for pinpointing the appearance of a ‘negative’ phase at sixteen, whereas other more numerically inclined researchers placed the age of ‘discontent’ between eleven years and eight months and thirteen or fourteen years. Zagorovskii (also cited by Vygotsky, 1998:12), in addition to ‘negativity’, assumed the presence of keen sexual interest in many adolescents; however, he did not attempt to describe the nature of the awakening sexuality of the adolescent but,

remarkably, did observe its influence on the reading interests of his respondents (cf. Sections 6.4 and 7.2.2).

Zagarovskii (according to Vygotsky, 1998:21-23) postulated that some basic variants could be observed during the negative adolescent phase. Firstly, a sharply expressed negativism is manifested in all areas of the adolescent's life, with old interests dropping off sharply and taking new directions. This could happen in a very short space of time. For example, regarding sexual matters, the behaviour of the adolescent in some cases changed within several weeks. Secondly, the negative phase also manifests in a decreased success rate and work capacity. Vygotsky notes that, following the primary school period of 'normal' rates of success and work capacity, in adolescence lapses in work appear as well as a 'sudden failure' to do assignments; students who have formerly completed tasks enthusiastically, suddenly lose interest in it. To the teacher's questions as to why one assignment or another has not been done, the answer frequently is, "I didn't want to do it". In the third place, Zagarovskii mentions that a flouting of discipline, especially among boys, also becomes evident, if not common. 'Verbal negativism' and negativistic acts such as contempt for rules and opposition to friends and family are some common adolescent behaviours. Lastly, many girls are observed to enter a passive, apathetic and dreamy state at this stage.

Another relevant point is the fact that the decrease in work capacity is especially pronounced with regard to creative tasks. This is understandable, according to Vygotsky, because the adolescent is progressing towards new, "still not firmly established forms of intellectual activity" (1998:22). This is further explained by the fact that creative and intellectual kinds of work, more than tasks of a repetitive or mechanical nature, can only succeed if they derive from the adolescent's creative interests and these are purportedly at "a low ebb during this period of changing interests" (Vygotsky, 1998:22). It is important to note that at this stage much reading, especially 'higher order' reading, requires both intellectual and creative input to be fostered effectively and enthusiastically.

Like Irvin (1998), Vygotsky reiterates that, in spite of the general characteristics of a developmental stage, it is incorrect to depict adolescence as a homogeneous stage and "to

imagine the whole melody of this critical stage to be made up of a single note” (Vygotsky, 1998:23). He emphasizes that the processes of development in general are distinguished by immeasurably more complex construction and an inestimably finer structure. Hence, adolescent interests cannot be understood outside the process of development, mainly because “in the course of a comparatively small period of time, in the course of five years, such intensive and deep changes in the driving forces of behaviour take place that they absolutely clearly form a special line of development” (Vygotsky, 1998:12).

Vygotsky agrees in this respect with Piaget: a child’s thinking changes qualitatively as she grows older. Endorsing Piagetian principles with regard to the phase of concrete operations, Vygotsky postulates that with the adolescent’s transition to “thinking in concepts”, even what she remembers of what she perceives and logically comprehends during this new phase “must disclose completely different laws than those that characterized remembering during primary school” (Vygotsky, 1998:97). The growth of cognitive power, according to Piaget, arises primarily from the development of the ability to symbolize.

To refine these Vygotskian views of adolescent development, a synoptic framework is extrapolated from work conducted by Adams, Montemayor and Gullotta (1996), based on the legacy of John Hill (1973/1983; in Adams *et al.*, 1996:1-3). Hill, who was considered a leading advocate for the developmental contextualist view of adolescence in his day, draws on theories developed by other psychologists, including the Freuds (Sigmund and Anna), Adelson and Erikson. In short, Hill identifies *dimensions*, *domains* and *variables* regarding the study of adolescence which are, if not exhaustive, at least “representative of current theoretical perspectives that include both a *personality* and a *situational* dimension” (Adams *et al.*, 1996:3).

Hill firstly categorizes three *dimensions* to underpin adolescent development, namely the *biological*, *cognitive*, and *psychosocial* dimensions. By using the term *biological*, a more cerebral term than, for instance *physiology*, Hill emphasizes the impact of bodily transformation and appearance issues, such as height or weight changes, breast and genital

development, skin conditions, growth of bodily hair, in addition to hormonal fluctuations, that have all generally been shown to play a pivotal role in adolescent behaviour.

Four *classes* of variables (and their interrelatedness) further conceptualise adolescence, namely the classes of *change*, *roles*, *psychosocial characteristics* and *demographics*. *Change* can be perceived in its impact on the three dimensions, namely *biological* events that result in changes in the body as a social stimulus, physiology, motor skills and sexual motivations⁹, *cognitive* changes in information processing and, finally, the reconstitution and redefinition of adolescence by norms applied throughout society, in other words, the *psychosocial* dimension. Identification of the factors of change enables Hill to explore the interrelationship of *roles* (for instance, son or daughter, peer, learner, member of the community or worker) and *demographics* (gender, social class and ethnicity-race).

The *psychosocial* dimension has six central psychosocial themes to articulate adolescent functioning, namely detachment, autonomy, intimacy, sexuality, achievement (consisting of both motivation and behaviour), and identity (regarding crisis and resolution) (Adams *et al.*, 1996:9). A feasible developmental theory, according to Adams *et al.* must be based on interactionist assumptions about development rather than a distinction between either an ‘inner’ or ‘outer’ bias. Developmental change is therefore a matter of “genetically-programmed and environmental events acting together in some way” (Adams *et al.*, 1996:8).¹⁰

Hill’s three broad dimensions of development, namely *cognitive* development (including self-cognition), *psychosocial* development (including motivational and behavioural components) and *biological* development (including genital maturation, pubertal timing and all other related aspects of physical growth) adequately provide a framework in which the impact of adolescence with regard to the research question of this study can be investigated (cf. Figure 2.1, page 36).

⁹ Hill regarded factors such as motivation and maturation as more important than mere biological processes.

¹⁰ This is a perfunctory nod in the direction of the nature/nurture debate.

In addition to the above areas of development, adolescent needs must also be taken into account. The American Centre for Early Adolescence (Irvin, 1998:31) identifies seven developmental needs that adolescents require in order to develop optimally:

1. *Adolescents require structure in their lives and clear limits – in spite of open or covert rebellion against authority.*
2. *Their identity is dependent on a sense of competence and achievement.*
3. *Adolescents need creative expression of their thoughts and feelings.*
4. *Physical activity is more than a beneficial pastime, it is mandatory.*
5. *Adolescents require positive social interaction with adults and peers.*
6. *Adolescents crave meaningful participation in their families, schools, and communities.*
7. *They need affirmation in their search for self-definition.*

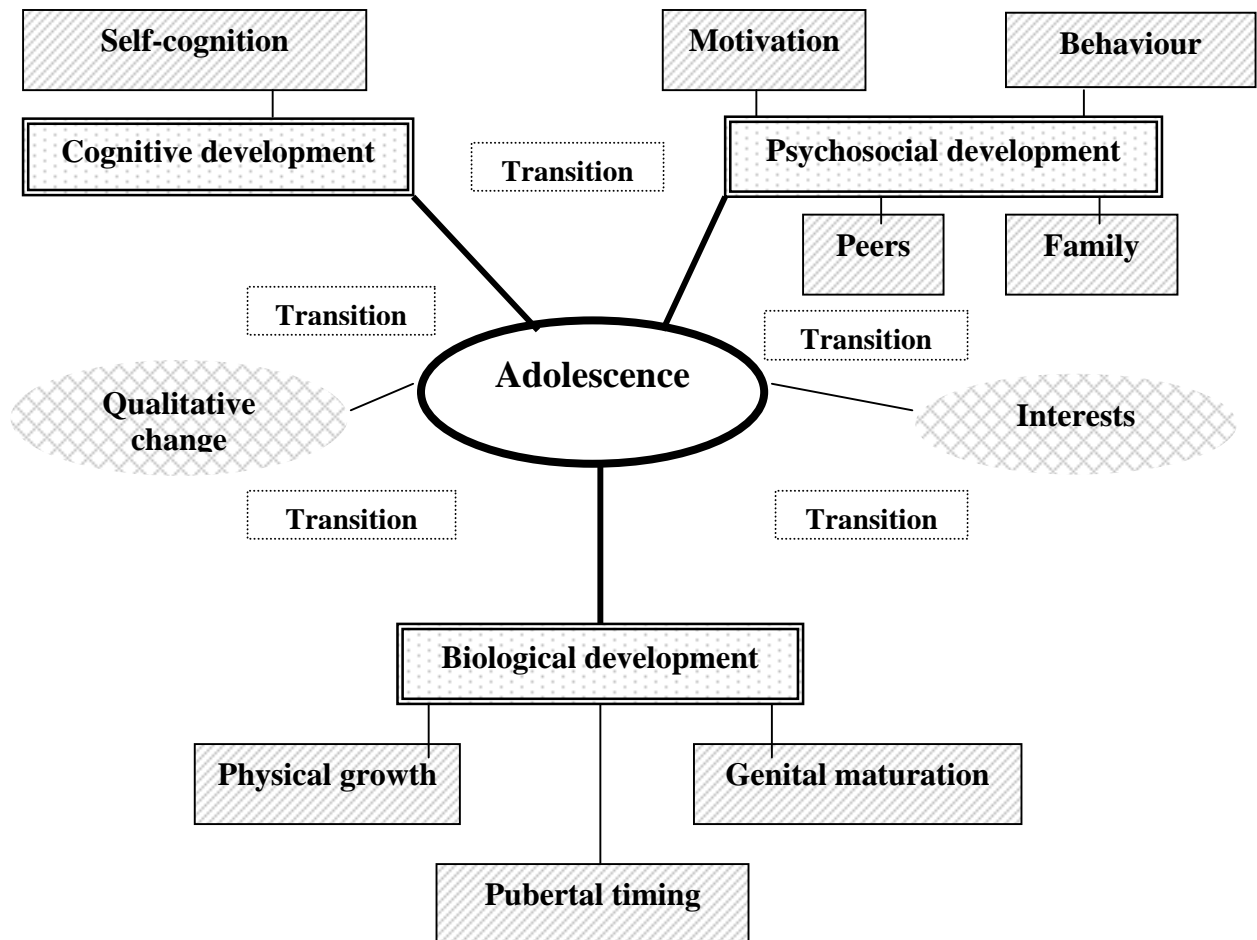
These developmental needs can be considered axiomatic. The need to develop “a sense of competence and achievement”, or positive self-efficacy views will be further addressed in Section 2.6.3.

The conceptual framework for adolescence (Figure 2.1, page 37) attempts to represent the phase’s multidimensionality as explicated above, as well as the interaction and interrelationship of diverse aspects in the development of the child. Hill’s outline, which centres on the biological, psychosocial and cognitive dimensions of adolescent development, forms the core of the conceptual framework, with additions derived from Vygotsky’s (1998) work (especially *Pedology of the Adolescent*) which emphasises the transitional aspects of development and is represented in the qualitative changes, adolescent interests and transitions that link Hill’s dimensions.

2.2.2 Ebb and flow

At the time that Vygotsky was writing *Pedology of the Adolescent*, it was customary to call all aspects of adolescence transitional. The terms adolescence and transition were regarded as interchangeable and the concept referred to the transition from childhood to adulthood. Moreover, adolescence was seen by most researchers as an amorphous age, but Vygotsky believed this to be wrong (Ratner, 1998:320). In the past two decades adolescence has no longer been seen as a single ‘condition’, and finer distinctions have been made. One of the

Figure 2. 1 Conceptual framework of adolescence



most significant refinements brought about by recent research into adolescent development is the distinction that is made between early, middle and late adolescence, each with their own typical characteristics.

Early adolescence, namely the phase between eleven and fourteen years of age, is especially relevant to this study and therefore the milestones of early adolescence are noted. According to Fenwick and Smith (1998:26), it becomes apparent that an adolescent's concern about his or her personal appearance increases. Adolescents' growing independence from their family becomes more important and rebellious or defiant behaviours may appear. The importance of friends increases and the peer group begins to dominate many aspects of behaviour and

choices. Fenwick and Smith declare that in the adolescent the ego begins to dominate the viewing of all issues.

Although middle and late adolescence fall largely outside the scope of this study, it is important to briefly delineate the characteristics of these two since they follow early adolescence. Middle adolescents, according to Fenwick and Smith (1998:30), are approximately fifteen to sixteen years old and are generally said to become less self-absorbed. They also start making their own decisions while taking risks and seeking new experiences. The middle adolescents are becoming sexually aware and begin to form lasting relationships. While experimenting with their self-image, they begin to develop a sense of values and morality. They constantly seek out ‘adventures’ but also display an increased intellectual awareness. Finally, their interests and skills have begun to approximate greater maturity.

Late adolescents (between seventeen and nineteen years of age) begin to hold an idealistic world view which is, according to Fenwick and Smith (1998:32), a reflection of their new involvement with the world outside the home and school. They start setting long-term goals while seeking to establish their independence more firmly. A stabilization of relationships is becoming the norm while they are beginning to see adults as ‘equals’.

This investigation focuses narrowly on the ‘grey area’ which is the transition between primary and secondary school, a period that takes place during early adolescence. Many educators and psychologists have commented on the incidence of ‘turbulence’ during this transition (Erikson, 1968:22; Irvin, 1998:23; San Antonio, 2004:181; Vygotsky, 1998:19-21). Each transitional period in a child’s life brings additional factors into play and these inevitably bring about qualitative changes in the individual psyche (Anderman *et al.*, 2002:210; Bandura, 1986:12; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002:112). Covington and Dray (2002:39) in particular have focused on the transition from primary to secondary school and have found numerous potential stressors. For instance, the transition brings about several changes, such as the fact that learners – because they change classes from subject to subject in secondary school - are now exposed to many different peers whom they do not know, and since most evaluation is

normative, there is also less teacher attention to individual progress (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002:20).

The often dramatic expansion in their psychosocial dimension forces many adolescents to reassess their self-efficacy views (cf. Section 2.4.3). Vulnerability regarding their academic progress is coupled with adjusting to and coping with their biological transformation, resulting in constant readjustment to changes in the self, making adolescence “a time of excitement and anxiety, of happiness and of troubles, of discovery and of bewilderment, of breaks with the past and yet of continuations of childhood behaviour” (Husen & Postlethwaite, 1994:83).

Of course, not all adolescents experience the disruptions of the period so pronouncedly, but it is also clear that during the transition from primary to secondary school certain adjustments are required, and that this has significant implications for later adjustment at the end of secondary school and possibly even later in life (Grolnick *et al.*, 2002:165; San Antonio, 2004:104-105).

2.2.3 Transition

Transition is described as a bridging period between two phases and it is usually acknowledged to be accompanied by some instability and uncertainty, some ebb and flow of conditions. In dictionary definitions, transition is commonly considered to have three aspects: the condition before, the experiences within the change and the intended arrival in the new state, for instance: “Transition: the movement across a threshold into another phase as the result of the interaction of relevant factors during the previous phase” (Bloomfield & Moulton, 1999; online doc.).

Although Freud’s *latency* period focuses on what he termed “retrogression in sexual development” and is not a relevant issue here, the concept of a *latent* phase which constitutes a dormant period between the ages of seven and early adolescence, is a highly descriptive one. The emphasis is on the often unsettling changes that usually take place at the onset of puberty

and which are often manifested, if not flaunted, in erratic behaviour. Other psychologists and educators also comment on this vacillation between opposite states during adolescence, between constructive and destructive manifestations. Erikson (1968:6), for instance, identifies adolescence as a ‘critical period’ but is careful to indicate that the word *crisis* no longer only signifies impending catastrophe, which may be an obstacle to the understanding of the concept. A crisis is now considered more in terms of a “necessary turning point, a crucial moment, when development must move one way or another, marshalling resources of growth, recovery, and further differentiation”. The term can be applied to a variety of situations, from denoting a crisis in individual development or to a group of people, “in the therapy of an individual or in the tensions of rapid historical change” (Erikson, 1968:16).

Erikson often succumbs to the temptation of employing evocative language when describing youthful characteristics (with his customary ‘us’ and ‘them’ polarization firmly in place):

Youth, in any period, means first of all the noisier and more obvious part of that subrace, plus the quiet sufferers who come to the attention of psychiatrists or are brought to life by the novelists. In the most picturesque segment of the younger generation we are witnessing an exacerbated ‘identity-consciousness’ which seems to play havoc not only with our formulations of the positive and negative identity, but also with our assumptions concerning manifest and latent behaviour and conscious and unconscious processes. What appears to us to be profoundly relative is displayed by them as a relativistic ‘stance’ (1968:26).

However, this ‘relativistic stance’ is emphasized by other researchers with less ebullience. Vygotsky, also reflecting on the reputed negativity, observes that most researchers on adolescence note that development at this stage is “different from that in the stable ages and does destructive rather than constructive work” (Vygotsky, 1998:192). To Vygotsky it even seems that continuous, progressive development of the child’s personality, “the continuous construction of the new, which had been so prominent in all stable ages”, has been reduced or postponed for the time being:

Processes of dying off and closure, the disintegration and breakdown of what had been formed at preceding stages and distinguished the child of a given age move to the forefront. During the critical periods, the child does not so much acquire as he loses some of what he had acquired earlier. The onset of these age levels is not marked by the appearance of new interests of the child, of new aspirations, new types of activity, new forms of internal life. The child entering a period of crisis is more apt to be characterized by the opposite traits: he loses interests that only

yesterday guided all his activity and took the greater part of his time and attention but now seemingly die off; forms of external relations and internal life developed earlier are neglected. L.N. Tolstoy¹¹ graphically and precisely called one such critical period of child development the desert of adolescence (Vygotsky, 1998:192).

Ultimately, according to Kozulin *et al.* (2003:5), Vygotskian development is a process marked by qualitative transformations. Vygotsky's theory of child development relies on his work on concept-formation, which also helps to explain the structural and functional transformations that occur during transitional phases, for instance, when language is acquired, when children start formal education, and when children enter adolescence. These phases are marked by periods of stability transitioning into qualitative transformations (Eriksonian crises) in which there are both integration and disintegration of functions and structures.

Rejecting the notions of gradual and smooth transitions advanced by researchers (also by Gates and Gesell, cf. Section 4.2.3), Vygotsky (1978:73) describes what Erikson later identified as developmental turbulence:

Child development is a complex dialectical process characterized by periodicity, unevenness in the development of different functions, metamorphosis or qualitative transformation of one form into another, intertwining of external and internal factors, and adaptive processes which overcome impediments that the child encounters. Steeped in the notion of evolutionary change, most workers in child psychology ignore those turning points, those spasmodic and revolutionary changes that are so frequent in the history of child development.

However, what is central to this thesis is not the famed turbulence of adolescence, but the *effect* of the (often turbulent) transition from a pre-adolescent state at primary school to early adolescence at secondary school and its influence on reader interests.

¹¹ It is interesting to note that the novelist and celebrated author of *War and Peace*, Leo Tolstoy, first used the image of a desert to describe the ebb, the dying off of old interests, the latency that can be observed around the time of adolescent transition - which then, in essence, also holds the promise of turbulence and volatility should the transitional period come to an end. Vygotsky often quotes Tolstoy.

2.2.4 Steps, scaffolds and stages

An early scheme hinting at a link between reading development and transitional phases was developed by Gray in 1925, concurrently with Piaget but displaying little correspondence with Piagetian concepts. Gray supplied detailed descriptions and benchmarks for each stage but the distinctions between the different stages are not always clear. Two decades later, Gates (1947; Chall, 1996:237; Chall & Conrad, 1991:13)¹² also commented on the role of transition during reading development and referred to a first transitory period, namely the one from *primary* to *intermediate* reading, in other words the transition from approximately Grade Four to Grade Six. Russell is yet another reading researcher who describes, as does Gates, a transitional stage between primary and intermediate reading and emphasizes the critical role which this period plays in reading development (Chall, 1996:237). Russell points out, as does Gray, that during the later phase of what he also terms the *intermediate* stage, popular adult reading material comes within the range of an adolescent learner's understanding.

One of the most important transitions with regard to reading occurs when learners have to negotiate the transition from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*. This second transition occurs when the change is made from reading word-for-word or word-by-word to reading by thought units and, according to Chall (1996:239) happens roughly around grade seven to the beginning of secondary school.

Like Gates and Russell, Chall also notes that a consistent failure point has been reported during the transition from what she terms Stage 2 and Stage 3 reading levels (cf. Section 4.3.2.1). In order to overcome difficulties and successfully negotiate the transition, learners need to acquire new knowledge and add more low frequency words to their vocabulary, as well as the ability to acquire them from context, dictionaries, and other references and sources. Parents and teachers ought to assist learners at this stage to refine their language skills to enable them to take control of their own learning. In this respect, Vygotsky and his followers refer to the *appropriation* of language and its associated cognitive tools to emphasize the importance of personally taking possession of what a culture may offer (Vygotsky, 1998:21).

¹² Gates' development stages will be discussed in Chapter Three.

For Vygotsky the transition to early adolescence requires the consolidation and expansion of language in order to acquire intellectual attitudes and to understand concepts (1998:21). Each child's system of activity is determined at each specific stage both by the child's degree of 'organic development' and by his or her degree of mastery in the use of intellectual tools. However, an impasse is reached as – and if - the very activities that will enhance the acquisition of these skills undergo a decline in the early adolescent phase. Around eight years of age children often become engaged in activities, projects and hobbies that aid the acquisition of new knowledge. Such enthusiastic endeavours, according to Kozulin *et al.* (2003:94), often reach a peak at around age eleven or twelve but begin to lose energy at about age fifteen. One of the activities that reportedly suffers a decline at this stage is, of course, recreational reading.

2.3 VOLUNTARY READING

The second of the four domains in the theoretical framework (Figure 1.2) is the voluntary reading of the adolescent. In its emphasis on the importance of the pleasure principle in the choice and continuation of recreational reading, Nell's model of ludic reading (1988; Figure 1.1) aptly explains how motivation affects volition when adolescents choose to read voluntarily. Avid readers cite a variety of reasons for their voracious reading habit, ranging from escapist motives to reading for "entranced involvement" (Nell, 1988:228-229). Nell's term *ludic reading*¹³ is used to refer to leisure reading that is done enthusiastically, voraciously, of the reader's volition and solely for the sake of enjoyment. The term voluntary reading here denotes the kind of reading learners do of their own free will, mostly in their own free time, because they derive pleasure from it; it is reading that is *chosen*, and that, if reading teachers have their way, becomes a lifelong habit. The following terms are used by reading researchers to describe this kind of reading:

¹³ *Ludic* reading is derived from the Latin *ludo* which means 'I play'. It describes the kind of reading that is "at root a play activity, intrinsically motivated . . . that is engaged in for its own sake" (Nell, 1988:2).

- *voluntary* reading (Ciani, 1981; Elley, 1992; Hunter-Carsh, 1995; Irving, 1980; Marshall, 1988; Olën & Matchet, 1997)
- *recreational* reading (Donovan, Smokin & Lomax, 2000; Gallik, 1999; Harris & Sipay, 1990; Krashen, 2001; Palmer, 1995; Spiegel, 1981)
- *reading for pleasure* and *pleasure reading* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Gallik, 1999; Jackson, 1989; Klein, 1985; Nell, 1988)
- *informal* reading (Jones, 1999)
- *reading for entertainment* (Hunt, 1992)
- *extensive* reading (Carter & Abrahamson, 1990)
- *aesthetic* reading (Karolides, 2000)
- *narrative reading* (Meek, 1984)
- *independent* reading (Blair *et al.*, 1992; Ingham, 1981; Irvin, 1998)
- *free voluntary reading* (Krashen, 2002a; Olën & Matchet, 1997)
- *enrichment reading* (Houghton-Hawksley, 1983)
- *readership* (Leeson, 1985; Staiger & Casey, 1983).

What these terms have in common – despite numerous and subtle shifts in meaning – is a general agreement that this kind of reading includes all categories of optional, leisure reading, freely chosen, of a wide range with the main aim of taking pleasure in the activity.

Thus, when reading, chosen freely, takes place regularly, successfully and solely for the sake of pleasure, it becomes ‘play’ (Nell, 1988). Csikszentmihalyi (1991), recognizing pleasure reading that is done enthusiastically and is intrinsically motivated, uses the term *flow*. Gambrell (1994) also uses *flow* to denote the kind of reading Nell terms *ludic* reading. When a reader becomes so involved in a text that she loses track of time and is loath to put a book down before finishing it, she is experiencing ‘flow’. Csikszentmihalyi (1991:118) asserts that the experience of flow in reading is similar to flow in challenging, self-directed activities, and it leads to optimal performance and highly positive affect. It is this kind of motivated, self-directed, fluent and pleasurable experience of voluntary reading that can aid the creation of a culture of reading.

Apart from the pleasure obtained from *flow* reading, many other benefits accrue when learners read voluntarily. Although there has been little research on the positive effects of voluntary reading on linguistic development, many studies claim positive results on language aspects such as improved vocabulary, written language fluency and comprehension, higher reading achievement scores, and a more positive attitude to reading in general (D’Ath, 1994:10;

Houghton-Hawksley, 1983:224; Palmer, 1995:26; Stainthorp & Hughes, 2000:126). With the belief, then, that voluntary reading has a definitive influence on the development of linguistic skills, many researchers further assume that the earlier and more comprehensive the contact with books, the better (Clark, 1976:98; Meek, 1984:20 & 38; Trelease, 1984:14). The ideal for the shaping of linguistic excellence – especially verbal articulation during a child’s early years - is clearly an environment that provides children with a great deal of positive verbal stimulation which in turn becomes the necessary mental scaffolding¹⁴ that will help them in time to construct their own rich models of the world.

However, reality falls far short of the ideal - here, as elsewhere. Not all homes are places where intellectual stimulation of the kind that advances reading skills takes place between parents and children. There are many reasons for this (none of which will be addressed here), but one result that is especially detrimental to the acquisition of literacy skills is the fact that many children from low socio-economic homes already have a paucity of reading experiences by the time they reach school. The disadvantages are dire: “The child whose parents cannot afford to buy books or whose own patterns of recreation and work do not include borrowing books and magazines from a public library loses the time needed for practice. If the parents do not read regularly to the child, development of language may be slower” (Chomsky, 1972). This view is corroborated by many reading promoters, of whom Butler (especially with *Babies need books* {1980} and *Cushla and her books*), Meek (1984) and Trelease (1984) (with his widely popular book, *The Read-Aloud Handbook*) are the most notable. In addition to the disadvantage of ‘slower’ language development, perhaps even more devastating is the fact that the non-reading learner loses out on the emotionally and intellectually confirming responses that books and reading matter bring (Chall, 1996:20).

Not only homes fall short of the ideal regarding early literacy experiences, schools are not always the depositories of salient literacy strategies and motivational forces they are supposed

¹⁴ Scaffolds are temporary structures that support someone in a specific task that cannot be performed without them, such as painting a ceiling, or attaching training wheels to a bicycle to support a child learning to cycle. Regarding reading, Scaffolded Reading Experiences are sets of activities specially designed to assist a particular group of learners to successfully read, understand, learn from, and enjoy a particular selection (Irvin, 1998:10). When a teacher designs instruction to provide enough support to ensure a successful reading or writing experience, she is “scaffolding”.

to be. Apart from considerations of inadequacy or neglect, schools may err by postponing literacy instruction until a child is seven years of age or older, which some researchers regard as detrimental to long-term reading motivation. One of the proponents of early reading instruction is Clark (1976:59), who compiled a comprehensive body of research findings to show that early fluent readers were certainly more advanced linguistically than their peers.¹⁵ There were other correlates between superior early literacy development and intelligence: as a group these precocious readers were regarded favourably by their teachers who considered them to have good concentration and wide interests. In addition, they were acceptable to their peers. As is often the case with early readers, some teachers feared that they might find school ‘boring’ and that they would find it difficult to stimulate children who could already read when they started school. However, observes Clark (1976:60), when their superior early reading skills were coupled “with a high level of intelligence and general knowledge well beyond their years”, these children proved to be a challenge to their teachers. After some years many were regarded by their teachers as ‘an asset’, and although they got on well with their peers and enjoyed their company, they were more contented than most when alone; “the choice was theirs”, adds Clark (1976:60).

Chall (1996:2) cites research evidence which indicates that learning to read early benefits verbal intelligence as well as reading development. However, early reading instruction is not the rule, and, according to some researchers, neither is it a viable option either. Chall reiterates some of the objections to early reading instruction commonly raised in the 1980s when she refers to the adverse effects of neurological difficulties in children who are given ‘an early start’ (1996:95). It appears, according to the critics of early reading instruction, that although most children seem to gain from an early introduction to reading at home, this initial start in reading instruction may cause greater frustration, “particularly to neurologically ‘high-risk children’ ”. Chall favours a somewhat later start to reading instruction because fewer learners are then placed in an ‘at risk’ situation. When regular classroom instruction starts later, the extra time also means that, generally, more children will be “neurologically ready for beginning reading”. However, Chall terms the children who read before formal schooling

¹⁵ In addition to being linguistically advanced, according to Clark (1976:59), it was also “quickly apparent to the school how advanced some of these children were in reading and related skills - and also that some of them were highly intelligent”.

begins the “precocious readers” (1996:111-112) and states that they display proficiency in three major components of reading, namely vocabulary and syntax, cognition and decoding.¹⁶

The flipside is the young reader who learns to dislike reading early on, mostly because of, according to Bettelheim and Zelan (1982), lacklustre literacy instruction in primary school. This apathy can account for the poor reading achievement of many older learners. The excitement that comes with early reading, namely the pleasure that young children derive from being able to read words, quickly fades with unchallenging, repetitive reading instruction practices, tedious texts and a lack of effective motivational strategies.

2.4 MOTIVATION

2.4.1 Motivation and volition

Although the theoretical framework (Figure 1.2; page 26) includes motivation in the domain of voluntary reading for the purposes of this study, motivation underpins all dimensions of the research. Of course, all learning is dependent on motivation. Literacy instruction, for instance, depends on beginning learners’ spontaneous interest and natural curiosity to motivate them to want to recognize words, to fathom meaning, to read fluently and regularly. However, motivation is neither a single entity nor a unitary attribute, but is multifaceted, and has many dimensions (Dweck, 2002:81; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004:330; Heckhausen & Dweck, 1998:2-3; Wigfield & Eccles, 2002:2-3). Adolescents, who have already acquired reading skills, require different facets of motivation than, for instance, pre-schoolers. Not only does motivation itself change as children grow older and acquire more experiences, but their motivation may be chequered, with highly motivated areas interspersed with a lack of motivation in others. Erikson (1968:23) greatly contributed to an understanding of adolescence

¹⁶ Whether the postponement of reading instruction is beneficial or harmful in the long run, is not discussed here. Suffice it to argue that there are even more assumptions and evidence regarding the harmfulness of unchallenging literacy practices, often due to a belated introduction to reading, as there are reports of inadequate literature acquisition due to reading ‘unreadiness’.

when he argued that the process of maturing “is always changing and developing” and is at best a “process of increasing differentiation”. Thus, individuals have different needs – and different motivational thrusts - at different times in their lives. This is endorsed by Covington and Dray (2002:39) when they apply the ‘stage-environmental fit’ theory (more about this in Chapter Four) to motivation and argue that learners have different combinations of psychological needs at different levels of their development, and that unless these needs are met, academic achievement and an overall motivation for learning will suffer.

It can, then, safely be said that motivation and achievement situations are different things to different learners. For some learners a challenging situation is a test of their ability and is fraught with threats of failure; for others, a challenge is an opportunity to learn something new. This difference ties in with *performance* goals, which Heckhausen & Dweck (1998:258) define as goals that derive from the pursuit of obtaining positive judgments of one’s ability.

Motivation, therefore, does not function in isolation. Values, beliefs and goals relate closely to a child’s choices and conduct as she grows older. Thus, according to Wigfield and Eccles (2002:94), motivation and behaviour become more closely linked as a child matures. Although the reciprocity of motivation and achievement is acknowledged, it is not always clear which came first – the motivation to do something or the belief that it can be done successfully. Research also shows that learners’ competence beliefs and expectancy of success for difficult tasks decline during the transition from primary to secondary school (Wigfield and Eccles, 2002:96). Significantly, these motivational declines occur at the same time as the appearance of adolescent negativity and crises predicted by Vygotsky and Erikson (cf. Section 4.1.2). It is understandable that these competency beliefs, together with changes in the adolescent’s self-efficacy views, must have a great influence on their voluntary reading.

2.4.2 Motivation and reading

It is also, however, manifestly clear that successful reading strategies are only developed when learners are intrinsically motivated. Teachers who are aware of at least some of the facets

involved in developing their learners' motivation, can help them come closer to the goal of instilling in all learners a love of reading (Cole, 2002:331).

Pintrich and DeGroot (1990:35) identified three classes of motivational concepts that have bearing on reading motivation, namely beliefs, reasons for participation and purposes for engagement, and lastly, affective reactions.

These three aspects do not operate singly: learners' values affect their attitude toward reading and their attitude influences their intrinsic motivation to read. As seen in Nell's flowchart (Figure 1.1) which links motivation and voluntary reading, negative affective experiences will result in choices that avoid a repetition of such experiences; pleasant and successful experiences will be reinforced in a circular activity. Csikszentmihalyi's (1991) term *flow* also refers to this kind of reading that is intrinsically motivated and affords pleasure. As with other aspects of learning, with reading, success breeds success.

However, Bandura (1986:391) points to another crucial aspect in the circular motion of engagement motivation which belies the ease of the above 'breeding of success', namely that "success is often attained only after generating and testing alternative forms of behaviour and strategies, which requires *perseverant* effort" (my italics; also cf. Figure 1.1, page 8). Motivation and self-efficacy are enhanced when students perceive they are performing well or acquiring greater skill – and are then prepared to persevere with the activity. However, the converse does not necessarily apply, namely that a lack of success inevitably results in lower self-efficacy or deflated motivation, provided that learners are guided to understand that they can perform better by modifying their approach, by expending more effort or using more effective task strategies (Schunk & Pajares, 2002:25). What does happen, however, to "self-doubters" (Bandura, 1986:391) as opposed to the self-efficacious, is that the former are "quick to abort" the generative process if their initial efforts prove inadequate and unsatisfactory and the latter have learnt the value of perseverance.

Guthrie and Humenick (2004) are representatives of a recent breed of reading researcher whose focus falls more squarely on reading promotion. In an attempt to identify conditions

that foster salient reading habits, they have identified at least twelve dimensions of reading motivation (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004:330-331), and categorized them into types, three of which are relevant to this study, namely external motivation, internal motivation and self-efficacy (for the latter, cf. Section 2.4.3).

External motivation is characterized as the need for recognition in the form of awards, rewards and praise as acknowledgment for excellence in reading. Externally or extrinsically motivated learners need affirmation from parents, teachers, peers or agents outside themselves to value the benefits of their reading experiences. *Internally* or intrinsically motivated learners, on the other hand, crave and are satisfied by the benefits of the reading activity itself. A learner who, for instance is interested in space travel, continually seeks new information on aeronautics, or on related subjects such as astronomy or physics. A new book on the subject of the discoveries made by the Hubble telescope is the greatest reward the intrinsically motivated learner requires. Because such readers value the reading act and its benefits, they not only become avid voluntary readers, but they welcome and adopt advanced, effective reading strategies.

Covington and Dray (2002) conceptualize motivation and achievement by categorizing three kinds of learners, namely the *success-oriented*, the *failure-avoidants* and the *overstrivers*. For purposes of this investigation, the first two classes of readers are studied since they essentially approximate in the theoretical framework (Figure 1.2), the intrinsically and extrinsically motivated learners.¹⁷

Covington and Dray's (2002:35) basic premise postulates that achievement motivation arises from the valuing of intrinsic rewards which "depend on a central, pervasive, and ongoing developmental need that involves establishing and maintaining a sense of personal worth". Adolescent learners, especially, equate their self-worth with their ability to achieve successfully. Covington and Dray postulate that, for the first class of learner, namely the success-oriented, intellectual ability is instrumental in the achievement of intrinsically

¹⁷ The so-called overstrivers share many characteristics of success-oriented learners with their well-developed taste for intrinsic valuing, but also with failure-avoidant learners who desire success as a way to avoid failure. Although overstrivers are successful, they still suffer from self-doubts about their ability to succeed because their "goal is perfection, not just mastery" (Covington & Dray, 2002:37).

motivated objectives, such as self-improvement, greater insight into people and events, and the satisfaction of interests and curiosities. The rewards of intrinsic motivation are unconditional and since they are not dependent on the number of learners who also wish to attain them (in other words, the competition), they are plentiful. Such learners do not measure themselves against prevailing standards. They approach success from the perspective of rising to its inherent challenges. Although the challenges are framed within reasonable limits, there is as great a possibility that the learners can fail as their chances of success.

The second category of learners, namely the failure-avoidants, “employ a relative yardstick for measuring their worth, that is, judging their adequacy in comparison to the performances of others and treating the pursuit of ability status as a goal in itself as the mark of their worthiness” (Covington & Dray, 2002:35). Accordingly, such goals are self-enhancing and ego-oriented and are attained when grades or results are ranked and compared. For this reason, for instance, exceptionally high grades are purposefully hunted because their attainment implies outstanding ability, namely that the learner has beaten the competition. Conversely, then, this kind of learner interprets low grades as indicative of incompetence and consequently a sense of worthlessness arises. Covington and Dray (2002:36) warn that learners who are thus competitive and grade-focused risk regular crises of identity. Whereas the success-oriented learner finds more situations in which success can be experienced, the failure-avoidant cannot possibly win every endeavour and is therefore almost always at risk of disappointment or the implication of failure and incompetence. Self-protective strategies then have to be generated to prevent the implication of incompetence, such as procrastination or by accepting extraordinarily heavy loads of work. Failure can also be attributed to others or to poor planning and not to a lack of ability. When warned against overburdening themselves, they justify their actions by using the excuse of ambition or conscientiousness. “Clearly, these fear-inspired tactics are at odds with intrinsic reasons for learning. Learning is valued only to the extent in which it serves to aggrandize or protect one’s ability status.” (Covington & Dray, 2002:36).

2.4.3 Motivation and self-efficacy

Another crucial motivational factor regarding voluntary reading is self-efficacy (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004:330). Covington and Dray's (2002:35-37) application of self-efficacy theories goes a long way towards explaining why some learners continue reading after their teachers or parents have stopped motivating them, and why other learners never acquire the habit of voluntary reading in spite of various strategies to entice them to read recreationally.

Self-efficacy is grounded in social cognitive theory which connects learner achievement to behaviour, personal aspects (including thoughts and beliefs) and environmental conditions (Bandura, 1986; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004:331). Self-efficacy is thus also an essential component both at the beginning of a literacy event (since it arises from a learner's belief that there is a chance of successful completion of the task), and at the end, because a reading event can affect a learner's belief about his or her competency or values and attitudes about learning (Cole, 2002:331; Dweck, 1998:258-9). The self-efficacious learner approaches books with confidence and engages with challenging texts or unfamiliar words and concepts, expecting that she will master them. Learners with lower self-efficacy lack the confidence to embark on the unfamiliar, or the hitherto unsuccessful endeavour, and consequently, without the "energizing value of high efficacy", are unable to sustain the effort required to learn reading skills or to become "knowledgeable through print" (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004:331).

It comes as no surprise, then, when Schunk and Pajares (2002:26) declare that secondary school learners with high self-efficacy display greater self-evaluative standards and persist longer than learners with low self-efficacy. This interrelatedness of self-efficacy, motivation and achievement is rendered in Schunk and Pajares' (2002:24) model in Figure 2.2:

Figure 2. 2 Self-efficacy, motivation and achievement (Schunk & Pajares, 2002)

	Pretask	Task engagement	Post-task
Personal qualities		Personal influences	Motivation
Prior experience	Self-efficacy	Situational influences	Self-efficacy
Social support			

Before an activity commences (the so-called pre-task phase) each learner has a certain level of self-efficacy depending on prior experience, an individual set of personal qualities (such as abilities or attitudes) and a social support system (such as parents, teachers and peers). The task engagement is affected by personal influences (such as goal setting or information retrieval strategies) and situational influences (such teacher feedback, class situation, self-regulatory strategies and extrinsic rewards). When the task has been performed successfully and a learner perceives that she has become more skilful, her motivation and self-efficacy are enhanced. A lack of success, on the other hand, may induce in the learner with a sufficient sense of self-efficacy the belief that she can perform better with some adjustments, and this enhances motivation.

Figure 2.2 explains the role of situational influences (including home, school and community, as represented in the theoretical framework, Figure 1.2, page 26) and shows how it is central to the development of self-efficacy. Reading interests and motivation for learning are supported by the learners' interaction with their environment. Parents who are supportive with regard to reading, peers who read avidly or a school in which learners are encouraged to read and pursue their interests in addition to being motivated to extend their academic ability, support the sets of possibilities available to a self-efficacious learner (Renniger & Hidi, 2002:174; San Antonio, 2004:184). Situational influences with regard to reading can evolve into personal interests, and personal interests can become even better developed with salient situational influences; once reading is internalized in the area of personal influence, a lifelong interest in recreational reading has begun.

2.4.4 Motivation and mastery

Two key factors that influence the development of salient reading habits are mastery learning and the setting of performance goals.

In some classrooms, the ideal is the attainment of mastery goals, with both teacher and learners defining success in terms of progress and improvement. The focus is on learning rather than comparison and performance relative to others, and effort and learning are valued (Anderman *et al.*, 2002:198; Dweck, 2002:271). When teachers emphasize content goals and a deep understanding of content, they encourage intrinsic motivation for reading. These learners experience a sense of satisfaction when their work is done well, they do not baulk at challenges and regard mistakes as an integral part of the learning process.

In performance-oriented schools, on the other hand, with their persistent emphasis on a competitive assessment of learner progress and ostensible recognition for high grades in the form of extrinsic incentives, researchers report a greater incidence of extrinsic motivation (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004:337). Performance-oriented learners, especially in meritocratic schools, are more often extrinsically motivated, solely interested in gaining a competitive advantage over their peers.

Dweck (1998) also points out that learners who set themselves *performance goals* in the pursuit of obtaining positive judgements of their abilities, thereby avoiding negative ones, are most vulnerable in the face of failure. Such learners easily fall into a “helpless pattern of self-blame, negative affect, and impaired performance” (Dweck, 1998:258). In contrast, adolescents who pursue a *learning goal* in a mastery-oriented mode, are not hindered by judging that they are not (yet) good at a task, because the goal they set themselves is to increase their ability and to learn from a challenge.

It is clear from the above motivational theories that cognitive and affective factors combine with the setting of learning and content goals to produce a volitional pattern. A third factor

concerns the adolescent learner's interests which adds further variables such as beliefs, values and prior knowledge to the already dynamically integrated profile of voluntary reading.

2.5 READING INTERESTS

2.5.1 Overview

Ideally, when teaching reading, teachers should not only concentrate on the 'mechanics' or the act of reading, but also address one or more of the *purposes* of reading which are, *inter alia*, to obtain information and respond appropriately, to reflect upon ideas, experiences and opinions and (especially in consideration of the pleasure principle) to gain imaginative and aesthetic pleasure (Hunter-Carsch, 1995:149). This dimension of reading interests is unfortunately often neglected at primary, but more often at secondary school level (Anderson, 1993:35; D'Ath, 1994:2; Du Toit, 2001; Harris & Sipay, 1990:670; Moss, 1985:66). Unfortunately, too, it is not considered a priority during teacher training – except in pockets of enthusiasm regarding voluntary reading (Du Toit, 2001; Houghton-Hawksley, 1983; Whitehead *et al.*, 1977). This is of course detrimental to the development of a culture of reading, since, according to Vygotsky (1998:9)¹⁸, interests are not acquired, but purposely developed.

The concept that interests are to be developed, places a crucial responsibility on the shoulders of both primary and secondary school teachers – and this happens, as stated above, with little or no training in this regard. It is also ironic that at the critical time for the development of new interests - which may last a lifetime, and in this matter, the acquisition of salient reading habits - the secondary school affords little, if any, guidance.

¹⁸ It is significant that Vygotsky begins the consideration of cognitive development during adolescence, his truly innovative work, *Pedology of the Adolescent*, with a consideration of interests, and not with, for instance, the influence of sexual maturation, or psychosocial development. "The key to the whole problem of the psychological development of the adolescent is the *problem of interests* during the transitional age" (Vygotsky, 1998:3).

Not only do new interests develop in the adolescent, but old habits die off. For Vygotsky, the dying off of old, childhood interests happening at the transitional age is a watershed experience for children and should be studied intensively – however, psychologists “who do not consider the changes and shifts in the area of interests subject themselves willy-nilly to the illusion that in the mental development of the adolescent there is absolutely nothing substantially new in comparison with what is present in a three-year-old” (Vygotsky, 1998:14).

Vygotsky (1998:12) regards such reasoning as erroneous and harmful because in the course of a relatively short period – approximately only five years – “such intensive and deep changes in the driving forces of behaviours take place that they absolutely clearly form a special line of development”.

Regarding adolescent interests, Vygotsky emphasises the correlation between innate interests and acquired ones – the former laid down by “biological factors”, the latter attained through the process of human development. This leads to the question: “Should psychology differentiate between interest and tendency, and what relation do they have to each other?” The answer lies in the factor of “striving”, the “driving impelling force”, the dynamism in the acquisition of an interest. Vygotsky quotes Thorndike who states that the feeling of enthusiasm, mental excitation, and attraction to a subject is termed an interest (Vygotsky, 1998:4), and the development of an interest, as seen in the previous section, requires motivation.

The development of interests, then, underpins for Vygotsky the cultural and mental development of the adolescent: “in a higher form, becoming conscious and free, interest stands before us as a realized striving, as an attraction *for* itself, in contrast to instinctive impulse, which is an attraction *to* itself” (1998:12).

More than half a century ago, Henne conducted research in South Africa and came to much the same conclusion regarding the importance of interests in the development of adolescent reading habits:

Reading interests constitute preconditional factors affecting reading in that they may influence the nature of the future reading of any given student and in that they provide patterns which may explain the nature and scope of a young person's reading as a whole. (1949:218).

Harris and Sipay (1990:658) endorse the concept of changing reading patterns. As children mature, it appears that their interests expand as they grow older but narrow again during the final two years of secondary school. During adolescence, reading motivation begins to change from pleasure reading to reading for insight into the self, and finally reading interests begin to resemble those of adults. It seems that one of the principal reasons adolescents read recreationally is for the satisfaction of psychological needs, including the need to develop self-concept, intellectual, emotional, social and aesthetic needs (Harris & Sipay, 1990:662). This, of course, is not only important for bibliotherapeutic practice, but must also be taken into account when designing reading promotion strategies. In an effort to develop adolescent learners' taste and interests, the qualitative change in reading interests should be considered too. Chall adds a following dimension to the accommodation of interests at this stage:

A great deal of knowledge is needed, as well as confidence and humility. Above all, the reader needs a feeling of entitlement. One needs to believe that one is entitled to the knowledge that exists, to think about it, use it, and to 'make knowledge' as did those whose works they read (1996:51).

Learners who have this 'feeling of entitlement', the self-efficacious readers, are eager to pursue the subjects and topics of their choice, are keen to follow their interests through reading activities and are not only likely to read effectively but also to develop additional motivation for subsequent reading activities.

2.5.2 Reading interests and engagement

Renniger and Hidi (2002) and Stipek (2002) link the above concepts of confidence, entitlement and knowledgeableness (Chall, 1996:51) with the aspects of interests and engagement. Renniger and Hidi (2002:174) define interests more narrowly as follows: "Interest refers to a psychological state of having an affective reaction to and focused attention for particular content and/or the relatively enduring predisposition to re-engage particular classes of objects, events or ideas".

Renniger and Hidi (2002:174) classify interests as either *situational* or *individual*, which corresponds to the situational and personal influences that have bearing upon the task engagement identified by Schunk and Pajares (2002:25, cf. Figure 2.1, page 53). Situational interests, according to Renniger and Hidi, are triggered spontaneously and momentarily, such as sudden sounds, a task to be performed as a group project or an amusing cartoon. Individual interests refer to an individual's relatively long-term proclivity to continue with work in a particular context, to re-engage and to persevere.

Although both situational and individual interests refer to the definition's psychological state of having one's interest aroused, they differ in relation to the stored knowledge and stored value they hold.

A situational interest may involve little knowledge and is not necessarily associated with positive value. It may be triggered in a person who has little information about cloning seeing a video-clip on the subject, or a cartoon of Napoleon in a text about the French Revolution. An individual interest for history, on the other hand, would suggest that a student has both stored knowledge and positive value for history that leads to informed re-engagement and the ability and desire to work with difficulties that might arise Thus, a student for whom history is a well-developed interest maintains and deepens his or her interest in spite of frustrating or potentially difficult situations such as an ineffective history teacher, a research assignment that requires major revision, and the need to forego another activity in order to take advantage of an unassigned presentation related to topics currently being covered in the history class. Presumably, the student with a well-developed interest has a richer sense about possible questions, directions, etc. at least in part because working through difficulty leads to a stretching of what is known. (Renniger & Hidi, 2002:174).

Stipek (2002:318) defines the concept of engagement in both behavioural terms (which include effort and persistence), and affective terms (such as enthusiasm and interest). The combination of behaviour and emotional components has important implications for how engagement is operationalized in education and is especially relevant with regard to the fostering of salient reading habits.

2.5.3 The reading environment

It is axiomatic to state that the home is the primary instigator of a child's reading development and that, without doing any deliberate teaching, the home remains the child's first teacher of most things, and especially of reading. What is not always readily acknowledged, is that the home remains crucially important for reading development throughout a learner's school career. As a matter of fact, the importance of home conditions increases as a child grows older, albeit in a more indirect manner.

The role of the community is often negated too. However, the community (as political entity, policy maker, service provider, economic power and a major situational influence) is fundamental to a child's reading development (cf. social support in Figure 2.2, page 53). Moreover, the amount and nature of impressionable and peer-pressured adolescent learners' voluntary reading are directly influenced by the media in general and television in particular.

Most disadvantaged learners from homes in which books are absent (and sometimes even unwelcome) need even greater input from the community to grapple with their developmental backlog. For them transitioning from one reading stage to another will require not only a reading input, but one to help them overcome limitations of language and knowledge. Pretorius and Machet (2004:60) state that since schools cannot change learners' low socio-economic status, they should, however, develop the range of resources that can provide the learners with an enriched literacy environment. Ideally, schools should help the disadvantaged learner by making those texts available that are commonly found in more affluent homes. These learners usually also lack the reading strategies, confidence and motivation that successful readers have from early reading stages onward. In many cases these readers experience a discrepancy between their reading achievement and their cognitive ability. Lyon (1997; online doc.) explains that such learners' prognoses are negative:

By the end of the first grade, we begin to notice substantial decreases in the children's self-esteem, self-concept, and motivation to learn to read if they have not been able to master reading skills and keep up with their age-mates. As we follow the children through elementary and middle school grades, these problems compound, and, in many cases, very bright youngsters are unable to learn about the

wonders of science, mathematics, literature and the like because they can not read the grade level textbooks. By high school, these children's potential for entering college has decreased to almost nil, with few choices available to them with respect to occupational and vocational opportunities. These individuals constantly tell us that they hate to read, primarily because it is such hard work and their reading is so slow and laborious. As an adolescent in one of our longitudinal studies remarked recently, 'I would rather have a root canal than read'.

One of the secondary aims of this investigation is an attempt to explain why some learners' voluntary reading development has undergone a decline over the transition from primary to secondary school. Inadequate reading skills, or a constant decline, can become debilitating and detrimental to learners' future education. Some learners may despair while others cease to hope for improvement since reading gaps grow exponentially as learners fail to successfully transition to the next phase. This is unfortunately especially true of the disenfranchised.

Grolnick *et al.* (2002) examine home influences that might facilitate or impede effective adjustment of learners to the transition from primary to secondary school. Unsurprisingly, they found that the transition is negotiated most successfully when parents provide the resources of involvement and autonomy support. More supportive home environments bolster children against possible declines in grades or perceived failure over the transition. Fewer behaviour problems occur where mothers accept the growing independence of their adolescent children. In addition, the children of mothers who “increased their autonomy support over the transition did not show the same negative declines in self-worth, control understanding and reading grades as did other children” (Grolnick *et al.*, 2002:165).

However, a major focus of the investigation rests with the role of the school. Next to the role of parents, the role teachers play in the fostering of the reading habit has been clear for decades. It has also been stated that teachers who love reading themselves are such potent role models that they need to do little beyond reading to and with their students to convey to them the benefits of reading (Anderson, 1992:34; Blair, 1992:58; Meek, 1984:64 & 157 & 187; Palmer, 1995:20).

2.5.4 Denying reading

Various reading researchers have commented on the incidence of a reading decline at approximately the age that the transition from primary to secondary school takes place. As early as 1929, Zagarovskii, cited by Vygotsky (1998:21), reported that the first feature of the adolescent negativity phase is a decrease in work capacity, noting that this occurred more pronouncedly in more creative activities. Later reading researchers are very specific about the exact age when this decline has been observed, for instance Whitehead *et al.* (1977:53), who state that there is a steady decline in active voluntary reading as children grow older: “Not only is there a reduction at 12+ and 14+ in the average number of books read, but there is also, at these ages, a steep increase in the percentage of non-book-readers.”

Not only is there is a decline in an overall voluntary reading practice which takes place in spite of an abundance of books (Palmer, 1995), but there is also a subsequent decline in reading comprehension, according to Purves and Niles (1984:6-7). However, they feel that this observation may be more anecdotal since the phenomenon has not been investigated rigorously. Gallik (1999:481) emphatically states that it has consistently been found that the amount of time spent in recreational reading declines in “the middle school years” (and this is in addition to an overall decline in time spent reading in the course of the “past few decades”). He furthermore states that recreational reading habits are acquired fairly early in an individual’s school life, probably early in primary school or not at all.

Chall (1996) refers to a reading decline, which she terms the fourth grade ‘slump’. It is purportedly a general slowing-down in reading enthusiasm, but one that takes place earlier than the one under scrutiny in this study. She then asks why the “significant gains in reading achievement found for primary grade children” do not continue at secondary school. She proposes that this ‘slump’ can be seen as a learner’s failure to transition smoothly to a higher reading stage when the linguistic, cognitive, and conceptual aspects of texts become more demanding (1996:75). According to Chall, teachers of learners who display this ‘slump’ are concerned about the fact that some of these learners are quite capable of reading stories in class novels but cannot adequately read their subject texts which contain more complex

vocabulary and concepts and require more background knowledge. Other evidence shows a decline in inferential comprehension accompanying the decline in reading. Chall regards this as evidence of changes in reading development between primary and secondary school, or the transition from “mastering the print medium to mastering the meanings of ever more complex messages” (1996:75).

The widely expanded social group in secondary schools that are traditionally bigger than in primary school - coupled with a shift in evaluation standards - often causes learners to reassess their academic capabilities, with the perception that there is a general academic decline or feelings of incompetence beginning in Grade Seven (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002:20).

Eccles and Wigfield (2002:111) and San Antonio (2004:123) have demonstrated that for many early adolescents, learning environments change dramatically as they progress from primary to secondary school. Eccles and Wigfield (2002:111) even claim that secondary school typically “often provides the type of environment that is antithetical to the developmental needs of early adolescents; consequently, during early adolescence, there often is a decline in academic motivation”.

The exponential expansion of reading requirements explains why many learners during this stage find it difficult to create meaning from text; the greater abstraction required for the reading of more advanced texts does not develop for them and they cannot transition to a higher reading level. The learners who do not adequately master early reading skills, and who, for whatever reason, do not develop sufficiently linguistically and cognitively, usually have difficulties transitioning to later phases (Chall, 1996:74; cf. Chapter 3). Such learners easily become the so-called reluctant, disinterested or disengaged readers (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Unfortunately, this occurs at a time when children display a keen interest in the world and a penchant for collecting facts; the desire to acquire knowledge is at a premium now and should be fed and rewarded by voracious reading. The key here is motivation, of course, or regrettably, the lack of motivation.

Whereas no educator will ever advocate boring, repetitive teaching practices, it is also true that not all learning can or should be considered ‘fun’ all the time. Surely, learning the alphabet, or the nine times table, or names of bones in the body is a task that is simply mastered, not discovered or created. Moreover, a learner’s development through ages and phases is not a straight upward path. At any reading stage, the level of the learner’s accomplishment depends on the relative novelty and difficulty of the task and the extent of instruction received. However, Eccles and Wigfield (2002:111) argue that for many early adolescents, learning environments change dramatically as they negotiate the transition from primary to secondary school. Anderman *et al.* (2002:207) claim that secondary school “often provides the type of environment that is antithetical to the developmental needs of early adolescents”, often resulting in a decline in academic motivation. The findings of a study conducted by Covington and Dray (2002:42) show that there is a dramatic and universal decline in early adolescents’ intrinsic motivation, their perceptions of teacher support and feelings of competency. Intrinsic motivation increases quite sharply towards the end of their school careers and their perception of teacher support also grows quite substantially. On average, however, most learners’ feelings of competency continue the steady decline from early to middle and even late adolescence. The widely expanded social reference group, coupled with the shift in evaluation standards, require that students reassess their academic capabilities. Perceptions of general academic competence typically begin to decline by Grade Seven, although some research shows that the decline begins earlier (Schunk & Pajares, 2002:20; Wigfield & Eccles, 2002:96). These feelings are exacerbated through intensifying social comparisons which commence, according to Covington and Dray (2002:46), after the transition to secondary school.

For the extrinsically motivated, failure avoidant learners, growing declines in self-confidence are paralleled by increasing self-doubts. It is easy to understand how these learners’ voluntary reading can suffer decline. However, it is conversely also possible to argue that success-oriented learners who have reaped the benefits of the intrinsic value of recreational reading, who are self-efficacious, who have autonomously chosen reading as an individual interest, will continue doing so for at least the rest of their school careers, if not their entire lives.

CHAPTER THREE

READING THE WRITING ON READING

The best teachers are not reading experts but expert readers.

Meek 1984

We now understand that universal success is too high a standard to set for any one reading method.

Snow 2004

We cannot afford to lurch from fad to fad in education while students are left behind, ill equipped to participate in a democracy or hold a meaningful job.

Reyna 2004

Instead of a stable consensus regarding best teaching practices, there seems only an unending succession of innovations.

Stone 1996

Contemporary pedagogy, the “active school”, and innumerable experiences in this subject teach us that if something is not acquired by experience and personal reflection it is acquired only superficially, with no change in our thought. It is in spite of adult authority, and not because of it, that the infant learns.

Piaget 1997

Reading is not learned once and for all but throughout a lifetime in which the individual is challenged to react to ever more difficult materials in ever more sophisticated ways. Early successes help the later ones, but they do not assure them.

Chall 1996

3.1 LITERACY

3.1.1 Shifting benchmarks

The major focus in this chapter will be two of the four domains of the theoretical framework (cf. Figure 1.2, page 26), namely literacy and literature. Their close link is easily described in terms of their being “twin vehicles” for intellectual discourse, of being two sides of a coin.

Styles, Bearne & Watson, (1994:1) described it better:

If we choose the conviction of certainty, we can believe that there is a known, loved and approachable literature, that there is correspondingly a known, fixed and achievable literacy, and that the straightforward connection between them is that one must be achieved so that the other may be approached (Styles, Bearne & Watson, 1994:1).

Early reading experiences can be described quite simply, as the following five-year old anecdotally did: “Reading is telling stories in your head” (Douglass, 1989:1). The extraordinary complexity of the reading process is also described by reading researchers in more academic terms: “Reading sovereignty is a gift conferred on the skilled reader by the harmonious interaction of the myriad processes and sub-processes of reading: attention, decoding, comprehension through macrostructuring and continually changing physiological arousal” (Nell, 1988:267). Or as Goodman (Gollasch, 1982:131) does, when he describes reading as “a psycholinguistic process by which the reader, a language user, reconstructs, as best he can, a message which has been encoded by a writer as a graphic display”. The fact, however, is that reading is an extraordinarily complex process that is still not well understood, despite decades spent on research analysing various aspects of what reading has traditionally been perceived to be.

The study focuses on the reading practices of early adolescents, learners who have already learned to read independently and proficiently in their seven or eight years of schooling. Emergent literacy, the initial teaching of reading, inadequate reading practices and remedial reading fall outside the scope of this investigation on adolescent reading habits. However, literacy acquisition cannot but remain a central focus because, in addition to the fact that

pleasure reading can only take place if a learner can already read fluently, the attainment of higher reading levels transpires only after primary school.

Despite contradictory perceptions, literacy requirements have become progressively more stringent with the advent of the cybernetic age. The shifting benchmarks of literacy attainment, according to Chall (1996:3), are due to the fact that literacy, “like income, has both an absolute and a relative value”. She argues that in the 1920s in America, an eighth grade reading level was the norm with people 25 years old or older and that this was considered to be well above the standard of minimal literacy. However, although the ideal today is cited to be an average of an eleventh or twelfth grade level, and although it appears to indicate a much higher ability, it probably has approximately the same relative value as the eighth grade level eighty years ago. Although Chall’s argument with regard to what is considered ‘average’ reading levels is highly debatable, it is also clear that the literacy requirements of one age are not sufficient for another. It is clear that literacy, by its very definition, has undergone major paradigmatic as well as subtle shifts of meaning in the past two or three decades, resulting in divergent views on literacy education.

3.1.2 Defining literacy

The definition of literacy has expanded greatly in the course of the past century and a half¹⁹ from the amorphous *ability to read* to the inclusion of many other literacies, reflecting educational paradigms, reading research practices and even political agendas, creating conceptual and methodological problems. Reading research has made great progress over the last twenty years alone for a number of reasons: disillusionment with reading practices and greater governmental funding for reading research being the two obvious ones. However, as Anderson (1993:18) speculates, another major reason for the rapid progress in reading research is the paradigm shifts in psychology and allied disciplines. The fruits of the

¹⁹ Literacy instruction only became an issue in the mid-19th century when the aristocracy’s fear of a literate mass abated (Nell, 1988:16). It was only after the Industrial Revolution that a literate work force became attractive to authorities and the acquisition of literacy became a viable option for the masses, in theory, if not in practice.

‘cognitive revolution’ are now everywhere to be seen in the field of reading research and it should be a point of honour among reading researchers that they were among the leaders in developing “the new cognitive view” (Anderson, 1993:18), since it is now included in most definitions of literacy.

Literacy was considered, until about three decades about, a single-faceted *ability to read*. This was followed by a more communicative definition centring on decoding for comprehension of texts. Currently the American National Assessments of Adult Literacy Association (2003; online doc.) broadly defines literacy as the use of printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals, and develop one’s knowledge and potential. The Association maintains that “literacy is neither a single skill suited to all types of texts, nor an infinite number of skills, each associated with a given type of text or document”. Of the three domains identified by the Association, namely *prose* literacy, *document* literacy, and *quantitative* literacy, only the first will be included in this investigation, although the importance of the ability to process information in the accomplishment of a range of tasks in job-related, home and civic spheres is duly acknowledged.²⁰ *Prose* literacy refers to the reading of written text such as newspaper articles, magazine stories, poems and fiction, which can be divided into two further types: expository prose and narrative prose. Expository prose literacy entails the location of information and its integration from texts, whereas narrative prose tells a story or describes ideas, events or emotions.

Since the reading of expository and narrative prose texts at school is a central focus in this study, note must be taken of the official directives concerning literacy. Together with other South African educational reforms introduced after 1994, the divergent views on literacy and literacy instruction were acknowledged in the early policy documents of the South African Department of Education (DoE) for Curriculum 2005. The draft document (April 1997), for instance, already adopted the concept of multiple literacies and defined the terms as follows

²⁰ Document literacy consists of the reading of graphically displayed information found in everyday life, including application forms, train schedules, maps and tables. Quantitative literacy refers to the finding and understanding of quantities available either visually, as in graphs and charts, or in numerical form, such as numbers, fractions, percentages, units of time or volumes.

(and it is significant that individual value and enjoyment are *preceded* by societal principles and community benefits):

Literacy and literacies

Literacy: initially “literacy” was seen as a cognitive process that enables reading, writing, and numeracy.

Literacies: Currently the use of the term “literacy” has expanded to include several kinds of literacies. “Literacies” stresses the issue of access to the world and to knowledge through development of multiple capacities within all of us to make sense of our worlds through whatever means we have, not only texts and books (SADoE, 1997:25).

The authors of the draft refer to five kinds of literacies, namely cultural, critical, visual, media and computer literacy. The inclusion of the first two literacies by the DoE is a salient feature, especially in a South African context. The draft defines these two literacies more specifically as follows:

- *Cultural literacy – Cultural, social and ideological values that shape our “reading” of texts.*
- *Critical literacy – The ability to respond critically to the intentions, contents and possible effects of messages and texts on the reader. (SADoE, 1997:25).*

A later document of the National Department of Education acknowledges, through Learning Outcomes 3 and 4, the fact that literacy provides the basis for successful living through the acquisition of reading and writing skills (DoE, 2002:5-6). It is also significant that the reference to the reading of “real books” and the “writing for genuine purposes” – which are features of the whole language approach to the teaching of reading – is succeeded by the inclusion of aspects of phonics instruction.

In the Language Learning Area’s glossary, literacy is defined as “the ability to read and use written information and to write for different purposes. It is part of a general ability to make sense of one’s world” (SADoE, 2002:139). It is noteworthy that the South African policy’s definition of literacy with its emphasis on the role played by language with regard to cultural understanding, echoes definitions produced by other international governmental bodies, such as the description applied by the Australian Department of Employment, Education and Training:

Literacy involves the integration of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and critical thinking. It includes the cultural knowledge which enables a speaker, writer or reader to recognise and use language appropriate to different social situations (cited by Bull & Anstey, 1996:231).

The civic importance of literacy is also reflected in the fact that comprehensive definitions of literacy, and even descriptions of literacy instruction, can be found on dilettante websites such as *questia.com*:

Literacy is typically taught in the early childhood years. Traditionally, literacy programs focused upon the ability to recognize letters and know the sounds each letter makes. In recent years, research done on emergent literacy reveals a positive indication that literacy occurs as a process. Emergent literacy programs establish literacy as the developmental process by which a child acquires the skills needed to read and write. This process includes experiences like having a book read aloud to them as well as the basics of knowledge such as letter recognition. Research done on emergent literacy programs indicates a high level of effectiveness in early childhood

It is thus widely understood that the concept of an overarching, single literacy no longer serves to explain its multifaceted nature. Various terms have been coined in the past two decades with further refinement developing from time to time, allowing researchers to speak of *literacies* in the plural, rather than literacy *per se*. According to Manzo, the concept of *multiple literacies* is perhaps “the most important reconceptualisation of literacy in recent times” (2003:654). Whereas children used to be considered *pre-literate* before being taught formally at school, it is now acknowledged by reading researchers that children arrive at school confidently possessing many literacies already (Styles, Bearne & Watson, 1994:2).

The concept of multiple literacies necessitates further distinctions, and an understanding of the nature of each facilitates literacy instruction and practice. The literacies that have bearing on the study are *basic, emergent, functional, computer, visual* and *information* literacies, and they will be briefly addressed here.

Survival literacy or *basic* literacy refers to the reading skills required for a basic retrieval of information from texts such as work schedules, food labels and warnings on road signs. *Functional* literacy – also called occupational or utilitarian literacy - involves the reading and

writing skills needed to understand texts encountered in work, leisure and civic duties and it is usually practised outside of school. Functional literacy empowers the reader to read for meaning, but is not an effective tool for academic study or so-called ‘higher order’ reading material.

Emergent literacy is now widely held to occur spontaneously before the introduction of formal reading and writing instruction at school. The term *emergent literacy* describes the aspects of reading and writing behaviour that precede conventional literacy and later develop into it. It is now commonly believed that young children, even as young as one and two years old, are interested in the process of becoming literate (Beck, 1993:77; Harris & Sipay, 1990:35). It is further understood that emergent literacy is essentially part of the child’s development of communicative language proficiency during the period between birth and the time when the child reads and writes in ways that can readily be recognized as reading and writing. The spontaneity of the activity is, naturally, dependent on the availability of books and the willingness of adults to help children in their early acquisition of literacy.²¹

Higher literacies, according to Wolf (1990:121), refer to reading which includes questioning and interpretation, critical reflection (not just decoding for information), and writing which creates meaning and does not merely consist of spelling or reporting. Aesthetic and academic reading requires the application of these higher literacies. This term, however, will not here be taken to imply “higher order” literature, which denotes a value judgement.

Visual literacy as defined by the International Visual Literacy Association (2004, online doc.), is a group of “vision competencies a person can develop by seeing while at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences”. The Association holds that the development of these competencies is fundamental to normal human learning since they enable the visually literate person to discriminate and interpret visual actions, objects or symbols, natural or man-made, that are encountered in the environment. The creative use of

²¹ The term was coined by Marie Clay and practitioners of the whole language movement in the 1960s as they veered away from the concept of *beginning* reading. Critics of the movement, however, severely criticized the method of ‘learning to read without being taught’. “*Emergent reading*, the joke ran in 1988, had become *emergency reading*” (Turner, 1995:80).

these competencies enables one to communicate with others and through their appreciative use one is able to comprehend and enjoy a variety of visual communications.

Computer literacy refers to a basic skill in the use of computers, and it is generally acknowledged that such a skill has become an indispensable societal skill. Computers and other technology are now called tools, including literacy tools (Sweet & Anderson, 1993:58). More specifically, *tech-literacy* describes the ability to use computer languages such as BASIC, or LOGO.

Information literacy is becoming increasingly more important for adolescent learners in the cybernetic age. According to Ryan (2004; online doc.), an information literate individual is someone who recognizes that there is a definite need for information in society, and that accurate and complete information is the basis for intelligent decision-making, critical thinking and problem solving. For a person to be information literate, several conditions must be simultaneously present: firstly, the learner must have a real desire to know, then be able to use analytic skills to formulate questions, identify research methods and strategies, and finally utilize critical skills to evaluate experimental and experiential results; secondly, the learner must have already acquired the skills to search for answers to those questions in increasingly diverse and complex ways; thirdly, once the learner has identified what is sought, he or she must be able to access it (Lenox & Walker, 1993: 314). The American Report of the Presidential Committee on Information Literacy presented by the American Library Association (2004; online doc.) describes the information literate as people who have learned how to learn, know how knowledge is organized and can be accessed. Such people, it postulates, are prepared for lifelong learning, because they can always find the information needed for any task or decision at hand.

Specific literacy requirements for the group of learners that form the subject of this study, namely the adolescents, have been identified by The International Reading Association (1999; online doc.). The Association asserts in a position statement entitled *Adolescent Literacy*, that the “ongoing literacy development of adolescents is just as important, and requires just as much attention, as that of beginning readers”. The Association reiterates the argument that

expanding literacy requirements demand more complex reading and writing tasks of modern adolescents than “at any other time in human history”. The position statement emphasized that adolescent learners “deserve the kinds of support and learning opportunities that will enable them to grow into confident, independent readers and writers”, and expresses its article of faith as follows:

The Association believes that adolescent readers have a right to

- 1. Access to a wide variety of reading material that appeals to their interests*
- 2. Instruction that builds the skill and desire to read increasingly complex materials*
- 3. Assessment that shows their strengths as well as their needs*
- 4. Expert teachers who model and provide explicit instruction across the curriculum*
- 5. Reading specialists who assist students having difficulty learning how to read*
- 6. Teachers who understand the complexities of individual adolescent readers*
- 7. Homes and communities that support the needs of adolescent learners.*

3.1.3 Acquiring literacy

Since adolescents are already independent readers (as the respondents in this study are supposed to be since problem readers are excluded from the sample), emergent literacy issues are not addressed here. It is nevertheless important to take note of aspects of literacy acquisition since reading habits can be encouraged or thwarted from the very beginning of reading instruction or the commencement of early reading strategies. An important condition for raising the reading proficiency level of all learners is to understand how best to engage them in learning to read and reading to learn (Anderson, 1993:10). It is, therefore, little wonder that a great deal of current educational research focuses on reading and reading problems. The teaching of reading has so often been the subject of serious and bitter debates that the term ‘reading wars’ is used by researchers (Fletcher & Francis, 2004:93; Pearson, 2004), and not always in jest. It is also clear that the very concepts of reading and of learning to read keep changing with paradigm shifts in psychology and developments in the cognitive sciences. It is now widely accepted that readers ‘construct’ the meanings of texts, or as Anderson (1993:18) describes the process, the reader creates meaning by using the “building

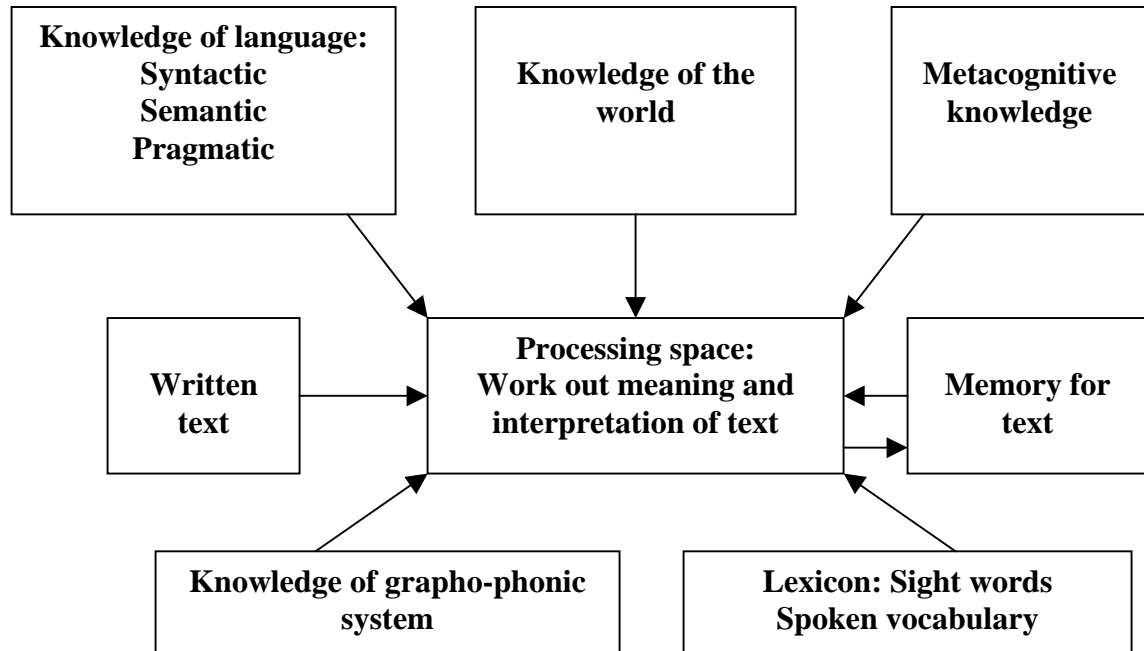
blocks for the meaning of a text” in addition to the words on a page, the reader’s purposes for reading the text and points of view, an analysis of the context and the author’s intentions. The reader also already possesses knowledge and beliefs about the topic before commencing to read a text. “Skilled readers swiftly and effortlessly integrate information from various sources as they build a representation of a text” (Anderson, 1993:19).

For many reading researchers (Adams, 1991; Anderson, 1993; Beck, 1993; Nell, 1988; Turner, 1995), the most effective model for the teaching of reading is one that closely approximates the way “real readers in the real world do their reading, which is by a judicious mix of both data-driven, bottom-up processes and ongoing hypothesis-driven interpretations of the semantic content of the text” (Nell, 1988:86). The eclectic, multi-faceted combination of factors and skills is presented in Figure 3.1 (p. 74), a model with which Owen and Pumfrey (1995) attempt to delineate the interactive networking of all the sources of knowledge that are required to operate in tandem when text is read.

Owen and Pumfrey’s (1995) interactive model, generated after almost three decades of cognitive analysis, postulates that the information supplied by the reader and the information in the text influence each other simultaneously to produce comprehension. It is clear, then, that the reader’s extant knowledge has an all-encompassing influence on comprehension. The interactive model completely excludes the view that reading is a matter of *extracting* meaning from the text, or that the printed page is used to confirm or reject an initial interpretation. Reading is now seen, as Beck (1993:66) describes it, as a complex cognitive process during which a reader actively *constructs* meaning on the basis of information on the printed page and information in memory.

An aspect ignored in the literacy model (Figure 3.1) is fluency, and its absence bears out Stahl’s (2004:187) assertion that fluency is the ‘neglected goal’ of reading. However, in the US, at least, it will no longer be the case, since fluency is one of the five reading goals of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (White House, 2001, online doc.) and reading researchers have begun to study effective strategies for its promotion (Stahl, 2004:187). Although various developmental models in the past described the concept of fluent reading, few identify it as a

Figure 3. 1 Interactive literacy model (Owen and Pumfrey, 1995)



crucial component of effective reading. However, Stahl (2004) considers the attainment of fluency as a separate stage, following on earlier stages, such as emergent literacy, decoding, and finally confirmation (cf. Section 4.3.1).

One of the most constructive results of an interactive literacy model, is the view that “none of us - neither teachers nor students - can say that we have learned (past tense) to read” (Adams, 1991:7; brackets in original). Most researchers now emphasize that reading is a continuously developing skill. However, this creates a circular situation: if teachers and educators want children to read well, a way must be found to motivate them to read a great deal, but if children are to be motivated to read avidly (quantitatively and qualitatively), they must first be *taught* to read well.

If defining literacy remains a delicate operation, much more work still remains to be done before educators reach consensus on the ‘right’ methods for teaching literacy. Societal concerns and cultural factors combine with didactic paradigms when it comes to educational research on a phenomenon such as reading. It is clear that many factors impact upon reading,

and that reading through the years has been successfully acquired by any one or by a combination of didactic approaches. However, the same holds true when reading is not adequately learnt and a learner begins to develop reading difficulties. “There is no single straight path to competence in reading but there are many teaching routes which are costly in terms of child failure” (Turner, 1995:80).

Although there has been little research on the positive effects of voluntary reading on linguistic development, many studies claim positive results on language aspects such as improved vocabulary, written language fluency and comprehension, higher reading achievement scores, and a more positive attitude to reading in general (D’Ath, 1994:10; Houghton-Hawksley, 1983:224; Meek, 1984:38; Palmer, 1995:26; Stainthorp & Hughes, 2000). With the belief, then, that voluntary reading has a definitive influence on the development of linguistic skills, many researchers further assume that the earlier and more comprehensive the contact with books, the better (Clark, 1976; Meek, 1984; Trelease, 1984). The ideal for the shaping of linguistic excellence – especially verbal articulation during a child’s early years - is clearly an environment that provides children with a great deal of positive verbal stimulation which in turn becomes the necessary mental scaffolding that will help them in time to construct their own rich models of the world.

3.1.4 Designing literacy

Literacy instruction approaches closely follow educational and psychological paradigm shifts, and are easily distinguished by their relative emphasis on certain aspects of the reading process. For example, some theories postulate (and did so decades ago already) that reading is mainly a top-down process, while others view it as a bottom-up process, and a third group as a combination of both. For the most part, top-down theories call attention to prediction and guessing from context – for both word recognition and comprehension – based on an overall understanding of the text, whereas bottom-up models emphasize the hierarchical aspects of reading – from letters to word for word recognition, from literal to interpretive skills in

reading comprehension (Chall, 1996:33; Harris & Sipay, 1990:16; Owen & Pumfrey, 1995:13; Pearson, 2004:218; Sweet & Anderson, 1993:20).

Chall (1996) is one of the researchers who endorses not only an eclectic approach to reading instruction, but argues that there are phases when a learner requires only one kind of reading instruction, followed by a phase that needs a different approach. For instance, the emergent literacy experiences of the pre-schooler can be considered top-down in the sense that the child pretends to read text that he or she has committed to memory, often while older readers orally transmit stories to them (Chall, 1996:52). This ‘reading’ style is thus primarily dependent on prediction and memory. This view of Chall’s is an interesting, albeit faint echo of Vygotsky’s (1997:14) theory of the process of the development of higher forms of childhood behaviour. The processing style then swings between top-down and bottom-up reading instruction approaches before coming comfortably to rest in a Stage 3²² reading level. Figure 3.2 is an extrapolation of Chall’s views on how reading instruction styles change to accommodate the needs of the learner.

Figure 3.2 Chall's theory of changes in literacy instruction

	Reading process style	Medium or message
Stage 0	Top-down	Message to medium
Stage 1	Bottom-up	Medium to message
Stage 2	Bottom-up to top-down	Medium and message
Stage 3	Top-down and bottom-up	Message and medium

When the early reader has to acquire a firm basis in mastering the basic elements of word recognition, a structured, bottom-up approach is more effective. At this stage there simply are “rules to be learned and followed” (Chall, 1996:53). Grade Three to Grade Five or Six readers are best taught through a bottom-up reading processing style, followed by a combination of the two, with a bottom up approach predominating around Grade Seven. Thus, according to Chall, the ebb and flow reading instruction theories swing from greater structure to greater medium-related openness, and back again. According to this view, the pre-reading child is

²² Stage level transitioning is described more fully in Section 4.3.2.

open to subtle nuances and the child is helped by “invention and daring” (Chall, 1996:52), which again becomes desirable by the time the learner needs to transition to a higher reading level.

The ideal for reading instruction, then, lies between the extremes of the bottom-up approach advocated by many educational authorities with standardized physical, linguistic and mental attainment levels, and an informal, top-down approach which contends that good examples and available texts will ‘automatically’ lead to a successful acquisition of literacy and reading habits. Pearson (2004:223) identifies the two opposing schools of literacy instruction according to the difference between those who assume that reading skills are best “caught” during the pursuit of authentic reading activity rather than “taught” directly and explicitly. The revised policy document of the South African DoE (2002) cautiously steers between these opposing approaches in its careful delineation of the selected system:

In this curriculum, a ‘balanced approach’ to literacy development has been used. It is balanced because it begins with children’s emergent literacy, it involves them in reading real books and writing for genuine purposes, and it gives attention to phonics. These are the things learners need to know and do in order to learn to read and write successfully. In reading, this means moving away from the ‘reading readiness approach’, which held that children were not ready to start learning to read and write until they were able to perform sub-skills such as auditory discrimination and visual discrimination, and had developed their fine and large motor skills to a certain level.

With the balanced approach, these skills:

- *do not have to be in place before a learner can start to read and write; and*
- *can and should be developed during children’s early learning experiences.*

(DoE, 2002:9).

The emphasis on balance in the prescribed approach is a salient feature of the policy document, aligning it to ‘balanced’ views such as Bettelheim and Zelan’s (1982:49), who recommend that teachers adopt an approach that does not focus exclusively on either academic or functional skills, but rather on reading programmes that would create in learners a fervent belief that being able to read will open a world of wonderful experiences, which will permit them to shed their ignorance, understand the world, and become masters of their fate.

A novel and more structured approach to an understanding of the plethora of reading instruction methods is Giordano's (2000) synopsis that identifies the major instructional models and classifies them not in the usual top-down/ bottom-up tradition, but according to four distinct designs, namely skills-based, language-based, technology-based and literature-based designs.

In an historic overview, Giordano (2000:xv) explains that whichever one of these designs has been the dominant instructional approach, depends upon which of the following three questions reading educators, reading researchers and policy makers focus on at any one time: 'What is?' 'What is possible?' and 'What ought to be?'

In his definition, Giordano (2000:271) notes that reading often has the scholastic connotation of "successfully mastering a curriculum". He therefore differentiates between the "restrictive connotation of the term *reading*" and the less restrictive meaning of *literacy*, which denotes "participation in a culturally defined structure of knowledge and communication".

That technology-based reading instruction and computer-assisted learning will greatly influence the acquisition and exercise of literacy in the future is axiomatic. However, it is also clear that in South Africa computer-based instruction is dependent on the resources and infrastructure of a specific community. In a survey conducted with Grade Eleven learners in an urban district in Gauteng (Du Toit, 2001), it was found that computer instruction is certainly not universal, neither is Internet use an activity shared by the less affluent at this stage, making the gap (or the 'digital divide', as it is popularly known) between advantaged and disadvantaged communities ever wider. Since the respondents in the present study had not been taught to read through technology-based approaches, as well as the fact that only the respondents' current interaction with the Internet relates to this thesis, this design will not be addressed.

Skills-based instructional programmes have been the most popular approach and dominated reading education, not only throughout the 20th century, but for more than two centuries preceding it (Giordano, 2000:189). Skills-based literacy instruction, according to Giordano

(2000:xxi), is part of a broad initiative to promote reading proficiency through homogenous programmes based on the acquisition of reading and pre-reading skills. These programmes structure learning through materials that have been arranged in a sequential order and are connected to a hierarchy of skills. Skills-based instruction is developed according to an explicit curriculum and can easily be linked to graded textbooks.

However, the textbooks and basal readers with which skills-based programmes are associated are easily criticised by educators who, for instance, endorse apposite instructional approaches (such as the whole language approach). Criticism of skills-based programmes is the result of inherent inadequacies, such as unintentional bias, a lack of cognitive demand, an uncreative use of language and especially the fact that teachers tend to rely exclusively on textbooks to the exclusion of other texts, especially more ‘creative’ texts. According to Giordano (2000:xxi; 2000:233), educators who oppose skills-based instruction are easily attracted to language-based approaches because they renounce the use of textbooks and emphasise instead the experiences and functional language of children. This move away from the standardization of skills-based instruction already started in the 1920s and was endorsed in the 1960s by people such as Hildreth (1966), who emphasized the verbal creativity of children in her research on giftedness. This early methodology which paved the way for the whole language movement had ten basic tenets (Giordano, 2000:233), some of which are not only relevant to whole language programmes but are also adopted by current approaches. The basic tenets proposed that

1. *children’s experiences should be prioritised over academic learning*
2. *reading should be integrated with speaking, listening, writing and other language arts*
3. *the use of basal readers and commercial materials should be delayed until children had made progress with experiential materials*
4. *vocabulary should not be controlled*
5. *experiential approaches should not be viewed as pre-reading activities but as the most appropriate type of instruction for learning to read*
6. *manuscript styles of lettering should be used to prepare experience materials*
7. *instruction should be informal and spontaneous*
8. *instruction should be supplemented by the extensive use of trade books*
9. *initial instruction should involve comprehensive reinforcement of word recognition, comprehension and pictorial illustration skills*
10. *the link between reading and writing could be reinforced in this way.*

For many educators and researchers a skills-based and a language-based approach completely preclude the other, but there are others (such as Adams, 1991) who acknowledge the instructional value of employing both approaches. Such eclecticism, according to Adams (1991:16), attempts to link the approaches and heal the rift between the two groups who either advocate or oppose the use of phonics by stating that the orthographic, semantic, and phonological processes “cannot be invoked independently of one another” and that “reading reflects the coordinated, interactive knowledge and behaviour of all three” (Giordano, 2000:49). Pearson (2004:217) coined the term “basalization” to describe this kind of linkage and also advocates a kind of “balanced literacy” instruction.

While educators who endorse a literature-based design would agree with many of the tenets advocated above, the “extensive use of trade books” would be considered a less salient feature. Literature-based programmes are founded on the conviction that the content of reading materials influences both learning and character development (Giordano, 2000:xxi).²³ The literature-based design will receive greater prominence in this study, not because it is advocated as the ideal,²⁴ but because the respondents of this investigation are already sufficiently literate and their experience of literary texts will be central to the interviews. Another reason for the sharper focus on literature-based designs is the fact that, unlike the other three approaches, it is linked to the bibliotherapeutic aspect of reading which is a facet of the theoretical framework.

The whole language movement is one of the more high-profile literature-based approaches and is still in certain sectors, despite severe criticism from skills-based educators, “a crusade at high tide”, and can be considered more a “philosophy than a method” (Anderson, 1993:20). The heart of the whole language approach is the principle that learning to read should be done holistically and follow natural inclinations, like learning to talk. Reading instruction should

²³ It is easy to see how literature-based instructional programmes lead to a bibliotherapeutic approach with books “as part of analytical procedures patterned after psychological therapy” (Giordano, 2000:xxi; also cf. Section 3.2.3).

²⁴ Perhaps there is no single ideal route to optimise the acquisition of literacy; best practice may include an eclectic though salient combination of aspects of all four approaches.

not consist of breaking down the activity into component skills that are taught singly (Anderson, 1993:20), and as the focus of literature-based instruction, children's reading should commence with authentic texts, as opposed to texts that are written for school instruction only. Another reason for its popularity is the fact that it is supported by "its cousins" (Pearson, 2004:219), namely process writing and an integrated curriculum. It can clearly be seen why the whole language movement easily gains support from political entities because it "stands for empowering the disenfranchised", and, after all, as spokespersons for whole language assert, the acquisition of literacy "is always a political act" (Anderson, 1993:21).

All literature-based approaches for the teaching of reading make allowance for a broader consideration of language, for instance more abstract, symbolic, poetic, technical usage is possible than the more fundamental understanding of language that is imposed by a skills-based approach. In this respect, some researchers distinguish between so-called *basic* language and *higher* language (Levine, 2002:125). According to Levine, basic language is mostly used at primary school and is therefore more literal, practical and to the point. *Higher* language can be more hypothetical, personal, biased, and ambiguous, is full of ideas and information. As learners make the transition to secondary school, this kind of language has to be mastered in their thinking, reading and writing. This comes at a time when language also becomes an instrument of learning.²⁵

A further complication concerning the school's responsibilities regarding reading development, is the fact that a learner's sociocultural background plays a far greater role than anticipated by most early educators. Robinson and Good (1987:36) argue that a child's ability to fully understand a specific reading passage does not only depend on the attainment of a certain age, but is directly related to the learner's background of experience, the motivation behind the reading of the passage, and the difficulty level of the material. The sociocultural perspective on reading and child development is one that has been researched more rigorously from a psychological stance, for instance by Vygotsky (1997; 1998) and San Antonio (2004). Furthermore, learners at the same age are hardly at the same developmental level, but instead

²⁵ Levine (2002:126) furthermore links this period with evidence that shows that the period from age nine to thirteen is a time of rapid growth in the language area of the human brain.

range on a continuum from illiterates to proficient readers. Ideally, teachers have a perfect understanding of each reader's strengths and weaknesses in terms of readiness for any particular reading experience, and adjust reading instruction accordingly. However, reality falls short of the ideal – here as elsewhere.

3.1.5 Declining literacy

Many reading researchers (Akira, 2003; online doc.; Harris & Sipay, 1990:2-4; Krashen, 2002b:748-750; Krashen, 2004:19; Manzo, 2003:654-5) do not believe that there is sufficient evidence to declare that reading achievement was higher decades ago than it is now. Harris and Sipay (1990:2) state that it is impossible to determine whether literacy levels have declined, improved or simply remained constant over the years. Statistics concerning reading proficiency are inconclusive for a number of reasons, *inter alia* the fact that more learners attend school – not only in South Africa where schooling up to Grade Nine level for all learners became not only compulsory, but (ideally) possible, since 1994, but in other countries too - making the school population much more diverse than it was a decade or three ago.

Reports on declining literacy levels guarantee headlines in the popular press, especially in a developing country such as South Africa. However, many researchers postulate that this decline is little more than an assumption. Henne (1949:101), more than half a century ago, asserted that there is “no solid foundation” to the claims made by reading researchers at the time that learners read less as they advance to high school. Akira (2003; online doc.) speaks disparagingly of “the clichés about a decline in reading” or “some other version of the same lament”, citing examples that explain the phenomenon as a skewed representation caused by the proliferation of books and other reading materials amounting to a “publishing glut”. Manzo (2003:654) quips that the assumption that there is a reading decline at all has only gained ground to pave the way for greater funding opportunities for reading researchers. Krashen (2002b) contests the theory of a reading decline after the introduction of the whole language approach to the teaching of literacy. He cheerily likens the incidence of the low reading scores that learners obtained in the National Assessment of Educational Progress

(NAEP) tests to an urban legend, declaring that the “Great Plummet of 1987-92” never took place (2002b: 748).

While reserving an opinion on the matter of reading decline, Giordano (2000:147) cites research by Purves and Niles showing that the literacy crisis might actually be contrived. This conflicting point of view contends that the insistence on universal literacy is a late-20th century ideal, and that failure to achieve such a high ideal had primarily been the result of the increasingly sophisticated reading skills required by an “urbanized global market economy”. Although conceding that a decline in literacy levels had actually transpired, there is a belief that such a decline was restricted to the most sophisticated readers. This decline can be attributed to two rather ambiguous factors, namely a “pervasive materialism” that caused people to devalue critical reading and a “stifling proliferation of specialized printed materials that had indirectly reduced the general public’s access to information” (Giordano, 2000:47).

Giordano’s (2000:148) mostly historical perspective on the so-called literacy crisis elucidates the fact that there had already been many literacy crises in the course of the 20th century. Again, one obvious explanation for such a crisis is the exponential increase in civic literacy during the previous century. However, like Manzo (2003) and Krashen (2002b), Giordano (2000) also reflects on the fact that educators regularly declare a literacy crisis, and concedes that although there may often be problems with “popular skills and learning”, there are great similarities between discussion about literacy declines in the past and at present. Reports of these declines have recurred throughout modern history, just as criticism of other aspects of society. Giordano (2000:148) reviews notions that “at times of large-scale, rapid change and confusion about the condition of civilization and morality, literacy has seemed to suffer a ‘decline’ almost generationally across the span of recorded history”. Giordano (2000:148) points out that it is even possible that a literacy crisis can be exaggerated for political agendas because “the contemporary context heightens the seriousness of perceptions and exacerbates fears”.

Like Krashen (2002b), Berliner and Biddle (1999:4-6) roundly demythologize the notion that schools fail to teach literacy and other fundamental skills, calling it a “fraud” propagated

during the 1980s when greater credence was given to “reactionary voices” in America.²⁶ They also contend that political agendas directed “reactionary voices as a composite of conservatives, neoconservatives, and religious political activists”, and further blame politicians, (and leaders in the Clinton administration specifically) who purportedly embraced some ideas and “rhetorics” so that “educators may have to contend with the debris of reactionary educational thought for some time to come” (Berliner & Biddle, 1999:4).

Snow (2004:xx) judiciously warns that “a single-minded emphasis on poor reading outcomes has a cost, and the cost is comity”. She argues that when researchers focus with such “laserlike intensity” on reading problems, it can distract them from the fact that effective reading instruction does indeed take place in many schools. Many learners manage to learn to read effectively in the very classes where at-risk learners fail at learning to read. A further danger, Snow (2004:xx) contends, is that pessimism concerning reading instruction can lead to “overly simplistic statements about the incompetence of teachers, or the inadequacies of teacher preparation programs, or the failure of urban school districts”, giving the impression that the very people who are most certainly needed to participate in reform are most to blame.

Another dimension of the problem of declining literacy levels is added by the argument that simply too much access to new reading materials gives rise to the impression that reading is no longer taking place as liberally as it used to in the past. Giordano’s argument of the proliferation of informational materials supports Akira’s (2003; online doc.) notion of a publishing ‘glut’, and it is ironic that an increase in textual material can actually cause a decline in reading, or ‘higher order’ reading, then, which extends beyond the mercenary or the merely informational.

Chall (2000), arguing from a novel perspective, says that although there are different views on whether there has been a decline in academic achievement as a whole, there is, however, consensus that learner achievement is “too low for the demands of an advanced technological

²⁶ The differences in opinion on whether there is a reading decline, is another example of the politicization of reading instruction, leading, in part, to Pearson (2004) brightly referring to *The Reading Wars*.

society” (2000:1). Researchers agree that the low academic achievement of minority and poor learners needs to be improved greatly.

However, research to attempt to more accurately determine the development levels of citizens’ reading aptitude received great impetus when educational malpractice suits began to proliferate in the United States of America in the 1970s. A typical case is the one of Peter W. versus the San Francisco School District in 1976 (Standler, 2001; online doc.) in which the state educational system was sued by a mother because her son had spent twelve years at school, was graduated successfully but could not read beyond the fifth grade level. The state at the time required learners to read beyond an eighth level to graduate, but since he could only read at a fifth grade level, it was alleged that the school was negligent, if not downright fraudulent, in graduating him from high school. Similar cases concerned graduates who could not find and hold down jobs due to inadequate reading skills (Standler, 2001; online doc.). The court curtly disposed of the plaintiff’s allegations that the school made a deceitful misrepresentation to the parents about their child’s performance. One of the reasons for the verdict was the fact that, unlike activities in more mercenary domains, “classroom methodology affords no readily acceptable standards of care, or cause, or injury”. The judge ruled that

the science of pedagogy itself is fraught with different and conflicting theories on how or what a child should be taught, and any layman might - and commonly does - have his own emphatic views on the subject. The ‘injury’ claimed here is plaintiff’s inability to read and write. Substantial professional authority attests that the achievement of literacy in the schools, or its failure, are influenced by a host of factors which affect the pupil subjectively, from outside the formal teaching process, and beyond the control of its ministers. They may be physical, neurological, emotional, cultural, environmental; they may be present but not perceived, recognized but not identified (Standler, 2001; online doc.).

Law courts may have been unforthcoming regarding the handicap of inadequate reading skills caused by ineffective, if not indifferent, educational practices, but national and international reading surveys continue to accumulate statistics to explicate the magnitude of the problem of inferior literacy levels. Ironically, this is the case in spite of, or because of, the fact that educational systems and schools are often satisfied with their students’ attainment of minimal

competency instead of achieving “a level of mastery appropriate to their age, their views of themselves and their aspirations” (Purves & Niles, 1984:8).

The gravity of the problem of minimal competency and unsatisfactory literacy levels in South Africa is illustrated in a study conducted by Horne (2001) with Additional Language speakers who prefer English as their medium of instruction (SAAL-E). The steady decline in the reading proficiency of matriculants applying for admission to tertiary institutions in the Gauteng area is shown in the following example of a representative sample of SAAL-English students (Horne, 2001:3):

Table 3.1 Literacy levels of applicants for tertiary education

Year	Number Assessed	Functionally Literate, i.e. Grade 8 or above
1990	568	51%
1991	490	35%
1992	899	33%
1993	770	31%
1994	930	28%
1995	1 314	25%
1996	520	24%
1997	434	22%
1998	621	20%
1999	537	19%
2000	451	18%

In spite of the fact that the demographic reality of the South African student profile has changed considerably, the undeniably steady decline in the reading skills of matriculants over a ten-year period cannot but cause alarm.

It is with good reason, then, that over the past two decades schools all over the developed world have been subjected to an increasing barrage of criticism. The chief object of complaint

has been their continuing failure to adequately equip students with the academic and workplace skills needed in an era of increasing economic competition.

The American Legislative Exchange Council (Stone, 1996; online doc.) disclosed in 1994 that, since the Nation at Risk report in 1983, there has been little change in the achievement levels of public school students despite a 43% increase in real dollar expenditures. The *Business Week* of April 1995 reported that businesses find too many job applicants unable to read, write, or do simple arithmetic and that Americans are therefore “fed up” with their public schools (Stone, 1996;online doc.). The National Assessment of Adult Literacy indices (2003; online doc.) reveal there has been a significant growth in illiteracy in America, with over 90 million US adults, nearly one out of two, now considered functionally illiterate or nearly illiterate, without the minimum skills required in a modern society.

It is little wonder that President George Bush, in his 1999 election campaign, repeatedly stated that the number of learners graduating from U.S schools without acquiring the necessary reading skills is unacceptable, and accordingly made improved reading instruction one of his top priorities (Sweet, 2004:24). Among other initiatives, Bush launched the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (White House, 2001; online doc.) with the following statement, confirming the notion that literacy development is also a highly politicized issue:

Reading is, after all, the most basic educational skill, and the most basic obligation of any school is to teach reading. Yet earlier this year, tests showed that almost two-thirds of African American children in the 4th grade cannot read at a basic level, and reading performance overall is basically unimproved over the past ten years.

The ability to read is what turns a child into a student. When this skill is not taught, a child has not failed the system; the system has failed the child. And that child is often put on a path to frustration and broken confidence.

The methods we use to teach reading are critically important. First, we will have diagnostic tests to identify early reading problems in grades K through 3. Second, we will correct those problems with a central role for phonics. And we'll make sure that every teacher is well-trained in these proven methods.

All of this can serve an important goal I have set for our country, to ensure that every child is able to read by the end of third grade.

After the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 became law, reading research studies proliferated in America. Reading researchers in South Africa have followed suit, but without the funding

(which is more readily available on vaster scale to researchers in developed countries), research activities are limited to small-scale initiatives. Although statistics on South African reading practices are less plentiful than in America or Europe, there are numerous researchers who paint as bleak a picture of South Africans' reading and language proficiencies. For instance, Hugo (1999:93) states that the language proficiency of many South African learners is not sufficiently developed to give them the ability to use their higher level cognitive abilities when reading, writing or speaking, whether in English or in their first language. One of the main reasons cited for this restricted proficiency is the language ability of the teachers themselves. Sometimes, Hugo asserts, teacher training in South Africa does not equip teachers with the basic principles of language acquisition. Many learners in South Africa have a perception that they are being inadequately prepared for their matric examinations by unqualified teachers. This problem is exacerbated at tertiary level, as greater demands are made on students' language skills which include reading comprehension and academic reading (Chisholm *et al.*, 2000:80; Hugo, 1999:93)

D'Ath (1994:92) and Lambley (1992:22) cite studies showing that teachers trained in the United States felt that since their initial teacher training was inadequate, they did not enter the profession as properly equipped teachers of reading and after years of practice still felt the need for training in the more crucial areas of the subject. Teacher training programmes specifically are criticised by much extant research for lack of adequate or continuing preparation in literacy instruction and reading promotion. Sweet (2004) also refers to the fact that many recent studies confirm that the majority of teachers are "underprepared to teach reading" since they receive too little formal instruction in reading development during their undergraduate and graduate studies, with the "average teacher completing only two reading courses" (2004:39).

Disillusionment with basic literacy levels – whether of teachers or learners - comes at the same time as an escalation of the need for effective reading skills. The growing demand to read not only adequately but at increasingly more superior levels was termed a 'literacy revolution' by Chall (1996:142) two decades ago already. She contrasts the ravenous late-20th century appetite for advanced reading practices with earlier satisfaction with less demanding

reading proficiencies. Before the ‘agricultural revolution’ which brought an increase in the numbers of literate people who could keep simple records and read them (Chall, 1996:142; Nell, 1988:16), the majority of ‘literate’ people only required a proficiency that would enable them to read what is familiar and already known, such as for reading prayers and psalms that had already been memorized before through oral repetition. Most unskilled people were still totally illiterate, and the majority of those who were basically literate only reached a reading level roughly corresponding to a ten-year old modern child’s level of functional literacy. With the industrial revolution the ideal level of reading proficiency increased to include the ability to read and learn from unfamiliar texts, approximating the level of a child of twelve or thirteen years. However, with the “knowledge revolution, and perhaps because of it, most people in the technologically advanced, developed countries need a higher level of reading – Stage 4 – the reading of difficult, unfamiliar texts analytically. Such reading levels are generally acquired in secondary schools” (Chall, 1996:143).²⁷

The decrease in literacy levels can be explained by the facts that, on the one hand, greater mastery is required in the electronic and technological age, and on the other, that lower levels are simply the result of most people spending too little time optimising their literacy skills. The latter is an area of great concern for most reading researchers. In attempting to improve learners’ reading proficiency, it is important to understand how best to engage them “in learning to read and reading to learn” (Sweet & Anderson, 1993:10). Two areas in which critical investigation is valuable with a view to improving learners’ ability to read adequately and enthusiastically include early literacy learning and the influences of home, school and community, and how learners learn school subjects by reading their textbooks.

A third area, deserving of rigorous research and which is a focal area in this investigation, stems from indications that reading ability is positively related to the extent to which learners read recreationally. Committed educators are increasingly encouraging their learners to read and write on their own after school hours. Apart from the patent emotional, linguistic and intellectual benefits, it has been shown that voluntary reading is also necessary for the

²⁷ The function of the stages of reading development or reading levels is more fully addressed in Chapter Four.

reinforcement of functional reading. It has been established that if newly literates don't read regularly and of their own volition, they can relapse into illiteracy within months of becoming literate (Staiger & Casey, 1983:8). This caveat may sound extremely alarmist, but it emphasizes the importance of a continuous and enthusiastic reading practice in the acquisition and enhancement of basic literacy. To enhance basic literacy, to learn to read fluently and attain a higher order of reading proficiency, teachers have to create more opportunities for learners to read recreationally. Or failing that, learners will have to create such opportunities for themselves through their voluntary reading habits.

3.2 LITERATURE

3.2.1 Literally

The creation of suitable reading opportunities to foster salient reading habits, however, is not as simple a matter. Neither is the provision of suitable reading material. One of the most common solutions has been the prescribing of graded readers. Basal readers (and this also applies to other prescribed and subject texts) are designed to match per grade level the required reading skills of learners and are aligned to the teaching methods currently in vogue. However, they often pay little more than lip service to the quality and nature of reading material or the development of salient reading habits (Anderson, 1993²⁸; Baum, 1990:138; Bettelheim, 1976:4; Bettelheim & Zelan, 1982:932; Blair *et al.*, 1992:33-34; Chall, 1996:171; Chall & Conrad, 1991:69-70; Dubow, 1993:237; Giordano, 2000:xxi; Harris & Sipay, 1990:87; Hunt, 1996:7; Moss, 1985:66; Pearson, 2004:218; Robinson & Good, 1987:75-76; Sulzby, 1993:41).

Hunter-Carsch (1995:137) has another explanation for the popularity of basal texts with educational authorities and publishers: "The stakes are high as publishers frequently obtain

²⁸ Anderson (1993:18) is an especially sharp critic of the basal reader and subject textbooks: "Far too many textbooks are disgracefully written, superficial baskets of facts. A root cause of the problem is that too many classrooms are not places that 'rouse children's minds to life'".

substantial orders as a result of state-policy decision to employ particular schemes”. However, skills-based, basal reader instruction is as easily defended by its adherents as it is condemned by its critics, because it ultimately offers a systematized, co-ordinated and sequential development of word identification, vocabulary comprehension, content reading skills, and, according to Blair *et al.* (1992:33), moreover endeavours to promote recreational reading, although he does not explain how.

Baum (1990), Bettelheim (1976), Chall (2000), Chambers (1985), Dubow (1993), Hunt (1996) and Robinson and Good (1987) object to the lack of cognitive and linguistic demand in most graded readers. Baum (1990:138), for instance, is concerned about the adverse effect of undemanding texts on the scholastic achievement of gifted children, but her reservations (which are an endorsement of Hildreth’s {1966} earlier concerns) apply to all learners. Robinson and Good (1987:13) speak of a ‘word-starved simplicity’ in early basal readers, indicating that there is a definite decrease in vocabulary acquisition in these texts in the course of the twentieth century. According to them, American first-grade class readers of the 1920s contained an average of 645 new words, which were reduced to about 460 words a decade later. From the 1940s the addition of new words declined even further to reach about 350 words by the 1960s, and in the 1980s the number decreased to fewer than 200 words. The paucity of challenge in texts such as these is highlighted by the fact that research indicates that most children, upon entering school, already know 4000 or more words “and that even the least verbal first graders have mastered well over 2000 words” (Robinson & Good, 1987:13). It is little wonder that many of these texts are slammed, if only for the fact that they do not use the vocabulary that children possess, resulting in stories that are dull and learners that are not motivated to read them.

Criticism of tedious textual practices is aimed at the school’s tendency to force learners to approach literature mainly (if not solely) through reading for exam purposes or the completion of work charts. Even before young learners can write properly, they are required to give feedback, either by answering questions after a narrative text has been read, or by making some mark on worksheets or in basal reading manuals to indicate their answers. Such practices are of course necessary for the development of numerous academic skills, in addition to the

fact that a teacher can only establish what learners have comprehended while reading silently if they correctly answer questions on what they have read. However, completing worksheets does not guarantee that a learner has read with understanding (let alone pleasure) since most reading kits' questions are entirely contextual, simplified or superficial to facilitate marking or self-assessment. It is thus possible for learners to be considered proficient readers according to test scores based on worksheet assessment and yet never, while at school, read a book in its entirety. Moreover, as Talty (1995:16) observes, if traditional classroom question, answer and assessment sequences predominate, what happens during the teaching of reading is that literacy learning is reduced to a competition aimed at guessing what the teacher expects the right answers to be.

It can be argued, of course, that a decrease in cognitive challenge leads to a decrease in achievement. There is little research to corroborate this. However, it is clear that word-starved basal readers inevitably must have a deleterious impact on reading development, as Allington (1977) pithily comments on concerns raised by such inadequate quantitative and qualitative demand:

To develop the ability to read fluently requires the opportunity to read – a simple rule of thumb. If, in a typical week of reading instruction, students only encounter 150 to 500 words in context, one has to ask: how they ever gonna get good?

Chall (1996), Chall and Conrad (1991) and Pearson (2004) affirm the criticism of the unchallenging nature of basal readers and ask whether the earlier introduction of “authentic, adult literature” could not be used to give learners a “sense of the seriousness of reading”. Another reason is, as Chall and Conrad (1991:70) put it: “Materials low in challenge may have low appeal”. Chall (1996:171) pursues this line of thinking: “Have we perhaps put too much emphasis on fun as an incentive for reading? Perhaps children’s readers might do better to offer a contrast from the ‘fun appeal’ of most TV and provide, instead, literature of enduring value”.

Pearson (2004:217) attributes the disillusionment with basal readers to the emergence of the whole language movement, and argues that “basals changed dramatically in the early 1990s,

largely in response to the groundswell of support within the teaching profession for whole language and its close curricular allies, literature-based reading and process writing”.

Chall (2000) would have agreed with these findings, and like Pearson, attempts to trace the pattern of basals and textbooks from a historical viewpoint. She finds a distinct decline in the difficulty level from the 1920s to the present. Authors and publishers in the 1930s to 1950s who simplified primary readers claimed that they did so because easier books were purportedly more suitable for most children. The move toward easier texts was also prompted by the change in methods from a stronger phonics approach in teaching reading to a whole-word, sight method (Chall, 2000:50). However, she disagrees with Robinson and Good’s assumption that the simplification of reading textbooks continued unabated and asserts that from the 1960s onward some readers started appearing to “get somewhat harder again”. Subject matter textbooks purportedly followed the same route and became increasingly less challenging through the decades: “Overall, whether the measures of difficulty used were based on cognitive difficulty, readability, abstractness, or concreteness of the topic, they indicated a decrease in challenge over time” (Chall, 2000:51). Pearson (2004:217) argues that criticism of basal readers by researchers such as Chall resulted in the 1990s in the creation of thematically related units of reading text to enable teachers to expand their lessons’ context “horizontally” and thereby enrich their learners’ textual and literary opportunities.

3.2.2 Textually

For most reading researchers (Buthelezi, 2003, online doc.; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001) the availability of enticing books is considered one of the most important factors in reading development and the fostering of enthusiastic voluntary reading. Nell’s model of ludic reading, the flowchart in Figure 1.1²⁹, affirms that ‘correct’ book selection is an antecedent to avid reading, in other words, the serendipitous matching of book and reader is the basis upon which avid voluntary reading rests. A book that is too simple or too difficult, or about events

²⁹ Nell’s use of the term flowchart is of course not an intentional pun on the concept of ‘flow’, which according to Csikszentmihalyi (1991:118) indicates the successful kind of reading avid voluntary readers do. Also cf. Section 3.1.4.

and characters that the reader finds irrelevant, will eventually do more harm than good. Nell (1988:260) warns that the reading of a mismatched book takes an inordinate expenditure of energy in order to continue reading. Moreover, a poorly chosen book is speedily abandoned and the adolescent will immediately settle for another activity instead, as is illustrated in Nell's model (Figure 1.1, page 8).

In the theoretical framework (Figure 1.2, page 26), the term literature broadly denotes all reading material and printed texts that the respondents encounter. Literacy (from a literature-based perspective) is the minimum competence with which a textual experience is made possible, whereas literature presupposes the optimal experience to be derived from the reading of texts. Literacy, as a firm footing, makes possible the vicarious enjoyment of literature.

In this study *literature* is not value assessment which separates 'higher order' reading material from escapist reading matter. Strictly speaking, to use the term *literature* for reading material is not correct since it already implies some quality judgement and may carry the narrow confines of 'good' reading material too far. Also, much suitable or popular youth fiction will never be considered *literature* by critics. The matter of the quality of books has always been a tricky one. Whereas idealistic teachers and parents devoutly wish children would (learn to) like the 'classic' books they enjoyed as children, and inveterate book selection committees of National Departments of Education have continued to prescribe higher order literature for schools, the fact is that learners refuse to be guided by what could be considered elitist notions in their individual choices of leisure reading. Trade books or so-called mass-market texts, have proved their popularity to such an extent that many schools now use them to win learners over to the cause of reading. With regard to popular books, Ivey and Broaddus (2001:351) speak of the 'literate underlife' outside of the school curriculum when learners read, write and "talk about issues that are not sanctioned for them in typical classrooms".

There are many reasons to refute the notion of 'higher' order literature as opposed to more 'common' fare. One of these is advanced by Nell (1988:2) who maintains that although sophisticated readers have the capacity and the desire to habitually enjoy "deeply felt and delicately wrought literature", they also continue to delight in less intellectually or

aesthetically inclined texts from time to time. He is adamant that the two classes of reader as defined by the elitist critics do not exist, and that the view that they do contains a fundamental error so common that it deserves to be labelled “the elitist fallacy”: - the belief that, as sophistication grows, coarser tastes wither away. For the purposes of this study, little distinction is drawn between the ‘classes’ of literature read by learners. It will suffice to say that literacy and the reading of literature are twin vehicles for the functional, imaginative, intellectual and emotional life of a modern individual. The reading of literature is, of course, not the only provider of these experiences, but it certainly is a major and an effective one.³⁰

However, for optimal development, an increasing amount of reading is required as learners progress through the developmental reading stages. To this end the home, school and the community must contribute to the furnishing of suitable, challenging and exciting reading materials as well as ample opportunity for learners to exercise and nurture their reading skills at all levels.

To aid the happy matching of book and learner, and guide the selection of suitable reading material, Piaget’s and Vygotsky’s descriptions of the adolescent’s developmental level and consequently Chall’s work on developmental stages (cf. Chapter Four) are invaluable. These models can also help determine how content in other school subjects is learnt and which strategies teachers can employ to help their learners to do this more effectively.

3.2.3 Analytically

An important benefit of voluntary reading, based on psycho-educational principles, is bibliotherapy, which attempts to foster mental and emotional health by using reading materials to fulfil needs, relieve pressure, or help individual learners in their development as human beings (Harris & Sipay, 1990:682). They further argue that identification with fictional

³⁰ Other forms of literacy that can also provide functional, intellectual or imaginative experiences will be discussed in the next section. The rich oral tradition of ancient societies, folklore or illiterate communities bears testimony to a wealth of experiences that is possible through narration alone.

characters helps to lessen learners' sense of isolation, bringing about a catharsis after experiencing, vicariously, the conflicts and emotions of the protagonist, ultimately leading to insight into themselves. This makes bibliotherapy not only a valuable tool in the hands of psychologists, but also an important strategy for teachers who can employ fiction in class not only for didactic purposes and literary merit, but for discussion, comparison and introspection. Experiencing problems obliquely and vicariously through story characters creates a safe distance between the problem and the reader, and the further processes of emulation and catharsis are facilitated (Le Roux, 1993:228). This approach is preferable to direct confrontation with problems which at an early stage can produce negative reactions of defence and denial. Bibliotherapists, moreover, believe that the portrayal of social issues in children's literature can help young readers to cope with the social problems they are grappling with daily.

Of course, a book in itself is not therapeutic, nor is this the intention of the author who creates a literary work and not a psychotherapeutic tool. Bibliotherapy is a derivative result that depends on the emotional and intellectual responses of the reader, and it is facilitated through dialogue and interaction between a child and an adult. However, whereas bibliotherapy undoubtedly is a resourceful strategy to communicate with troubled learners, it does not attempt to replace psychotherapeutic intervention where help is seriously needed. Bibliotherapy is a most valuable aid if used by sensitive and knowledgeable teachers to help less seriously troubled learners gain insight into their problems and as a validation of difficulties and fears. As an educational strategy bibliotherapy can effectively be employed to enrich a learner's experiences and view of the world rather than act as a way of 'curing' psychological ills.

Chapters Two and Three addressed the four domains of the theoretical framework (Figure 1.2, page 26) and introduced factors that have some impact on them, such as motivation and interests, or educational strategies, such as bibliotherapy or the concept of multiple literacies. The fourth chapter will focus on the concept of periodicity, with the following caveat serving as guiding principle:

Reading is not learned once and for all but throughout a lifetime in which the individual is challenged to react to ever more difficult materials in ever more sophisticated ways. Early successes help the later ones, but they do not assure them (Chall, 1996:97).

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CHAPTER FOUR

PERIODICITY AND PRACTICE

Since moral reasoning clearly is reasoning, advanced moral reasoning depends upon advanced logical reasoning; a person's logical stage puts a certain ceiling on the moral status he can attain.

Kohlberg 1966

We still do not know whether changes in sociohistorical structures or changes in the nature of social practice result only in broadened experience acquisition of new habits and knowledge, literacy and so forth, or whether they result in radical reorganization of mental processes, changes at the structural level of mental activity, and the formation of new mental systems.

Luria 1976

If the critical ages had not been discovered through purely empirical means, the conception of them would have to be introduced into the pattern of development on the basis of theoretical analysis. Now it remains for theory only to become cognizant of and comprehend what has already been established by empirical studies.

Vygotsky 1998

A stage theory might help to prevent some of the persistent controversies that occur in the field of reading research and practice. The research in reading seems to be particularly subject to misunderstandings. It is not uncommon for investigators to disagree over the meaning of reading when each is concerned with a different stage of its development. The proposed stages should help to clarify what is or is not being studied or discussed.

Chall 1996

4.1 PERIODICITY

4.1.1 Introduction

Transitioning from primary to secondary school is often described as a turbulent experience, fraught with difficulties, exposing a vulnerable early adolescent learner to, *inter alia*, anxiety, distress and uncertainty (Bandura, 1986; Erikson, 1968; Grolnick *et al.*, 2001; San Antonio, 2004; Vygotsky, 1997, 1998; Wigfield & Eccles, 2002). The momentous changes accompanying adolescent transitions have a powerful influence on identity formation, relationship building, school practice and sociocultural activities, to name but a few. When educators, parents, psychologists and policy makers understand the nature of these transitional forces, and acknowledge and accommodate the changes involved, adolescents can more adequately be helped to cope with their experiences, some of which are traditionally considered negative, and develop a positive self-efficacious identity. One of the most effective means by which to understand, predict and utilize the complex interactive influences of adolescent transition is a model that describes it from the perspective of developmental structure.

The concept of developmental modelling, having been created early in the 20th century, is currently still popular in many modern educational approaches. According to Stone (1996; online doc.), a harsh critic of developmentalism, Dewey's so-called progressive education is the best-known historic form of developmentalism that is still the vogue in current educational practices. Other educators, theorists and psychologists who base theories on developmental learning and teaching are *philosophic*-developmentalists, a term used by Kohlberg and applied to Dewey and Piaget (Modgil & Modgil, 1985), *neoprogressive theorists* (such as Erikson), *cognitive* developmentalists such as Torrence, whose main interest was the development of intellectual creativity (Stone, 1996; online doc.) and Kohlberg, who described moral development as a progression based on Piaget's framework. Hill (cf. Section 2.2.) was considered a leading advocate in the 1970s and 1980s of a developmental contextualist view of adolescence (Adams *et al.*, 1996:9).

After decades during which behaviourist approaches to learning and teaching predominated, paradigms of developmental stages and constructivist instructional levels were roundly advanced, gained ground and achieved great prominence in the 1950s and 1960s:

Clearly something was happening in the 60s – and the something that was happening was a rediscovery of ‘structure’ and the placing of structural issues at the core of inquiry. The essence of the cognitive movement was to recognize that there were structural aspects of behaviour and thinking that necessitated a form of theorizing that went beyond the physicalistic metaphors of behaviourist canon (Glick, 1997:viii).

Major influences, albeit quite oblique at times, that aid the grounding of this study, are traced to Piaget and Vygotsky and some neoVygotskians, such as Adams *et al.* (1996), Chall (1996, 2000), Luria (1976), and Matusov and Hayes (2000).

4.1.2 Piaget and Vygotsky ³¹

Much initial research on cognitive developmental stratification comes from the field of psychology and not education, and frequently commences (if only in refutation) with theories first advanced and popularised by Piaget.³² Despite vociferous detractors, much of his work – albeit in adulterated form - is still relevant today. Piaget’s theories, for instance, influenced many psychologists, notably Kohlberg (Modgil & Modgil, 1985), whose theory of moral development goes far beyond Piaget’s original tenets and has been used extensively for three decades – and is currently still being used - by educators and moralists the world over.

However, although Piaget’s scheme describing the stages of cognitive development has had a significant impact on the field of education and related disciplines in the past sixty years, and although the scheme is essentially concerned with *cognitive* development, his work,

³¹ Ratner, (1998), who wrote the Prologue and Epilogue to Hall’s translation of the fifth volume of Vygotsky’s work, observed the following: *In Piaget, Vygotsky finds confirmation of his hypothesis on the development of logical thinking with the transition from primary school age to adolescence. There is some agreement between the two who knew sections of each others’ work well.*

³² Piaget did not label the work he was doing psychology but identified it as *genetic epistemology* (Campbell, 1997). He claimed that he was primarily not a developmental psychologist but rather an epistemologist using child development research to address questions on the origin and nature of the logic of scientific knowledge (Smith, 1995:12).

remarkably, has had little influence on the teaching of reading *per se* (Chall, 1996:167). However, a valuable ancillary influence on reading has to do with Piaget's belief that a learner can 'function' on more than one developmental level, or more specifically, read on more than one level at any one time; for instance, when studying, a reader uses skills corresponding to a higher stage of reading development than when thumbing a magazine or skimming headlines in a newspaper. In spite of other misgivings about Piaget, numerous reading stages schemes endorse Piaget's developmental theory to a greater or lesser degree.

Although Piaget continued working on his theories until his death in 1980 and published active research until the 1970s, "happily discussing molecular biology, cybernetics, and quantum mechanics, as well as the latest developments in symbolic logic" (Campbell, 1997; online doc.), most of his influential work was done between 1910 and 1920. Much well deserved criticism of Piaget's views hones in on his often rather eccentric and untidy approach to his own work. Piaget's style was notoriously graceless and without articulation, creating great problems for translators who are forced to "break up his tortuous sentences and to clarify his cryptic allusions both to his own work and to the work of others" (Campbell, 1997; online doc.).

In spite of severe criticism of Piaget in general and against developmentalism in particular (McClelland & Siegler, 2001; Stone, 1996), Piaget remains highly influential with modern developmental educators. Many reading researchers happily acknowledge Piaget's theories, if only as a point of departure for their more complex models of developmental stages. For the purposes of this thesis, Piaget's concept of formal operations is a valid and powerful starting point.

In investigations on the cognitive development of children, Piaget noted that there are periods in which children assimilate new knowledge, followed by periods of accommodation, and later by periods of relative equilibrium. Piaget found that all the children he studied displayed these same periods with regard to their nature and the approximate timing of their occurrence. Piaget therefore believed that the development of knowledge is a biological process, a matter

of adaptation by organisms to their environment. This led Piaget to develop the idea of stages of cognitive development, which became his most lasting legacy to psychology.

For the purposes of this study, Piaget's theory of genetic epistemology with special focus on the level of formal operations will be employed as a starting point for more complex notions on adolescent development. To better understand the nature, interests and needs of adolescent learners as they progress from primary to secondary school, Piaget's theory (Gabain's translation 1997; first published 1950) remains an invaluable introduction. According to Piaget, the adolescent stage of formal operations begins approximately at age eleven and ends at age fifteen, which roughly corresponds to the period that forms the focus of this thesis. Although much criticism has been levelled at Piaget's insistence that a child only progresses to the next level if the present level has first been successfully mastered, his model still adequately explains the scaffolding that is required to take place in a learner's cognitive development, and in this case, for the purposes of independent reading practices (Sweet & Anderson, 1993:ix).

Piaget is mainly criticized by researchers who follow a Vygotskian approach and compare Piaget's approach unfavourably with Vygotsky's (Matusov & Hayes, 2000:215). However, according to Glick (1997:ix), Vygotsky's approach can be seen not so much as a critique of Piaget, but as an answer to concepts that are considered too structure-dependent.³³ According to Glick (1997:ix), there are especially three foci of concern with Piagetian theory related to the underlying implications of the structure-dependency idea. The first focus is an attempt to escape the inherently limiting aspects of the structure-dependency position which inevitably may constrain future developments.³⁴ However, such structure dependency and

³³ Vygotsky and Piaget were familiar with many aspects of each other's work, and the importance of the biological dimension with regard to adolescent development is one area they agreed upon. It is remarkable that Vygotsky and Piaget are often analyzed in relation to each other in spite of the fact that Vygotsky died in 1934 and Piaget was academically active until his death in 1980. In addition, "this contest between Vygotsky and Piaget is unevenly constructed. Many of us have seen Piaget's work as it unfolded within the contemporary field. We know both his original works and the works of followers and critics. Vygotsky, we are just getting to know. In short, we know Piaget through his followers and Vygotsky through his disciples" (Glick, 1997:vii.).

³⁴ This is very valid criticism, and is reiterated by Stone (1996), who regards developmentalism as a restricting and ultimately harmful approach; this is dealt with more conclusively later in this chapter.

developmentally constraining factors could be overcome by training which could show accelerated acquisition.

The second focus rejects the ‘universalism’ associated with the structure-dependency idea. Studies tested the limits of the notion of structure by investigating supposedly common underlying structures and by comparing disparate populations to see if they attained the same structural landmarks at roughly the same developmental age. The third focus has to do with probing the ‘processes’ presumed to underpin development. Piaget considered these constrained developmental structures a result of the dynamics of a ‘constructive’ process which depend heavily on initial states in interaction with a physically constrained world.

One of Piaget’s strengths is his focus on the individual as an agent and active learner. He criticized existing educational and social institutions for their obstruction of cognitive development and advocated the democratisation of schools. Piaget deemed the cooperation and dialogue between ‘power-equal partners’ as necessary for individual cognitive development (Matusov & Hayes, 2000:238).

Criticism of Piaget’s theories, according to Glick (1997:x), is predictably always launched from one of three angles. The first is the fact that a theory of ‘nativism’ (which leans heavily on the structural aspects of developmentalism and possibly follows in the wake of ‘evolutionist’ principles) regards facets of that structure as ‘inbuilt’ or innate and therefore not constructed. The second line of criticism concerns a shift from the concept of construction as an intra-individual process to an exploration of social structuring processes. Finally, a focus on the ‘knowledge base’ and strategies that characterize specific domains which were seen as a defining ‘expertise’ in an area, and considered a more relevant factor than structured constraints.

However, in spite of decades of valid criticism against aspects of his work, Piaget continues to underpin much modern child development psychology. With regard to this study, Campbell’s (1997; online doc.) aphorism of the Piagetian paradigm describes a valid approach “What is basic then, for Piaget, is knowing how to change things - or knowing how things change.”

On par with Piaget, especially with regard to the theories presented in this investigation, even more valuable as approaches to a study of voluntary reading, are sections of work conducted by Vygotsky³⁵ who is currently enjoying reassessment and reinterpretation. Although the bulk of Vygotsky's work was done before 1934, his work only became known in the West through texts that appeared decades later, for instance in 1978 and 1994 with Luria as co-writer (and then also narrowed down to common interests), or in new translations in the late 1990s.

The aspects of Vygotsky's work that have lately attracted educators and child psychologists are the following: his emphases on semiotic and tool mediation, activity, and guidance, and his assertion that history, culture, institutions and society are keys to an understanding of child development (Matusov & Hayes, 2000:238). With regard to the latter, he asserted that the social origins of development twice greatly influence an individual's life: first in an interpersonal process and then as an intrapersonal one. It is especially the latter that has bearing on this thesis.

However, the most popular Vygotskian concept still employed in contemporary educational theory is the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). He defined it as the difference between the learner's actual level of development assessed through independent problem-solving and the level of potential development determined by various forms of assisted performance. Vygotsky emphasized that

Everything that the child cannot do independently, but which he³⁶ can be taught or which he can do with direction or cooperation or with the help of leading questions,

³⁵ Although Vygotsky died in 1934, many of his publication dates, in Russian as well as in English, are contemporary. Early publications in his name are often shoddy collections and distillations of partially published works combined with fragments of his unpublished research. Some researchers, for instance, date works such as *Thought and Language*, as 1934/1962/1987. For the purposes of this study, his work is here only dated 1997 and 1998 which are the dates of the edited, translated publications by Plenum. The seminal work, *Tool and Society*, written jointly by Luria and Vygotsky in 1930 was only published as a complete text in 1994. Moreover, "Vygotsky wrote in an exciting but dangerous climate. Not everything could be published. And what was published had to be couched in an acceptable language. It awaited Stalin's death in 1956 for the English translation of Vygotsky's capstone *Thought and Language* to be published in 1962" (Glick, 1997:vi).

³⁶ Vygotsky's work is not gender sensitive. In this study *he* indicates the universal person and not gender.

we will include in the sphere of imitation . . . Thus, in studying what the child is capable of doing independently, we study yesterday's development. Studying what the child is capable of doing cooperatively, we ascertain tomorrow's development. The area of immature, but maturing processes makes up the child's zone of proximal development (1998:202).

The idea of the ZPD is considered valuable by researchers since the theory implies that developmental structure is not an absolute limiting factor; instead of following development and depending on it, learning can be seen to actually lead developmental change (Glick, 1997:x). Criticism of the ZPD arises from the fact that Vygotsky used this concept in three different contexts: in *developmental* context the ZPD attempts to explain the emerging psychological functions of the child; in *applied* context the theory explains the difference between the child's individual and assisted performances, both in situations of assessment and in classroom learning; finally, the ZPD is used as a metaphoric 'space' where everyday concepts of the child meet 'scientific' concepts provided by teachers or other mediators of learning (Kozulin *et al.*, 2003:3).

Underpinning Vygotsky's developmental psychology and the concept of the ZPD is the child's transition from so-called lower processes to higher conscious psychological functions. The lower processes include spontaneous reflexes, temperamental traits and basic, conscious processes, whereas higher processes include developed, voluntary, cognitive functions and related personality characteristics. Vygotsky believed that psychological development is manifested in "the transition from direct, innate, natural forms and methods of behaviour to mediated, artificial mental functions that develop in the process of cultural development" (Vygotsky, 1998:168).

According to Vygotsky (1997:14), the concept of the development of higher mental functions embraces two sets of phenomena that appear to be unrelated but are, in fact, two paths of development of higher forms of behaviour inseparably connected, but never completely merging. The first phenomenon concerns the mastering of "external materials of cultural development and thinking", namely language, writing, arithmetic and drawing. The second refers to the processes of development of special higher mental functions that are neither delimited nor precisely determined and consists of voluntary attention, logical memory and the

formation of concepts. Together they form the process of development of the higher forms of the child's behaviour.

The area of research most pertinent to this thesis is concerned with Vygotsky's work which was published in *Pedology of the Adolescent*, half of which appeared during his lifetime in a limited number of copies in 1930. It is a vindication of this investigation that Vygotsky begins the consideration of mental development during adolescence with research on interests.³⁷ In addition to this, the study of the cognitive processes and intellectual development during adolescence is especially significant for Vygotsky for its revelation of the character and content of the generalisations which help to construct the adolescent's world view. According to Ratner (1998:310), Vygotsky found it completely natural that the whole course of individual mental child development could be traced and an explanation found in the basic patterns of the transition from one developmental stage to another, and he remained involved with these problems during the last years of his life.

Vygotskian development, then, is a process marked by periods of stability transitioning into qualitative transformations or 'crises' (cf. Erikson, Section 2.2.2) in which there are both integration and disintegration of mental functions and structures (cf. both Figures 2.1 and 2.2 for the centrality of qualitative change). Vygotsky's theories of child development rely heavily on his theory of concept formation which attempts to explain the structural and functional transformations that occur during three crucial developmental periods or 'crises', namely when language is acquired, when children start formal education, and when children enter adolescence (Kozulin *et al.*, 2003:5).

Apart from these critical periods, for Vygotsky there is no other criterion for determining the concrete periods of child development or age levels except for what he termed *neoformations*. These age-related neoformations are quintessentially the distinctive characteristics of each

³⁷ It is interesting to note the difference here between Vygotsky and Piaget. A serious limitation of Piaget's theories is their neglect of children's feeling for narrative as opposed to logic. Post-Piagetian psychologists, for instance, have found that children learn far better through play and social situations than Piaget gives them credit for, and Vygotsky believed, ahead of his time, that play and language represent the most fundamental of human attempts to transcend the here and now in order to construct symbolic models for the better understanding of the nature of reality (Tucker, 1992:167-168).

chronological age level, indicative of a “new type of structure of the personality and its activity, those mental and social changes which first appear at a given age level and which mainly and basically determine the consciousness of the child, his relation to the environment, his internal and external life” (Vygotsky, 1998:190).

If one fundamental principle can be singled out as the driving force behind Vygotskian developmental psychology, it is the transition from ‘lower’ psychobiological processes to ‘higher’ conscious psychological functions. The former include spontaneous reflexes, characteristic temperamental behaviour and impulsive, fundamental, conscious processes. The ‘higher’ conscious psychological functions are the developed, voluntary, mental functions and related personality traits. Psychological development consists of “the transition from direct, innate, natural forms and methods of behaviour to mediated, artificial, mental functions that develop in the process of cultural development” (Vygotsky, 1998:168). This psychological transitioning eventually forms the basis of Vygotskian sociocultural theory. “Just as the medieval endeavour to bring a renaissance of ancient Greek art and culture gave birth to a new art and a new culture, we argue that the renaissance of Vygotsky has gradually produced a new theoretical approach – namely the sociocultural” (Matusov & Hayes, 2000:215).

4.1.3 A socio-cultural perspective

Vygotsky (1978, 1997, 1998)³⁸ and Luria (1976) employ the term mediation to describe what they deem to be the most elementary aspect of human consciousness. Human beings, they argue, are not restricted to simple stimulus-response reflexes like animals, but are able to establish direct connections between incoming stimulation and responses through various mediating links. When individuals bring about a change in the environment through their behaviour, these same changes can influence their later behaviour. Vygotsky and Luria use the concept of mediation mostly to describe the development of children’s cognitive processes and (more relevant to this study) the role of language in development. The concept of mediation

³⁸ Vygotsky and Luria started their collaboration in 1924 (with Vygotsky originally the mentor) and continued for a decade. From 1930 onwards all field work was conducted by Luria because Vygotsky was already too ill with tuberculosis to conduct interviews and participate in field trips.

leads to a further theory centred on the fact that higher cognitive activities continue to be sociohistorical in nature, and the very structure of cognitive activity – and not only the specific content but also the general forms basic to all cognitive processes – is transformed in the course of historical development (Cole, 1976:xii; Luria, 1976:8).³⁹

Cognitive activity, according to Luria (1976:162), is a continuing developmental process in which “graphic, object-oriented experience” or direct impressions dramatically progress through the structures of mental processes (such as fixation and reproduction of the purely concrete and situational) to become “established in the processes of social history” and neatly coded in language. Luria further compellingly argues that these transformations culminate in changes to the very structure of cognitive processes and ultimately cause “an enormous expansion of experience” and the “construction of a vastly broader world in which human beings begin to live”. An important transformation occurs above all in the self-awareness of the personality which proceeds to a “higher level of social awareness and assumes new capabilities for objective, categorical analysis of one’s motivation, actions, intrinsic properties, and idiosyncracies”. According to Luria (1976:163), this reveals a fact that has previously been ignored by psychology, namely that sociohistorical changes do not only introduce new content into the cognitive world of individuals, but they also create new forms of activity and new structures of cognitive functioning. In this way human consciousness is advanced to new levels.

Matusov and Hayes (2000) endorse Luria’s view but adopt a more sociocultural approach, stating simply that development occurs when “participation transforms”. They argue that a child’s beginning to ask parents to read a favourite book is evidence that the child’s participation in literacy practices has been transformed since the reading activity is now also initiated by the child and not only by adults. However, they warn, not every individual’s change of participation in a sociocultural activity is development “but only that which is recognized and valued by the community. Community values are not always stable but often have a dynamic, negotiable, and relational character where future events can redefine the past”

³⁹ Luria regards this emphasis on the socio-historical and socio-cultural aspects of cognitive development as the reason their research has enduring value.

(Matusov & Hayes, 2000:232). This endorses Vygotsky's and Luria's articulate reasoning that the basic categories of human mental life can fundamentally be understood as "products of social history" which are susceptible to change.

4.2 DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

4.2.1 A rationale

For the purposes of this investigation, and specifically regarding reading motivational theories, a developmental view of reading acquisition and practice is invaluable for a deeper understanding of the scaffolding required of the reading process in general and especially the stage that is investigated here. However, as is generally the case with other developmental schemes in psychology or education, the one that informs this study is not advocated for inflexible use or as an exclusive standard.

Stage development theories of reading grew to popularity in the wake of the educational malpractice suits of the 1970s. One of the watershed cases (cf. Section 3.1.5) involved a mother who took the American school system to court because her son graduated from high school but could not read beyond a fifth grade level. She did not assert that her son was illiterate, but that he was not "literate enough to get and hold a job" (Chall, 1996:6). The developmental stage view of reading was considered useful to aid the understanding of how reading develops as well as explain how a learner of average ability could attend school for twelve years and only manage to learn as much as a child who has attended school for only five years. It was also hoped at the time that such a stage theory could identify the minimum requirements for each reading level.

Late 20th century criticism of developmentalism focuses on aspects such as the fact that it is considered too narrow and biased. Matusov and Hayes (2000:216) regard both Piaget's and Vygotsky's approaches to development as universalist (since they claim that there is only *one* advanced direction for development), ethnocentric and adultocentric (due to their claim that

there are deficits in the values and practices of children when they are simply just incomprehensible to adults). Stone (1996; online doc.), another harsh critic of developmentalism, postulates that it can actually be harmful to learners' overall development:

Developmentalism gives rise to a disabling hesitancy and uncertainty about how or whether adults should attempt to influence children. It strongly suggests the possibility of harm, but it offers no clear guidance as to a safe and effective course of action. It requires an estimation of a child's developmental status as a prerequisite to action yet it offers no workable means of ascertaining that status.

However, much of developmental theory is invaluable. The main thrust of the argument applicable to this study is that there is just one direction for reading development and that is ascending. In spite of myriad possibilities for development, Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective effectively underpins central issues of developmental directionality and its socially constructive, relational, negotiable, and emergent character. For the purposes of this thesis, it is believed that children mainly and in most cases develop according to a system of stages, and that reading is a skill that is structured. A child does not master reading skills by merely growing older. Maturation itself does not bring about development, but development is possible due to teaching, whether by a teacher, peers or self (and to this end Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD is an invaluable aid). The major implication, therefore, is that reading must be *actively taught* for transitions to become possible.

Therefore, a brief critical look at the concepts of developmental stages will serve to better describe the approach under consideration here. Vygotsky (1998) categorizes into three groups the theoretical bases for the different schemes attempting to divide child development into periods.

The first group of schemes divides childhood into periods on the basis of a graded construction of other processes connected to certain aspects of a child's development, for instance, dividing child development into periods based on the biogenetic principle.

The second group focuses on a single trait of a child's development, for instance dentition. The appearance of teeth and their replacement serve to separate one period of childhood from another. Physiological indicators of development, for instance weight, height, number of steps

taken, are visible and readily quantifiable. Such a scheme is successful (albeit arbitrary and superficial), because it is objective, easily accessible and usually an obvious indicator for judgement on the general development of the child.⁴⁰ In another scheme sexual development is the main criterion, using youthful maturation and sexual awakening (age fourteen to eighteen) with the development of an independent personality and the envisioning of plans for the future as clear indicators of a specific period. Freud's so-called latency period is yet another example of this kind of classification.

The third group of schemes assign periods to child development according to a symptomatic and descriptive principle which identifies prominent features. Vygotsky refers to Gesell's attempts to construct a periodicity of child development on the basis of the change in the child's "internal rhythm and tempo", which he also describes as determining "the flowing stream of development" (1998:189). Gesell⁴¹ represents researchers who perceive the dynamics of child development as a process of the gradual slowing of growth.

Vygotsky is clearly dismissive of most of these developmental schemes. Certainly not antigenetic in outlook, Vygotsky believed, like later Piagetian followers, that childhood can be divided broadly into stages and developmental levels: "The importance and significance of any trait change continuously with the transition from age level to age level. This excludes the possibility of dividing childhood into separate periods according to a single criterion for all ages" (Vygotsky, 1998:188). Two aspects are especially significant here: continuous change

⁴⁰ Vygotsky whimsically compares the ease with which periods can be assigned to development according to physical benchmarks such as dentition, to the more amorphously established psychological stages. "Dentition processes are closely connected with essential features of the constitution of the growing organism . . . Dentition is a clear age trait. On the basis of dentition, postnatal childhood can be divided into periods, for instance: toothless childhood, the childhood of milk teeth and the childhood of permanent teeth" (Vygotsky, 1998:188).

⁴¹ Vygotsky criticizes Gesell for making early childhood the high point for the interpretation of the personality and its history: "What is main and most important in child development, according to Gesell, is accomplished in the first years or even in the first months of life. Subsequent development taken as a whole does not equal one act of this drama that is maximally saturated with content" (Vygotsky, 1998:189).

with transitions, and the fact that no *single* criterion can be used to characterize a developmental level.

Vygotsky justifies the main principles for a developmental stage theory as follows:

We already know where to look for its real basis: only internal changes of development itself, only breaks and turning points in its flow can provide a reliable basis for determining the main periods of formation of the personality of the child which we call age levels. All theories of child development can be reduced to two basic conceptions. According to one, development is nothing other than realization, modification, and combinations of deposits. Nothing new develops here – only a growth, a branching, and regrouping of those factors that were already present at the very beginning. According to the second conception, development is a continuous process of self-propulsion characterized primarily by a continuous appearance and formation of the new which did not exist at previous stages. This point of view captures in development something essential to a dialectical understanding of the process (1998:190).

To better understand the structuring of developmental phases, a delineation of the quintessence of each period, followed by a description of the dynamics of transitions from one level to another must be effected and this can indeed be done by empirical research. According to Vygotsky, psychological studies have already established that age-level changes may either occur abruptly and critically, or gradually and organically. At certain ages development takes place in slow, smooth, frequently unremarkable, evolutionary steps, whereas others happen in critical leaps. Periods and stages are separated from one another by abrupt crises or more gradual phases. Vygotsky argues that stable age periods appear to have been studied considerably more fully and consistently than those that are characterized by another type of development, namely the crises. “The latter are disclosed purely empirically and thus far have not been brought into the system” (Vygotsky, 1998:191). Remarkably, although Vygotsky wrote this approximately sixty years ago, the argument still holds.

Vygotsky divides the *principles* for constructing a feasible theory of periodicity into two main groups. In the first approach, development is considered a realisation, modification and combination of characteristics and behaviours that are already present in the child; “nothing new develops here – only a growth, a branching, and regrouping of those factors that were already present at the very beginning” (1998:189). Theories of creative evolution directed by

an “autonomous, internal vital surge of the purposefully self-developing personality” ultimately lead toward self-affirmation (cf. self-efficacy theories in Section 2.4.3).

The second approach gives rise to a group of theories that regard development as a “continuous process of self-propulsion characterized primarily by a continuous appearance and formation of the new which did not exist at previous stages”.

In recent years rigorous research on adolescence and the transitions adolescents undergo have endorsed (albeit unwittingly) much of Vygotsky’s theory of periodicity (Anderman *et al.*, 2002:209). Much research, for instance, on goal orientation during adolescence has focused on theories of a stage-environment development.

The stage-environmental fit theory (whether applied to motivation, self-efficacy or reading development) asserts that learners have different sets of psychological needs at different levels of their development, and unless these needs are met, academic achievement, appreciation for learning and consequently also effective reading development will suffer. The transition from primary to secondary school is usually a critical time during which a variety of lifestyle changes occur in the life of the early adolescent. The individual changes associated with puberty, an increase in self-consciousness and a heightened search for self-identity are exacerbated by social-cultural changes and more autonomously driven school practices. An understanding of the stage-environment theory goes a long way towards explaining the changes that can be expected as the learner progresses both cognitively and psychosocially.

4.2.2 An early reading stage scheme

One of the first reading development schemes was developed by Gray (Chall, 1996:131; Harris & Sipay, 1990; cf. Section 2.2.4) in 1925, approximately the same time as Piaget’s early work, but their work has few similarities. Gray divided reading development into five stages, the first being Stage One, which prepares the child for reading. Stage Two is an initial period of reading instruction with preliminary exercises and guidance in learning to read. For

the purposes of this study, it is important to note that a major goal during this stage was the development of an interest in reading as well as what Gray termed “a thoughtful reading attitude”.

The third stage is the period of rapid progress in fundamental attitudes, habits and skills. Unusual for current practice, one of the specific aims of this stage is happily described as reading “the world’s greatest stories for children”.

Stage Four reading (which usually corresponds to school grades four to six) focuses more narrowly on reading in content areas as well as what Gray deemed “better forms of literature”. This stage requires a wider scope for reading in order to extend and enrich the learner’s experience and to cultivate important reading habits and tastes. Greater exposure to content and informational material will help to prepare learners for more advanced study later. According to Gray (Chall, 1996:138), one reason why so many learners fail in content subjects in the grade four is because they have not been trained to interpret simple, factual material effectively. Furthermore, stage reading four has a “unique educational and social significance” since this is the level necessary for the reading of adult material of average difficulty. Gray furthermore emphasizes that it is also important to develop in the primary school learner the understanding that the reading of different kinds of material requires different strategies for different purposes. At this level it is important to improve performance in study activities requiring reading, such as finding relationships, applying principles or facts to new situations and generalizing new information.

Stage Five (which is an extended period corresponding roughly to the phase between Grade Seven and post-matric) requires a broader use of books, newspapers and other texts. It is a period in which specific reading attitudes undergo refinement. This stage (and this is vitally important to this thesis), which Gray placed at the juncture of primary and secondary school, “is largely a reflective and interpretive” stage. During stage five the ‘modes of thought and interpretation’ that are required in subject fields such as history, science or “argumentation” should be developed. The ability to critically study and intelligently interpret various kinds of writing by paying attention to scientific method, inductive and deductive thinking, underlying

assumptions and errors in logic must be developed before senior school (Gray, cited by Chall, 1996:219).

Originally Gray held that reading acquisition is mastered at primary school and needs no further instruction after grade three, but he later rejected this view.⁴² It is also clear that these reading stages are advanced by an educator and not a psychologist and they owe little to Piagetian or Vygotskian principles.

4.2.3 Gates and Russell

A refinement of the early stage-environment theories of scaffolded reading levels is seen more than twenty years later with Gates (Chall, 1996:223). Although there are many similarities between the two schemes, a major refinement pertinent to this study is the fact that Gates recognized the crucially important transitional period from primary to intermediate reading (Grades Two and Three) when the typical learner begins to shift from a rudimentary to a higher level of reading ability. The period of “intermediate” reading is crucial for later academic achievement since at this stage reading for content has already commenced. This transition is accelerated when the reading of reasonably familiar texts have become so effective that learners manage to give their minds more fully to ‘the thought’ behind the reading matter. It is moreover a time of differentiation and versatility in the reading of a wide range of materials requiring a variety of comprehension skills.

Gates not only identifies an intermediate period but also an advanced stage, characterized by mature reading which is beyond the Grade Six level. This stage is a period in which yet further refinement takes place as well as the perfecting of skills with even greater versatility in

⁴² This refutation is to Gray’s credit, since, in fact, it has been shown and it will be reiterated later in this thesis that learners require instruction throughout their school careers, especially of a more advanced nature.

adapting to a variety of reading tasks. As is the case with Gray, Gates finds the more advanced stages focusing ever more narrowly on thought.⁴³

During the early 1960s, Russell redefined the earlier concepts of reading stages. According to Chall (1996:134), he was less concerned with child development and more with its implications for the teaching of reading. In his design three distinctive age groups are categorized, each with its own developmental characteristics, namely six to eight years (Grades One to Three), nine to eleven years (Grades Four to Six) and twelve to fourteen years (Grades Seven to Nine), which is the phase which is specifically investigated here.

Russell includes (as does Gates) a transitional stage between primary and intermediate reading, emphasizing the critical role which this period plays in reading development. Russell points out (again, as does Gray) that during the intermediate stage (Grades Four to six) popular adult reading material becomes accessible and comprehensible for the learner whose reading develops satisfactorily (Chall, 1996: 234). In order to refine reading practices, Russell advocates the teaching of flexible reading skills such as skimming, reading to outline, summarize, to select and compare. Russell emphasises that the teaching of reading skills should not only take place at primary school but, remarkable for the time, also at secondary school and tertiary levels.

During the reading phase that Russell terms *advanced* (namely Grade Seven and higher), skills have to be perfected and diversified with the development of strategies for reading in a variety of ways and for different purposes. Not only senior readers, but also younger readers are required to learn to “select, judge, compare, or criticize while reading” (Chall, 1996:236).

The first transitional phase is characterized, according to both Gates and Russell, by the transformation that takes place from ‘learning to read’ to ‘reading to learn’. Gray’s stage that

⁴³ As seen in Chapter Two, reluctant or extrinsically motivated readers regularly experience difficulties with, and often declare downright aversion to, these more advanced stages because they have little confidence in their reading and comprehension abilities and less experience in the evaluation and critically thinking about the content they are reading, mainly due to the fact that the actual process of reading has proved so difficult to master or their skills have already been proven inadequate.

corresponds to Russell's transitional period is the phase of rapid progress in attitudes and habits. This further entails the change from word-by-word reading to reading by thought units. This is a crucial observation and is pertinent to the transitional phase the learners negotiate between primary and secondary school.

4.2.4 The Ilg and Ames Reading Gradient

Ilg and Ames developed their theories in the mid-1950s. They collaborated with Gesell on reading research and developed a reading gradient with which to grade learners' reading levels (Gesell, Ilg & Ames, 1956; Ilg & Ames, 1957/2004). Their reading gradient differs from Gray's and Russell's in several respects, and it especially asserts the graded structuring of reading development. Their reading gradient is more inflexible in its insistence that development follows a strict and predictable order. A salient feature is the fact that they pay more attention to gender differences in learners' approach to reading and concentrate chiefly on the changes in the number of books and genres children read during their hours of leisure.

Gesell, later with Ilg and Ames, designed a reading scheme that, according to Vygotsky (1998:190),⁴⁴ is based on a matrix mapping child development according to perceived changes in the individual child's 'internal rhythm and tempo'. Vygotsky states that Gesell presents the dynamics of child development as a process of a gradual slowing of growth. Further criticism is directed towards Gesell's theory because it makes early childhood the "high point for the interpretation of the personality and its history". Crucial aspects of a child's development, according to Gesell, are firmly established in the first years or even in the first months of life. Vygotsky criticises Gesell for the significance he attached to the importance attached to early experience as though all "subsequent development taken as a whole does not equal one act of this drama that is maximally saturated with content" (1998:190).

Gesell's theory furthermore errs, according to Vygotsky, because it derives from an "evolutionistic conception of development" and the mistaken belief that nothing new

⁴⁴ Vygotsky wrote the introduction to Gesell's book in 1932, stating quite diffidently that Gesell's studies solve theoretical problems with child development only half way!

transpires during development, that no *qualitative* changes emerge and only what has been present from a very young age can grow and develop, as the following rhetorical description of child development testifies:

As with a plant, so with a child. His mind grows by natural stages. A child creeps before he walks, sits before he stands, cries before he laughs, babbles before he talks, draws a circle before he draws a square, lies before he tells the truth, and is selfish before he is altruistic. Such sequences are part of the order of Nature . . . Every child, therefore, has a unique pattern of growth, but that pattern is a variant of a basic ground plan (Gesell, cited by Stone, 1996; online doc.).

Ilg and Ames furthered the aims of Gesell and, in spite of the rather inflexible demarcations of an ‘evolutionistic’ nature or characteristics (or perhaps because of this), their popularised developmental theories have been influential to a greater or lesser extent for more than five decades. In spite of severe criticism of such a rigid system of periodicity, then and now, (Stone, 1996;online doc.) their graded learning and reading assessment tests are supported by the American government, and, for instance, used for the Wisconsin Assessments system ⁴⁵ and widely applied by schools and parents. In addition, Ilg and Ames (2004) included reading promotion guidelines for parents, *Seven Ways Parents Can Encourage Their Children to Read!* in their brochure and guides on development . To help foster their children’s reading habits, the Ilg and Ames brochure wisely advises parents to, *inter alia*

- *Read yourself. Whether you’re reading the newspaper or curling up with a good book, your child will want to follow your example.*
- *Make sure that your child reads daily - with you, to you, or on their own. Reading is a skill. Children who read for fun each day develop the skills to become better readers at school.*
- *Get the library habit. Take your children to the library often and make sure they have their own library card.*
- *Read aloud to your child. It’s the most important way a parent can help a child become a better reader. Begin reading to your child as an infant – it’ll soon become ‘quality time’ for years to come!* (Ilg & Ames, 2004; online doc.).

The Ilg and Ames gradient was – and still is - especially popular with educators who advocate the concept of reading readiness (Stone, 1996; online doc.) and employ it to determine whether a child is ready for formal reading instruction by comparing his or her reading

⁴⁵ It is available on website: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/bbfcsp/doc/grade.doc>. Accessed 2004/02/20.

development to that typically encountered in others of the same age. A salient aspect of their work is also their insistence that there are gender differences in reading development.

4.3 DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES: THEORY AND PRACTICE

4.3.1 Introduction

Chall (1996; 1991) bases much of her own theory of reading development on Piaget's theory of the stages of cognitive development. The first stage (which, incidentally corresponds to Kohlberg's first stage of moral development, namely the pre-moral), is called Stage 0⁴⁶ or the Prereading stage with age indicators between birth and age six. At school-going age learners encounter Stage 1, the *Initial reading or decoding stage* with learners aged six or seven and corresponding school grades of Grades One and Two.

Stage 2 is called Confirmation, Fluency, Ungluing from Print and is found in school Grades Two and Three. Although this stage is usually attained by children aged seven and eight, it is also a stage that is aimed for in adult literacy campaigns. According to Chall, Stage 2 seems to be the point at which most such campaigns fail. Efforts to this effect, whether in America or in Third World countries, indicate that although most newly literate adults can get through Stage 1, they begin to falter at Stage 2 (Chall, 1996:19).

It is also noteworthy that with regard to children from low socio-economic homes, the reading gap already reported from the pre-reading stage onward, seems to widen even further at Stage 2. This is a stage that requires a great deal of reading practice and this cannot be achieved from school readers and workbooks alone. A learner whose parents cannot afford to buy books or whose own patterns of recreation do not include borrowing books and magazines from a public library loses much crucial practice. Reading promoters such as Trelease (1984) or

⁴⁶ Chall prefers to capitalize Stages, Grades and Phases and use them with a numeral. This custom will be followed in reference to her work in this thesis to distinguish her developmental scheme from those of other researchers. References to grades and phases employed by other researchers will have numerals written as words for these categories.

linguists such as Chomsky (1972; 2003) report that if parents do not read regularly to a child at this stage, his or her language development is slower than children who are read to by parents. Chall regards as equally important the fact that “the child loses out on the emotionally confirming responses that books and reading matter bring” (1996:20).

The reading stages that approximate the focus of this study start with Stage 3, which Chall terms the stage of *Reading for Learning the New: A First Step*. This is traditionally the watershed between primary and later schooling. Chall (together with Gates and Russell) also describes the traditional difference between reading in the primary grades and later as the difference between learning to read and reading to learn. During Stages 1 and 2, what is learned concerns more the “relating of print to speech” while Stage 3 involves more the “relating of print to ideas” (1996:20). Moreover, reading in the third stage is characterized by the growing importance of word meanings and prior knowledge. According to Chall, children at this age experience more than ever the need to know new things and more knowledge must be acquired through reading. Prior knowledge and experience are required if learners are to benefit optimally from their reading.

Chall makes a further distinction between the observed reading requirements and behaviours at this reading level, creating Stages 3A and 3B, stating that the former does not usually require special knowledge for reading informational materials or fiction. Stage 3B, however, brings readers closer to the ability required to read on a general adult level. Popular magazines, popular adult fiction, and newspapers are within the reader’s ability by the end of this phase. However, there is a clear distinction between the reading ability required to read *The Readers’ Digest* and more erudite or sophisticated periodicals such as *Time* or *The Economist*, believing the latter to be still somewhat beyond the reading level of this stage. Chall also postulates that as learners progress from Stage 3A to 3B, they develop in their ability to analyse what they read and to react critically to the divergent points of view they encounter (1996:22). She nevertheless believes that although a great deal can be accomplished at this stage regarding critical reading, it is advisable for teachers to refrain from too exacting critical studies at this stage until Stage 4 when learners’ critical abilities are more developed.

At the start of Stage 4, with learners in secondary school aged approximately fourteen to eighteen, reading and reflecting from multiple viewpoints become possible. Learners at this stage begin to develop the ability to deal with layers of facts and concepts added on to those acquired earlier.

However, whereas reading strategies are purposely taught in the primary school, advanced reading strategies for Stage 4 are developed at secondary school almost exclusively through formal subject-related teaching, such as perusal of a variety of textbooks and gathering information for assignments from original or secondary sources, reference works, newspapers and magazines.

The most advanced stage of reading development is Stage 5, which Chall terms *Construction and Reconstruction – a world view*, and which occurs after school at university level with students eighteen years and older. Reading at this stage is essentially constructive since readers now have to construct knowledge for themselves by reading what others say.

Stage 5 reading, above all, depends on analysis, synthesis, and judgment. A reader's metacognitive reading skills come into play when he or she has to make judgements and choices with regard to reading material, how much of the material to read, and what *not* to read; skimming, scanning and synthesizing are aspects of these sophisticated reading skills. While reading at this stage, the reader continuously struggles to balance his or her understanding of the ideas read, and the reader reflects and analyses. Prior knowledge and familiarity with the concepts enable to adopt a faster pace when reading, while unfamiliar texts require a slower study-type pace (Chall, 1996:25).

If reading development has transpired successfully up to now, Stage 5 reading empowers learners with the ability to construct knowledge on a high level of abstraction and generality and to create their 'own truth' from the 'truths of others'. It is also important to note that at this stage a text can function at more than one level. A novel can be read, understood and enjoyed as a narrative text alone, which requires perhaps a Stage 3 reading level, while the same text can simultaneously be understood as a complex metaphorical, philosophical or

historical work. For instance, *The Lord of the Rings* can be read, understood and enjoyed as an adventure story, or it can be regarded as a profound reflection on the battle between evil and good, or the responsibility of destiny, or even as an eminently Christian text, as literary critics do. Typical literacy behaviour does not remain fixed in one stage only. Individuals who read at Stage 5 for study and work may relax with a mystery at Stage 2 (Chall, 1996:26).

This interdependence of developmental stages is a concept that was first described by Piaget who states that a learner easily employs skills mastered at a lower level while still struggling to master skills at the present level. For instance, Stage 3, which is the first stage of 'reading to learn', assumes the existence of abilities to use context and fluency in reading that have successfully been acquired in Stage 2. Only when fundamental decoding skills have been mastered in Stage 1 and fluency has become habitual in Stage 2, can reading become utilised as a tool for learning, even if the new information is not complicated by a variety of viewpoints and subtleties. Stage 3 reading requires confidence to move ahead and it therefore makes use of Stage 2 fluency (Chall, 1996:26).

Like other reading researchers (notably Palmer, 1995, Purves & Niles, 1984; Whitehead *et al.*, 1977), Chall also reports instances of reading decline, but identifies the first decline taking place at an earlier stage than the one considered in this thesis:

For example, we may ask why there has been a consistent failure point reported for Grade 4 or 5, the point of transition between Stages 2 and 3. The appropriateness of the optimal challenge, the proper materials and instructional strategies for effecting a transition from Stage 2 to Stage 3 need to be questioned. Thus, the concept of proper match or challenge, a concept used often in the 1930s, might gain from a fresh look. How and where to teach reading in the intermediate and upper elementary grades (Stage 3) could also profit from a fresh look. Is it better done by the teacher from a reader, a collection of stories? Or is it better done by the teaching – of literature, science, social studies – from content materials? Or are both needed? (Chall, 1996:27).

Chall concludes that a manner of direct instruction is again required for Stage 3 when the emphasis has shifted to reading for the purpose of acquiring new factual knowledge. As knowledge continues to be acquired, a learner needs a greater vocabulary and a more advanced ability to infer meanings from context, dictionaries and other sources. However, the literary and academic language of textbooks, encyclopaedias, and other academic sources

creates another hurdle which must be overcome by actually *teaching* the concepts, vocabulary and strategies necessary for the reading of such texts. Chall (1996:28) asks a crucial question: “Who should do the teaching of reading – and what should be taught? Should emphasis be on reading literature? On content? On exercises designed to teach the various reading comprehension skills?”

Chall intimates that the answer to the above question is that direct teaching should be done at secondary school too because students have much to learn in order to read increasingly more difficult texts, with ever more abstract and sophisticated responses. A greater and more sophisticated vocabulary and background information must be acquired, and these are seldom achieved by self-discovery alone. Only when learners have been empowered with rich and varied literary experiences can they move smoothly from Stage 2 to Stage 3. This observation is especially important for the transition that forms the focus of this thesis: whereas many children can progress successfully from the fluent reading of simple children’s books to the reading of subject textbooks in order to acquire new information, children with more limited literary experiences will require additional help to do so. In this case too, if disadvantaged learners are to compete on equal footing with their peers, they must be helped to progress through these reading stages; firstly, they need to be aided to develop their vocabulary, general knowledge, their grasp on the facts and ideas that children from more stable socio-economic backgrounds acquire from their home and family, as a matter of fact around the dinner table, from books on the family shelves, and from the “magazines cluttering the coffee table” (Chall 1996:31). However, since the opportunities for such learning may not be provided by most lower SES homes, it is essential that the school provides them with learning contexts during the stages when they are most needed.

Chall considers a developmental reading stage theory as particularly successful for clarifying concepts in the field of reading research: a field which seems to be particularly subject to misunderstandings if even the very definition of reading itself is a cause for dispute:

Stage theory may add to our knowledge of what happens as the individual learns to read at an ever-increasing level of maturity. Although we use only one word – reading – for what happens at the various stages, important quantitative and qualitative changes take place. Quantitative measures of change already exist – the

standardized reading tests for measuring the abilities of readers and the readability formulas for measuring the difficulty of the reading materials. The standardized reading tests are similar to existing measures of mental ability in that they measure growth in maturity in terms of ages or grades. Such quantitative estimates have their value in that they can help to effect a match between reading materials and readers. They also help to determine whether progress has been made from year to year (Chall, 1996:32).

Figure 4.1 is an approximation of reading levels according to examples of texts that are typical, standard reading at successive stage levels. The level of material corresponds to Chall's example (1996:39), but the material used here is from texts typically used by South African learners and students, and is therefore referenced in the footnotes. Each succeeding stage contains longer sentences, includes more unfamiliar concepts and more low-frequency words, as well as progressively more abstract language and concepts.

Stages 1 and 2 texts contain high frequency words and shorter sentences; they usually contain narratives about everyday events and familiar concepts. During Stage 3A, texts begin to be more literary when dealing with emotions or ideas and the use of language is already more creative with longer sentences and the introduction of more low-frequency words. Non-fiction material is used more commonly at the beginning of Stage 3 and increases in complexity and frequency towards the end of Stage 3B with more lower-frequency words and more abstract concepts.

Figure 4. 1 Example of standard texts at successive stage levels

Stage 1	One day Wilson said to Thandi: "My tummy is very sore." Thandi put her hand on his forehead. "I think you are ill. Your forehead is very warm." Thandi called Mrs Mabula. "Wilson is ill, Mother." ⁴⁷
Stage 2	My four friends and I had come across a loose floorboard at the back of the classroom, and when we prised it up with the blade of a pocketknife, we discovered a big hollow space underneath. This, we decided, would be our secret hiding place for sweets and other small treasures. ⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Abel, B. 1994. *English can be fun*. Grade 2. Pretoria: Via Afrika.

⁴⁸ Goodacre, J.G., Ansur, E., Greenwell, A. & Rumboll, F.C.H. 1993. *Comprehensive English practice*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.

Stage 3 A	Submerged, Jay heard nothing but his own rasping breath and the pumps' repetitive thuds. He could not hear intruders enter the hatchery, but he did hear a far-away muted sound of breaking glass. He paid no attention, concentrated as he was on recapturing the experiences he had previously enjoyed so effortlessly: slowly he was understanding that the once so familiar fantasy world had gone forever. In its place was something dark and threatening. ⁴⁹
Stage 3 B	Planet Earth can be divided into several broad categories of land type. Geographers refer to these as vegetation zones, and they include such well-known types as forest, grassland and desert. Recognizing the interrelatedness of all life forms, ecologists now prefer to use the word biome for these broad definitions so as to embrace all the components. ⁵⁰
Stage 4	From the older oral narratives about the Canaanite shrine at Peniel/Peneul and the ancestor Jacob's victorious struggle with a nocturnal water spirit, it becomes clear that the narrator created a story by means of which he successfully Israelised the Canaanite shrine, thereby appropriating it as a shrine of their religion. By means of his narrative the author implies that it is a cult place which the Israelites may visit to worship. ⁵¹
Stage 5	Cross tabulations were made to determine whether the variable diffall differs between the control and experimental schools. Taking the variable diffall = (sum of totno - totma) the following results were obtained: For standard 2 - Diffall p-value of 0.0094. This indicates a significant difference between the two schools in terms of improved/not improved (a p-value < = 0.05 is considered significant). ⁵²

4.3.2 Stage transitions

4.3.2.1 The transition from Stage 2 to Stage 3

The research problem of this study centres on the assumption that reading development, as in the case with many other developmental events, is structured according to identifiable phases and stages. Learners have to negotiate the transitions between stages and effectively accomplish each transition before a higher level of reading becomes possible. Reading researchers define transition variously. What most theories have in common is that transitioning involves a life change and that it has the potential for anxiety and distress.

⁴⁹ Williams, M. 1992. *The genuine half-moon kid*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.

⁵⁰ Butchart, D. 1995. *Wild about the Okavango*. Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers.

⁵¹ Spangenberg, I. 2002. *Perspectives on the Bible*. Pretoria: Protea Book House.

⁵² Olën, S.I.I. & Machet, M.P. Research project to determine the effect of free voluntary reading on comprehension. *South African Journal of Library & Information Science*; June 1997, Vol. 65 Issue 2, pp 85-93.

An effective strategy for all role players with which to minimize the stress of a transitional experience is to acknowledge, accept, assist and accommodate the changes involved (Grolnick *et al.*, 2002:164; Heckhausen & Dweck, 1998; San Antonio, 2004). Bandura (1986:417) states that the ease with which developmental transition is negotiated depends “on no small measure, in the assurance in one’s capabilities built up through prior mastery experiences”.

The question, “How does a reader move from one reading stage to the next?” is therefore critically important here. Piaget’s concepts of assimilation and accommodation - which are two ways of adapting to the environment - are especially useful for understanding the nature of reading development.

During the transition from Stage 2 to Stage 3 a change in attitudes and strategies is imperative, in addition to an increase in general knowledge, language skills and cognitive abilities. According to Chall (1996:48), other differences can be discerned in the materials typically read during Stage 3 compared to Stage 2 materials, for instance, the vocabulary transcends the reader’s everyday word knowledge, the number and difficulty of concepts increase, the sentences are more complex, and a more sophisticated background knowledge is assumed. In addition to these, Stage 3 reading development requires a higher level of reading skill, a greater world knowledge, a higher level of language and cognitive development reflectiveness, and the ability to accumulate facts and other details.

Moreover, it is inconsequential for Stage 2 readers whether the hero is called James or Joseph; it does, however, matter a great deal in the reading of historical and scientific materials at Stage 3 whether the protagonist is Alexander, Wolfgang or Adolf. Stage 3 reading demands correctness and accuracy in reading what the author wrote.

However, at this very crucial stage of reading development, when sophisticated and intellectually demanding skills are required of developing readers, no formal reading instruction takes place in the majority of schools. Stage 3 reading has to be attained through the perusal of subject-related texts and reference works in science and mathematics, through

textbooks, reference works and biographies in the history and social studies class, and prescribed works of a literary nature in the language classroom.

A Stage 3 reading level is often regarded as the average minimal level required by the great majority of people in an industrial society (Chall, 1996:50). This level is sufficient for the acquisition of information and vicarious experiences from books, newspapers and magazines that are written on not too complex a level. This stage requires a comfortable literacy that is the aim of governmental policy makers, especially of developing countries. The transition to a higher level is not attained by the majority of any country's citizens, if national literacy reports are to be believed. It is also part of the transition that is investigated in this study.

4.3.2.2 The transition from Stage 3 to Stage 4

Chall (1996:49) views Stage 4 as the “minimal reading competence required in a knowledge society, one in which communication of information is the most valued pursuit”. At this stage readers should be able to efficiently read complex materials on a wide variety of topics, read from a variety of viewpoints, display a greater openness to the reading materials and to the different views they present. When reading at this level, the learner should search for relationships and viewpoints compared to merely accumulating facts as in Stage 3, should read a greater quantity of reading compared to Stage 3, read at a sufficiently brisk pace to deal with all the requisite reading for school assignments, and possibly too a daily newspaper, the occasional magazine and a book or two for leisure reading.

Reading at Stage 4 may at times be considered impulsive, even erratic, with seemingly little integration. Before assimilation can take place, the reader requires “to know more and value more of what is being read” (Chall, 1996:50). Children's ability to fully understand what they are reading is inextricably linked to their background knowledge (Lyon, 1997, online doc.). It is hoped that with understanding comes the fervent desire to read more and to read frequently, ensuring that reading practice takes place.

Chall (1996:58) depicts the difference in the experience of the nature of reading during the final three stages as a typical answer to the question: Is what you just read true?

Stage 3: Yes, I read it in a book. The author said it was true.

Stage 4: I don't know. One of the authors I read said it was true, the other said it was not. I think there may be no true answers on the subject.

Stage 5: There are different views on the matter. But one of the views seems to have the best evidence supporting it, and I would tend to go along with that view.

The more advanced reading strategies which are being developed at this stage only become fully developed at Stage 5. Mastery of Stage 4 reading tasks embraces a 'multiplicity of knowledge', in other words, facts, ideas, opinions and views, with discussions and written assignments designed to encourage the learner to grapple with concepts and ideas. According to Chall (1996:50), most content areas in the secondary school lend themselves to providing the needed challenge and practice, whether English, history, the social sciences or science.

4.3.2.3 The transition from Stage 4 to Stage 5

Although the thesis is not concerned with the final transition, namely from Stage 4 to 5, it is judicious to take note of what is considered to be the ultimate goal of reading proficiency. This transition is more fraught with difficulty than the other transitions, especially because it seems to depend on the reader's cognitive abilities, accumulated knowledge, and motivation (Chall, 1996:51). Transitioning from Stage 4 to 5 requires the reader to engage in tasks that involve synthesis, reorganization and a critical reaction to what is read in often complex and contradictory texts. At this advanced stage, "knowledge is needed, as well as confidence and humility. Above all, the reader needs a feeling of entitlement. One needs to believe that one is entitled to the knowledge that exists, to think about it, use it, and to 'make knowledge' as did those whose works they read" (Chall, 1996:52).

4.3.2.4 Transitioning the stages

The above clearly delineates a major dilemma in reading development: with the transition from Stage 2 to 3, which traditionally takes place during the transition from primary to

secondary school, and even to a greater extent from a Stage 3 to Stage 4 reading level, the learner must bring to books knowledge, experiences and input. This then turns into a circular event: to successfully make the transition, learner input and knowledge is required, which books, more than any other experience, provide. If books have already helped to furnish the acquisition by providing the knowledge and further extending the experiences for enrichment, the transition will take place successfully.

However, this also seems to be the reason most secondary school teachers do not think that they have to teach reading at all and they may say that, if “the prereader already seems to do what the most mature readers do after 13 or more years of instruction and practice, why do we have to instruct him or her?” (Chall, 1996:53).

Why, indeed. This, of course, is a valid point regarding learners who have already acquired salient reading practices, in other words, when a child grows up being read to, with access to a variety of books, with no impediments either at home or at school; in such cases learners can and do teach themselves more sophisticated reading practices. However, this is certainly not the norm; many children grow up in houses in which books play no part and go to schools where the teaching of reading leaves much to be desired and little is done to foster reading habits. Left to their own devices, these learners often become what reading researchers term the *aliterates* (Palmer, 1995:20). It has become crucially important that all secondary school learners are actively taught effective and sophisticated reading skills.⁵³ Chall endorses this view:

I do not take the position that the ‘naturalistic’ view does not work at all, it works, but I believe, mainly where the learners have high motivation, high cognitive and language development, much stimulation and help in their homes, and highly individualized teaching in school with a plentiful supply of books. But even these children appear to achieve better when reading is taught in a more developmental manner (1996:53).

⁵³ By the same token, it can be argued that students who are required to make the transition from stage 4 to stage 5 reading at a higher education institution should also be taught the more advanced reading strategies required of them. They need to understand that specialized knowledge and its acquisition now require more sophisticated strategies than the ones that suited their needs at secondary school or at primary school. The developmental view of reading essentially is the understanding that useful reading skills at one stage in a learner’s life are not necessarily effective in another.

What is furthermore clear from the developmental stage theory is that certain skills have to be mastered before a reader can successfully transfer to the next stage. For instance, before simple texts can be read fluently, basic word recognition and decoding skills have to be in place. Stage 2 becomes possible because the young reader has already acquired in Stage 1, not only knowledge of the relation between letters and sounds (the eye-voice span, or visual-auditory perceptual aspects of reading), but has also applied the skills in practice. An enormous leap takes place in the transition between Stages 1 and 2 when the *mechanics* of reading, namely basic word recognition, phonics, and fluency have been mastered. Chall calls the major reading task up to Stage 2 “mastering the medium”, whereas with the transition to Stage 3 the main task shifts to “mastering the message”. A young learner’s ability to acquire these “mechanics” of reading is at its most acute during the first two stages. This growth spurt seems to be slowing down during Stage 3. This ‘slowing down’ was also observed by Kozulin *et al.* (2003) and Vygotsky (1998) (cf. Section 2.2.2).

However, no stage is ever fully mastered before the next one is entered since a reader continues to grow and becomes ever more proficient in the skills of a lower stage even while operating at a higher stage. It can therefore be said that the transition to a new stage rests on one’s proficiency in the previous one.⁵⁴

To fully master the highest level of reading development can take up to sixteen years, or longer. Obviously this is not reached by all, mainly due to the fact that advanced reading skills, in addition to a mastery of the ‘mechanics’ of reading, also require analytic and critical judgment and sufficient prior knowledge of a subject

The following table is a combination and adaptation of Chall’s (1996:34; 84; 98) models that attempt to delineate the stages of reading development and link the major qualitative characteristics with their manner of acquisition and uses:

⁵⁴ Remarkably and quite ironically, Chall (1996:57) also uses the example of how a higher stage can be mastered without even becoming proficient in an earlier stage or stages in the example of young Jewish and Muslim readers who go from a basic acquisition of the alphabet immediately to the reading of adult texts, albeit in a halting fashion.

Figure 4.2 Synopsis of Chall's models of reading development

STAGE DESIGNATION	MAJOR QUALITATIVE CHARACTERISTICS AND MASTERIES BY END OF STAGE	HOW ACQUIRED	KNOWLEDGE AND USES OF READING
Stage 2: Confirmation and fluency	Learner reads simple, familiar stories and selections with increasing fluency. This is done by consolidating the basic decoding elements, sight vocabulary, and meaning context in the reading of familiar stories and selections	Direct instruction in advanced decoding skills; wide reading (with instruction and independently) of familiar, interesting materials which help promote fluent reading. Being read to at levels above their own independent reading level to develop language, vocabulary and concepts.	At the end of Stage 2, about 3 000 words can be read and understood and about 9 000 are known when heard. Listening is still more effective than reading.
Stage 3: Reading for learning the new Phase A Phase B	Reading is used to learn new ideas, to gain new knowledge, to experience new feelings, to learn new attitudes; generally from one viewpoint. Can read orally and silently (with comprehension) a variety of materials and styles up to a beginning 7 th Grade readability level: literature and popular writing, textbooks in social studies, science, etc. Reads easier parts of adult newspapers and magazines; uses dictionary. Strong meaning vocabulary.	Reading and study of textbooks, reference works, trade books, newspapers, and magazines that contain new ideas and values, unfamiliar vocabulary and syntax; systematic study of words and reacting to the text through discussion, answering questions, writing, etc. Reading of increasingly more complex fiction, biography, non-fiction, and the like.	Reads widely children's fiction and non-fiction, children's newspapers, magazines. Uses library efficiently; uses children's dictionaries and encyclopaedias. Begins to develop effective study habits.
Stage 4: Multiple view-points	Can comprehend what is read and learn new information and ideas from a variety of material up to a beginning 9 th Grade readability level: adult literature; popular fiction; science and social studies texts; adult encyclopaedias and other reference works. Has a good meaning vocabulary, general and technical; uses an adult dictionary. Can read adult newspapers and magazines.	Wide reading and study of the physical, biological, and social sciences and the humanities; high quality and popular literature; newspapers and magazines; systematic study of words and word parts.	Reads adolescent and adult fiction and nonfiction. Uses print materials efficiently – textbooks, adult dictionaries etc. – for study, written reports, and own interests. Uses library efficiently.

Stage 5: Construct- ion and recog- nition	Reading is used for one's own needs and purposes (professional and personal); reading serves to integrate one's knowledge with that of others, to synthesize it and to create new knowledge. It is rapid and efficient. Can read analytically and critically from a broad range of fiction and non-fiction of different styles and content: (readability levels up to beginning college) books, textbooks, newspapers, (<i>New York Times</i>), and magazines (<i>Time</i> , <i>Newsweek</i> , etc.). Extensive meaning vocabulary, general and technical.	Wide reading of ever more difficult materials, reading beyond one's immediate needs, writing of papers, tests, essays, and others forms that call for integration of varied knowledge and points of view.	Reads widely for own needs and for academic requirements; has efficient study strategies; locates materials needed and uses efficiently for written reports and study. Reads newspapers, magazines, novels, etc.
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Chall's model of reading development is especially valuable as a framework for the design and conducting of the interviews with respondents, amongst others for the following reason:

Essentially, then, the most effective way to bring about the full development of a person's ability to read and the uses to which he or she puts that reading is to attend carefully to changing needs at each successive stage. Schools and teachers cannot do this alone. Parents, siblings and the community must provide the needed incentives, materials, practice, and services. Reading is not learned once and for all but throughout a lifetime in which the individual is challenged to react to ever more difficult materials in ever more sophisticated ways. Early successes help the later ones, but they do not assure them. (1996:97).

Chall's model is used as a standard against which the respondents' individual reading levels can be measured with regard to three of the four domains in the theoretical framework (Figure 1.2), namely voluntary reading, literacy level and functional texts. The fourth domain, namely adolescence, is mainly underpinned by the theories of Vygotsky and other developmental psychologists.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHOD IN THE MAKING

A new active persona enters the drama of development, a new, qualitatively unique factor – the personality of the adolescent himself.

Vygotsky 1998

Begin with ‘How?’ questions, then ask ‘Why?’

Silverman 2001

From our perspective, it is no more necessary to resolve your epistemology in your empirical research than it is to incorporate a declaration of your religious affiliation. Unfortunately, however, the tendency to make a pass at epistemological discussion is commonly presented in lieu of adequate theoretical development.

Brown and Dowling 1998

5.1 TEXTS IN TRANSITION

5.1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate factors that influence the voluntary reading of South African pre-adolescents, especially at an age when they reputedly undergo many emotional, intellectual, social and physical changes which all impact to a greater or lesser extent on their habits, interests and choices. Since there is a broad perception that adolescent learners read fewer books at secondary than at primary school, an investigation on their voluntary reading habits during this crucial time in their lives may go some way towards explicating factors that influence their reading for recreational purposes. The research problem centres on the factors affecting the voluntary reading of adolescents during this crucial transitory stage. The main research question highlights the reading experiences of specifically Grade Eight learners in an attempt to plot the aspects that influence their reading habits.

More keenly, the investigation focuses on the perceived but inadequately researched changes and transitions that occur in the reading of learners during what is assumed to be a ‘grey area’ between the last years of childhood (approximating Grades Six and Seven) and the emergence of puberty and adolescence (represented by Grades Eight, Nine and Ten). Learners’ descriptions of their views of voluntary reading as well as their experience of the transformations and transitions that are inevitably taking place in their lives between primary and secondary school may reveal some of the factors that precipitate changes in their experience of voluntary reading.

While the first chapter essentially focuses on the exercise of literacy with a narrow focus on aspects of learner readership which also form the four domains of the theoretical framework, the second chapter hones in on factors that specifically influence the reading of the adolescent. Additional factors, such as transition, interests and motivation are also addressed. The third chapter addresses two of the four domains of the theoretical framework, namely literacy and literature. The fourth chapter concentrates on the structure of stage transitions in reading

development, creating a matrix against which the reading interests, development and choices of individual learners can be traced. In the present chapter the course of the empirical investigation is plotted, with the research design, methodology, ethical considerations and data analysis procedures as central concerns.

5.1.2 Qualitatively researching reading

The majority of national and international studies on the reading habits of learners have predominantly been quantitative in nature (Du Toit, 2001; Henne, 1949; Houghton-Hawksley, 1985; Palmer, 1995; Reynolds, 1996; Whitehead *et al.*, 1977). Such quantitative research projects are often quite breathtaking in scope.⁵⁵ Elley (1992), for instance, cites some of the results of the research conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement and describes it as an enormous international “research exercise”, the largest of its kind since it surveyed and attempted to interpret the reading achievement levels of 210 000 children in 32 educational systems on every continent on earth. In another monumental study, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, conducted and reported by NAEP (the American National Assessment of Educational Progress), thousands of children were surveyed throughout the United States. Nell (1988:20) cites a study, *The Use of Time*, that was conducted over an eight-year period, involving some 27,000 subjects in eleven countries and three continents. It attempted to measure *inter alia* the amount of time fiction reading occupies in an adult individual’s daily round of activities.

The results of studies on reading habits are usually quantified and presented statistically, for example the results of the 1981 and 1985 NAEP reports distributed by the US Office of Education, that indicated consistent and significant differences in reading achievement

⁵⁵ It is remarkable to note that some of these early readership studies involved vast numbers – in some cases almost 37 000 learners who reported on 9 300 books. One of the reasons for the magnitude of these surveys was the assumption – of course quite erroneous – that the greater the number of respondents, the more legitimate the generalizations concerning children’s reading habits and the preferences of “children at large” (Whitehead *et al.*, 1977:2) without a rigorous defining of the population that is being researched.

between children in affluent suburbs and those in disadvantaged communities, as well as showing that “75% of juvenile delinquents are significantly retarded in reading” (Snow, Barnes & Chandler, 1991:vii). Similarly, according to the US Office of Education, statistics show that adult illiterates compose 75% of the unemployed and 60% of the American prison population (Blair *et al.*, 1992:4).

After the 1995 readership survey, *Services and Resources for Children & Young Adults in Public Libraries*, the US National Centre for Education Statistics released a statistical report which was, according to Jones (1999:5) “chockfull of numbers”, with “factoids” such as the following: only eleven percent of public libraries have a young adult librarian in the US. Much is illuminating in this, although it can be interpreted from different points of view. Firstly, Jones, a first-world, idealistic reading researcher is appalled by the fact that only eleven percent of libraries in the US deem YA (Young Adult) fiction sufficiently important to appoint a trained librarian to facilitate the lending of books specifically to adolescent readers. This statistic draws the following comment from him:

Yet, even all this visibility cannot blind us to the fact that in many libraries, especially public libraries, YAs are not served - they are tolerated. In these libraries, there are no YA librarians, no YA collections other than a rack of Sweet Valley High romances, and services provision falls to a generalist / adult/ children's librarian without YA training (1999:5).

From a second point of view, perhaps held by a teacher in rural South Africa, one could marvel at the fact that there actually are librarians specifically trained and appointed for adolescent readers at all. Observers in developing countries could even reflect on the luxury of having trained librarians, or a library, for that matter.

However, it is clear that the results of such quantitative research projects are helpful for a number of reasons, if only to reveal certain tendencies, as can be seen in the following example, taken from the NAEP report of 1981:

Nationally, 9-year-olds' overall reading performance level rose 3.9 percent. They made significant gains in reference skills (4.8 percent), literal comprehension (3.9 percent) and inferential comprehension (3.5 percent). The largest gains among 9-year-olds' reporting groups occurred for black students (9.9 percent) . . . those who

attend schools in rural communities (6 percent) and those who attend schools in disadvantaged urban communities (5.2 percent) (Purves & Niles, 1984:2).

Quantitative measures of change can thus be found in the standardized reading tests for measuring the abilities of readers to demonstrate whether progress is made from year to year and phase to phase. However, the grounds for the appearance of trends as learners transition the phases can hardly be explained by statistics such as the above. Attempts are often made to overcome this limitation in a readership survey by the inclusion of open-ended questions in the questionnaire, as in the example (Du Toit, 2001:133) in Figure 5.1 in which Grade Eleven learners were asked about their reading habits:

Figure 5. 1 Excerpt from readership survey

How did your reading habits differ when you were at primary school?

<i>I read more often then</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>I read the same number of books</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>I read fewer books then</i>	<i>3</i>

If you answered that you read more books when you were at primary school, what is the reason for it?

<i>I had more time for reading in my spare time</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Homework is taking up much more time now</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>I didn't have so many extra-mural activities at primary school</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>My teachers encouraged us more to read in primary school</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>My social life is taking up much more time now</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Other. Please specify</i>		
.....		

The findings of the South African study conducted with 700 Grade Eleven learners indicate that eighty percent of the respondents specified that they had had more time for reading while at primary school. The same percentage explained this phenomenon by stating that homework

took up more time in secondary school, and eighty percent again felt that their social life had become more time-consuming than at primary school. In 61,7 percent of the cases extra-mural activities had increased to the detriment of recreational reading, while almost seventy percent of the respondents indicated that primary school teachers encouraged them more actively to read recreationally than secondary teachers did. Significantly, two reasons supplied in the open-ended category for reading fewer books at secondary school were that many learners found the books they read at primary school ‘easier’, as well as the existence of what the learners themselves termed ‘reading problems’. These conclusions are illuminating, if only for a cursory investigation of reading decline. Quantitative research studies are valuable and necessary for many other reasons, as, for instance, in the following example cited by Ingham (1981:3):

The child of a professional or non-manual worker is more likely to achieve a high level of reading attainment than the child of a manual worker . . . Such studies are particularly useful in that they are statistically generalisable and point us towards factors which are more commonly to be found in the professional family than the family of the manual worker . . . But of course such studies, valuable and necessary as they are, are unlikely to be educationally productive unless we take the trouble to look beyond the “what” to the “how” and the “why”.

For looking ‘beyond’ the obvious and the statistical, and to answer questions about essence, causes and foundations, about the ‘how’ and especially the ‘why’, a quantitative approach is greatly limited, as can be seen in the example taken from the aforementioned survey (Du Toit, 2000). In this study, little in-depth exploration could take place of the kind of reading that was being done (although another section asked learners the titles of the last five books they have read). Reasons for a shift in reading habits could also not be fathomed and neither could the open-ended questions throw much light on motivation or changing patterns in tastes, habits and other intrinsic forces.

Quantitative measures alone do not provide a fulsome explication of a reading transition. Admittedly, quantitative studies on reading habits, conducted solely by means of a survey, are not intended for a deep exploration of impacting factors. After one of the most comprehensive studies of this nature, Whitehead *et al.* (1977) came to much the same conclusion. In this British study, conducted in 1971, extensive research was conducted on the reading habits of

some 8 000 children ten, twelve and fourteen years old in 193 primary and 188 secondary schools under the auspices of the University of Sheffield Institute of Education. The integrity of the project was heightened by the fact that the survey was augmented by follow-up interviews with almost 800 children. Reporting on their findings after this already extensive study, it was suggested that a longitudinal study of a much smaller number of children should ideally follow in order to monitor the respondents' reading over a period of several years to establish the specific determining influences that bring about changes in learners' reading habits and tastes. However, although ideal, such research is costly, both in terms of time, manpower and resources.

Other measures than the survey or the longitudinal study have to be taken to obtain a deeper insight into underlying causes. A more holistic approach is required which places not only the learners in the context of their total milieu and experiences, but also posits reading in the context of textual communication in general. The limitations of a purely quantitative study are of such a nature that a qualitative study seemed to be the most feasible option for the present study. A qualitative approach would better serve to provide insight into the experience of reading in general and reading decline in particular during adolescence by eliciting richer descriptions and more thoughtful (narrative) responses. A deeper, first-hand understanding of the factors that influence recreational reading could only be garnered through a research practice that elicited adolescent views.

Since a qualitative approach does not attempt to impose a probability theory nor is it numerically answerable, it loses not only the inflexibility of a quantitative method, but also much of its inimitable power. Then again, although a qualitative study is not required to apply specific numerical coding principles so that the data can be calculated, accounts must be rendered another way to reflect patterns of experience. Data may not be counted, but they must still be, metaphorically speaking, "*accounted for*". Qualitative data are not quantifiable, but they must be analysed and interpreted, and then presented validly and authentically. To authenticate the data further, descriptive validity has to be guaranteed, and for this reason thick description was used in this study, *inter alia* to extrapolate the essence of learner experiences (cf. Chapter Five) and thereby to enhance the validity of analysis and interpretation.

Dependability, however, remains uncertain, because of the accusation so easily leveled against qualitative researchers who, according to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000:120) detect only “the loudest bangs or the brightest lights”.

For the purposes of this thesis, however, qualitative measures only are selected, despite the fact that the method’s shortcomings are numerous. The decision to adopt a qualitative approach is not revolutionary; more than half a century ago already Henne (1949) came to much the same conclusion in his investigation of “the reading of young people” - which was a remarkable approach for the time:

Very seldom have reasons for lack of interest been analysed to discover what in the student’s experience or background may have contributed to the formulation of his attitude. A vote of disinterest frequently reflects a lack of experience background, an absence of familiarity with the subject or reading materials, unfortunate experiences with reading in general or with reading materials in the field, content or style, and similar factors; in these instances, a genuine disinterest in the subject or in reading about the subject may not be the same. Personal and developmental characteristics, reading abilities, and similar factors about readers as they affect reading interests are ignored in the purely quantitative studies (Henne, 1949:224).

In spite of frequent criticism of qualitative research accusing it of being “impressionistic, biased, commonplace, insignificant, ungeneralisable, idiosyncratic, subjective and short-sighted” (Cohen *et al.*, 2000:120), this approach was selected for its “fidelity to real life, context- and situation specificity, authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail, honesty, depth of response and meaningfulness to the respondents” (Cohen *et al.*, 2000:120).

5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

5.2.1 Design the paradigm

Although even Chall (1996:10) is hesitant to present the developmental reading stages as a theory but prefers to use the less formal concepts of ‘scheme’ or ‘model’, her delineation of adolescent reading and the transitions that have to be negotiated before more sophisticated reading is effected, provide invaluable guidelines for this study. Her theories acknowledge

many Piagetian premises and developmentalist concepts which she modifies to develop a scheme that facilitates an understanding of reading development (Chall, 1996:11; cf. Section 4.3.2). This study employs Chall's theories of stage development for the older learner and focuses more narrowly on the transitions from one stage to another, and more specifically, the transition from Stage 2 to Stage 3 reading (cf. Section 4.3.2.1). Piagetian concepts of assimilation and accommodation, which are two methods by which the individual adapts to the environment, are also useful for understanding the transitioning from one reading stage to the next.

Theories about cognitive development became established in the 1970s and 1980s, successfully negotiating the paradigm shift from viewing learners as passive beneficiaries of knowledge to regarding them as the active constructors of knowledge. This was mostly the result of latter-day constructivism revived by Piagetian cognitive developmental theory which firmly locates cognitive processes in the individual learner. For reading researchers like Chall, Piaget supplies a firm epistemological foundation. However, a further refinement of constructivism is developed on Vygotskian principles. From a postmodern and sociocultural perspective, cognitive processes take place locally, specifically and contextualised, and are not considered as elevated expressions of 'truth'. The present study can then be seen as deriving more from an interpretivist paradigm with a narrow focus on the voluntary reading and related experiences of a highly specific group of learners. A further dimension is added to the context since Vygotsky's sociocultural theories are incorporated in the empirical study, if only peripherally. The attainment of a reading level is never an isolated, inevitable or predictable phenomenon as, for instance, biological maturation. Transitions are dependent on many factors in various domains, of which some will form the focus of the empirical investigation.

The interpretative paradigm of the study is not intended as an exploration of indisputable and predictable laws. The selected approach attempts to "produce descriptive analyses that emphasize deep, interpretive understanding" of a specific phenomenon (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004:21). The interpretative paradigm ties in well with Vygotskian sociocultural theories because it holds that the learner is not a generalisable 'case', but a 'free' agent who has highly individualized perceptions and experiences. The multifacetedness of

each interviewee's individual reality must therefore be contextualized before an in-depth understanding of her experiences and beliefs can be attempted. This, then, excludes the possibility of a single objective reality, and the findings of this study can only be presented as presentations of a perceived, though authentic, reality both from the interviewees' and the researcher's perspective.

5.2.2 Theoretical parameters

The respondents' negotiation of stage transitioning is one of the key concepts in the research design. To have reached their second (Stage 2 to 3) transition (cf. Section 4.3.2.1), the respondents had to successfully have negotiated the first transition.⁵⁶

The Stage 1 reading level described by Chall (1996:13), is characterized by the acquisition of initial reading skills or decoding. Initially Goodman (Gollasch, 1982) also favoured a developmental scheme of reading, and although it is more amorphous than the other models, it has three definitive and diverse levels. According to Goodman, first level reading consists of the designation of phonetic values to letter or whole word shapes to create aural input, which is ultimately decoded into meaning. The transition to a second level consists of a 'focusing' process during which the reader learns to cope with more advanced graphic units with greater fluency.

For Chall (1996:13) the first transition also entails the acquisition of more advanced skills, namely, the capacity for *Confirmation, Fluency, Ungluing from Print* (cf. Section 4.3.1). The crucial nature of this first transition is seen, according to Chall, in the outcomes of campaigns to improve adult literacy, because it is at Stage 2 that the majority of such campaigns fail: "These efforts here and in Third World countries indicate that although most adults can get

⁵⁶ Although Chall focuses more narrowly on the reading development of school-going learners and does not pay much attention to what current reading researchers term "emergent literacy", she identifies a Stage 0, which is the "prereading" or "pseudo reading" phase during which children "pretend" to read or retell stories when looking at a book previously encountered (1996:84). During this stage and by six years of age children understand thousands of words but can read few – if any – of them.

through Stage 1, they begin to falter at Stage 2” (1996:19). Chall furthermore points out that for many learners of low socio-economic status (SES), Stage 2 reading is often fraught with failure because the gap is ever widening between children whose reading skills are developing successfully and effectively due to exposure to books, and the learners who have already lost out on reading experiences due to a dearth of books or opportunities to read or to be read to. Even more importantly, such children lose out on the emotionally confirming responses that the independent reading of books brings (Chall, 1996:20).

However, the respondents for this study were selected because they had already successfully negotiated the first transition, and the investigation focuses on their transition from Stage 2 to Stage 3 reading. This second transition, which corresponds with the South African school transition from primary to secondary school, comprises the so-called shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Whereas Stages 1 and 2 are more concerned with relating print to speech, Stage 3 is more concerned with the relating of print to ideas (Chall, 1996:21).

As can be seen in Figure 4.2 (page 131), Stage 3 reading is divided into two phases, namely Phase A and B. The first phase contains the essence of the transitioning focus, namely the increasing ability to read so that new knowledge can be acquired (cf. Section 4.3.2). Stage 3’s Phase B requires learners to increasingly read on a general (as opposed to an academic, or advanced) adult level. Accomplishing Phase B also allows learners to begin to read critically and to analyse and reflect on what they have read.

The Stage 2 to Stage 3 transition is negotiated approximately around the time most learners progress from primary to secondary school. It is clear that for some learners this transition is fraught with obstacles, even making it a “consistent failure point” for low-motivated learners (Chall, 1996:27) or a time of crisis (cf. Section 2.2.3). Some learners may experience this phase as sufficiently problematic not to progress through the transition at all; others may lose interest in reading altogether. Many reasons are touted to be the cause of this, but one of the most obvious, according to Chall, is the inappropriateness of “materials and instructional

strategies”, and the lack of optimal challenge. Another culprit, and one favoured by Vygotsky (cf. Section 2.2.2), is the pronounced changeability in learner interests.⁵⁷

Chall’s developmental stages theory is especially successful in a theoretical framework for its combination of various reading models. Whereas other more inflexible systems (cf. Ilg and Ames; cf. Section 4.2.4) describe developmental as gradual, consistent, inevitable or predictable, Chall describes a cycle of ebb and flow shifts as learners transition from stage to stage – if they develop sufficiently to transition to a higher level of reading at all. The ebb and flow shifts in reading development theories swing pendulum-like from greater openness to a more structured way, and then return to openness again. According to this view, the pre-reading child is open to subtle nuances and the child is helped by “invention and daring” (Chall, 1996:52).

When the young Stage 1 reader has to acquire a firm basis in learning the alphabet and mastering the basic elements of word recognition, a structured approach is more effective. At this stage there simply are “rules to be learned and followed”. While paying little attention to issues of early literacy instruction (for instance the polarization that is caused by the top-down versus bottom-up controversy, cf. Section 3.1.3), especially since her focus rests more firmly on the reading development of older learners, Chall’s views on the matter are eclectic, and yet adequately explain the cyclical ebb and flow of stage transitions.

For the purposes of the study, the possibility of a Stage 2 to Stage 3 transition will be investigated with each interviewee. One of the keynotes will be the so-called ‘daring’ which is, according to Chall (1996:52), similar in nature but not in degree, to the daring required during the pre-reading phase. During this transition there must be some evidence of additional reading elements and refined decoding skills since the message is carrying greater emphasis than before and a requisite ‘openness’ is the ideal state in which to access the meaning of a text. Transitioning to Stage 3 centres on a return to the concentration required in Stage 1, but since the reader has already mastered basic decoding strategies, she must now actually learn to

⁵⁷ During the interviews, special attention will be paid to these aspects of the respondents’ reading experiences.

read for ‘new ideas and meanings’. Stage 4 reading development requires a swing away from structured learning to a new openness and this continues to Stage 5 when “courage and commitment to using the knowledge gained” becomes the essence of the reading phase.

In summary, then, it is argued that to attain a Stage 3 reading level (which is the level that should ideally be attained during secondary school), development in some of the following areas are required to have taken place, and each consequently constitutes a factor to be explored in the transitional reading experiences of the respondents:

- an increase in a background knowledge of a more sophisticated nature takes place
- cognitive development occurs, with an increase in the difficulty of concepts (also Vygotsky, 1998)
- changes in reading attitudes and strategies occur, in addition to the need for a higher level of reading skills, culminating in and driven by intrinsic motivation which is increasingly becoming more pronounced (Bandura, 1986; Covington, 2002; Schunk & Pajares, 2002; Wigfield & Eccles, 2002)
- evidence of either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation (Bandura, 1986; Covington & Dray, 2002; Wigfield & Eccles, 2002)
- an expansion of vocabulary and an increase in the use of low-frequency words
- a desire for more challenging textual material
- the learning of subject matter and the reading of textbooks, reference works and other non-fiction often taking precedence over fiction
- evidence of a respondent being mastery-oriented or failure-avoidant (Anderman *et al.* 2002; Covington & Dray, 2002; Wigfield & Eccles, 2002)
- evidence of a transfer from external to internal speech.

Implications of Stage 2 to Stage 3 transition on the voluntary reading habits of Grade Eight learners include the fact that a different kind of reading strategy is required as learners progress from Stage 2 to Stage 3 reading, which occurs in most cases as learners transfer from primary to secondary school. Reading skills have to be refined to accommodate ‘reading to learn’; more advanced reading skills are required for the more ‘advanced’ texts at secondary school. In addition, the ‘daring’ required for mastery of Stage 2 reading development can be

patently absent in learners with reading problems of whatever nature or a decline in reading interests. Ineffective reading strategies, fearful experiences with learning to read, a dearth of books in either home or school, physiological problems that affect learning to read and other adverse factors can prevent a learner from transitioning to a Stage 3 reading level.

During the transition from primary to secondary school, the learner must bring to books knowledge, experiences and input. This is a circular event: greater learner input is required and books can help greatly to extend these experiences for enrichment; the greater the knowledge and input, the more effective the transition. If a learner, then, has difficulty transitioning from Stage 2 because she has not adequately mastered the intricacies of accessing the ‘message’ in texts, it is clear that the more advanced skills required during Stage 3 will not be mastered adequately – and certainly not with pleasure.

The fact that there is a return to greater structure and concentration in Stage 3 reading, builds the case for continued reading instruction in secondary school. The more advanced reading skills required for the understanding of the dense texts and abstract concepts (cf. Table 4.1, page 123) of subject textbooks or more adult literature do not develop as ‘naturally’ as is hoped, especially not if learners lack high motivation, high cognitive and language development and come from environments that lack sufficient books and adequate early reading education. However, Chall (1996:53) argues that even children who come from homes with a plentiful supply of books, where they are greatly stimulated and who have experiences of individualized teaching, “appear to achieve better” when reading continues to be taught in a structured manner.

5.2.3 Empirical parameters

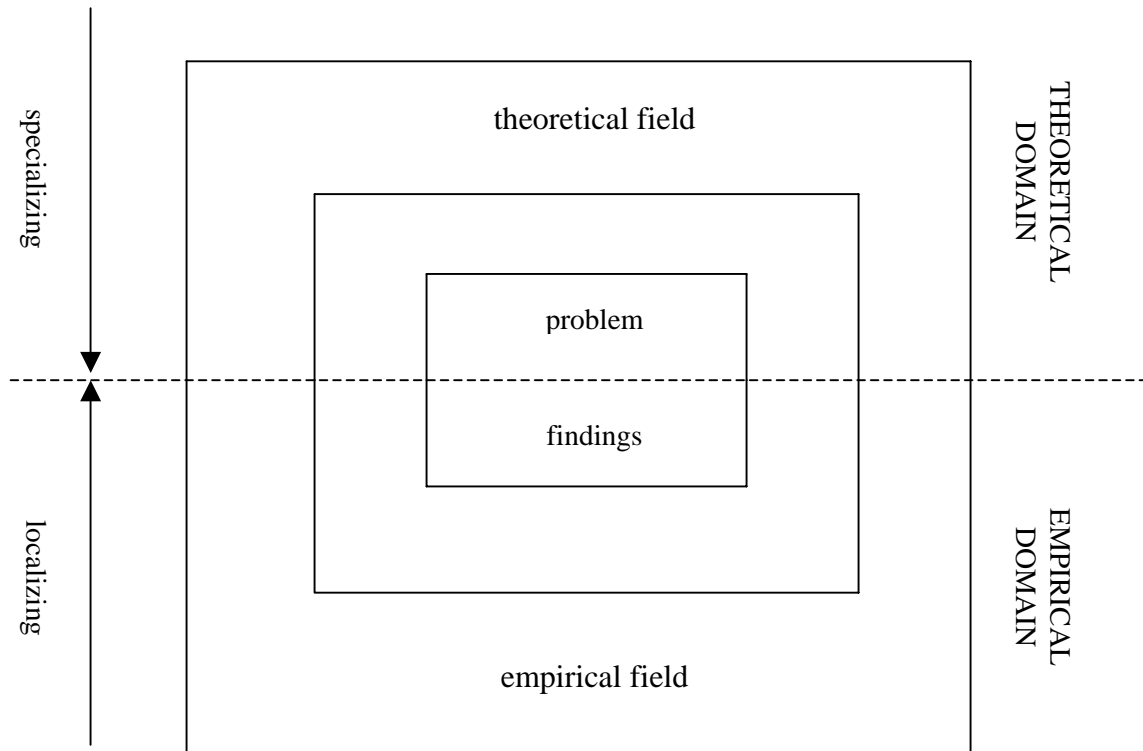
The research goal is to provide insight into the factors that influence the reading habits of early adolescents in their transition to secondary school. The negotiation of a transition to a Stage 3 reading level has now become part of the refined research problem. The designated research procedures are essentially a qualitative exploration and analysis in an interpretive narrative model.

Although this investigation was not a case study (according to the definition strictly applied by Henning *et al.*, 2004:32), various aspects of a case study model were employed, such as the purpose to explore, describe, analyse and interpret the unique experiences of ‘real individuals’ through accessible data as well as catch the complexity and ‘situatedness’ of, in this case, adolescent behaviour and experiences (Cohen *et al.*, 2000:78-79). The investigation, furthermore, focused on individual experiences in localized situations. The uniqueness of the respondents was a central facet of the study, in spite of the general pattern of experience stated in the research problem. The investigation was holistic and empathically inclined and the findings are non-interventionist. In-depth analysis led to description and interpretation, and although inferences were subjective, they were made from a knowledge-based perceptual frame as they sought a deeper understanding of a highly specific situation in which the defining aspect was respect for the uniqueness, individuality and particularity of each respondent.

The study was a qualitative, interpretive investigation. The literature review created the parameters of the theoretical domain, thereby identifying categories of experience, detecting patterns and trends and describing those adolescent experiences which have an impact on reading development. In the empirical domain the respondents’ reflections were explored in an attempt to trace elements of intrinsic motivation, qualitative change, internalized speech and interests. The data gathered through the processes of collection, organisation, and analysis, contributed to a better understanding of the factors influencing the reading of the Grade Eight learners. The close link between (to a certain extent almost a mirror image of) the theoretical and empirical fields is presented in Figure 5.2 (page 148).

According to Brown and Dowling (1998:98), data analysis is a dialogic process which involves moving between the empirical and theoretical fields. After soundly mapping the theoretical field through a literature review leading to a further refinement of the research problem, the empirical field opened up, paving the way for the data collection and subsequent

Figure 5. 2 Linking the theoretical and empirical fields



research findings. Figure 5.2 illustrates how the specialized inquiry of the theoretical domain is mirrored in the localizing investigation of the empirical domain. A refinement of the research problem facilitated the data collection, first providing ‘thin’ data which were enriched and contextualized to become thick descriptions which culminated in the findings of the investigation. It is furthermore clear from Figure 5.2 how cogently problem and findings correlate. Brown and Dowling (1998:98) contend that it is “only through this bringing together of the theoretical and empirical fields that the research is able to make more statements that extend in generality beyond its particular empirical setting”.

5.3 METHOD

5.3.1 Making method

The use of a (comparatively) retrospective methodology allowed the respondents to evaluate events from a perspective provided by the passage of time and the significance of earlier experiences can be weighed against present practices. This method differs from a traditional longitudinal study in which measurements can be repeated over a period of time and the opinions that are elicited each time are treated as independent events for comparison. A retrospective analysis such as this study is practicable because it is less time-consuming and therefore also less costly than a longitudinal study.

However, the very nature of reflection, which is used to great advantage in this study, also has its disadvantages. Early adolescents – as most other people – can certainly colour a past event affectively, or interpret, appraise or fictionalize experience for a number of reasons. Adolescence, by its very nature, is an emotionally changeable stage and the power of selective memory is ever-present in human life. Recalled experiences, therefore, may be less than ‘true’. Critics of this method may therefore distrust the data presented, considering with suspicion the evocation of events that may be partly forgotten or distorted through the lens of biased reminiscence. However, in its defense, Covington and Dray (2002:51) query pertinently:

But is not identifying and understanding the lens through which individuals perceive events and how these views change over time the proper pursuit of psychology? As long as educational planners are concerned with perceptions of reality as well as reality itself, retrospective methodology should provide an important complement to mainstream research techniques.

Although the investigation was only in a minimal sense retrospective, some distancing was already made possible by the fact that learners were expected to reflect on their experiences of the past year. This proved to be a salient feature of the research. Feelings about experiences are still recent enough to be recalled with some intensity, but some reflection, especially at this time of life, has already taken place too.

The respondents' intrinsic reasons for reading – and for reading more avidly, or less regularly, or exactly the same as always – are the main foci of this thesis. However, the teachers' management of reading activities in class and their encouragement of extrinsic motivation practices were inevitably also reflected in the responses. The study did not endeavour to link readers' motivation to their teachers' classroom practice beyond peripheral implications regarding policy and transitioning from primary to secondary school. The assumption that a distinct but unquantifiable shift in reading habits occurs during early adolescence lies at the heart of this research. A qualitative approach was selected because it better served to provide insight into the phenomenon of adolescent reading experiences by eliciting richer (narrative) responses, thereby (hopefully) revealing underlying factors and/or discourses. During face-to-face interviews with the respondents questions of an exploratory and descriptive nature were asked. By means of probing, respondents were encouraged to describe (narrate) and define their reading experiences.

5.3.2 More questions than answers

The pilot phase consisted of hour-long interviews with four respondents and enabled me to rehearse the format and effectiveness of the partially structured interviews. The questions were divided into three spheres with two sets of questions in each. The questions focused predominantly on three of the four domains of the theoretical framework (cf. Figures 1.2 and 6.2).

In spite of the central role of literacy, there was no direct probing in this domain – the teachers were relied on to select whom they considered to be avid and successful readers, and it can be safely assumed that literacy acquisition must therefore have taken place successfully. The three remaining domains, namely adolescence, voluntary reading and literature (specifically textual material), were the foci of the questions during the interviews. This refining came about after a reconsideration of the original interview agenda. During the four individual hour-long interviews of the pilot phase, I probed areas that later proved to have little bearing on the research problem, for instance, questions about siblings, their future careers or, fruitlessly

enough, favourite TV programmes. Reflection after the early interviews found little consistency and less consequence in these areas that have direct bearing on the research question. These areas, of course, are not in themselves meaningless; on the contrary, they can furnish much revelatory data, not only in other investigations, but also regarding aspects of the respondents' development, such as leisure activities, adolescent views on school, teachers or the opposite sex, or home influences on reading (and actually did, in some instances), but they were not sufficiently focused on the research problem to pursue in the actual interviews.

The pilot interviews commenced by assuring the learners that the interviews were completely confidential and that their views were not only respected, but essential. Their permission was obtained for the audio recording. Pleasantries were exchanged in the hope of putting the interviewees at their ease and informal questions were asked about pets, or the buses bringing them home from school or the novel experience of a hostel. Although a successful tactic, I later decided that the small talk took up too much valuable time and therefore limited these exchanges during the actual interviews.

The first set of questions concerned the respondents' experiences as they progressed from primary to secondary school. These questions were tested in the pilot interviews and remained a fixture during the later interview rounds. After an encouraging and safe start, the interviewees were most forthcoming in their answers, although the majority required additional probing later in the interview before more indications of qualitative change became evident.

Questions about class readers in school, serving as a link between the domains of literature and voluntary reading, and probes about the interviewees' likes and dislikes of prescribed books were highly rewarding. When reflecting on the responses, it was a pleasant surprise to have unintentionally found verification for the postulation that there are greater differences in the reading interests of boys and girls at this age than between the affluent and the disadvantaged, or the high-achieving or low-achieving learner (Du Toit, 2001; Jones, 1999; Palmer, 1995). This line of questioning, however, was not pursued as gender differences did not directly relate to the research question.

The third set of questions probed the learners' voluntary reading habits as an extension of their interests more pertinently. This line of questioning was above all directed by Vygotsky's tenet that "the key to the whole problem of the psychological development of the adolescent is the *problem of interests* during the transitional age" (1998:3). The responses obtained during the pilot study validated this line of questioning and were sufficiently edifying to keep unchanged on the interview agenda.

Questions honing in on the adolescent nature of their experiences had to be more circumspect. References to the cartoon character, Jeremy, who is the ubiquitous teenager, served as a harmless foil so that the interviewees could reflect on their own and their peers' so-called adolescent behaviour from a safe distance. It was assumed that the interviewees would be more forthcoming about their 'adolescent behaviour' in a whimsical manner than when asked about in a graver way. The following excerpt illustrates a typical exchange.⁵⁸

- RICHARD: We get the newspaper. We used to get it everyday, but now we only get it about three days a week. But if there is something interesting in it, I'll read it.
- CT: Good, what about the cartoons §
- R: >Yes, I read the // comics<
- CT: // Zitts⁵⁹, for instance.
- R: Yes. I read the comics.
- CT: Do you identify with Zitts §
- R: Yes (.) I sometimes think of myself when I read it.
- CT: I enjoy Zitts a lot. It is for me, as mother, a very good imitation (...) Can you tell me three things in which you are the same as Jeremy §
- R: I think (.) the most important thing is, my room and where I walk, is never neat. I think (.) I don't take life as seriously (...) and I also enjoy (.) .hhh just going with other people (.) to malls and parties and such things. Yes.
- CT: Good. And one more thing, you say you are not as serious as Jeremy. Is this a way of saying that you don't stress very much § Just look at how Jeremy stresses about his girlfriend //
- R: // Yes, mam. I don't have such a lot of stress. I (.) the only stress I will have (.) is when something goes wrong somewhere in the family > like someone is very ill or something < That is the only stress I have.

⁵⁸ For use of transcription symbols, cf. Section 5.4.2.

⁵⁹ *Zitts* is the title (used by the daily Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Beeld*) of a syndicated cartoon about a quintessential teenager called Jeremy.

- CT: And what about school stress, meaning homework. Too many assignments, a test in which you were disappointed.
- R: I would rather (.) > I wouldn't easily < (..)I must say personally that I do rather well. But if there is an assignment or something and I begin working on it late, then I would begin stressing and then (...) I would rather try to take short cuts than doing it well.
- CT: And how do you feel about that §
- R: It (.) then (.) then I think every time (..) next time I must start doing it early enough, and then (.) I think after the next assignment, I must start early enough.
- CT: And why don't you start it early enough §
- R: Because (..) then you (.) .hhhhhh get (.) come home in the afternoon and then you think, am I going to do my assignment or only my homework or my homework and my assignment, and perhaps I only do the homework { *Laughs shyly* }

This line of probing into the psychosocial and motivational behaviour proved most profitable and as can be seen in the above exchange, in addition to his responses to certain foibles of the cartoon character, which are also a reflection on what he perceived as his own, much was revealed about Richard's intrinsically motivated behaviour and experience of stress.

A fifth set of questions focused more pertinently on their interests in literature and continued from the earlier sets of questions which touched upon their voluntary reading habits and experiences of prescribed books in an attempt to find evidence of the process of Stage 2 to Stage 3 transitioning, internalised speech and extrinsic/intrinsic motivation regarding reading. A sixth set of questions attempted to continue probing for the manifestation of transitional and motivational factors and included plans for the future in the belief that this may reveal much. My first attempts were crude and I was duly informed by three respondents that such thinking was premature.

- TEBOGO: My best subject is maths. And my worst subject is (..) I really don't know § I think it is geography or German.
- CT: Is that so § OK, but maths, it's very nice to hear somebody saying maths is easy. What do you plan on becoming one day §
- T: I don't know . . . I still have to think about school.
- CT: Yes, it's still early.
- T: Ja (.) I must still think about school.

Because I was too careful of ethical considerations, and while not meaning to pry, I ended by not probing effectively (cf. the exchange with Therese, Section 6.3.2.3.1) and found little evidence of intrinsic motivation through this line of questioning. After reflecting on the unsatisfactory responses in this area during the pilot phase, I refined the interview agenda and included a preamble with a question about their experience of successful endeavours. All the respondents reacted favourably to this, and when this line of questioning was followed by a question about their experiences of failure and disappointment, the responses revealed a great deal about their motivational behaviour.

Clarity of focus was not pursued in the pilot study to the extent it should have been in a scientific study of this nature. Many of the questions, especially during the warm-up phase of the interview veered far away from the theoretical field, leaving crucial aspects of the research problem uninvestigated. It was clear that the actual interviews would require more effective probing since insufficient clarification of central aspects resulted from the pilot studies. A second weakness that became clear in the transcriptions of the pilot interviews, was that I prompted too often. This was a major failing since the prompt involved not only suggestions of possible responses but interrupted the spontaneity of the response. The following exceptionally telling snippet from an interview is emblematic of the kind of interviewing that had to be avoided during the actual investigation:

CT: Therese, what is your favourite subject §

THERESE: Accounting.

CT: Is that so § Do you want to become an accountant one day §

T: .hhhhh (..) I don't know (..) It (..) will be nice. If I can't do my work, I can always become an accountant.

CT: So, apart from becoming an accountant, what else do you wish to become §

T: A game warden.

CT: So, instead of working with people, you would choose being a game warden §

T: Yes.

CT: Would you say that you are more introverted than extroverted than the majority of children in your class §

T: hhhhhh (..) What does this mean §

CT: Do you like being alone §

T: Yes. Very.

CT: More or less the same as other children §

- T: Most kids in my class prefer to be part of little groups of friends (.) And then sometimes I am alone and sometimes I am with my best friend (..) So.
- CT: And you are comfortable with this §
- T: Yes.

During the actual interviews I took greater care to avoid interruptions and gave more careful consideration to answers of a more thoughtful nature. I had to learn to tolerate silences and not to *appear* to be judgmental, which, incidentally, was never the case. I also realized during the pilot interviews that I should limit background questions and questions of a demographic nature. During the interviews sensitive, empathic listening while maintaining a friendly informality overcame reticence in the shy learners. Questions during the actual interviews focused more closely on the crucial motivators and influences, as explicated in the theoretical study. Field notes as well as transcriptions of the audio recordings of the interviews facilitated the documentation of the learners' responses. The partially structured nature of the interviews enabled the researcher to adapt the questions, probes and prompts to the respondents' train of thought and to encourage the respondents to define and describe their experiences of reading.

Thus, by reflecting constantly on the interview agenda during and after the pilot interviews, I managed to refine the line of questioning and learnt how to probe more effectively while being exceedingly careful not to (wittingly) influence the responses. Most importantly, I had to learn to ride out the silences and not to fill them with small talk.

5.3.3 Selection of participants

During the research proposal and pilot study phases, I envisaged collecting data over a wide spectrum of reading behaviours to reflect an inclusive perspective on voluntary reading, necessitating a more extensive and representative sample of Grade Eight learners. I initially planned the inclusion of three groups of readers, namely avid, average and reluctant or disinterested readers. During the pilot phase, the principal of a primary school was approached with the documentation from the Gauteng Department of Education and the cooperation of his

Grade Seven language⁶⁰ teachers was elicited. They were consequently asked to select a critical-case sample of three groups of readers, namely two avid, two average and two disinterested readers.

However, it soon became clear after analyzing the interviews with the respondents in the pilot study that the only readers whose habits have bearing on the research problem are the avid or regular readers⁶¹. The reluctant and problem readers do not read if they can help it for a variety of reasons (for instance, dyslexia, a “threshold fear” of books, inadequate reading skills, a complete lack of interest, even a fear of being alone), none of which are relevant to the study, and the average reader has but a mild or distractible interest in reading. In the final selection, then, only children who were known by their teachers, or had declared themselves to their teachers, to be avid readers were selected as participants. The emphasis in the selection then fell solely on the able and enthusiastic reader.

For the final study, five schools in one district were selected to provide a sample of avid Grade Eight readers. The schools were selected from one district because they were conveniently situated, attracted approximately the same kind of learner, as well as each being representative of a certain kind of school, namely a mixed gendered, parallel medium school, in other words, a school with boys and girls from predominantly English and Afrikaans homes; secondly, a boys’ school with predominantly English-speaking learners; thirdly, a boys’ school with predominantly Afrikaans-speaking learners; fourthly, a girls’ school with predominantly Afrikaans-speaking learners, and finally, a girls’ school with predominantly English-speaking learners.

Purposive sampling strategies were employed since a smaller, critical-case sample was considered to supply more in-depth, information-rich experiences of the individual experiences and preferences of Grade Eight learners could be investigated. The language

⁶⁰ The language teachers taught English and Afrikaans but no further official languages were included in the investigation.

⁶¹ The pilot study made clear that the so-called reluctant readers would do well with a research project all their own. There would be great similarities between such a study and the current one, but the differences proved too great for the present study’s narrow focus on avid reading.

teachers were asked to nominate Grade Eight learners who displayed salient reading habits and who were known to be enthusiastic readers. The teachers' continuous assessment and observation of their learners' reading skills in class and of reports of their reading habits after school hours, as well as informal conversations with the learners and their parents, informed the teachers' selection of suitable participants.

The transition from primary to secondary school has been shown to bring about much upheaval and change in various aspects of a learner's life. The interviews were conducted after approximately six months had been spent in secondary school, believing this to be a sufficient period for some distancing, as well as recent enough for transitional experiences to still be fresh in their minds. Many questions in the interviews centred on the changes the respondents had experienced in the approximately six-month period. The advantage of a qualitative inquiry over the quantitative research done in this field facilitated in-depth insights into the roots of their experiences. Establishing rapport with the learners, ensuring them of the confidentiality of the interviews and respecting their views, encouraged them to reveal sincere opinions and give an honest assessment of their reading experiences.

The participants were in most cases identified as having individual (as opposed to situational or occasional) motivation for reading (Covington & Dray, 2002:34; Schunk & Pajares, 2002:20). Although the teachers were merely requested to nominate avid readers, it is significant to find that, with one exception, the respondents were mastery-oriented learners who achieved well, or at least, above-average, both at primary and now secondary school. Numerous studies on avidly reading children have shown a high correlation between voluntary reading practices and high achievement at school, but this did not form part of the study and this avenue was consequently not pursued.

The fact that the study consisted of qualitative, individualised interviews ruled out generalisability. The study was conducted with a non-probability sample in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population, it simply represents itself (Cohen *et al.*, 2000:12). Interviews with ten respondents were conducted, and in order to become truly familiar with the responses, I transcribed the interviews myself. I strove to guard against

personal bias, especially during the interviews, but possibly the frequency of oblique and direct questions about reading activities did not leave the learners in much doubt as to my own stance regarding the value of recreational reading.

Partially structured ⁶² interviews were conducted – with the structure here implying the general purpose which was brought to bear on the interviews. Although there was much variance regarding aspects of the respondents' experience (and consequently a probing of these individual pursuits), the introduction and warm-up questions, the methodological selections (such as the fact that the interviews were conducted during the respondents' hours of leisure), the procedure and the sequence of questions were the same with each interview.

The interviews took place after school hours, as ordained by the Gauteng Department of Education. Although the original intention was that the interviewing should not interfere with the learners' schoolwork, the proscription turned out to have very happy consequences. The fact that most of the interviews were conducted in the respondents' homes over weekends was conducive to creating a leisurely ambience. In four cases the interviews were conducted after school hours, but still on the school premises, as the learners were hostel boarders. Since an empty classroom in a deserted corridor was not an ideal location to reinforce the concept of leisure, as was the case in weekend interviews at respondents' homes, I took great care to enhance the informality of each interview.

The weekend respondents were very much at home (in both senses of the word) and responded confidently and enthusiastically. Since the investigation concerned leisure reading habits, it was also a happy coincidence to have the majority of respondents removed from the classroom where they may have subconsciously been too easily reminded of their prescribed texts; the main focus of the study, after all, being the leisure reading habits of early adolescents, which

⁶² Partially structured interviews differ from semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews as follows: semi-structured interviews follow a pre-determined order and remain the same for each respondent. Unstructured interviews are better suited to exploratory studies and may change focus to pursue interests as they unfold in the course of the interaction. Partially structured interviews operate within a broad framework with questions that have been formulated beforehand and remain the same for all respondents, but the ordering and weighting of questions are flexible as the respondents' interests develop. An investigation of learner interests is one of the key aspects of this study.

may include subject-related reading but in most cases represented voluntary reading activities. In all cases the learners warmed to the situation within a couple of minutes. The presence of the audio-recorder did not appear inhibiting after they were reassured of the confidentiality of the interview. At home the parents and family members moved around the house as usual and this added to the respondents' feeling of security. The playground noises and the sound of the school orchestra rehearsing in the hall could only have been reassuring to the interviewees who were met after school hours.

Since numerous surveys have shown that the majority of adolescent learners indicate some shifts in their reading experiences after progressing to secondary school (Du Toit, 2001; Henne, 1949; Houghton-Hawksley, 1985; Whitehead *et al.*, 1977), the study focused essentially on the period during which the learners' reading is affected by the factors so far reported in the extant literature.

It is interesting to note that in all qualitative interviews the age of the respondents plays a major role. In one of the earliest studies on reading habits, (however, in this case a quantitative survey conducted in 1921 by Jordan (Whitehead *et al.*, 1977:2), this was taken into account. The researcher seems to have been well aware of the difficulty of obtaining 'trustworthy' data from the responses of children. The questionnaire survey had therefore been 'supplemented' by additional data from public libraries and 'popularity scores'. This, of course, was not the case in the interviews conducted in this study. The learners were all twelve or thirteen years (and some months) of age. Some were quite loquacious, others were more thoughtful before responding, but none was reticent about his or her reading habits, possibly because they knew their views were respected and the questions were experienced as non-judgmental and non-threatening.

5.3.4 Instruments of measurement

The main instrument of measurement in this qualitative study was, of course, the researcher herself. Secondly, lying at the heart of the instruments of measurement, were the personal

constructs by means of which the respondents made sense of their reading experiences. To this end, key elements were firstly identified from the responses during the pilot studies and these were correlated with the theoretical framework. Three of the four domains of the theoretical framework (cf. Figure 1.2) provided the basis for the selection of a set of elements, namely adolescence, literature and the activity of voluntary reading.⁶³ The similarity or difference in the way in which these elements were described formed the first level of experience, for instance:

The respondent experiences

- *reading as pleasant/ reading as unpleasant or best avoided*
- *reading as beneficial / reading as having little to offer*
- *reading as useful / reading as useless or meaningless*
- *reading as different in some aspects in primary school / the same as in primary school.*

These relative bi-polar opposites formed the first level of constructs which have bearing on the domain of the voluntary reading experiences of the respondents. The psychosocial dimension is represented by items such as the following:

The respondent perceives an awareness of (to the extent of)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| • <i>internalised speech</i> | <i>not at all / somewhat / exceedingly</i> |
| • <i>success-oriented motivation</i> | <i>not at all / somewhat / exceedingly</i> |
| • <i>intrinsic motivation</i> | <i>not at all / somewhat / exceedingly</i> |
| • <i>mastery learning</i> | <i>not at all / somewhat / exceedingly</i> |

Another dimension, namely transition (cf. Section 4.3.2), linked with all four domains and consequently provided an additional set of elements as an answer to questions about, for instance:

*shifts in perspectives / habits / views / choices occurred regarding
reading experiences
leisure activities
peer influence*

⁶³ The fourth domain, namely the acquisition and teaching of literacy, is, of course, basic to the last two domains, but it is hardly a sphere of which adolescents are expected to display an awareness, let alone an informed understanding. The study did not attempt to link the respondents' literacy acquisition with the enthusiasm they now display in their voluntary reading habits. In other studies this is possible, and may even be valuable, but teachers and policy makers will then have to become part of the equation.

*teaching strategies (especially regarding reading)
views of life/ future / society.*

To reiterate: the succinct description given by Henning *et al.* (2004:10) is applicable here too, namely that the first instrument of research in qualitative research is the human mind, as is their warning that just because interviews had been conducted, after which they were transcribed and coded in order to be categorised, does not imply that one is a competent researcher.

5.3.5 Data collection

5.3.5.1 The respondents

One of the most invigorating aspects of the study, albeit a challenging one, was the fact that the research participants were early adolescents, whose very nature is considered to be, amongst others, volatile, marked by rapid growth, erratic psychosocial development and heightened cognitive awareness. The fact that their self-identity is in the process of being developed, that they struggle to make meaning of their new experiences, that they are forced to craft a new peer group during the first months at secondary school, are all factors that add to their complexity. It was therefore imperative that I attempt to understand their experiences from the perspective of this complexity.

The population from which this sample of learners was drawn is hardly representative of the vast majority of adolescent readers in South Africa. Not only were they early adolescents, but already highly selected ones at that since they were selected by their teachers who considered them avid or successful readers. Not only were they deemed superior or at least above average regarding their reading ability, they also came from homes sufficiently functional and affluent to make reading a viable option. Of course, as stated before, this was the ideal group to include in the investigation. Only effective readers would choose recreational reading as a preferred leisure activity. Only learners who have the luxury of leisure can voluntarily regard reading as an option. Academically successful learners more readily appreciate the rewards contingent on reading. Intrinsically motivated readers are more susceptible to the charms of a solitary

activity such as recreational reading. In many cases, the respondents came from homes in which learning for its own sake is valued highly.

To protect the respondents' identity, they were given fictitious names from the second phase of data analysis onward (cf. Section 5.3.4.2). In two cases some aspects of the circumstances in the interviewee's home and the occupation of a parent were adapted for increased confidentiality. The ten research participants are identified by the following nom-de-plumes⁶⁴: Arthur, David, Iris, Mary, Nina, Richard, Simpiwe, Therese, Wayne and Zelda.

5.3.5.2 The interviews

The interviews with the respondents were certainly the most pleasant and exciting, if most challenging, aspects of the study. Many issues, in addition to the usual ethical considerations, had to be uppermost in my mind during the interviews, such as the fact that qualitative research is also essentially a deeply relational process and, therefore, whether I intended this or not, a powerful intervention (San Antonio, 2004:44).

My role as interviewer, therefore, was a dual one. Firstly, as the unknown 'professional' outsider who asked questions according to an agenda and audiotaped the responses, the researcher might have appeared daunting at first. To counter this perception, I took pains to reassure the respondents that there were no ramifications for him or her beyond this single interview, no expectations of right and wrong answers, and that their opinions and experiences were unique and respected for that reason. A certain 'insider' perception of the interviewer may also have arisen since it became clear to the respondents that the researcher had sufficient knowledge of their environment to have understanding, if not empathy, for their experiences and points of view. Thus, the interviewees and researcher worked in an interrelated, dialogical fashion, with the researcher attempting to understand how each interviewee thought and experienced voluntary reading and transitional factors. I attempted to elicit sincere and thoughtful responses from the interviewees, instead of trivial answers to questions just because

⁶⁴ In the transcriptions the first letter of the respondents' name was used, with the researcher's initials, CT.

they were asked. Through exploration of the respondents' beliefs, values and attitudes concerning voluntary reading, the role of transitioning from primary to secondary school and their experiences of adolescence, I attempted to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of reading in their lives at an important time in their school careers.

Since, according to Brown and Dowling (1998:74), there is no such location as a neutral one, "nor are there hard and fast rules for determining the effects of location" these interviews were best held in a location in which the Grade Eight learners felt at home – the study, after all, was about *leisure* reading, and although the study is indirectly concerned with the role played by the school and teachers in the reading experience, it was a salient feature of the home-based interviews that the respondents saw themselves as individuals first and learners second. Ecological validity was thus attempted by face-to-face interviews in a natural, and when possible, home-based setting. Unfortunately this was not feasible in all cases, for instance, four hostel boarders could only be interviewed at school. I tried to overcome the problem of the learners' being conscious of the classroom surroundings by spending more time on informal warm-up questions. I also made every effort to appear neither authorial nor didactic, to encourage the learners to verbalize what they sincerely thought, and not what they imagined their teachers or the researcher would like to hear. To maximize credibility the questions were phrased in such a way to ensure that each interviewee understood them in the same way as the others.

The interview commenced with the researcher explaining the purpose of the research and emphasizing respect for their opinions and experiences. This also minimized the Hawthorne effect (Cohen *et al.*, 2000:127), in other words, the researcher took care not to let the respondents feel they were 'guinea pigs'. I also endeavoured to ask questions as unambiguously as possible. They were consequently short and explicit. I kept prompts to the minimum (as opposed to my interviewing technique during the pilot phase, cf. Section 5.3.2) since I wanted to refrain from leading the respondents in their answers.

By using sets of questions, rather than an individual item pertaining to a single facet of reading, authenticity was increased. A set of items on the same phenomenon reduced

unintentional bias and elicited a valuable multi-faceted response. However, it was also important to keep in mind that the responses to the multiplicity of questions on a single theme had to be combined again so that the set as a whole could be considered as a reflection of one item.

The questions had to be carefully phrased, since wording is a crucially important factor in attitudinal probing. For this reason the interviews were partially structured. The procedure and sequence of the interview agenda remained essentially the same for all respondents, and questioning only changed when learners' specific circumstances, for instance, highly individualized leisure activities, necessitated it. The following interchanges illustrate the range of responses to the same question:

CT: And how have your reading habits changed from last year till now §

NINA: .hhhh I'm not sure (.) This year I am so very busy with assignments and so on. But Sundays are my rest days. Then (.) then, it is the day I read. But this year, in the holidays, we had many camps and so on. But I read when I get the time. But I can't really say (.) I am so busy this year (.) So many things on (.)

CT: You have now, in the past six months, gone from primary to secondary school. How have your reading habits changed from last year till now §

MARY: It was very different at first. There were only girls at first. But you got used to it later. It's actually much more relaxed. You're no longer . . . wondering what boys are thinking about you.

CT: Please tell me (.) how has your reading changed from primary to high school §

ARTHUR: hhhhh (.) it's a lot more work. And now that I ride to school on my own (..) so, I can't go to the library as easily as when my mother picked me up after school (..) So (.) Yes, so I read far less (..) but I still like reading (..) So this didn't change. And the high school I go to is very, very much bigger than the primary school I went to. So this is also a big difference.

Nina's responses after this interchange centred on an increased workload, and how this influenced her voluntary reading. It is interesting to note that Mary paid more attention to the difference in schools than on reflecting on her reading habits. Arthur described how he missed visiting the neighbourhood library every day after school and in the rest of the exchange went on to comment on the differences in the ambience and socializing at his secondary school.

The interviews were audiotaped to reflect as accurately as possible what transpired during the meetings. To record fine nuances and make subtle distinctions, in addition to familiarizing myself completely with the interview texts, I transcribed the interviews myself. The value of the interviews ultimately rests on the richness, specificity, spontaneity, sincerity and relevance of the answers elicited by the selection of questions.

5.4 DATA ANALYSIS

5.4.1 The process of data analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is succinctly described by Henning *et al.* (2004:127) as an ongoing, emerging, iterative and non-linear process. Here it took place in five phases, namely verbatim transcription, first level transcription analysis, second level theme-based analysis, thick descriptions and, finally, meaning-generating interpretation (which are discussed at greater length in the following subsections).

5.4.2 Transcriptions

Transcribing interviews is a deceptively simple activity, but in actual fact this is a procedure fraught with errors, distortions and loss. I had to take great care to avoid the many pitfalls and reduce the limitations of this kind of record keeping of interviews that were dynamic social experiences between the respondents and interviewer. If the spontaneity and animation of a face-to-face encounter is hard enough to capture on video, it is clear that a transcription of an audiorecording is in many ways even more limiting. As a mere verbatim record of spoken language, a transcription is highly selective, neglecting non-verbal aspects of communication although capable of distinctive vocal nuances. One of the reasons for this is that oral, intrapersonal and interpersonal interchanges are translated into another system, namely written language, in a format that does not favour paralinguistic signifiers.

Some qualitative researchers present the verbatim transcriptions in a collated, classified and theme-based format as a positivistic and definitive ‘explanation’ of a research problem. According to Henning *et al.* (2004:7), such ‘thin descriptions’ are the result of the mistaken belief that “the data alone are the carrier of meaning, as if the researcher has not in any way ‘contaminated’ (interpreted) it”. Here, however, although it is listed as an almost pre-interpretive instrument, the transcriptions of the interviews are regarded as already interpreted data, another clear indication that the researcher incontestably remains the main instrument of research, and that meaning has to be made from the data before it can be presented in the form of findings.

I attempted to overcome some inefficiencies of verbatim transcription by transcribing the audio-recorded interview as soon as possible after the event, while the interviewee’s tone of voice, mood, inflections and gestures were still fresh in my memory. Secondly, I returned frequently to the field notes written directly after each interview. Thirdly, I listened to the whole interview a number of times to check the accuracy of the transcribed version.

Traditional punctuation marks, such as commas (for instance indicating a continuation of a thought or an enumeration of items) and full stops (indicating a stopping of a thought unit, often accompanied by a fall in the tone of voice) were used to transcribe the spoken words according to the courtesies of good writing. However, to accurately represent a dynamic conversation, additional notes and marks were used to signify supralingual communication. For instance, descriptions in parentheses could, to a certain extent, describe the emotions and attitudes that do not as readily find their way into a verbal presentation of dialogue only. Comments in brackets, e.g. {{*Laughs*}}, {{*Hesitates*}} or {{*Holds his head in mock despair*}}, attempt to add a richness to the verbatim text. In addition, transcription symbols favoured by Silverman (2001:303) and Henning *et al.* (2004:162) were adopted and adapted to notate participants’ non-verbal or extra-communicative expressions. The transcription symbols used in this study are explained in Figure 5.3 (page 167). The transcriptions of the interviews indicate the wide range of highly individualized communicative expressions, ranging from careful, even monotone responses to rather animated answers accompanied by idiomatic interjections and animated, even musical articulations.

Figure 5. 3 Transcription symbols

Symbol	Use in transcription	Explanation
//	CT: <i>quite a // while</i> N: <i>// yes, I thought I would</i>	Double slashes indicate the point at which a current speaker's talk is overlapped by another's talk; or an interruption
=	CT: <i>that I'm aware of =</i> N: <i>= Quite. I can confirm that</i>	Equal signs, one at end of a line and one at the beginning, indicate no gap between the two lines; immediately following
(.)	CT: <i>I'm not always (.) happy with the situation</i>	A dot in parentheses indicates a tiny gap
(. .)	CT: <i>It's not that I (. .) hate my stepmom</i>	A slightly longer pause
(. . .)	CT: <i>I (. . .) well, I don't know what to think</i>	A longish pause
—	<i>I would <u>never</u> do that</i>	Underscoring indicates some form of stress, via pitch and/or amplitude
.hhhh hhhh	.hhhhh <i>I don't know</i> hhhhh <i>that I never, I swear</i>	A row of h's preceded by a dot indicates either an in- or outbreath. Without a dot, an outbreath is suggested. The length of the row of h's indicates the length of the exclamation.
()	<i>I thought that I () and then went ()</i>	Empty parentheses indicate transcriber's inability to hear what was said.
(word)	<i>I must have read two (thousand) books over the holiday</i>	Parenthesized words are possibilities for inaudible words
{{ }}	<i>I don't know {{shrugs and laughs}}</i>	Double parentheses contain author's description of paralinguistic communication. This is highly subjective, and being the transcriber's interpretation of an action, attitude or gesture, is always open to another explanation.
> <	<i>I fell for him > just like that <</i>	Shows dialogue that is noticeably faster than surrounding talk
§	<i>Why do you say that §</i>	Indicates a rising intonation; usually in lieu of a question mark.
Repeated letters	<i>I said no-o-o-o-o- way</i>	A repetition of a sound, usually used for emphasis.

The following transcription serves as an example of the use of the above transcription symbols:

- CT: > OK < Now I want us to go back to last year in Grade Seven again. Apart from the girls (..) not being in the class, apart from you still being very cheeky, are there other differences between Grade Seven and Grade Eight that you can think of §
- S: The education (.) The naughtiness of the classes //
- CT: // Yea § //
- S: // The loudness (..)
- CT: Yea § OK, let's first take (.) education. How did this differ §
- S: § JA § In Grade Seven (..) it's a bit simpler. When you're in Grade Seven it's like .hhhh it's hard. When you're in Grade Eight, it's like §§§ .hhhh that was easy. And now in Grade Eight, .hhhh this is haa-a-a-a-rd.
- CT: Is it a lot of work §
- S: §Ja § ja, it's a lot, mam. *{{Nods emphatically}}*
- CT: Much, much more than Grade Seven §
- S: Hmm § Hmm §

Transcription of the interviews was a time-consuming but ultimately highly rewarding endeavour. Repeated listening to an interview and consultation of the field notes that were written directly afterward an interview helped to make the transcription as truthful and reliable as possible.

The field notes were journal entries containing reflection from the beginning of the research process and proved to be an invaluable process for a variety of reasons, for instance, for plotting a future course of action, a very brief report of a new discovery, or reflecting on interpretations. The field notes were especially valuable as a supra-linguistic record of an interview. They were also an eclectic combination of exacting academic notes and intensely personal reflection. Three extracts from the field notes hint at differences in the tone of the entries:

Saturday morning; 17 July, 11:00. Therese's home in (suburb x). A leafy suburb in an older part of the city that has become fashionable with trendy people. Therese, a slight but confident, though unassuming girl, has a dancer's posture and litheness. She is dressed in a tracksuit and sits on the edge of her chair; I'm sure she isn't nervous, but does so because she must be regularly told that a dancer sits with a straight back, feet carefully placed, never with legs crossed (varicose veins!). The interview was conducted in the lounge of her parents' home. On a table to one side of the room a vast array of trophies, cups and medals are displayed, consisting of Therese's and her sister's dancing awards and her father's plenteous decorations for athletics. Casually spread out on another table, as if someone has just been paging through them, or is ready to share the memories contained in them, are albums full of photographs and mementoes of the sisters' significant occasions and activities, mostly as dancers. Therese is soft-spoken but speaks with conviction and few hesitations. The door to the kitchen is slightly ajar, and the clink of cups and saucers is heard from time to time. I am quite touched by the fact that the other members of the family take care not to interrupt the interview and speak to each other in hushed tones in the kitchen.

.....

21 April

More and more Vygotsky. Friend Luria, who's quite entertaining (the thing about the hammer, the sickle, the saw and the grain of wheat!) Must remember the following: Piaget was a molecular biologist first, he worked rather sloppily, changing what he believed often, lived to a ripe old age, interested in many things. Vyg died early (36. Like Mozart and Schubert. Alexander even earlier. Van Gogh?). Great scientist, work has not only consistency but logic Also, his concepts have empirical validity. Manion, Cohen on triangulation etc.? Spoke to mother of (learner x). Next Saturday. Other parents more than accommodating. Wonder why.

.....

Thursday, 5 August. 15:00. Over the phone Zelda's mother indicated that her daughter would be home already. Security gate open when I arrive. Zelda unlocks the front door; still in her school uniform. A latchkey kid. Well-spoken, pretty, dark-haired girl. We sit in a small dining-room at the table, homework spread out all over. Zelda is confident, mature, a good communicator. Some photographs of her and her mother on a side table. She watches, interested, as I fiddle with the tape recorder. I flatter myself to think that I put her at her ease and assure her of my harmlessness by telling her that I have three children, slightly older than her. She repeatedly mentions that she is often alone, but prefers her own company to superficial acquaintances. When she speaks of leisure reading, she curiously waves her right hand in the direction of the stairs, presumably to indicate her room on the second storey of this duplex flat, possibly associating book choice with time spent reading on her own there. I now remember I didn't ask about it, though.

5.4.3 Further analytic procedures

The second phase of the data analysis, namely a meticulous first level transcription analysis, was essentially a critical study of the interview data, consisting of a reflective and initial interpretive procedure during which the individual transcriptions were systematically combed for revelatory responses. A thorough scrutiny of all verbalised – and non-verbalised – communication enabled specific units of meaning and themes to emerge. Redundancies, such as repeated mannerisms⁶⁵ or answers to (irrelevant) questions during the warm-up were deleted from the copied version of each transcription. Codes were then applied after repeated readings of each interview according to the system explicated in Figure 5.4:

Figure 5. 4 Coding applied during the second and third phase

Code	Abbreviation	
Adolescence	ADC	widely encompassing aspects of their experience
Difference – transitional	DIFPRIM	The difference between primary and secondary school
Dislike	DISLIKE	reluctant reading, rather than problem reading
Emotion	EMOT	expression of emotion, especially related to reading or school
Failure avoidant	FAILVOID	aspect of motivation
Future	FUTURE	future career plans
Gender		experiences of gender
Home influences	HOME	mainly regarding reading habits, models and leisure pursuits
Internalised speech	INTERSPEEC	evidence of the transition from external to internal speech
Internet use	IT	Internet use, both for school assignments and leisure
Intrinsic motivation	INTRINMOT	an aspect of motivation
Leisure	LES	use of leisure time; choice of leisure pursuits
Library	LIBRARY	use of provincial, public or school library

⁶⁵ For instance, although a very articulate communicator, Arthur started well-nigh every answer with “Yes”, and used it often in mid-sentence, too. Mary “hmmm-ed” even at times that she was quite animated.

Literature	LIT	all manner of texts, prescribed, higher order, series, nonfiction
Mastery learning	MASLEARN	aspect of motivation
Motivation	MOT	explicitly describing reading or learning motivation
Peers	PEERS	both influences and experiences of peers
Primary school	PRIM	activities exclusively done at primary school; definite differences
Psychosocial	PSYSO	opinions and experiences denoting the psychosocial dimension
Reading pleasure	PLEAS	evidence of ludic reading
Reward	REWARD	extrinsic rewards
School	SCHOOL	school-related matters; such as schedules, initiation
Self-efficacy	S-E	evidence of self-efficacious behaviour
Social	SOC	including aspects of the psychosocial dimension
Stages	STAGES	evidence of Stage 2/3 transition
Success-oriented	SUCOR	aspect of motivation
Teach	TEACH	experience of teaching strategies, especially regarding reading
Time	TIME	especially time constraints
Transition	TRANS	transitional experiences, including difference between primary and secondary school
Value	VALUE	perception of reading as beneficial or useless
Work – school	WORK	especially the difference in workload from primary school

The third phase of the data analysis process consisted of second level, theme-based analysis employing the concentrated constructs of the first level analysed and coded transcriptions. It was essentially a pattern-finding process with thematic generalising and classification of categories within the data. Clustering units of interrelated meaning were generated by collating and factorising coded responses, now no longer individually, as during the first level analysis, but thematically. The results of the second level analysis, namely the creation of logical chains of evidence, were compared to the thick descriptions of each respondent, to contextualise the themes, to enrich the data, as well as to serve as a validity check. The systematic refinement of the third phase of the analytic process produced a focused matrix of coherent constructs to facilitate the uncovering of rich layers of meaning in the respondents’

descriptions of their experiences and views. Meaningful segments were identified and then factorised into major themes.

The fourth phase, consisting of meaning-generating interpretation of the data, aimed for the eventual attainment of conceptual/ theoretical coherence (cf. Figure 5.2) and the creation of authentic constructs (phase five) with which to understand and explain the research problem.

5.4.4 Analysis and synthesis

To illustrate the analytic process from raw data to coherent constructs, the following may serve as examples (the fifth and final phase forms the bulk of Chapter Six and is not presented here). In the first exchange, Nina is describing her reading experiences at primary school (which had changed considerably as she entered secondary school). The following process represents a first level transcription analysis of an individual respondent with the codes in bold letters:

- CT: Do your brother and sister read as much as you do § **HOME**
 N: Yes {{Laughs}} When I was, like in Grade Two, they were the bookworms. I really didn't like to read then. **DISLIKE**. Like my father. **HOME**. But my mother loves to read. But then (.) so. Grade Four, Grade Five (.) I started reading a lot. **STAGE**
 CT: What was happening in school as you started to like reading § **SCHOOL PLEAS**
 N: hhhh My brother and sister (...) I saw them reading **HOME PLEAS**

Second level analysis entailed the bringing together of all the themes gleaned from each interview. The responses were collated from all the interviews as descriptions of how the respondents experienced a certain phenomenon. The data from the interviewees' responses were analysed interpretatively, tracing similarities and differences in their experiences and opinions to facilitate the finding of patterns. The following example illustrates a second level thematic analysis with responses to the question: "*How did you feel when you first arrived in secondary school, compared to your experiences of primary school?*" Several codes were

applied to the following interchanges, resulting in various clusters. In the following example they were collated as the factor *transition*⁶⁶:

MARY: .hhhhh You learn things more easily. There aren't boys now to distract your attention (...) And the teachers can spend more time with you, because there aren't boys who (.) misbehave. You don't mind (...) there aren't boys to hear what you are saying (...) Well, many of the boys were very naughty in class, and they would do anything just to make the teachers angry. They wouldn't do their homework, or talk too much in class. Worry other people (.) Yes.

THERESE: .hhh when I got here I felt I'm glad to be in a new school, in high school, and (...) but as things changed, the teachers in primary school always called you by name and now you are § little Grade Eight girl§, and so on (...)

CT: Yes (.) You were an important {{jokingly}} Grade Seven (...) everybody looked up to you //

T: // yes, now everybody looks down on you (..) they don't look as if (...) you are now a prefect or anything

Synthesis of the third phase process entailed a more systematic coding and clustering of the analysed data. Both common and highly individualised themes were identified and coded at this stage, as demonstrated in Figure 5.5:

Figure 5. 5 Synthesizing third phase analysis

TEXT	CODE	CLUSTER
You learn things more easily. There aren't boys to distract attention. Teachers spend more time with you, because there aren't boys who misbehave. You don't mind. There aren't boys to hear what you are saying. Many boys were very naughty in class, would do anything just to make the teachers angry. They wouldn't do their homework. They talk too much in class. Worry other people.	MOT GEND TEACH S-E EMOT ADC PEERS PSYSO	Transition
I'm glad to be in a new school, in high school. Things changed. Teachers in primary school always called you by name and now you are	DIFPRIM TEACH EMOT	Transition

⁶⁶ The same interchange can reveal experiences and attitudes that are coded variously. For instance, in Mary's response here, *gender* and *peers* are coded in addition to *transition*.

little Grade Eight girl. Now everybody looks down on you. You are no longer for instance prefect.	S-E PSYSO REWARD PRIM	
---	--------------------------------	--

The following two extracts serve as examples of the thick descriptions that constituted the fourth phase of data analysis. This phase was essentially also a test of construct validity since it attempted to balance the individual's thick description against the thematically analysed third phase construct. Whereas the field notes are characterized by immediacy and spontaneity since they were written directly after the interviews with the respondents, the thick descriptions typically display hindsight and careful consideration of the analysed transcripts.⁶⁷

***ARTHUR:** Mixed-gendered school. Thirteen years and one month.*

Arthur has been identified by his primary school's Grade Seven language teachers as an enthusiastic reader. No further information was solicited or supplied. Having received permission from his parents, I conducted the interview with him on a Saturday morning in his home, which was a salient decision, since the leisurely nature of voluntary reading was emphasized.

The father who meets me at the door seems pleased with the fact that his son has been selected and is very interested in the investigation. He reads the GDE letter with great interest after taking us through to the dining room. He talks informally and intelligently about his work (he is a computer analyst) and the problems with Internet bandwidth, and upon leaving the dining room with his daughter unsolicitedly tells Arthur to answer my questions openly and honestly. Arthur's description of his family as a close-knit one is corroborated by many the activities taking place around the dining room, including the mother's and siblings' movements about the house. Arthur continually refers to family events, and in addition to spending a lot of time together at home, the family also do horse-riding and cycling during holidays and over weekends.

Although the interview hones in on his reading habits, it is evident that Arthur is a very busy boy with many pursuits and a small number of close friends. He achieved well at primary school and although no Grade Eight semester marks have been made available at the time of the interview and general academic achievement formed no part of the research problem, he is clearly achieving well enough and with some ease again. Arthur has the characteristics of a mastery-oriented learner who enjoys widening his general knowledge to satisfy a natural curiosity. He works hard at his schoolwork but experiences little tension in this regard. He understands that high achievement is

⁶⁷ The fact that the historic present tense is used for the thick descriptions paradoxically reduces instead of enhancing the immediacy of the thick description.

brought about by conscientious study habits. He is also intrinsically motivated. Arthur appears confident about his school performance and seemingly unaware that he is a far above-average reader since reading for him is a well-developed interest. His is also a “literate intelligence” and it is clear that his reading and writing have changed qualitatively during the transition with more non-fiction books read voluntarily, as is predicted for mastery-oriented and intrinsically motivated learners. With his father’s influence and interests he has become exceedingly au fait with all uses of the computer and at this early stage predicts for himself a career in computers. That he has developed well cognitively can be attributed to a number of environmental and character factors.

Although Arthur achieves well at school and is obviously highly self-efficacious in most aspects of his life, he displays no arrogance. It is as if he does not realize that he is unusual. He attributes the fact that he achieves well to his ability to work hard and consistently. A full programme does not create tension in his life or his home. Since he is intrinsically motivated and mastery-oriented, it is possible that he will maintain a life-long interest for reading.

Arthur often goes with his mother to the library and went there regularly after school while at primary school. Arthur is certainly an enthusiastic reader. He mentions that he can read up to twelve books a week and this is borne out by his easy references to authors and titles of books he has read. His love for books is shared by his father and mother. I unfortunately did not ask him whether his parents read aloud to him when he was smaller. He is the eldest of three children. That Arthur cited reading first in describing his favourite subjects is consistent with research findings that report that young children are more likely to first shift attention, recognize, and recall contents of well-developed individual interest as opposed to contents of less-developed interest. Arthur’s case is a clear example of the self-efficacious and intrinsically motivated reader for whom voluntary reading is not only a pleasant recreational activity, but a necessity for mastery-oriented learning. Arthur receives acknowledgement for his achievements and is encouraged by his parents to pursue his well-developed interests. He is also appreciated for achieving well, but not rewarded by presents. The feedback he receives enables him to continue to stretch his abilities. His understanding of the conditions of success is reinforced by his home, his experiences at school and his own connection to schoolwork.

Arthur will probably be a lifelong reader. His curiosity has always been fed by his parents who encourage his intellectual pursuits. He is highly intrinsically motivated and self-efficacious without being arrogant. He seems quite oblivious of the fact that his achievements and his habits are quite rare. His voluntary reading habits are very much part of his leisure activities, as is evident from the following:

ARTHUR: .hhhh I think reading is very important. For many things you will need to read in life. For most jobs you have to read to do your work (.) Reading is very, very nice for me (.) yes (yes) so I think it is quite important because it also develops your brain. You can, through reading, learn a lot of things (.) get more information

ARTHUR: .hhhhh I read all the books they had (..) and we brought back all the books and I think I finished reading them within .hhhh a month or so (..) and it is nice now to read the series and to have so many books to read (. .) and I think if you like a book very much and > it is gripping and it keeps you in suspense < then you will make time to read it. You will finish your homework quickly so that you can get back to reading.

ZELDA: Thirteen years old. Attends single-gendered school, 40 minutes by bus away from her home.

When I arrive at the apartment block in an upmarket, new suburb at the appointed hour, Zelda unlocks the door and invites me to take a seat in the dining-room. Zelda lives with her single mother and quickly asserts that she has become used to spending a great deal of time on her own, which explains why she whimsically refers to herself as a 'latch-key kid'. The apartment appears snug and comfortable, and is very feminine despite the fact that some used breakfast crockery can be seen in the kitchen leading from the dining-room, indicating that mother and daughter possibly left in a great hurry that morning. Zelda is a confident, articulate and pretty girl, still in school uniform with her dark hair in a ponytail. She is mature for her age and reminiscences with candour and retrospection. She repeatedly remarks on the fact that she is often alone, but emphasizes that she prefers her own company to superficial acquaintances. She also has a small number of close friends with whom she readily shares confidences.

She speaks fondly of a grandmother with whom she grew up, who regularly read to her, and then taught her to read before she went to school. This is the classical, reading-researcher-honoured route for becoming an avid reader. In addition to these early, encouraging experiences with reading, her description of her Grade Six and Seven teachers' well-stocked class libraries, their open invitation to read voraciously, and her library prefectship go a long way towards explaining the creation of Zelda as an avid reader. She was nominated by her English teacher, and not only is she still an insatiable reader in Grade Eight, but she has clearly also transitioned from Stage 2 to Stage 3 reading and mastered the greater complexities required of a more advanced reading level. The fact that she won several incentive book prizes for displaying reading prowess in Grade Seven is peripheral to her reading enjoyment – in her case, individual interests and intrinsic motivation are well developed, and extrinsic rewards are regarded as a pleasant bonus, making the pleasure derived from reading per se the primary raison d'être:

CT: .hhhh Why would you say do you read such a lot of books §

ZELDA: When I was young and my mother worked, then I lived with my grandmother (..) And she taught me to read from a very young age (..) And since then (...) and everyday she read to me and I read a little. And it was just very nice to me. It was as if you enter another world where you forget everything around

you. And it is just something (..) it is something to look forward to when you get home. And you know your homework had been done and you can go on with the story and you forget everything. So. Yes, it is an adventure.

Zelda's descriptions of her experiences during the transition from primary to secondary school are mostly positive, despite the fact that she now spends an additional hour and a half travelling to school everyday. She likes the fact that teachers appear to be more "respected" at secondary school:

For instance, when a teacher comes in, you get up. You have more respect (..) everything is more strict and there are more rules. And respect

Although she did not experience undue stress during transition, even "at the hands of the matrics" in the first days at secondary school, displaying a resilient handling of the customary tensions during the initiation period, she reports at some length on the unhappiness and antisocial behaviour of a classmate. Zelda speaks rather disparagingly of this classmate's reluctance to take responsibility for her immature actions ("and what she doesn't manage, she blames everyone else for it"), which reflects Zelda's more mature understanding of her own accountability, also signifying her role in the household. She handles conflict by withdrawing and having a bath and a good cry. She handled her disappointment after the awards ceremony at the end of Grade Seven in a remarkably mature way. When she did not receive two awards that she earlier felt were her due (in addition to the many others that she did, indeed, win), she rationalised it after a day or two, reasoning that the recipient of the prizes perhaps deserved them too because he also must have studied very hard. Other reflections on her work in Grade Seven especially reveal her mastery learning character and intrinsically motivated actions.

Like many adolescents, Zelda is quite critical of teachers, especially those who do not, according to her, attempt to inspire the learners. One teacher, for instance, is "boring. . . and she has such a sing-song voice". Moreover, Zelda does not value her high marks in a subject because "the test questions are so easy". Another only speaks "about her husband and her cats" instead of teaching. Moreover, this teacher

does explain to us, but not in a nice way. She doesn't explain in (...) a stimulating way that would interest us. It's as if she explains things because she has to. Because she gets paid.

Zelda is as disparaging of the romances her mother reads because the stories end happily every time. Such facile plots leave her unsatisfied, and she even confesses mocking her mother for reading such simplistic fare. Her love of books not only sustains her when she is alone, but has branched into creative writing activities and she is at present writing a play for a school production, in addition to being a regular contributor to the school paper. Her interest in literature is evident in her excitement at reading a Shakespeare play in Grade Eight already:

Z: And now we are doing "Midsummer Night's Dream", and the teacher told us about Old English and Modern English, and so on. We (..) like it very much. We first watched the video, and now we are busy reading a shortened version of it. And

we are all enjoying it (..) We now have more information on him. Shakespeare. Research and everything we are busy with at the moment. Like a project. It is very nice. It is very different.

Zelda's mastery learning and self-efficacy strategies are well-developed. Her reading interests have matured and are matched by her more advanced reading strategies, clearly indicative of a transition to a higher reading level (Chall). Her intrinsically motivated reading habits and individual interests leave no doubt in my mind that she will continue to be an avid reader for the rest of her school career, and following her mother's and grandmother's examples, possibly for the rest of her life.

The construct validity attempted in the fourth phase is – as cited by Cohen *et al.* (2000:132), “the queen of the types of validity because it is subsumptive and because it concerns constructs or explanations rather than methodological factors”. However, they caution against the under-representation of the construct as well as excess reliable variance, which imply the inclusion of irrelevancies, two dangers that I, especially, had to avoid.

The fifth phase consisted of interpretation and a composite summary. It essentially aimed for concurrent validity (cf. Figure 5.2; Cohen *et al.*, 2000:132), mediating between the theoretical and empirical domains. This phase forms the gist of Chapter Six.

5.4.5 Reliability, validity, generalisability

Regarding the claim for validity in a qualitative investigation, San Antonio (2004:39) cites Guba and Lincoln's injunction that qualitative research should have ‘truth value’; for research to have truth value, findings are required to be credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable. San Antonio (2004:40) also refers to Miles and Huberman's guidelines for truth value, asking of this research: “Do the findings of the study make sense? Are they credible to the people we study? Do we have an authentic portrait of what we are looking at?” Hence, regarding validity in qualitative research, certainty is replaced with confidence, or, put differently, authenticity rather than reliability is the issue (Silverman, 2001:13). Qualitative educational research is set apart from other scientific inquiries as it is difficult to design and implement in research studies strong internal and external validity because its subject is

humans, and specifically children (Fletcher & Francis, 2004:75). An additional complexity arises when it, moreover, involves phenomena that are dependent on a variety of influences across a wide spectrum of children, as is the case in this study. When research is conducted with children, there are likely to be many threats to internal and external validity (Fletcher & Francis, 2004:75). San Antonio's (2004:41) quoting from Gitlin and Russell's 1994 political view of validity adds a further dimension to the demand for validity:

The validity or 'truthfulness' of the data can no longer be understood as something extracted by an individual armed with a set of research procedures, but rather as a mutual process, pursued by the researcher and those studied, that recognizes the value of practical knowledge, theoretical inquiry, and systematic examinations. The influence of the research process on who produces knowledge, who is seen as expert, and the resulting changes at the level of school practice are also part of an expanded and political view of validity.

Despite the above caveats, three kinds of validity are offered here, namely *descriptive* validity, since the data were derived from as truthful and accurate an account of the actual interviews with the respondents as possible, *interpretive* validity, since the researcher endeavoured to catch the meaning and interpretations of the respondents' descriptions of their experiences and opinions as authentically as possible, and *theoretical* validity in the theoretical constructs with which I attempted to explain the data.

Further claims of internal validity are answered through the integrity of the data and augmented by the plausibility and credibility of the evidence as well as by the soundness of the research design. However, the most compelling standard for validity I believe to be my sincere desire to describe an authentic encounter with the research participants and their understanding of my willingness to listen openly and judiciously to their descriptions of experiences, opinions and values, and their trust that I would protect their anonymity.

Generalisability is offered here, but in extremely limited scope compared to quantitative research's potential for generalisability, since there can be little external generalisability when there are so many variables concerning the location of the interviews (i.e. the different homes, classrooms, the office of a departmental head at school), the times of the interviews (on Saturday mornings, during the week after school hours, during a school holiday), the culture (home language is English, Afrikaans or Sotho) and backgrounds (single parent, nuclear

families, extended families, stepparents). Although generalisability is not a characteristic feature of qualitative research of this nature, some measure of internal generalisability is claimed since only a highly specific sample of early adolescents and their reading experiences were investigated. As the learners in this study were selected with specific criteria in mind (the injunction to the participating teachers that only avid, effective readers be chosen), the research participants' voluntary reading and transitional experiences can be considered representative of the experiences of learners who meet the same criteria. I also took care to minimise the Hawthorne effect (cf. Section 5.3.5.2) and ensured some ecological validity through face-to-face interviews in private, whether the research participants' own homes or an empty classroom after school hours. Consequently this study aims for relevance, or resonance (Silverman, 2001:249), even if it does not lay claim to great generalisability

The use of an audiorecording provided an excellent record of a 'naturally occurring' interaction (Silverman, 2001:13) and was an authentic record to which I could regularly return as I was developing a new understanding of the research problem. Ontological authenticity exists in the fact that the findings attempt to present a deeper understanding of an as yet under-researched phenomenon, namely the influences of transition on adolescent reading. The data are socio-culturally oriented and context-bound; the responses are presented with 'thick description' because the adolescents' reading experiences are complex, socially situated and unique to each respondent. Content validity in this study is attained because the three elements (Grade Eight learners, voluntary reading and experiences) are addressed within the four domains (voluntary reading, adolescence, literacy and literature), as represented in Figure 1.2.

Triangulation is characterised by a multi-method approach to a problem and demonstrates concurrent validity in qualitative research (Cohen *et al.*, 2000:112). Of the different kinds of methodological triangulation identified by Cohen *et al.* (2000:113), two are especially relevant, namely time triangulation – since the interviews with the participants were conducted in a short time span, which ensured a similarity of data gathered regarding the time in learners' school careers, and theoretical triangulation – since use was made of several alternative theories (cf. theoretical framework, Figure 1.2).

Finally, both transcription and coder reliability were secured, in addition to a meticulous transcription of each interview and translation of some, by taking great care also to reflect the inferential and interactional aspects of the conversations by being acutely sensitive to the nuances of language, whether verbal, attitudinal or gestural.

5.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Permission was granted by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) to conduct interviews with learners identified by the selected schools. The GDE's comprehensive regulatory mechanisms were employed to further protect the interests of the interviewees.

Since the participants were under-aged, informed consent had to be gained from their parents prior to their involvement in the study. The parents were requested to sign a form, giving their approval to the conducting of the interviews. The purpose and procedures of the interviews were discussed with the parents and they were assured that their children's dignity, privacy and interests would be respected and the confidentiality of the interviews was guaranteed. Their right to withdraw their children's participation from the study at any time was emphasised before the commencement of the study. Since a face-to-face interview can hardly be deemed anonymous, confidentiality alone was promised the interviewees and their parents.

The ethical implications and psychological consequences for the participants were considered at all times. The participants were informed of the objective of the research project, namely to gain insight into the manner in which South African adolescent learners view their recreational reading. The information elicited is not of a particularly sensitive nature and therefore the usual safeguards were sufficient to protect the interviewee. It was, however, important to protect the interviewees from the researcher's unspoken bias about recreational reading, and care was taken not to give them the impression that they are expected to continue being avid readers, or that the interviewer had a judgemental stance.

It was imperative to build a relationship of trust with participants before and during the interviews. To deserve this trust, I duly informed them during the initial telephone

conversations and upon meeting the parents and the respondents of the objective of the research project, namely to gain understanding about the reading experiences of adolescent learners. I also clearly described what was required of them, as well as the fact that they were entitled to withdraw from the study at any time. Neither the respondents nor their parents were misled, misinformed or intentionally deceived and I took care to protect them from especially mental harm by not appearing judgmental or critical. The participants and their parents granted me informed consent prior to their participation to the study and also to audiotape interviews.

Above all, the respondents and their parents were ensured of the confidentiality and anonymity of the obtained data. The confidentiality of the respondents is protected, above all, by refraining to name the participating schools, and especially by disguising the identities of the children. Because the responses were uniquely revelatory, it was essential to identify them individually and they were therefore given fictitious names. The audiotapes, transcripts and other data such as field notes and lists of names are kept in a secure place. The accuracy and truthfulness of the transcripts were verified, as well as my interpretation of events and expressions, by critical readers, but not by the learners themselves, as a second interview was not feasible.

5.6 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

Much was attempted in this investigation, and some aspects of the voluntary reading experiences of a group of adolescent learner were indeed captured. However, it is obvious that even more facets of reading, or adolescent experiences, or transitional factors were left little researched, and for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it is clear that the sampling from a highly selected population made generalisation impossible. Like all research, the retrospective study has been highly discriminatory of the factors selected for investigation. The investigation focused on the field of voluntary reading habits, which is but an aspect within the larger sphere of literacy practice and education. The study was further limited in scope since it concentrated on the adolescent reader, and more specifically the early adolescents, and on their experiences of a specific kind of leisure activity, namely voluntary reading.

For the purposes of the study problem readers were excluded – although this was not originally envisaged. Only after analysing the data from the pilot study, did it become clear that only avid readers who regularly engage in voluntary reading could answer the research questions. Therefore, in addition to readers with reading problems and reluctant or disinterested readers, dyslexic or disadvantaged readers were excluded because the phenomenon of voluntary reading is, by definition, an activity of choice and not compulsion. The disadvantaged reader was therefore also excluded because – albeit tragically – the lack of the availability of books makes the free choice of reading as a voluntary activity well nigh impossible.

Apart from the fact that the research problem narrowly focused on the ‘grey area’ as learners negotiate the transition from primary to secondary school, the selection of factors was also partly based on practical and logistic considerations since only a limited area of research can be accomplished in a single study. The findings, therefore, do not presume to apply to other facets of reading, to leisure activities, adolescent behaviour in general, or teaching practice in secondary schools, to mention but a few. Description, understanding and explanation of a very specific phenomenon were the desired outcomes of this study.

Apart from the crucial delimitation of the respondents to include only effective and avid readers, other aspects that were also delimited included gender differences, ethnic differences, the influence of affluence or poverty on voluntary reading, and the role played by parents, peers, role models and the school on their habits in general and their reading habits in particular. To enable a researcher to research a specific phenomenon with the mandatory focus and depth, peripheral factors (although they are major issues in the larger field) should be excluded. Gender, for instance, plays a crucial role in the book choice of adolescents. It has been found that greater differences exist between in the book choices of boys and girls than between those of disadvantaged and affluent adolescent readers (Du Toit, 2001; Jones, 1999; Palmer, 1995). To focus with laserlike intensity on the (underresearched) issue of psychosocial transitional influences, the related areas of gender or affluence were excluded.

As is made clear in Section 5.1.2, only a qualitative research strategy could attempt to examine the participants' perspectives and explore the complexity of their motivation and choices regarding voluntary reading. The primary objective, after all, was to develop an explanation to show how transitional experiences influence voluntary reading aspects in a group of early adolescent learners. The research design, therefore, attempted to closely link the critical questions, the theoretical field and the research strategy.

Partially structured interviews with adolescent learners proved an effective research method and in most cases the respondents' accounts in which they detailed their perspectives proved illuminating and conducive of thick description. The retrospective nature of the questions and responses during the interview and the reflexivity of the descriptions of respondent experiences created an effective matrix for the clarification of the research question.

The participants were purposively selected; they were neither a representative nor a cross section of a larger body of learners. They were firstly nominated by their schools' language teachers for being avid readers, and secondly, after a preliminary, informal telephone conversation, they were selected because it was evident that they have sufficient voluntary reading experiences. The decisions made in terms of data collection and analysis arose from the aims of the investigation and the nature of the research design. The following chapter contains further facets of the empirical investigation, namely the final patterning of the data with a discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER SIX

MOUTH OF BABES⁶⁸

In the child, intellect is a function of memory; in the adolescent, memory is function of intellect.

Vygotsky 1998

It takes most people about twenty years to reach the highest stage of reading development. Some do it much faster, others take longer, and still others may not reach it at all.

Chall 1996

It was as if childhood, like a thing real and visible, were slipping down the grassy river-banks . . . and disappearing like them into the moon-lit shadows of the summer night.

“I am all alone in the little harbour”, she repeated; “and, oh, I wonder, I wonder, shall I be afraid to leave it, if anybody comes to carry me out to sea!”

The New Chronicles of Rebecca 1907

⁶⁸ Reference to the ‘mouth of babes’ is found in numerous verses in the King James Version of the Bible (cf. Psalm 8:2; Matthew 21:16), and usually indicates an honest expression of opinion, or a more innate understanding of issues, as in Matthew 11:25: *Lord of heaven and earth, thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes*. Reference to the horse’s mouth is not applicable here, although the respondents’ generous sharing of opinions and ideas lies at the heart of this chapter.

6.1 SELECTION OF REFLECTION

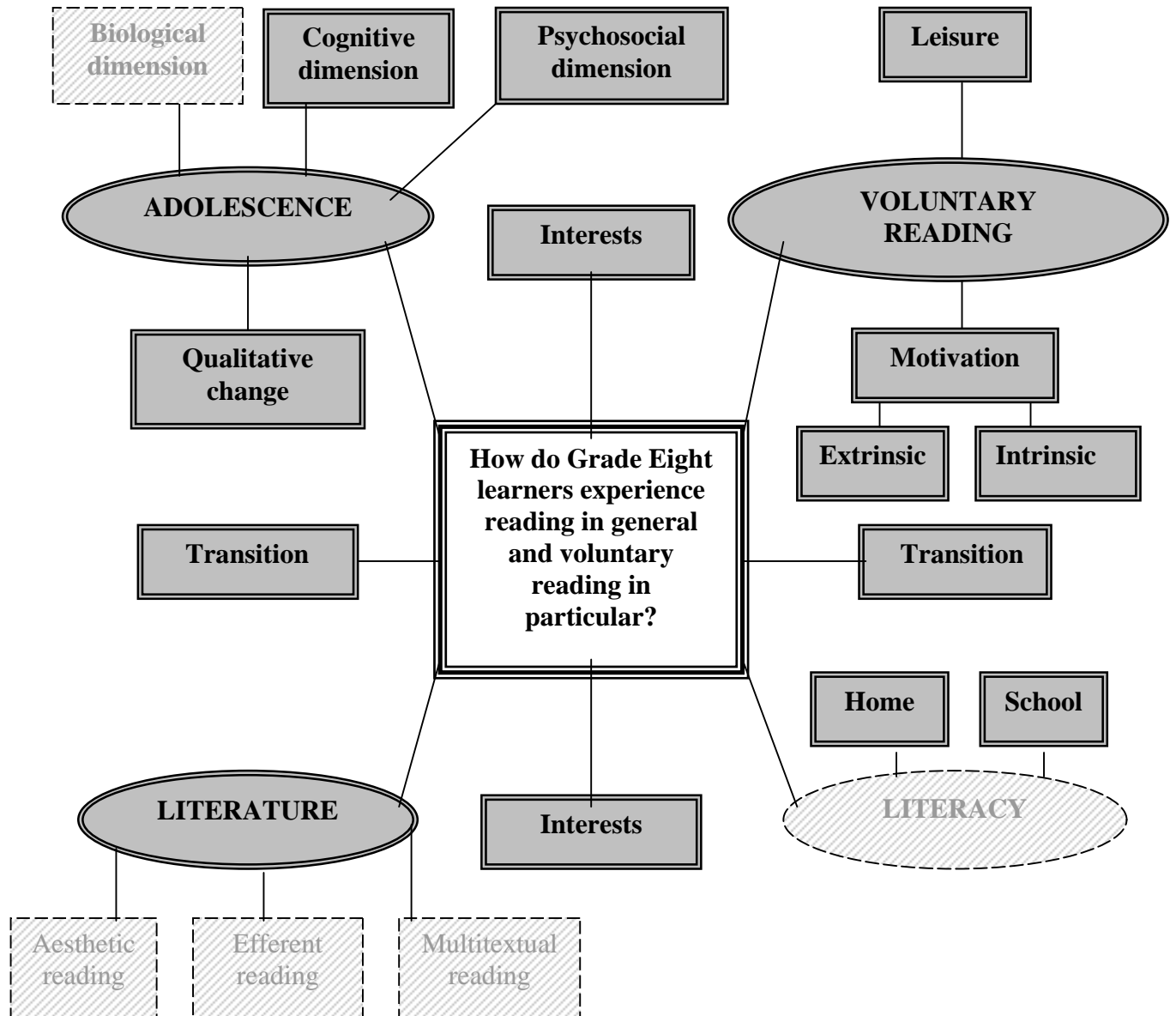
As indicated in the Chapter Five, the process of data analysis – within the localized features of the empirical setting - is intimately integrated with the highly specified nature of the research problem, which in this case concerns the factors that influence the voluntary reading experiences of a selected group of Grade Eight learners. An adequate description of the analytic process, therefore, invariably involves a considerable measure of contextual information; moreover, in describing analysis, “one is, in a sense, attempting to get at one’s own thought processes” (Brown & Dowling 1998:84). For both researcher and respondent, the phenomenon of voluntary reading is constructed in terms of a number of concepts. The study necessitated thick description, not only because it was a qualitative, interpretive inquiry, but also to enable the researcher to identify themes and categories, perceive patterns and trends and formulate theories for an own understanding of the adolescent reading experience.

During the process of data collection – from pilot study to the final round of interviews - the focus became essentially more contracted than the original conceptualisation which is presented in the framework (Figure 1.2).⁶⁹ The refined framework (Figure 6.1; p. 187), extrapolated out of the original theoretical framework, identifies which domains and themes were investigated incisively and delineates areas (in dotted lines) that were explored less assiduously than originally anticipated. For instance, since the respondents were selected by their secondary school teachers who considered them to be avid or at least above-average readers, it can be assumed that they had already successfully mastered a Stage 2 reading level and consequently no questions were asked about their emergent literacy or pre-school reading experiences.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Reasons for this narrowing of focus were discussed in Chapter Five and will again be addressed in Chapter Seven.

⁷⁰ As shall be seen later in this chapter, the focus here also rests on the transition from a Stage 2 reading level and the process of attaining a Stage 3 level

Figure 6.1 Refined theoretical framework



Extant literature on the early reading experiences of enthusiastic readers have conclusively shown the correlation between the positive influences of early environments full of books and people – whether parents, older siblings or early caregivers - who make emergent literacy experiences possible, pleasant and popular; hence this avenue need not be pursued here. However, whereas the home’s salient influences on voluntary reading practices are accepted

as axiomatic, some reflection on the role of teachers and the school was anticipated. Another aspect that received little attention during data collection was bibliotherapy, except obliquely.⁷¹ The questions, prompts and probes during the interviews encouraged responses of an essentially exploratory and descriptive nature, and were not intended as therapeutic interventions. Although the bibliotherapeutic value of voluntary reading is emphasized in Section 3.2.3, it does not form part of the investigation in this study. As can be seen in Figure 6.1, the critical domains explored most extensively were adolescence, voluntary reading and literature.

In this chapter, findings extrapolated from the themes traced in Chapter Five inform the discussion of the factors of the research problem. Although the thrust of the argument follows to a great extent the guiding principles of the refined theoretical framework (Figure 6.1), some overlap between the areas of investigation is inevitable, for instance, the factor of interests that have bearing on the spheres of both adolescence and voluntary reading (and, for that matter, also influences the selection of literature). This chapter attempts to collate strands from various areas in line with Brown and Dowling's (1998:73) statement that researchers

wish to look at this diversity neither in epistemological terms nor in terms of whether interviews are themselves structured, semi-structured or unstructured, but rather as a range of approaches that differ with respect to the point at which the researcher imposes structure on information to produce data.

6.2 ADOLESCENCE

6.2.1 Prefacing

In his delineation of adolescent development, Hill (cf. Figure 2.2) focuses on three domains, namely the psychosocial, the cognitive and the biological. In this study the first two dimensions were investigated, with the latter receiving no attention. Although this is an aspect of adolescence that undergoes considerable and palpable development and brings about great

⁷¹ For instance, an oblique reference to a bibliotherapeutic approach occurred during an interviewee's reflection on her and her friends' responses to a class book with anorexia nervosa as a central theme. Three other respondents indicated that reading took their minds off troubling experiences.

pubescent turbulence, it did not form any part of the investigation, and, adhering to the ethical considerations raised in Section 5.5, certainly no questions were asked during the interviews about the respondents' genital maturation and pubertal timing. The cognitive and psychosocial aspects of adolescent development formed the focus of the discussion of respondent experiences in the following section.

6.2.2 Cognitive dimension

6.2.2.1 Overview

One experience, common to all, about which a fair measure of discontent was expressed, was the drastic increase in the research participants' workload from primary to secondary school. The magnitude of the expansion of the cognitive dimension during adolescence can hardly be underestimated. Apart from a 'quantitatively' developing intellect, Vygotsky (1998:40) postulates that a *qualitative* change also occurs as transition is made from "complex thinking to thinking in concepts". The cognitive acuity that adolescents increasingly need to acquire is an essentially new ability involving the formation and operation of concepts. Adolescent cognitive development is not a smooth or simply enriched continuation of earlier development, but an essentially new *qualitative* formation, a *neoformation* or "a new form of intellectual activity, a new method of behaviour, a new intellectual mechanism" (Vygotsky, 1998:41).

The urgency of the development of a 'new intellectual mechanism' explicates the respondents' repeated references to the increasing cognitive demand of their secondary school work. All the respondents indicated that there was an exponential increase in their schoolwork, both in quantity and level of difficulty. These two facets of the changes in the cognitive dimension, namely the sheer increase in the volume of work, and the qualitative changes in the cognitive demand of secondary school work are now investigated more closely.

6.2.2.2 The work load

One facet of secondary school about which all the respondents expressed a fair measure of frustration, was the drastic increase in their workload and some tension was evident in this regard. The increase in the sheer volume of schoolwork caught most of them by surprise and all commented on a sense of urgency regarding their homework, which they did not at all remember experiencing at primary school. The following are typical views, expressed by Arthur, Iris and Simpiwe. Arthur, who achieved highly at primary school as an intrinsically motivated, mastery-oriented learner, repeatedly and in various contexts, referred to the increased workload:

ARTHUR: Sometimes you get more work than other weeks (.) Some days you get more work than other days > And those days it means ha-a-a-rd work and work fast < to get everything finished

IRIS: Academic work. It is just so much more work .hhh The activities. When you get to high school, there are just so many more things to do. There are more kinds of sport, and there is choir. And there is orchestra. There is everything.

Simpiwe's views were typical, as he described his experiences in his animated and inimitable manner. When asked about the changes from Grade Seven to Grade Eight, the first difference he pointed out was what he termed "education":

CT: Yea § OK, let's take (.) education. How did this differ § // ⁷²
 S: // §§ JA §§ In Grade Seven (..) it's a bit simpler. When you're in Grade Seven it's like .hhhh it's hard. When you're in Grade Eight, it's like §§§ .hhhh that was easy. And now in Grade Eight, .hhhh this is haa-a-a- rd
 CT: Is it a lot of work §
 S: §JA §§ ja, it's a lot, mam {{*Nods emphatically*}}
 CT: Much, much more than Grade Seven §
 S: Hmm § Hmm §

Therese, a conscientious worker and an above average achiever (albeit a more extrinsically than intrinsically motivated learner, cf. Section 2.4.2), had three kinds of extramural activities

⁷² Transcription symbols are tabulated in Figure 5.2.

which alone took up five afternoons a week, in addition to dance performances over weekends. This left her with very little leisure time, which was often taken up by schoolwork:

THERESE: (...) then I must over the weekends, I must study for tests a lot (...) like last weekend, like I finished studying for two tests (.) then during the week, or when I'm dancing > and I have to teach the others < and then I have to study for the other (..) So that becomes very stressful and when I don't finish writing the test, then (..)

Therese referred to a girl in their class who came from a home schooling background and found the workload so daunting and difficult to cope with, that she left the particular secondary school within four months. Therese also cited the difficult nature of the academic work she was required to do in Grade Eight as a reason for a diminishing desire to read recreationally. These reports are a further justification of Chall's (1996:75) proposition that a reading 'slump' often occurs during the transition from primary to secondary school when the cognitive and conceptual aspects of texts become more demanding.

However, in spite of the vast increase in their workload, only one respondent had stopped reading voluntarily altogether, and there are other, psychosocial reasons to account for this, *inter alia*, personal problems associated with the divorce of parents and the acquisition of a new stepfamily. With one exception, the respondents observed a slight reading decline, such as Arthur's typical response:

ARTHUR: I think I read fewer books because there is more work and I have less time to read. Yes, so I read far less, but I still like reading. So this didn't change.

Simpiwe is the exception who indicated that he had actually started to read more books in Grade Eight:

CT: Now (.) in Grade Eight you say you have so much more work. Have your reading habits changed in any way §

S: Ja § This year, because we have some free periods and I can do my own work in another class. So when I get to them I can read more. So this year I am reading more than (.) what I read last year. Because it was only last year that I started reading this much.

This finding was not anticipated. It seems that I had been too receptive during the early stages of this investigation to rampant reports (cf. Section 3.1.5) of reading decline and expected the respondents' experiences to reflect it. They did not. With the exception of Mary (whose home situation influenced her reading motivation adversely), and despite a greater workload at school, the respondents did not *qualitatively* read fewer books. There were changes in reading tastes (cf. Section 2.5), as well as some shift from fiction to non-fiction, but the phenomenon of reading decline did not become an undisputed fact.

However, although schoolwork increased quantitatively, many aspects of it were considered unchallenging. Zelda thought the Afrikaans class rather boring because the syllabus was mostly a repetition of what had been done before at primary school. Nina also felt that changing difficulty levels in certain subjects were undemanding:

NINA: Yes. Like last year's teacher. She was very good. She explained things well. People understood things. But this year hhhhh the teacher doesn't explain things so well. I think, for some children, as for me, she is a bit slow and (...) boring. And for other children, they understand nothing of what she is saying, and then I have to explain things to them. For geometry, for instance, I had to explain the geometry to other children because they understood nothing whatsoever because the teacher was going too fast, but I am as bored as anything because I've already done all my sums and the teacher is only busy explaining the first sum. So, this, for me (...) I would like to have a good maths teacher.

Therese's teacher was perhaps too careful not to frustrate learners who might find a text too challenging and attempted to match books with the learners' reading level:

T: The teacher said *Vlerkdans* was only for children who could read well and (..) can understand deeper things in books

CT: Is that so §

T: Yes. She said it was not for children who (..) who can't read well, because there are there are too many difficult words and terms

However, in spite of complaints about the sheer volume of work required at secondary school, as adequately or highly achieving learners, the respondents displayed, to a greater or lesser extent, an understanding and willingness to 'buckle down' and meet the demands of the increased workload. Not one of them indicated a wish to change the status quo with regard to

the greater demands of secondary school work, which is certainly an indication of intrinsically motivated behaviour (cf. Sections 2.4 and 6.3.1.1).

6.2.2.3 Qualitative change

Vygotsky (1998:40) argues that the adolescent develops exponentially “along the path of intellectual development during the time of sexual maturation”. The forming of concepts and the operation of conceptual thinking are the essentially new cognitive abilities that are required to develop during adolescence. Vygotsky emphasizes that the developing intellect does not simply continue smoothly along preceding lines with previously acquired concepts that are merely enriched and internally connected with associated concepts. He reiterates that the adolescent’s cognitive development is a qualitative change involving a new form of intellectual activity, making it almost a “new method of behaviour” (1998:40).

Evidence of this qualitative change in cognitive thinking was found in the responses of nine research participants. However, although these respondents were high achievers, or at least above average, a curious dichotomy was detected in some of their experiences of the difficulty level of the work.⁷³

- CT: // With too many assignments, and tests and () academic work §
 IRIS: It sometimes is a problem. It depends on what you write (..) and, how well you think you should do in them. And (..) and if it is one of your worse subjects. When you re-a-a-a-ly have to work hard.
 CT: Can you give me an example of your worse subject §
 I: {{Laughs quickly}} Technology.
 CT: Oh //
 I: // And History. Geography. Learning subjects.
 CT: hhhhh Dates that you have to remember, or so.
 I: I don't know, I just think I don't like swotting (.) memorizing. I like maths or Afrikaans or something like that > you must understand and apply it < (..) For History and things you must learn things by heart. Technology's a lot like it
 CT: I see. Things that you have to memorize. Which do not only make sense to you.
 I: Yes. You have to

⁷³ This discrepancy can to some extent be attributed to the difference between mastery oriented and failure avoidant learning. This will be discussed more fully in the section on motivation, Section 6.3.1

Richard is another high achiever who had excelled at maths in Grade Seven and now in Grade Eight experienced some (but certainly not insurmountable) difficulties with the higher cognitive demand of secondary school work.

RICHARD: I rather liked maths because I found it easier in the primary school > And I think I rather did well in it < I think because I enjoyed it I wanted to (...) when I had to study, I preferred learning that than something else. And I think I also did better in it. But now, I think > especially with technology < it is nice, with all the sketches and things, but I don't do so-o-o well in the exam. In the first term I did very well, but now (.) I fell with about thirty percent.

CT: What would you say is the reason for this §

R: I think as the work is getting harder (.) and yes, the work is getting more difficult (..) and I think in the first quarter they asked it easier in the exam because you are new in the school, and now they twist the questions more in the exam (...) Yes it's now like (.) a new quarter is like a new year now. Because everything is now completely different.

Some respondents also curiously reported a discrepancy between their reading achievement and the slightness of the cognitive demand of their prescribed reading. The result of this is inevitably boredom. Four respondents reported that they were rereading texts in Grade Eight that they had already completed in Grade Seven; two respondents accepted this phlegmatically, one was rather bemused by the fact and the fourth used this as an example of her teacher's indifference towards her learners' reading. None of the teachers appeared to be concerned about the possibility of boring the learners with a repetition of familiar texts, for example, as illustrated in the following exchange:

CT: What did the teacher say when you told her that you had already done the book last year §

NINA: No, she says she knew we had already read the book. Many of us had already done it. But we are going to read it again anyway {{Laughs}}

CT: Do the children like the book § Those who are reading it for the first time §

N: (..) I think there are some children who do not like the book. There are many (.) It's a sad story. Yes (.) I'm not sure. For me personally it is a very sad story > Not really my type < I like adventure stories better

Iris' Grade Seven teacher did not pay much attention to the learners' view of prescribed texts either; she also displayed little motivation for promoting voluntary reading with her learners,

inflicting on them a class reader, for three weeks, despite the fact that it was not enthusiastically received:

IRIS: hhhhh In English we started a book, but I can't remember the title. But {{Laughs}} we didn't really finish it. Don't know (..) But we also didn't really like it (..) So we didn't really have prescribed books.

CT: How many weeks did you spend on this book that the class didn't really like §

I: I think (..) we spent three weeks on it > Surely two periods per week < Or something. Now (..) it was almost finished and I can't now remember what happened, but we didn't finish it

According to Chall's (1996) research, teachers of learners who display a 'slump' in voluntary reading are concerned about the fact that learners cannot adequately read more complex texts with low-frequency vocabulary and concepts, and have deficient background knowledge. However, that is hardly the case here. The slight decline in Nina's reading is not the result of a more demanding reading level, but rather of unchallenging fictional texts. Changes in reading development, the transition from "mastering the print medium to mastering the meanings of ever more complex messages" (Chall: 1996:75), should have taken place from primary to secondary school, but do not in many classes due to the lack of cognitive demand. The result is also that, for instance in Mary's and David's cases, creative fiction is relinquished in favour of an exclusive choice of subject texts.

The poor selection of narrative texts is a sad reality, and a harmful practice, especially in the light of Vygotsky's (1998:147) postulation that adolescence brings (and demands) new intellectual requirements. Transitioning to greater cognitive challenges should also bring about changes in mental functioning to accommodate it. Vygotsky (1998:97), therefore, emphasises the phenomenon of *qualitative* change, and refutes Thorndikean notions of *quantitative* change, stating "if one holds the point of view (that) the process of intellectual changes that occur at adolescence can be reduced to a simple quantitative accumulation of characteristics already laid down in the thinking of a three-year old . . . the word development does not apply".⁷⁴

⁷⁴ The respondents' views of the unsatisfactory, unchallenging nature of many of the prescribed texts will be discussed in Section 6.4.

6.2.3 Psychosocial dimension

Erikson (1968) and Vygotsky (1989) observed, at the start of a transitional age, manifestation of negativity, identity crises and even vestiges of rebellion – whether overt or passive, either verbal or attitudinal. However, the respondents displayed none of this during the interviews, being most cooperative, possibly because the ‘halo effect’ of an hour-long interview with a professional stranger does not typically arouse feelings of discontent, nor did they wish to be exhibitionist in a display of rebellion during an interview that was being audiotaped. They also did not report any overt acts of rebelliousness.

The respondents did not ruminate whimsically on the traditional characteristics of adolescence. It is little wonder because they had barely arrived in their teens (with four still only twelve years of age when the interviews were conducted) and, as the juniors in secondary school, and treated as such by older adolescents, they did not display the required distance to view themselves nostalgically or otherwise. The following exchanges took place as answers to probing about the ‘negative phase’ as described by Vygotsky and Erikson (cf. Section 2.2.1), the line of questioning usually started with a reference to a typical teenage cartoon character:

- CT: Do you think there is some truth in this depiction of a typical teenager §
 ARTHUR: hhhhhh Sometimes, when I think I have a lot of homework, then I feel lazy I don't really want to do it > I wish I needn't have to do it < But, yes (.) there are lots of people at school who are incredibly lazy. They'd rather sit and chat in class than to do their homework (..) to get it done quickly. But not all teenagers are that lazy.
- ZELDA: Well (.) {{*Laughs*}} my room is always a mess. I am a teenager in that way. I am a typical teenager there. And I am also terribly moody and am jealous of my privacy. But (..) oh, I don't know. {{*Sighs*}} They say teenagers fight a lot with their parents but I don't really fight a lot with my mother. She and I understand each other. She knows I am now moody.
- CT: Are you sometimes told by a teacher, or the headmistress, that you are now at a (.) well (.) rebellious stage§
 MARY: .hhhhhh no, other people say so
 CT: Do you agree with this § What are your experiences §
 M: I don't know (..) I am not sure (...) I don't really think so. I am not so (...) I have not experienced things this way
 CT: So, things are pretty much the way they were last year §

M: Yes, except the change with school (.) and so

The first set of questions centred on the respondents' transition to secondary school and the difference between being the seniors at primary school and the juniors in Grade Eight. All the respondents found the change quite pronounced and their experiences ranged from being rather overwhelmed to being somewhat defiant of the new hierarchy. Here are three typical responses to questions about the differences between primary and secondary school, and the matriculants' treatment of juniors:

RICHARD: OK. First thing is, I'm no longer so big (.) in the school because (.) there everybody knew about you and here nobody knows about you. I think one (...) let's say, had attitude in Grade Seven and now you no longer have it. (.) And (.) I think in primary school you don't have (.) so much respect for your school and things but now you have more

THERESE: Oh .hhh when I got here I felt I'm glad to be in a new school, in high school, and (...) but as things changed, the teachers in primary school always called you by name and now you are § little Grade Eight girl §, and so on (...)

CT: Yes (.) You were an important {{*Jokingly*}} Grade Seven (...) everybody looked up to you //

T: // yes, now everybody looks down on you (..) they don't look as if (....) you are now a prefect or anything

SIMPIWE: They (...) they haven't even cut me down to size yet

CT: Is that so § Are you cheeky §

S: You can say so.

CT: {{*Laughs*}} And they haven't even tried to take you down a peg or two §

S: They haa-a-ave but (..) but they're not doing such a good job

Simpiwe's account of his jaunty and daring behaviour, it must be noted, was given during a private interview, and not within earshot of senior learners. More commonly, none of the other respondents viewed themselves as particularly rebellious, and had more pertinent observations of the stressful condition of having progressed to Grade Eight and secondary school.

6.2.3.1 Stresses and strains – emotions and perceptions

Although most of the respondents achieved well academically, or at least above average, many reported stress experienced in this regard. When asked to reflect on stressful work-related

situations and their handling of them, three girls admitted that they cry quite often, as can be seen in the following example:

THERESE: The (...) hhhh, tests we wrote, we used to have much more time to complete them in the primary than high school. So we learnt to write really fast. So now I often don't finish many tests

CT: How do you handle work stress at school §

T: No, I cry (.) I cry a lot, now during the high school years (.) Because there is a lot of stress but it is not as if (.) like (...) I get very angry about it. After the test I know it is over, I (...) I can't do anything about it anymore, then I only focus ahead.

CT: So, you rather become sad instead of angry §

T: Yes.

However, in spite of the occasional bout of tearfulness, the respondents appeared to be coping adequately with the stress of the transition. Zelda is a highly self-efficacious learner and this was her experience:

Z: hhhhhhh there was a little tension the first couple of weeks because we had to practice for the Grade Eight concert (..) and so on. And then you get home and >you have to cover all your books and you still have to do your homework and practice the whole afternoon and it is hockey practice and netball practice and < it was very busy (.) yes. But you could manage, it was (..) you got to bed later than usual a couple of evenings. It was not impossible to handle.

CT: And specifically, how do you handle stress §

Z: hhhhh I won't say I really have a problem with tension (..) I don't experience tension, oh § if there now re-e-a-a-ally is a day that I feel I really can't handle things, then I go and take a bath {{Laughs}}

Arthur, a mastery-oriented learner, described himself as someone who can handle a great deal of work without becoming unduly stressed:

CT: Would you say that you experienced the change from primary to secondary school as full of stress, from time to time § Is there stress, say, for instance, when you get too much homework §

A: Sometimes you get more work than other weeks (.) Some days you get more work than other days > And those days it means ha-a-a-rd work and work fast < to get everything finished

CT: How do you cope those days when you have too much stress §

A: hhhh I would say reasonably well > Something I don't manage well < But luckily the homework isn't always for the next day, so you can finish some things a day later but I would say I handle things rather well

- CT: I am sure. Are there friends of yours who don't handle things quite this well §
Who experience things as stressful §
- A: .hhhhh I don't think I have such friends but (..) I think there are children who struggle to finish everything > they regularly get scolded in class because their homework isn't finished > So (.) So (.) Some people don't get all the work done. Don't understand all the work

Iris, a high achiever and a mostly intrinsically oriented learner, almost enviously reflected on learners whom she perceived as impervious to stress, compared to herself:

- I: hhhh There are two of them who (...) they just don't take stress. They don't stress at all. It doesn't really bother them. They are usually the children who do well in everything. Who (..) they also do lots of other things. I don't know how they manage it. .hhhhh But they (..) you just get the impression they don't really stress about something like this (..) Then there are the others who (.) stress, and they just continue stressing and don't start with their work (..) They just say ... hhh we must do technology, but they never do it. (.) And the others who stress like this and (..) really start working, working very hard

David, also a high achiever who reported experiencing some stress associated with the great increase in his schoolwork load and greater cognitive demand at secondary school, did not view it as daunting, but rather as a powerful motivator, which identifies him as an intrinsically motivated learner (more on this in Section 6.3.1.1).

The respondents' experiences of the transition to secondary school confirm the views of educators and researchers (such as Grolnick *et al.*, 2002; Husen & Postlethwaite, 1994; San Antonio, 2004; Wigfield & Eccles, 2002) that stressors follow in the wake of these changes, from innocuous ones, such as the frequent changing of classes to more critical ones such as the encounter with new ideas or a whole new group of peers. The significant expansion of the respondents' psychosocial experiences (cf. Section 2.2.2) compelled them to a greater or lesser degree to reassess their self-efficacy views. Some respondents experienced uncertainty regarding their academic achievements (for instance, Richard, who "fell thirty percent" in one subject in a single term), in line with the argument that adolescents' vulnerability regarding their academic progress, coupled with dramatic changes in the biological dimension (cf. Section 2.2.1), result in constant readjustment to changes in the self.

With an increased workload, stress is inevitable. Following on Therese's response (cf. Section 6.2.2) that she cried a great deal during, what she referred to as her "high school years" (which had only consisted of the previous six months), she reflected further on her and her friends' handling of stress. It is interesting to note that she continued to describe her own experience, despite the fact that the question was about her friends' coping with stress:

- CT: And is this the way your friends also handle stress §
 T: Yes (.) No. I (. . .) they know I cry easily, I am a crying person
 CT: hhh (.) Emotional
 T: Yes, emotional. They know (..) when I start crying they just leave me alone (...) because they know if they are going to console me, then I only cry more (...) so, everybody just leaves me alone for a little while

The stresses of the transition from primary to secondary school and an increased workload with greater cognitive demand were in most cases outweighed by the adventure of a new school and an expanded circle of friends. Predictably, some uncertainty was also caused by changing social patterns in the psychosocial dimension.

6.2.3.2 Socializing and school

Whether a learner adjusts successfully or unsuccessfully to secondary school after the transition from primary school, is dependent on various "interconnected dynamics" (San Antonio, 2004:249), including factors in the personal, social and educational arenas, the physical, cognitive and emotional domains, cultural and community aspects. In this study all respondents reported a change in learner/ teacher interaction. A typical experience, coupling feelings of elation with some uncertainty, is the following:

- NINA: The primary school was very small, so everybody knew everybody. So (.) if someone says something in Grade one, the whole school knows. But (school x) is very different. It is a big school. I know the people, because I sing in the choir. So, there is something about the big, and not so small, cosy. So (.) that is one difference. Another difference is also the teachers in the primary school. They are (...) The teachers in high school, I don't want to say they are (.) impersonal, but in primary school, they, hhhhhh like the maths teacher, she was more like a mother, but in the high school, the teachers see so many children, they are not so (...) As I say, in the primary school all the teachers

knew your name. In the high school only some know your name, even if five Mondays are past, and only some know your name. So, they are very on the work, but in the primary school they were also on the work, but (..)

Zelda attributed the change in learner / teacher relationship to teachers adopting a different approach, and Arthur responded positively to the change despite some anxiety about it being unfamiliar territory at first:

ZELDA: hhhhh like, for instance, when a teacher comes in, you get up. You have more respect. And also for older pupils. But it was not really further a great adjustment or something. It was only . . . everything is more strict and there are more rules. And respect.

ARTHUR: A lot of unknown things. At primary school everything was familiar. You were used to things. High school, the school is bigger. You know very few of the teachers. Only those with whom you get classes. Yes. You don't know a lot of people there.

.....

ARTHUR: .hhh I think it is nice to get to know new teachers. It's nice to start right from the beginning. It's nice to work hard, sometimes to prove to them that you are hardworking, you are not one of the children who never do their homework. And yes (..) it's nice. To meet new people.

These views affirm Wigfield and Eccles' (2002:238) findings that teachers are found to be less supportive and caring by learners at secondary school. Wigfield and Eccles go further and actually link the declines in the nurturing relationship between teacher / learner to corresponding declines "in academic motivation and achievement". These findings are "especially interesting in that they document the interrelated role of students' perceptions and social needs . . . in predicting classroom-specific motivation" (2002:238). Wigfield and Eccles' research studies have also shown that adolescents have very firm ideas of their expectations of teachers, from expecting democratic treatment to an ability to establish interest in their subject and interpersonal dealings with their learners. Although the interviews did not directly probe learner views of their teachers, it is clear that many experiences and goal setting at school are closely linked to teachers and their relationship with the respondents.

While all respondents reflected on the changing role of the teachers, not all reported a respectful treatment of teachers. As opposed to Zelda's perception that there was greater respect for teachers at secondary school, Simpiwe experienced the learner / teacher relationship as more volatile and described his experience of a typical classroom scene:

S: (.) The loudness (.) In Grade Seven, no kids (were naughty). It's like the kids are afraid of the teachers. In Grade Eight the kids are like cheeky, they think, they're still in Grade Seven. They are naughty in class

CT: Is that so §

S: Ja § {{*Nods, scandalized*}} Others read magazines in class while the teacher's teaching.

Mary, who went to a single-gendered secondary school, reflected on the disrespectful treatment of teachers by the boys in primary school.

CT: Last year, do you remember some of the boys in class going through, well (.) this rebellious phase §

M: Well, many of the boys were very naughty in class, and they would do anything just to make the teachers angry. They wouldn't do their homework, or talk too much in class. Worry other people (.) Yes.

CT: Would you say that they were naughtier than the girls in class §

M: Yes. The girls were more relaxed and they would do their work (..) and they would complete things. And only then would they talk. But they wouldn't (..) be very naughty.

CT: Why do you think were the boys so much naughtier §

M: I think they were trying to get attention. {{*Laughs*}}

CT: You have little contact with (school x, single-gendered boys' school) Oh § not so. Have you met some of the boys you knew at primary school again §

M: Yes, we (..) we only do academic things alone. Yes, we go to their school, when there are bands, then they come to us. So, they often come to us

CT: Are the boys very much the same when you meet them again §

M: No, they changed a great deal. They, they (...) perhaps because they are stricter with them, they (.) they wouldn't be so naughty now. They would say § good morning, ladies §. They are not so silly. They (.) they are friendlier.

On several occasions during her interview, Mary referred to the boys' misbehaviour in Grade Seven and the fact that she found their 'antics' in class distracting and herself relieved without them in class in Grade Eight. It is also interesting to note that the change Mary perceived in the boys' behaviour towards the girls, took place during a period of only six months after leaving primary school. One is led to wonder how objective Mary was concerning the boys if

the following rather revealing interchange, that took place earlier in the interview, is taken into account. Note how Mary continued thinking of the boys' influence instead of answering the question about her reading habits:

CT: You have now, in the past six months, gone from primary to secondary school. How have your reading habits changed from last year till now §

M: It was very different at first. There were only girls at first. But you got used to it later. It's actually much more relaxed. You're no longer (..) wondering what boys are thinking about you.

The respondents displayed little open interest in the opposite sex, whether in a mixed or a single-gendered school, except for Simpiwe who roundly declared that he missed having girls in class. The respondents from single-gendered schools actually expressed relief at not having the other gender in class.

CT: Let's return to last year. Last year you were in a mixed school and this year you are in an all girls' school. How do you experience the change § Do you miss the boys § Are there advantages §//

ZELDA: //Oh. There are many advantages {{Laughs}}. Hmmmm. It is a lot different. It's, like (.) (last year) when we had a concert, and the boys were away, it was so quiet and we all thought, oh goodness, we were not going to survive this silence. But it's really very different, last year we were eleven girls in the class and now we are thirty. And everyone, we form a unit. It is like a bond that has been formed between us and it is very nice. One isn't too shy to behave like yourself, and there is no one to try and look pretty for. You go the way you wake up and you are like you feel. And it's not a matter of not seeing boys, we see them incredibly often, very many occasions, there are many opportunities to see boys (.) but it (.) really, it feels very nice

IRIS: hhhhhh I don't think it really matters for me (.) in the class it changed things. {{Laughs}} It's as if you get more done. The boys were always disturbing (..) the class. It didn't affect me, myself. It doesn't really matter so much to me

NINA: > Yes < They think they are smart, the best. And so on. It was difficult for the teachers (...) and they didn't do their homework. And they didn't listen. They were popular.

Remarkably, boys felt very much the same and, with penetrating insight, some even had views on their own disruptive presence in class. Wayne, who confessed to being 'naughty' quite often, both at home and at school, said the following:

- CT: Are there changes that you see in a class with (regard to girls) § //
- W: // Yes mam. hhh You can talk about whatever you want (.) without girls interfering.
- CT: Girls interfering. That's very interesting.
- W: .hh § Most girls are quiet and (..) they get their work done always, but boys, they (..) just make a big noise in the classroom.

- CT: How does this work for you §
- DAVID: .hh no mam, I don't really miss them very much. .hh I'm not really after girls at the moment. But (..) it's nice here.
- CT: Is that so §
- D: Yes. The fact that one can speak to others so easily and so, I guess, makes up for the fact that there aren't girls.

As stated before, Simpiwe missed not having girls in class and he expressed his views in his inimitable way:

- CT: OK. Now the first important question, how are things different this year when you don't have girls in the class §
- S: .hhh .hhhhh. I don't know, seriously. It (..) it depends.
- CT: Do you miss them?
- S: Ja §
- CT: Really §
- S: Ja §
- CT: Give me two reasons why you miss them.
- S: The class is less exciting. () Heavens (.) They (.) there's no girls to talk to (.)
- CT: Is there contact between (*school x, single gendered boys school*) and (*school y, single-gendered girls school*)
- S: .hhhh Ja, there is
- CT: Is that so // §
- S: But not enough

The dynamics of same-gendered peer grouping also changed from primary to secondary school. A new school necessitated the making of new friends:

- THERESE: // Yes, and the group of friends also changed (..) like (.) the cool group split up, and now the one girl again plays with us and the other one plays with girls from other (primary) schools

It is interesting to note that Therese here used the term 'play', which is commonly used by primary school children but quickly abandoned by secondary school learners who prefer more trendy terms like 'hanging out' or 'chilling', or simply 'being with friends'.

Most respondents experienced uncertainty and some anxiety to a greater or lesser degree during the transition and all had to adapt to changes in their routine. For instance, Arthur was used to being picked up by his mother after school and taken to the neighbourhood library every afternoon, but now in Grade Eight he had to cycle to school and was taken to the library more infrequently; Wayne had now become a hostel boarder; Nina, David, Richard and Zelda now took the bus to their secondary school whereas they used to walk home before; Simpiwe and Iris stayed at school in the afternoons until their parents could pick them up on their way home.

However, all the respondents declared that they managed to adapt quite well to the changes. Inquiring whether they knew of peers who had difficulty adapting to change was an attempt to probe deeper and elicit responses through transference. Several respondents readily reported that they had knowledge of classmates who did not cope well. Nina told of an acquaintance who came from a home-schooling background and enjoyed meeting new friends, but who experienced great difficulty coping with the volume of homework. Therese mentioned a girl who left her secondary school after only one week because she found the work to be too difficult. Zelda expressed great satisfaction with the way her peer group bonded, but at some length spoke of a girl who had difficulty making friends:

Z: hhhh She is not really one of my friends but she is a girl in my class. Yes, she is quite nice, I think if you get to know her better, but she (...) I don't know, she (..) is very down in the dumps. You can see she is not getting on well at high school. She has difficulty adapting and she (..) doesn't really manage her work and we are trying to help as far as we can. The other day we had (a fun athletics day (..) and then she didn't get a T-shirt and she blamed all of us and said we didn't buy her a shirt (..) but you put your name on a list § > And what she doesn't manage, she blames everyone else < So, then, as a class we sort of had a little talk with her (..) and since then, it is going a little better now, but you can see she is not really alright and she still has difficulties (..)

CT: Do you think a change of schools would help her §

Z: hhh I don't really know. To a certain extent I think (..) as I've said, (*school x's*) standard is really very high (..) and, perhaps it would help her, though I still think that we (..) can help her to acquire the right principles (..) because we are a nice group together, and yes, it would, personally, mean a great deal to me if she stays with us, so I think, for her, on an academic level, it may be better for her, but yes (.)

CT: Will it help if she went to another school, you think §

Z: I don't know. She doesn't make friends easily (..) So

The respondents who were all above average achievers clearly coped well with the turbulence that accompanied the transition from primary to secondary school, making it clear that the stress that may arise from the adolescent changes cannot be said to influence their reading habits adversely; on the contrary, reading, for the avid reader proved as attractive as always.

6.2.3.3 Interests

As argued from a Vygotskian perspective (cf. Section 2.2.1), the development and manifestation of interests lie at “the base of all cultural and mental development of the adolescent”, in a higher form, becoming conscious and free, “an attraction for itself, in contrast to instinctive impulse, which is an attraction to itself” (Vygotsky, 1998:12). More importantly, Vygotsky maintains that researchers and educators must consider the fact that these adolescent interests undergo substantial change in the course of one or two years only, and that this process, when aligned to adolescent development, is at “its most critical stage”. Vygotsky holds that “there is usually a decline in school progress, a weakening of formerly established habits, particularly when productive work of a creative nature unfolds before the child” (1998:13). As demonstrated above, the decline in school achievement cannot be held to take place across-the-board. Whereas Richard, Mary and Iris reported some decline in academic achievement, the rest continued achieving as successfully as before. Vygotsky's view, however, does hold true for many of the respondents with regard to interests.

A new peer group, changed circumstances, a greater workload and more options concerning extramural activities are some of the reasons given for changing interests. Richard ruefully reflected that he no longer did skateboarding. Three girls continued their dancing lessons, with the classes for one dancer increasing to even more afternoons a week. Choir singing had become an activity for some, while Wayne had started playing a brass instrument and joined an orchestra, as had Iris. Arthur commented on the greater choice of sporting activities at his school, but he did not participate in any; however, with a father in the IT industry, it is little wonder that Arthur's use of the Internet had increased substantially in the past six months.

David's interest in the Anglo-Boer war continued unabated, encouraged by his father who shared his interest, and together they spent many leisure hours visiting famous battle sites:

- D: .hhh it was rather interesting for me. Because we, my father and I and so, always attend (.) like the (.) the commemorations of the battles and so. So I know something about the Boer war and so (..)
- CT: Have you been to a battlefield like Magersfontein § //
- D: // yes mam. We (.) try every year to go to Majuba. hhhh We've already been to Two Bush. It's a (.) little way on the road to Delareyville, I think. Yes. And we don't always manage to get to it, but we try our best

It is significant to note that David especially enjoyed a class reader in Grade Seven because it dealt with the Anglo-Boer war and the concentration camps, some of which he had visited on occasion, convincingly affirming the theory that voluntary reading is supported by individual interests.⁷⁵ In David's case the empirical findings correlate well with the theoretical underpinning regarding the pursuit of interests. As Renniger and Hidi (2002:174) and Stipek (2002:318) point out (cf. Section 2.5.2), interests and engagement are inextricably linked to learners' concepts of confidence, entitlement and knowledgeable. In spite of not enjoying history as a school subject very much, David continued avidly reading in the field because of his well-developed, individual interest in South African history, and also the fact that he shares the passion with his father. His interest is therefore maintained, "in spite of frustrating or potentially difficult situations such as an ineffective history teacher (or) a research assignment that requires major revision" (Renniger & Hidi, 2002:174). This is, of course, also in line with Nell's (1988) views on the continuation of a leisure activity (cf. Figure 1.1, p. 8). This kind of continued engagement is above all of a behavioural and affective nature, dependent on effort, persistence and enthusiasm (Stipek, 2002:318).

This is also the case with Arthur's cybernetic and cycling activities, as well as with Therese's many forms of dancing, all in which she excelled, as well as shared with her sister and supported by her parents. It is furthermore noteworthy that Arthur and Therese, who both spent an inordinate amount of time on their chosen activities, shared their passion for them with their fathers, as did David. Reading interests, of course, are often the same.

⁷⁵ The aspect of reading interests is addressed more fully in Section 6.4.2.

6.3 VOLUNTARY READING

6.3.1 Motivation and voluntary reading

Zelda, as the child of a single parent, spent a lot of time alone, and voluntary reading was very important to her because she was often alone at home. Her reading needs were therefore also, but certainly not exclusively, of an escapist nature:

Z: No. No, you see, I don't always have someone to talk to. () But (..) sometimes you just want to be by yourself. Alone with your problem.

.....

Z: And (reading is) just very nice to me. It's as if you enter another world where you forget everything around you. And it is just something (..) it is something to look forward to when you get home. And you know your homework had been done and you can go on with the story and you forget everything. So (.) Yes, it is an adventure.

When asked how and when she started reading avidly, her answer was reminiscent of the motivation for David's, Arthur's and Therese's non-reading leisure activities:

CT: .hhh Why would you say do you read such a lot of books §

Z: When I was young and my mother worked, then I lived with my grandmother. And she taught me to read from a very young age. And since then (..) and everyday she read to me and I read a little. And it was just very nice to me. It was as if you enter another world where you forget everything around you. And it is just something (...) it is something to look forward to when you get home. And you know your work had been done and you can go on with the story and you forget everything. So (.) Yes, it is an adventure

However, Zelda's intrinsically motivated passion for reading had also been extrinsically rewarded while at primary school.

CT: Were there book prizes, or some other kind of recognition (school x) for reading a great deal §

Z: hhhh No, not for reading a lot, but in Afrikaans, and English (.) in Afrikaans and English when you achieved well, or at the end of the year with the merit function, then you get an award for the best achievement in Afrikaans and English and lots of other learning areas, and with these two languages you get a book prize then, it's more like a voucher and then you can go and select your book //

CT: // Did you get a prize §

Z: Yes. For Afrikaans and English.

- CT: My § And tell me, what did you buy with your vouchers §
 Z: I bought the complete Fairy Tales of Hans Christian Andersen. I lo-o-o-ove {{*gesture, emphasis*}} fairy tales. And then the Afrikaans Harry Potter, the *Order of the Phoenix*.

6.3.1.1 Intrinsically and extrinsically motivated reading

Zelda is a good example of the highly motivated reader. Home influences played the greatest role in establishing salient reading habits. As seen above, she was encouraged to read recreationally by her grandmother, and she declared that if she ran out of books during the holidays, she would read her mother's romantic novels, although she scoffed at their simplicity, finding them "so funny, because the stories work out well every time". She was also a highly achieving learner in Grade Seven who received numerous awards for academic prowess. Despite her pride in the extrinsic rewards she received at primary school, it is clear that she was intrinsically motivated, not only as a reader, but also as learner. In her responses to probes about her handling of disappointment, she revealed intrinsic motivation and a highly self-efficacious predisposition:

- CT: Let's return to the stress issue. Now you, I'm sure, with a lot of ease won the Afrikaans and English prizes. You enjoy it, it is easy for you. I want you to think now of something that you really wanted very much. And worked rather hard for. And then you didn't get it. Can you think of something like that §
 Z: .hhhhhhhhh. Last year (..)
 CT: Your feelings about it.
 Z: . hhhhhh. Last year hhhhh I won the prize for Natural Sciences. .hhhhh there is a little part of me that is really (..) mad about science. And I worked very, very hard for it. I think only I will know how really hard I worked for science. And I didn't get the award. And (..) I was disappointed about it because I worked very, very hard for it. But (..) the boy who got it also worked very hard for it, and although I was disappointed, I thought (..) perhaps he deserves it more than I do. Because there were times that I didn't work as hard as I could have. And he studied only for science and he did get it and I also worked for other things that I got. So (..) Together with the disappointment, I was disappointed for two days, but it passed quickly, because, yes (..)

This reasoning is remarkably level-headed for a pre-adolescent, especially in the light of Vygotsky's notion that learning becomes internalised as a result of "dialogues between a less experienced and more experienced learner" (1997:86), which is hardly the case here. In

Zelda's case, the rationalization of her disappointment is notable. Zelda was a voracious reader, and this internalisation must inevitably have influenced her reading motivation too - although this is a highly important but tenuous link that has not yet been sufficiently explored in the field of reading development (Sulzby, 1993:50).

The findings make it clear that intrinsically motivated readers, such as Zelda, Arthur and Simpiwe, continue reading avidly despite some upheaval during their progress to secondary school. The possibility is also great that they would become life-long avid readers. Whether they are extrinsically rewarded for their reading skills or not, seems to have little bearing on their desire to continue reading. With Mary, and to a lesser extent Nina and Therese too, extrinsic motivation clearly played a bigger role in their reading at primary school, and with a dearth of reading promotion strategies at secondary school, their enthusiasm regarding reading was beginning to show signs of strain. Therese may start reading avidly again at a later stage in her life, especially when she no longer exclusively devotes her hours of leisure to dancing. However, Mary, having lost interest in reading already, declared that she would read if she really could not find anything else to do in her free time. Nina, although nominated by two teachers as a prime example of an avid reader, was a mostly extrinsically motivated reader, and at this stage it is impossible to predict which way her reading habits would develop.

CT: Do your brother and sister read as much as you do §

N: Yes {{*Laughs*}} When I was (.) like in Grade Two, they were the bookworms. I really didn't like to read then. Like my father. But my mother also loves to read. But then, so (.) Grade Four, Grade Five (.) I started reading a lot.

CT: What was happening in school as you started to like reading §

N: My brother and sister. I saw them reading.

CT: Yes. And how have your reading habits changed from last year to now §

N: I'm not sure. This year I am so very busy with assignments and so on. But Sundays are my rest days. Then, then (.) it is the day I read. But this year, in the holidays, we had many camps and so on. But I read when I get the time. But I can't really say. I am so busy this year. So many things on

Nina is the kind of adolescent reader that can and should be positively influenced by secondary school teachers and reading promotion strategies. However, it seemed not to be the case. Nina mentioned that she did not feel intellectually challenged by many classes at

secondary school, describing, in spite of being a quiet and affable girl, some teachers as “boring” and the pace in the maths class “very slow”. Regarding the language teachers’ teaching practice regarding prescribed books, she preferred the way it was done in the Afrikaans class, because they “talked about the books” a great deal, discussing what the characters look like or finding motives for their behaviour. The English class, however, is less satisfactory because

NINA: (..) we are still doing things which we had learnt in primary school (...)

.....

NINA: I think that the teacher explains things. That wasn’t done in primary school, explaining tenses. And we focus a great deal on that, getting the right tenses. So the teacher explains that but what I don’t like very much is that she hhhhh well (.) explains things in Afrikaans.

.....

NINA: We must read at home and then she gives us work cards which we must fill in. In the English class the teacher reads with us (.) And also the poems and then the teacher reads with us. And sometimes she asks if you know this word or that word

This experience compares negatively with reading practices and reading promotion in the primary schools. The incessant completion of work charts is common teaching practice and is regarded by some reading researchers as an ultimately harmful practice, especially if it constitutes the only independent reading activity in class (cf. Section 3.2.1). David and Zelda described their language classes at primary school in a far more positive light. This is especially due to the fact that their teachers had classroom libraries which the learners could use whenever they wanted, and which provided books of their choice for class and leisure reading. Zelda, whose home influences on reading were already considerable, had the additional encouragement at school:

Z: In Afrikaans we didn’t really have a prescribed book. There only was a book case and when you finished your work you could go and take out a book //

CT: // A book of your choice §

Z: // Yes, your choice. And then, everyone had her own book so nobody else took it. And (.) there were cool books like Harry Potter and such books, not, like boring stuff for us. And in Grade Seven we did many book reports and there were lots of book forms to fill in when you finished a book. And the teacher looked at them often. And we had Danny Champion of the World as a prescribed book.

However, not all primary schools are this encouraging. For instance, Iris' class spent three weeks on a class reader that they did not like, did not complete and whose title they could not remember. Arthur, a particularly avid reader, indicated, if rather apologetically, that there was a dearth of reading experiences in Grade Eight:

- CT: What books are you doing at the moment § In English §
 A: We don't really read at the moment. We're starting reading in the third term (.) *The Hound of the Baskervilles*
 CT: Ah, Sherlock Holmes.
 A: Yes, Sherlock Holmes. And then we only do things, we work on language, the different things like verbs, and common nouns, and things like that. And, yes (..)
 CT: Things you actually did very well in at primary school §
 A: Yep. But it's (..) I forgot some of the things. The last time I did it in Grade Six. So it's nice to revise some of the things (.)
 CT: And in Afrikaans § What are you reading §
 A: hhhh there (..) we also don't actually read. I don't know if we are going to read. Because we didn't have to buy a book for reading. But we do a lot of written work. Lots of comprehension tests out of our textbooks. hhhh Articles and short stories and poems and things out of our textbooks that we read. Comprehension tests to see if we understand. So we read at least, but we don't really read out of books

The choice of a 19th century book such as *The Hound of the Baskervilles* as a class reader for a boy whose greatest passions are the cybernetic world and science fiction, is not a happy one. How Arthur's classmate who disliked reading were going to take to Conan Doyle's book about a laconic Victorian sleuth is also open to question. However, Arthur's intrinsic motivation and individual interests would most probably prevail and keep him reading avidly, despite such discouraging reading experiences at secondary school.

It has been argued that the extrinsically motivated reader, who is no longer encouraged by rewards, exemplary primary school reading practices and high reading test scores could lose interest in voluntary reading at secondary school (cf. Section 2.4). The rewards of reading have not been internalised in these readers, and the activity can cease, as in Mary's case, or decline, as in Nina's, who would only read if "there is absolutely nothing else to do". The intrinsically motivated readers, however, for whom reading has become akin to thinking and feeling, will continue reading in secondary school, and probably do so as adults too. Arthur's and Therese's parents and Zelda's mother had been doing exactly that their entire adult lives.

6.3.1.2 Mastery learning

Like most other behaviours, mastery learning starts at home. In addition to developing their children's self-efficacy, parents' interaction with their children and their provision of activities rich in interests extend their children's environment so effectively that mastery oriented learning is almost axiomatic. Challenges at school can then be met with curiosity and confidence. "Parents are the key providers of self-efficacy information when they arrange for varied mastery experiences" ((Schunk & Pajares, 2002:18).

Research also indicates that learners' appropriation of mastery and performance goals changes during the adolescent years (Anderman *et al.*, 2002:210; Guthrie and Humenick, 2004:335-336). The authors postulate that, in general, there are indications that learners tend to affirm performance goals more, and mastery goals less, as they progress through adolescence. This, according to Anderman *et al.* (2002:212), has especially been found in research on changes in learners' goal orientation across the transition from primary to secondary school (cf. Section 2.2.3). There was, however, little evidence of this, except to a certain extent in Iris, and to a lesser extent in Mary, whose home situation demands a different set of coping skills than in the mastery-oriented learners, such as Arthur, David and Zelda. It is possible that the six-month period from primary to secondary school, which witnesses numerous transitions and growth spurts, is too short a period for documenting substantial changes regarding performance goals.

However, some changes are discernible, as in the following interchange. Iris, who was a high achiever at primary school and was still an extremely enthusiastic reader at secondary school (having read *Gone with the Wind* and the sequel, *Scarlett* during the December holiday), described almost jealously the ease with which some learners achieved well at secondary school:

IRIS: hhh There are two of them who (..) they just don't take stress. They don't stress at all. It doesn't really bother them. They are usually the children who do well in everything. Who (..) they also do lots of other things. I don't know how they manage it. .hhhhh But they (..) you just get the impression they don't really stress about something like this (..)

Then there are the others who (.) stress, and they just continue stressing and don't start with their work (..) They just say .hhh we must do technology, but they never do it. (.) And the others who stress like this and (.) really start working, working very hard

Most remarkable about her lightly envious perception of these seemingly “unstressed” peers is the fact that Iris, as an academic high achiever, a pretty and socially highly acceptable girl who took part in a variety of exciting extramural activities, could possibly be viewed in the same light by other classmates – and that she was oblivious of this fact. David was another prime example of the highly efficacious, mastery-oriented learner.⁷⁶ When asked about a disappointing experience, he did not display the same kind of uncertainty or failure-avoidant behaviour as Iris or Mary. In a particularly revealing interchange, he not only displayed self-efficacious behaviour and evidence of mastery learning, but also, interestingly, reflected on the behaviour of his two role models, one, incidentally, whom he had never met:

- CT: Why didn't you get what you wanted § And I'm not talking about things money can buy
- D: Does mam mean achievement § //
- CT: // Yes. Achievement. There was a trophy, there was a (.) mark that you wanted and you didn't get it.
- D: .hhhhh Yes. (.) I swam in the past in the primary school and I've always done my best (..) but I didn't do (..) so very well in it. But I've never really (.) worked very hard for a specific thing, like say, a big cup, or something. I also don't really play rugby .hhhh So I've not really > if I don't quite manage something < then I don't feel too badly (.) it's just (..) I'm a jack of all trades (..) I do (..) I try everything. And I don't really excel in anything. I just do different things //
- CT: // but to be in the top ten academically § (.) sounds to me like excelling
- D: Yes, but I mean on the sports field //
- CT: // so you say all this came rather easily to you §
- D: Yes, mam. (.) I don't think I have a learning problem //
- CT: // No, I don't think so either {{Laughs}}
- D: {{Laughs}} People think I learn very (.) hard (.) because I achieve so well, but this isn't really the case. Sometimes I can be rather lazy, but I learn in the end (.)
- CT: Do you experience stress (.) if you come to a big exam §
- D: .hhhhh A little. I also think it helps. Because if you stress a little, then you are (.) likely to (..) like, start studying immediately. I don't rea-a-a-lly stress before the exams, especially since I know I do reasonably well. So, I don't really have something to worry about. My parents will never really be angry with me (..) like when I do badly in a subject or do something

⁷⁶ David's father's influence on his reading habits is discussed in Section 6.2.3.3.

- CT: So, you do well, not to please them, but because you like it.
- D: Yes. I do it for myself, because (..) .hhhh an engineer is to be a great (..) it's difficult to become an engineer. So I do it for myself. (.) My grandfather also, like, worked hard and also managed a great deal in his life (..) so I guess I want to be like him
- CT: Oh § Tell me more about your grandfather §
- D: Mam, he died, I guess about two years before I was born. .hhh he was ⁷⁷ () His name also was (*same as respondent's*) .hhhhhh He (.) he worked really very hard, so he didn't > really have time for my father and so on, which is why my father has made time, like for me < (...) because he knows (.) he doesn't want me to lead the sort of a life like he did > I guess < But my grandfather was very hardworking > and he didn't really stop < for (.) anybody. (.) Except now the fact that he smoked which probably caused his death (.) in the end. But apart from that he was (..) very .hhh a top man

David, remarkably like Iris and Arthur, seemed unconcerned about the fact that he had unique interests and could be considered “different” by his peers. In spite of being a high achiever, he was, like Iris and Arthur, also remarkably indifferent to extrinsic rewards and refreshingly free from arrogance.

Richard, an academic high achiever, had not given much evidence of mastery-oriented learning behaviour during the first six months in secondary school. However, he might simply be displaying the kind of ‘slackness’ or ‘latency’ Erikson (1968, cf. Section 2.2.2) considers part and parcel of the ‘critical phase’. Richard admitted to having had an “attitude” while at primary school, but still achieved well at secondary school (especially in maths), despite demonstrating a bemused attitude towards the increased workload of secondary school and the possibility of experiencing stress in this regard:

- R: I would rather (.) > I wouldn't easily < (..) I must say personally that I do rather well. But if there is an assignment or something and I begin working on it late, then I would begin stressing and then (...) I would rather try to take short cuts than doing it well.
- CT: And how do you feel about that §
- R: It, then (.) then I think every time (..) next time I must start doing it early enough, and then (.) I think after the next assignment, I must start early enough
- CT: And why don't you start it early enough §

⁷⁷ David's grandfather was an extremely forceful, well-known and successful professional man. I was not aware of this before the interview. Identifying information is here deleted for the sake of confidentiality.

R: Because (..) then you (.) get (.) come home in the afternoon and then you think, am I going to do my assignment or only my homework {{*Chuckles*}} (.) and then I only do the homework

In contrast, Arthur, both a mastery-oriented learner and a voracious reader, displayed exemplary study methods:

A: (.) about March, or early April, we visited my granny and they had a series of books, I think *Left Behind*, and I read all the books they had (.) and we brought back all the books and I think I finished reading them within, .hh, a month or so. And it is nice now to read the series and to have so many books to read and I think if you like a book very much and it is gripping and it keeps you in suspense, then you will make time to read it. You will finish your homework quickly so that you can get back to reading

Although there is neither empirical nor theoretical evidence in the extant literature of a correlation between mastery-oriented learning, intrinsic motivation and avid voluntary reading, it is significant that Arthur, David, Iris and Zelda displayed these characteristics abundantly.

6.3.2 Leisure

Clearly substantiated by respondent experiences – and an endorsement of extant research – is the hypothesis that leisure time has become an increasingly scarce commodity in the lives of teenagers. Stone (1996, online doc.) points out that few educators “seemed to appreciate the pedagogic and economic inefficiencies that would result as growing children became immersed in a world increasingly dominated by competing attractions”. Nell (1988; cf. Figure 1.1, page 8) too has shown that independent reading is required to be attractive, pleasurable and rewarding if they are to be chosen instead of other leisure activities during the few hours of free time that most adolescents have.

The attractions are numerous. As mentioned before, Therese spent five afternoons in various dancing classes, in addition to frequent performances (especially over weekends), eisteddfods and the like. Mary took both dancing and karate classes; many of the boys played rugby, some tennis, and the rest spent time on music lessons, orchestra rehearsals and art classes. Arthur’s

perusal of the Internet took up an inordinately great deal of time. However, although Arthur found that he had fewer hours of leisure and admitted to reading slightly fewer books, he emphatically declared that he still liked reading and made time in a busy schedule for it.

None of the respondents confessed to a lot of time spent watching TV. Rather than considering this convenient fibbing, possibly because adolescents are often told too much TV-watching is considered idle procrastination or a hedonistic pursuit, it should be stated in their defence that research has shown that individuals, whether children or adults, are usually unaware of the amount of time spent in front of the TV. TV, therefore, cannot be blamed for a reading decline because research conducted even before the advent of cable and satellite TV and other electronic pastimes showed that adolescent reading decline has long been deplored by educators and parents. Moreover, the majority of respondents asserted that they watched less TV than they had done when they were two or three years younger.

6.3.3 Transitioning the stages

According to Chall (1996), reading research is particularly prone to misunderstandings. She believes that the use of a stage theory might help, above all, to explain some of the phenomena perceived in the reading development of the adolescent. The stages are also valuable in their provision of a framework for analysis and synthesis of learners' reading. Starting with Piaget's concepts of assimilation and accommodation – two ways of adapting to the environment – Chall's developmental stages are useful for understanding reading development and benchmarking the transition from primary to secondary school reading.

Texts selected for classroom use at primary school are not expected to be too demanding, neither intellectually nor grammatically. Difficulties regarding reading, however, can begin to emerge early in their secondary school careers when texts are increasingly being used as a tool for new learning. Shifting reading requirements are encountered in Grade Eight as learners, firstly, need more knowledge to access more advanced abstract concepts, secondly, need more advanced language and decoding skills to cope with more cognitively demanding

texts, less familiar vocabulary and more mature literary texts, and, thirdly, need intrinsic motivation for voluntary reading practices since the secondary school curriculum does not advocate advanced reading instruction.

At primary school – and not only in the early grades but even, albeit to a lesser extent, as late as Grade Seven - the oral tradition plays a crucial role. Chall, admittedly speaking for American children of almost decades ago, has found that at the end of Stage 2, which roughly corresponds to Grade Seven, “about 3 000 words can be read and understood and about 9 000 are known when heard” (1996:84), which makes listening still more effective than reading. Even at the start of secondary school, listening comprehension of the same material is still more effective than reading comprehension. According to Chall, only by the end of Stage 3 do reading and listening become about equal, and “for those who read very well, reading may be more efficient” (1996:83; cf. Section 4.3.2).

Only during the later years at secondary school, in other words Stage 4 reading level, by reading widely from a “broad range of complex materials, both expository and narrative, with a variety of viewpoints” does *reading* comprehension become better than *listening* comprehension. The Grade Eight learner has just begun to read widely, not only ‘higher order’ prescribed literature, but especially also subject textbooks. It is, therefore, at this very stage that the poorer – or the extrinsically motivated readers - may be encountering difficulties sufficiently discouraging to create reading resistance, except when they are force-fed reading activities. The following interchange took place with a respondent who was extrinsically motivated and confessed to a diminished interest in voluntary reading:

CT: You are more interested in books about adventure and science fiction and so. Now I would like you to tell me more about your friends. Do some of them also read a great deal §

N: .hhhhh (..) some of my friends (..) they read also. I have a pal who also reads a lot. The others don’t read (..) not more than they have to. So. Not all of my friends read many books.

CT: What do they say is the reason for this §

N: They say they don’t like reading. They would do anything (..) even play ball outside (..) other things, watch TV (..) whatever

This illustrates the kind of reasoning that takes place in the adolescent's mind – and it is clear, according to Nell's flowchart (Figure 1.1, page 8), that there are many competing distractions, all vying for the few hours of leisure adolescent learners have nowadays.

However, transitioning through the stages is not a straight upward path (Chall, 1996:83). The level of the learner's development and performance also depends on the freshness and challenging nature of the text, in addition to the efficacy of the instruction received. Transitioning from Stage 2 to Stage 3 (cf. Section 4.3.2.1) can take place more effectively for most learners if reading instruction continues to take place at secondary school. It is also clear from the above exchange that adolescent learners will only continue reading voluntarily if, as seen in Nell's (1988) flowchart, they find voluntary reading sufficiently challenging and satisfying to continue doing so. The ideal, then, is for reading instruction to include the promotion of voluntary reading practices, also to abet the transition to a higher level of reading.

Both Zelda and Iris reflected on the fact that they used to enjoy reading a certain kind of book that they now felt they had 'outgrown':

- CT: What does your mother like to read §
 Z: hhhhh She reads (.) love stories. And sometimes I find them so-o-o funny, because the stories work out well every time. But (..) it's still interesting //
 CT: // like a modern fairy tale. Perhaps one needs such happy endings. Have you read *Sweet Valley High* §
 Z: No. I tried it once but it wasn't for me (..) it's not the kind of book I like so I left it. Hhhh There was the Baby Sitters Club and I rather liked it. And (..) hhhh I tried one of each. It usually works.
- CT: Of the books you have read last year as media prefect (..) how has your reading pattern changed from then till now §
 I: Last year, I sort of read *Sweet Valley* a lot, which (..) actually, it is not realistic. It is nice (..) but it's not realistic or relevant or (..) how things really are. But //
 CT: // Why did you then read so many of them §
 I: I (..) also wonder now why I read them {{ *Laughs* }}. They are (..) silly books. They are not well written. It is not (..) the story line, actually remains the same (..) all hundred books are actually exactly the same
 CT: So this was *Sweet Valley High* §

- I: It was (.) I also read *Sweet Valley High*, yes. And then also *Sweet Valley Twins*. So, they were twelve. *Sweet Valley High* was, so fifteen, sixteen
- CT: hh So you read many books like these. And now §
- I: Now I read more realistic books. That are real. They are not (..) extravagant. .hh Where last year, I almost read no adventure, apart from Harry Potter (.) I now read more adventure and things like that. > last year I read more romances < like *Sweet Valley*. Everyone is about the guys //

Iris' developing reading interests – as well as David's and Richard's - clearly reflect an increasing complexity predicted by the transitioning from a Stage 2 to a Stage 3 reading level (cf. Section 4.3.2.1), with text selection abetted by cognitive demand and more advanced reading skills.

6.4 LITERATURE

As seen above, tastes in books selected for leisure reading changed in most cases, whether to a greater or lesser degree. This greatly reflects Jones's (1999:104) findings, although his respondents were Mid-Western American learners. In the current study, especially the boys - David, Wayne, Richard and Simpiwe - reported that they were reading more non-fiction, despite Simpiwe's outspoken dislike of autobiography (specifically Roald Dahl's *Boy* and the assertion that the book is "only about himself"). The reading of science fiction and mystery increased for all boys, as did the reading of romance with most girls. The great changes in reading interests taking place from Grade Six to Grade Ten can be seen in the following extract from an American study conducted by Jones (1999:104):

Table 6. 1 A reflection of the reading of popular genres

GENRE	6 th grade	8 th grade	10 th grade
Romance	-	9 %	19 %
Historical	-	1 %	6 %
Science fiction	-	2 %	13 %
Horror	9 %	18 %	7 %

The survey also indicated a major difference between the reading interests of boys and girls:

Table 6.2 Gender differences regarding genre

GENRE	GIRLS	BOYS
Romance	8 %	-
Science fiction	1 %	19 %
Horror	12 %	8 %

Many of these findings are predictable, such as the growing appeal of the romantic novel for girls, and early adolescent boys' ostentatious lack of interest in it. Girls' interest in the mostly innocuous entanglements in the cited romantic novels is explained by researchers (such as Zagorovskii, in Vygotsky, 1998:12) as a manifestation of awakening sexuality in the adolescent girl. The girls in this study (to a greater or lesser degree) were all reading romantic novels, or had done so while at primary school already. Remarkably, with the exception of Simpiwe, the boys in this study declared themselves uninterested in girls, or as David typically and succinctly explained the situation and indirectly gave a reason for boys' not reading romantic novels:

DAVID: .hh no mam, I don't really miss them very much. .hh I'm not really after girls at the moment. (...) it's nice here (at single-gendered school x)

While the adolescent's fascination with the horror genre doubles between Grade Six and Eight, there is no explanation why it has decreased so dramatically by Grade Ten, or why girls are more avid readers of horror but lag well behind boys in the science fiction genre. However, the tendency for learners to read books targeted for an older audience holds true for the thriller or horror genre. Stephen King, often cited by adolescents (Du Toit, 2001), is an author of adult horror books. Jones (1999:13) has found that increasingly younger teens are now becoming Stephen King aficionados. Jones says that horror books, written for the older child, such as R.L. Stine's *Fear Street*, are more enthusiastically read by learners in Grade Five or Six, resulting in Stine's horror series for eleven-year olds, namely *Goosebumps*, being popular with Grade Three and Four readers. These statistics are corroborated by the respondents' experiences: most of them had read the *Goosebumps* series, but had already relegated it to their "distant" past. Arthur spoke disparagingly of them, calling them "boring" and

“predictable”. Iris’s fondness of romantic novels corroborates the statistics on adolescent reading interests (cf. Section 6.4), especially girls’ predilection of the romantic genre:

- CT: // (inaudible) the right books at the right time § What are the last three books you have read §
 I: *Gone with the wind*.
 CT: Goodness From start to finish §
 I: Yes. From start to finish. It took me some time. {{Laughs}}. But I read it. And *Scarlett*. It’s the sequel to *Gone with the Wind*. It is (..) everything turns out right in it. Finally. {{Laughs}}
 CT: Where do your interests lie at the moment §
 I: I actually read a little of everything. I read (..) I enjoy love stories, but they must be well-written. Otherwise they are just like the ones before.
 CT: You could have written them yourself.
 I: {{Chuckles}}. Yes. And. I like adventure. Actually I read everything.
 CT: . hhh Mainly novels §
 I: Yes. Mainly romance.

Arthur’s penchant for science fiction also bears out the increased interest boys are cited to have in science fiction. Arthur stated that he must have read “ten, twelve” in the *Star Wars* series alone, and although he also liked detective stories, he declared that his favourite book in primary school was yet another science fiction story: *The moon shines so brightly you can see it on Jupiter*, and that, without a doubt, “I think this was one of the nicest books I’ve ever read”.

Regarding class readers in Grade Eight, more reported being bored than being engrossed. For many the selected books were not intellectually demanding, and even when they were, some teaching strategies and the kowtowing to the ‘slower’ reading skills of peers killed any fun that could have been gleaned from such texts. The following interchanges demonstrate the wide variety of teaching strategies employed by secondary school teachers. Therese, for instance, loyally explained her teacher’s reading strategy, but it is clear that an exciting book about a topic that she, as dancer, might have had strong views on, is ‘done to death’:

- CT: How does the teacher deal with issues in the book §
 T: She reads a little, lets us read a little, and then she explains the book (..) for the children who don’t understand, then she explains to us that this is now here (..) she is at the

psychologist, she tries to get help but (..) her girl friend helps her but she doesn't want any help (..)

CT: Do you think what the teacher is doing with the book helps the learners who don't like reading so much §

T: Yes, but oh > the thing is < she (..) she gives children the opportunity to read but there are some who don't want to read . . . then they read, like a sentence, then . . . we others read sort of a paragraph . . . but the children who don't like reading sort of read just a sentence, and then (..) if they don't read themselves, they don't concentrate on what they are reading (..) so they copy what their friends have written down

CT: Does the teacher read it aloud in class §

MARY: She reads a piece of it (..) and then she said we had to read the rest. And then we also fill in questions. Because we are doing it for the exam.

CT: What does she mean by doing it for the exam §

M: Like (.) we have to say who are the main characters, and who is the writer who wrote the book. And then we complete work cards. And worked out assignments.

CT: Did you do *Boy* the same way §

M: No, hmm, we didn't .hh we actually did more interesting things with *Boy*. We had to describe what the woman looks like who works in the shop. We had to draw her. His mother, how he described her. We are now going to make a collage about who Roald Dahl is.

CT: What did the teacher say when you told her that you had already done the book last year

NINA: No, she says she knew we had already read the book. Many of us had already done it. But we are going to read it again. {{Laughs}}

CT: Do the children like the book §

N: I think there are some children who do not like the book. There are many (...) It is a sad story. Yes, I'm not sure. For me personally it is a very sad story. Not really my type.

It is remarkable that a book can *again* be selected as a class reader, in the full knowledge of the teacher that it had already been read before by the learners, and despite the fact that it was not universally appreciated the first time. Even more distressing is the fact that Arthur, who was a fast and avid reader at home, could report that the Grade Eights at his school had yet not received a single narrative text for class or home reading. This is a sad reflection of the state of reading promotion at this level, since Arthur's school is an affluent one with superior sporting and educational facilities and that takes pride in its accomplishments on all levels. The differences between Arthur's primary school reading experiences and the dearth of them at secondary school are particularly glaring; his experiences of class reading had been so quantitatively and qualitative different in Grade Seven:

ARTHUR: Yes, and they were nice books. I really liked reading them. They were nice books to read. Although it was sometimes bad because the class read the books slower than me. In Afrikaans the teacher had five books. And sometimes the teacher gave us a period to read, and then she looked at the end of the period how much we have read. And at the end of the year (.) because I also (.) when the teacher wasn't there went and read and by the end of the year I had finished all five books in the year and that was also very nice.

A most remarkable discovery was the fact that only three of the respondents had read any of the *Harry Potter* series, and this in spite of its global popularity, and the fact that these ten respondents were considered avid readers by their teachers, and were indeed to be found to have been so during the interviews. The following are typical responses:

CT: Have you read any of the Harry Potters §

MARY: No. But I have seen the two movies. I know about the thick new one, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. But I've not read any of them.

CT: You say you didn't like the witching of Harry Potter so much §

ARTHUR: .hhh I never read the books, I only saw the movie, the first one > and I didn't find it very interesting < .hhhhh I still want to read *Lord of the Rings* but I don't know what that is going to be like.

CT: OK. Other writers. Have you read Harry Potter §

WAYNE: Yes, mam, I got all five of them.

CT: Is that so § And is there a difference in Harry Potter one (.) compared to Harry Potter five §

W: A big difference, mam.

CT: In what way §

W: .hhh The way, the way (.) it all spread out. The (..) how the story goes, mam.

CT: hh OK. Let's say (...) you are obviously, you don't have a flying broom (..) and you are not at Hogwarts > sometimes close but at any rate < Are there three characteristics of Harry's that you feel you share §

W: .hhh Adventures, mam

CT: A book of your choice §

ZELDA: Yes, your choice. And then, everyone had her own book so nobody else took it. And (..) there were cool books like *Harry Potter* and such books, not, like boring stuff for us. And in Grade Seven we did many book reports and there were lots of book forms to fill in when you finished a book. And the teacher looked at them often. And we had *Danny Champion of the World* as a prescribed book.

CT: OK, now let's compare Danny and Harry. Which one did you like best §

- Z: Danny
 CT: Why §
 Z: Because (..) Danny was something new. I had read Roald Dahl before, but (..) Danny was (..) I don't know (..) .hhhhh It was more interesting because (..) it is about a little boy and (..) the circumstances are more realistic.
 CT: .hhhh
 Z: And Harry Potter, it was very, very good, interesting, and (..) but there was just something that (..) fascinated me (...) more about Danny.
 CT: More substantial.
 Z: Yes.
 CT: Would you say you identified more with Danny than with Harry § You don't have a flying broom here somewhere.
 Z: {{Laughs}}

6.5 INTERNALISED SPEECH

One of the most important aspects of the perceived qualitative changes discernible in early adolescence is the transition from external to internal speech ⁷⁸. The internalisation of speech is, of course, necessary for reading to be sensible, if not enjoyable and enthusiastically pursued. Learners who have not yet negotiated this transition find reading less pleasurable, and ultimately do not like reading and cease to read voluntarily. Nina, who is finding fewer reasons to read recreationally at secondary school, reflected on her peers' lack of enthusiasm as follows:

- CT: Why do you think do the children in your class not like to read §
 N: I don't know if they don't find it interesting. If they don't (..) They don't read boring books. If it clashes with their other things

According to Vygotsky, not everybody is capable of internalising speech, and internalised speech, after all, is necessary for a real enjoyment of books. Transitioning to a more advanced reading level firstly requires various qualitative changes, starting with conceptualisation. As Vygotsky (1998:97) describes it:

We have seen that the child's thinking depends specifically on concrete images, on visual representations. When the adolescent makes the transition to thinking in

⁷⁸ The development of internalised speech is addressed more thoroughly in Chapter 7.

concepts, his remembering what he perceived and logically comprehended must disclose completely different laws than those that characterized remembering during primary school age.

This explains a facet of reading that not all children have mastered by the time they transition to secondary school. It also explains some learners' lacklustre interest in reading – after all, not everybody makes the transition from external to internal speech. Transitioning from Stage 1 to Stage 2 already presupposes the ability to read 'silently': "Understanding written language is done through oral speech, but gradually this path is shortened, the intermediate link in the form of oral speech drops away, and written language becomes a direct symbol, just as understandable as oral speech" (Vygotsky, 1998:142). Transitioning to Stage 4 requires increasingly more refinement in the search for relationships and viewpoints compared to merely accumulating facts as in Stage 3. Both quantitative and qualitative changes are required in the independent reading of learners. As a correlative to the idea of internal speech, Vygotsky considers the process of writing and reading 'genetically', including the process of the transitional link that comprises an abbreviation of the extended forms of reading and which ensures the possibility of 'silent' reading.

How well a child or an adult reads at any point depends upon the interaction between personal and environmental conditions. The relationship is dynamic and socioculturally linked in that changes in personal characteristics require adjustments in the reading environment for optimal stimulation and further growth. A limitation in the personal development of a learner does not mean that learning cannot take place. It can, and usually does, but it can also be severely restricted in an impoverished environment instead of flourishing in an enriched and optimised educational setting. The research indicates the need for proper adjustments in the environment for continued reading development. And although adjustments in the environment start at home, this study is more intimately concerned with requisite development at secondary school.

CHAPTER SEVEN

READING IS AS READING DOES

Taste develops through comparison and contrast, not from ignorance.

A.J. Harris 1956

Lastly I come to the cheerful if not surprising finding that the heaviest readers are the people most active in everything. The doers are the readers.

Barbara Tuchman 1978

Bringing books and children together does not automatically assure learning. Learning must be planned for and worked toward. Children's literature is a potent source for helping children learn about the world and their place in it. Literature, however, must be augmented by the fine art of teaching.

D.W. Chambers 1971

Stage 5 is not easily achieved and requires much knowledge, reading skill, and efficiency, and ability in analysis and synthesis. Most of all, it requires teachers and mentors who themselves are doing Stage 5 reading – facing the realities of recreating and creating knowledge for themselves.

Chall 1996

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This study is fundamentally an investigation into aspects of the reading behaviour of pre-adolescent learners in an attempt to trace and explain factors that directly or indirectly influence their choice of voluntary reading as an activity. As indicated in the title, the study focussed narrowly on three key spheres of influence - *text*, *transition* and *turbulence* – that shape the specific character of adolescents' voluntary reading experiences and that require learners to cope with changes, both qualitative and quantitative, as they progress from primary to secondary school.

The research process was an interpretive inquiry that veered towards the narrative, neither interventionist, nor claiming generalisation. Coherence, authenticity and credibility, rather than validity and reliability, were the benchmarks of the study.

The research problem, leading to the research questions, has three foci: *learners' experience of voluntary reading at a crucial time* during their school careers. The first chapter prepares the theoretical framework by weaving together some spheres of influence that cover the subject, thereby establishing a basis to inform the interpretation of the research question after empirical study. The second chapter focuses more closely on the first two domains of the theoretical framework, namely adolescence and voluntary reading, with special reference to the factors of motivation and reading interests. The third chapter addresses the final two domains of the theoretical framework, namely literature and literacy. The fourth chapter concentrates on the transitional aspects of the domains and highlights various periodicity theories with a special focus on the developmental reading stages advanced by reading researchers such as Chall (1996). In the fifth chapter the complexity of the inquiry is addressed through a more refined focus on three of the domains and a description of the methodology. Respondent views formed the heart of chapter six, with thick descriptions abetting thin descriptions in a four-tiered analysis of the interview transcripts. In the final chapter the findings are presented as a narrative of the interconnections of the theoretical and empirical domains. An interwoven web of influences takes shape in this reflective chapter, attempting to point the way to future directions from a basis in the findings, conclusions and the limitations

of the inquiry. Three domains, namely adolescence, literature and voluntary reading, together with the forces of transition and qualitative change will underscore this chapter. The first part of Chapter Seven is more keenly concerned with the spheres of influence that generally shape adolescent learner experience, and especially motivating and goal oriented forces. The focus of inquiry in Section 7.4 is the respondent experiences linked to the refined domains of the theoretical framework (Figure 6.1).

7.2 INTERTEXTUAL TRANSITIONING

7.2.1 A narrative of evidential statements

Let the fanciful view be taken that children are taught to read adequately, even well; let us further assume that they have sufficient access to books to continue reading if they so wish, and that they may even regularly choose reading as a leisure activity, and all this takes place at primary school, under the interested eye of the expertly trained teacher. Let us further happily assume that this can continue well into adolescence and even after.

Imagine, then, the disappointment when discovering that statistics show that it does not. At least not for the majority of young readers. As a matter of fact, it has actually been affirmed that many of these regular readers start reading less, so much so, perhaps, that a reading decline has been noted in some readership surveys. cursory discussions and investigation allude to a number of obvious reasons for this phenomenon: greater choice of extra-mural activities, more time spent with peers and the electronic media, an added workload in secondary school, teachers who are too pressed for time teaching compartmentalised subjects. However, hunches tell you there is more to it and a little digging in extant but rather unrelated sources confirms that these assumptions are correct in many respects.

However, the path leading through reading-related research points in many directions. When the map of the theoretical framework is spread out, it is easy to see that main thoroughfares like literacy development and educational psychology with Vygotsky and Chall as true north become major highways offering a firm footing; auxiliary roads such as motivation and self-

efficacy theories confirm that the road, albeit less taken, will lead to a worthy destination. However, Stone (1996; online doc.) and others have warned that developmental stages may lead the researcher astray – after all, Rousseau had always adamantly believed that reading would cause Emile to stumble and fall. But other researchers continue to believe that structure is like backbone, it supports, directs and makes movement possible. And if there is one constant in the nature of adolescence, it is the fact of movement.

7.2.2 Text

Textual transition transpires in various ways during adolescence. Firstly, the cognitive requirements of texts move only in one direction, namely ascending. Secondly, the adolescent's (Vygotskian) qualitative changes require the texts themselves to answer to more stringent developmental issues. To answer to the developing needs of the adolescent, texts must involve more of the reader's cognitive abilities, accumulated knowledge, and motivation (Chall, 1996:51). An ability to synthesise, reorganize and critically react to texts that are often complex and contradictory is one of the requirements of an advanced reading stage, and this is the target that secondary school traditionally aims for. Too many of the respondents' prescribed texts – both fictional and subject-related – did not comply with these strictures.

Chall's reading development stage theory plots the increasing cognitive demand of texts selected for and required by secondary school learners (cf. Figure 4.1). Criticism of developmentalism is often harsh and easily justified, especially when developmentalism is employed to categorize and dictate. However, an understanding of the 'laddering' of reading skills and interests⁷⁹ is an invaluable and effective tool in the crucial task of designing reading programmes that benefit the individual reader and of matching book with reader. This approximation of an individual learner's reading interests and skills is intended solely as a guide and never as a rigid imposition. Tallying a learner's individual reading stage with a developmental scheme is only effective if it considers that numerous factors influence individual motivation and interests. A stage development theory predicts change and helps

⁷⁹ The term 'laddering' is used to avoid the term 'scaffolding', which in educational, Vygotskian terms describes the provision of supports, *inter alia*, by the teacher.

teachers and policy makers to prepare for it. Chall, for instance, was the first to explain that the adolescent voracious reader may start to read more nonfiction, and may be seen to read fewer books, but that they are qualitatively more demanding. An effective developmental stage theory can therefore predict and accommodate; it neither prescribes nor should it enforce. Both quantitative and qualitative changes have to be taken into account.

The function of a developmental stage model is confirmed by the responses of most of the research participants who expressed dissatisfaction with the kinds of books that they had voraciously read and enjoyed only a year or so ago. One declared that she was at a loss to explain why she had read so incredibly many of a particular series since they were “all the same”; ironically, it is the very *predictability* of the characters’ actions and the events that is cited by readers, writers and publishers when accounting for these books’ popularity. Another avid reader even poked fun at her mother’s favourite genre, the romantic novel, because of the determination of the books’ resolve to have happy endings. Boys’ series (such as *The Hardy Boys*) held little attraction for respondents who had started to prefer nonfiction texts instead, and the Internet was cited as choice reading material. Regarding literary texts, several respondents indicated that they had lately begun to read novels that were more challenging, or preferred texts (both fiction and nonfiction) written for an adult audience. This finding is consistent with research on reading interests (Chall, 1996; Jones, 1999; Palmer, 1995):

An outgrowth of this trend seems to be that many YAs⁸⁰ are approaching adult books at an earlier age. It seems common to see a 9th grader reading John Grisham as opposed to Richard Peck. YA literature is still serving as a transition, but this trend shows that transition is happening at an earlier age, partly because teenagers are wanting to act or be perceived as older than they really are and partly due to a natural phenomenon best demonstrated within the horror genre (Jones, 1999:13).

The respondents’ reading interests confirmed research evidence that found that especially girls prefer to read novels that are targeted at their peers two, three or even more years older. One of the respondents, a particularly avid reader, illustrated this tendency in her reflection on favourite books. When she was approximately ten or eleven years old, she favoured the series

⁸⁰ YA is the abbreviation for Young Adults. The term was coined in the 1990s and has been popularised by the media sciences, together with the term *tweens* which describes the stage ‘in-between’ childhood and the teenagers.

Sweet Valley Twins, and later, when she turned twelve, she read the series for the older girls, *Sweet Valley High*. Now at thirteen, she had started reading adult romantic novels.

Research conducted on the reading habits of learners has largely been divided among several arbitrarily imposed divisions of children's literature, for instance the polarization between research on texts for the younger child and research on youth fiction, or fiction and nonfiction. These divisions may have contributed to the fact that the quantitative and especially qualitative changes taking place in voluntary reading habits, occurring in the passage from the primary to secondary school, have remained inadequately (if at all) researched. The dearth of research studies focusing on the transitional factors and especially their impact on reading interests are not only indications of the dichotomy in readership practice, but also works against the notion that reading development takes place on a continuum, albeit an erratic one, from early literacy to the attainment of the highest level of advanced critical reading skills.

7.2.3 Transition

The transition from primary to secondary school is accompanied by changes, quantitative and especially qualitative, some greater than others, as asserted in the theories on adolescence and substantiated by the experiences of the respondents. In addition to biological development, there are new encounters in a new school with new peers, teachers, subjects and activities. While the study did not attempt to investigate psychological or biological development, the respondents readily shared their experiences of psychosocial and cognitive changes, indicating that they were managing the transition with cautious enthusiasm.

Transitioning to a new school with new challenges, combined with the biological and psychosocial changes of early adolescence and the increased cognitive demand of secondary schoolwork, require complex organizational and interpersonal skills. This is a time of great vulnerability during which their self-concepts can be either boosted or bruised, depending on

their experiences at school.⁸¹ However, all ten respondents in this study revealed resilience in coping with changes during the transitional year, whether the challenges came from their seniors, teachers or their new peer groups. Nine of the ten respondents indicated that they found the changes mostly exhilarating, even though secondary school required various adjustments, such as a more challenging environment, more complex transport arrangements, longer bus rides, an earlier start to the day and arriving back home later in the day, and a greater choice of extramural activities or peers. The tenth respondent was more apprehensive of the new challenges, but the fact that she also had to cope with changing conditions at home following on divorce and the acquisition of a new stepfamily, could have exacerbated feelings of apprehension.

Vygotsky's concept of qualitative change effectively traces and predicts many of the transformations the respondents displayed during the investigation. A quantitative increase in the academic workload at secondary school was reported by all the respondents, but this was to be expected. The increase in cognitive demand, indicative of a qualitative change, was also remarked upon by most of the respondents, and this is a far more significant finding, since it is an affirmation of Vygotsky's principles.

In addition to cognitive qualitative change, psychosocial development also underwent qualitative change. The establishment of a new peer group, together with a desire to keep trusted friends, seemed a major concern of the respondents. The girls all reflected on this at some length, and three of the respondents cited examples of girls in Grade Eight who had difficulty adjusting to the changed circumstances at secondary school and 'making friends'. None of the respondents reported undue experiences in this regard themselves, but several remarked that they sought their own company and found gratification in the solitary exercise of reading. Simpiwe, for instance, even complained that his parents insisted on talking to him when he would have preferred reading a book in silence. Zelda, the only child of a single

⁸¹ San Antonio (2004:259-260) reports on the anxiety that adolescents can suffer when experiencing peer rejection during this time of transition and recounts her experience of a fifteen year old boy's suicide: "He was buried with a burn mark on his cheek – a classmate seared his face with a hot glue stick a couple of days before he pulled the trigger".

parent, confessed to being on her own for protracted periods of time, but emphasized that this was to her liking, too.

It is clear that an effective strategy to minimize the stress of transitional experiences is to acknowledge, accept, assist and accommodate the fact that changes, both quantitative and qualitative, are involved. The respondents in this study confirmed Bandura's (1986:417) statement that the ease with which developmental transition is negotiated depends "on no small measure, in the assurance in one's capabilities built up through prior mastery experiences".

Most readership surveys and quantitative readership studies are not designed for in-depth investigation of motivational and interest factors. In a qualitative study, however, the reasons for the changes in interests or motivational factors can be described more adequately as, for instance, in the theories and models advanced by Chall and Vygotsky. The changes in interests and the qualitative transformations that accompany adolescent development (especially the cognitive and psychosocial aspects) are two Vygotskian concepts that create a deeper understanding of adolescents in general and their reading habits in particular.

Regarding reading development, Chall (1996) maintains that it is imperative that a number of developments take place before a learner transitions from a Stage 2 to a Stage 3 reading level. An expanding vocabulary which transcends the reader's everyday word knowledge, greater sophistication regarding background knowledge and the ability to understand and use sentences with greater complexity are three of the most important factors. The one learner who indicated that she no longer counted reading as a preferred leisure activity, gave no indication of any of these factors, whereas the other respondents all displayed proficiency in most of these, and at least five gave an indication of a much higher level of cognitive development and reflectivity. The respondent who shared a love of history and famous battlefields with his father and admired his grandfather for greatly achieving in his lifetime, also demonstrated a highly sophisticated ability to accumulate and enjoy facts and other details.

7.2.4 Turbulence

In their work, Vygotsky (1978; 1997; 1998) and Erikson (1968) (also cf. Section 2.2) predict the concept of ‘turbulence’ with the coming of the ‘adolescent age’ and often even refer to it as a ‘thirteen-year crisis’. Vygotskian predictions include blatant negativity, anxiety around issues of sexual maturation, flouting of discipline (especially among boys), verbal contempt for rules, opposition to parents, teachers and senior learners, moodiness, laziness, messiness and a dreamy state (especially for the girls). Although Vygotsky and Erikson also warn that adolescence as a developmental stage is certainly not homogeneous, remarkably, all the respondents displayed some of these characteristics and confessed to others. For instance, Simpiwe displayed irritation with parents who insisted on communicating with him when he preferred his own thoughts, whereas Zelda confessed to moodiness, David to messiness and ‘naughtiness’, Richard to laziness, Iris to dreaminess, Nina to frequent bouts of boredom and Therese to tears. Mary did not confess to an interest in boys but they cropped up quite frequently in the interview, especially regarding their improved behaviour and manners. Arthur did not express defiant conduct, but gave evidence of a critical stance to teachers, while the importance of friends increased. That the peer group gained in importance was also clear from many responses, as well as acts of growing independence from family.

Although all the respondents (with one exception) achieved average, or well above average at secondary school, some tension and anxiety were reported with an increased workload. However, the famed turbulence of adolescence was mostly concerned with the psychosocial rather than the cognitive aspects of the transition from primary school. The majority of the stressors came from the adjustments the respondents had to make with establishing a new group of peers or becoming acquainted with secondary school teachers who seemed “too busy” to get to know their learners’ names. Apart from some spells of tearfulness, few other problems were reported (except by the respondent who had to deal with a new step-family). When taking into account that the challenge of a new school, coupled with the biological, cognitive and psychosocial stressors of pubescence, inevitably must produce great strain in these learners’ lives, and that new responsibilities, new academic and social roles in new circumstances require shifts in self-efficacy views, the success of the respondents’ transition from primary to secondary school is indeed remarkable. The resilience and positive self-

efficacy views the respondents had of themselves outweighed much of the turbulence arising from their vulnerability in their new surroundings, even when it included becoming a hostel boarder or adjusting to a new family. However, although an hour-long interview with a friendly stranger does not create the stereotypical circumstances for a display of adolescent turbulence, the general feelings of cautious enthusiasm and hopefulness that future challenges will be met, characterized most of their narratives.

7.1.5 Synthesis

The transition from primary to secondary school is clearly fraught with many psychosocial challenges, upheavals and difficulties, but for the ‘average’, more or less self-efficacious adolescent under ‘average’ circumstances, they are met with cautious optimism, growing independence and some excitement. However, to transition cognitively to a higher level, and specifically a more advanced reading stage, requires the development of advanced reading strategies and more challenging texts that embrace a multiplicity of knowledge and assignments designed to invite and guide the adolescent to grapple with concepts and ideas. However, this does not always happen at secondary school, as the research participants indicated. Too often texts are trivial, assignments lack challenge and teachers are not sufficiently focused on developing the learners’ learning goals (as opposed to performance goals set extrinsically by the Department of Education or the school). Many of the intrinsically motivated respondents – most of whom were mastery-oriented learners as well – continued reading (as avidly as before) increasingly more challenging texts, and they will probably continue doing so, because feelings of competence and pride feed into the increased challenge of more demanding texts. The extrinsically motivated reader and the failure-avoidant adolescent learner often fail to rise to the challenge that the higher cognitive demand of secondary school reading requires of them. If teachers – and not only language teachers, but especially subject teachers - at secondary school can provide the needed challenge, guidance and support, the extrinsically motivated learner may be encouraged to participate more actively in more challenging cognitive activities, especially those requiring effective reading skills.

7.3 LIMITATIONS

Fletcher and Francis (2004:76) warn that the influential role played by context in educational research complicates both the research and its interpretation to such an extent that results and conclusions cannot easily be generalized across other contexts. Consequently the findings in this study, especially concerning the prerequisite internalisation of speech, mastery-oriented learning, self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation and their impact on voluntary reading, may effectively describe the ten Grade Eight research participants' experience of voluntary reading but do not presume to describe all adolescents' reading experiences. More research studies, using different methods and various instruments but investigating the same aspects of the research problem, are required before, for instance, the role of the internalisation of speech can be considered a definitive factor on voluntary reading.

While the study did not attempt to investigate the influence of psychological development, the respondents readily shared their experiences of psychosocial and cognitive changes. However, changes occurring over an approximately six month period may prove too short for some long-term influences to become apparent, such as goal orientation or motivational performance.

Apart from selecting the respondents solely on the basis of the fact that they are effective and avid readers, numerous other aspects were not taken into consideration, such as gender, ethnicity, affluence, poverty and the role played by parents, peers, role models and school.

Another limitation of the investigation was a common error: the initial outline of the study and the original conceptualisation were too broad. Time constraints and the bulkiness required of such work soon made it clear that the original concept is only practicable if the investigation is conducted by a group of people participating in a longitudinal project. The current data collection and analysis provided some answers to the research problem and afforded insight into various aspects of the refined theoretical framework. However, motivational factors and the internalisation of speech, and their impact on voluntary reading should be investigated more rigorously in subsequent studies with a different set of research instruments than the one used here.

In the original conceptualisation preceding the formulation of the current research problem, I may have paid too much attention to hypotheses on reading decline and have therefore neglected more crucial aspects, such as gender or the role of affluence, as factors that have an impact on voluntary reading practices. I postulated that the neglect of recreational reading at school (and consequently a contributory factor to the dearth of a reading culture in South Africa) is responsible for the seeming decline in adolescent reading, having found evidence of the phenomenon in numerous reading surveys. However, the slightness of the research in this regard is the reason that the nature and extent of a reading decline has not been verified.

Although great care was taken to minimize the danger of anecdotalism (Silverman, 2001:222) and the selection of ‘exotic’ snippets of conversation, a valid accusation of my having displayed a tendency towards such an approach can be made. However, I tried to select mostly those extracts from the interviews that could be considered representative of the experiences of the whole sample. The sheer volume of the transcriptions of ten interviews lasting approximately one hour each, makes more selections impossible, and it can be assumed that much more revelatory facets of the respondents’ experiences remained untapped. However, even highly individual responses are, if not representative, at least indicative of some aspects of the research problem. For this reason I restrict the use of terms such as *evidence*, *generality* or *proof* in favour of *description*, *indication* and *experience*.

However, the term *experience* may also be too ambiguous and should not be considered supremely important since all experience is dependent on, and fraught with, too many impacting factors such as bias, values, emotions, linguistic coding and paradox, to name but a few. Silverman (2001:221) argues that “immediacy and authenticity may be a good basis for certain kinds of journalism but qualitative researchers must make different claims if we are to take their work seriously” and maintains that if qualitative research “is to be judged by whether it produces valid knowledge, then we should properly ask highly critical questions about any piece of research. And these questions should be no less probing and critical than we ask about any quantitative research study”.

Further sobering thoughts arise when measuring the study against the list of common shortcomings of research studies in education made by Reyna (2004:57) who suggests that much of the “cant and commentary that passes for educational research” should be eliminated. She summarizes recurring weaknesses of research studies as follows:

Many studies produce no real evidence of effectiveness because of poor designs and lack of controls.

- *A common mistake is to use descriptive methods to answer causal or process questions*
- *Control groups are virtually absent from the educational literature, despite urgent need for effectiveness data.*

Many studies simply gather few data, unsystematically, with multiple sources of bias.

- *Only a few students are studied, observations are subjective and not validated, or there is no control group or a poorly matched one.*

Many studies that produce evidence of effectiveness still have shortcomings.

- *Philosophies and practices differ across effective programs.*
- *Lack of grounding of hypotheses in empirically based theory.*
- *Not clear what about the program is effective and what is counterproductive:*
- *What is the “active ingredient” that creates effectiveness and what could be thrown away.*
- *Measures are not standardized.*

Many studies are not published or are not reported in peer-reviewed journals.

- *Expert peer reviewers can catch mistakes and weed out unsupported claims.*

Many studies have no objective evidence of student learning.

While I am exceedingly mindful of these shortcomings, and while hoping to have avoided some pitfalls in the study, I am also only too painfully aware that in many cases I have not, and that my sins of omission are glaring, since many important questions were not addressed in this study. For example, I also did not attempt to address the issue of the availability of reading material, which in South Africa is a very real problem, not only in rural and less affluent schools, but even in schools in which enticing texts should be readily available in well-stocked libraries, as it is clear that these schools, for instance, do not lack sporting facilities or computer laboratories. Even with the few participants in this study, it is obvious

that too many school practices seem to rely heavily on textbooks or fiction with short selections and exercises in workbooks and worksheets as their only exposure to ‘real’ reading.

Neither were gender-related factors addressed in the study although much research has indicated a real difference between the reading interests and reading achievement of boys and girls at this age (Green, 1987:11; Jones, 1999:104; Palmer, 1995:56). Research studies, for instance, have shown that in most surveys primary school girls score higher than boys, but Chall (1996:79) indicates that in the absence of meticulous studies, it is impossible to say how long the girls remain ahead, because it appears that by Stage 3 many boys seem to have caught up. Casual observation during the interviews did not reveal deep-seated gender differences beyond the well-documented findings of surveys, such as those reported by Jones (1999) concerning reading interests. However, in the light of Reyna’s list of shortcomings, this is hardly a scientific finding. It is nevertheless sincerely hoped that the study’s limitations may serve as indications for future research.

7.4 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.4.1 Overview

Three of the original domains of the theoretical framework, namely voluntary reading, literature and adolescence, and their relevance with regard to the reading and transitional experiences of the research participants, form the core of Section 7.4. Whereas the findings and conclusions in Section 7.2 endeavour to describe the character of adolescent transitions, they here attempt to generally inform more advanced reading practice, especially as it is implemented in secondary schools.

7.4.2 Voluntary reading: where there’s a will, there’s a way

The respondents’ experiences revealed that there is a great variety of approaches for the promotion of reading strategies in primary school, ranging from classes with an enticing

selection of books in class libraries and the teacher's encouragement to enjoy freely selected books whenever the learners choose, to teachers displaying a total lack of interest in reading promotion and commitment to learner involvement. This wide range of interpretations of the DoE policy's injunction (cf. Section 3.1.2) to teachers to read 'real books' in class continued into secondary school, as respondents described practices that ranged from no reading (apart from grammar exercise for the purpose of completing worksheets) taking place in Grade Eight language classes to exciting discussions on relevant topics arising from books, goal-oriented and mastery learning activities, and thought-provoking assignments on authors. As in many other aspects at school, the individual teacher's attitude determines the level of general learner involvement in the language classroom.

It is furthermore clear that the intrinsically motivated learner with a well-developed interest in reading will continue reading avidly despite a lack of teacher involvement. However, the extrinsically motivated reader – who in many cases had actually read quite avidly at primary school - loses interest in reading when secondary school teachers prove indifferent towards their reading interests and experiences. Clearly, in order to develop a lifelong interest in reading, learners have to continue experiencing pleasure in the act of reading and do so with intrinsic motivation or reading will remain a marginalized or neglected activity. The role of school in this regard cannot be underestimated.

This is substantiated by extensive research on strategies to foster voluntary reading habits that was conducted by Guthrie and Humenick (2004:334). They assert that teachers who, for instance, provide content goals and encourage their learners to read for mastery of information by providing conceptual themes and a variety of topics with "real-world connections to texts", greatly enhance their learners' intrinsic motivations for reading. David's (Section 6.2.3.3) interest in history was encouraged by both his subject teacher and his father, and he would clearly continue reading about South African history with such a well-developed individual interest. However, it is important to note that David would also read avidly in spite of history teachers who do not encourage, praise or reward him because he was intrinsically motivated and he therefore did not need extrinsic rewards, finding the acquisition of knowledge, gleaned from texts, reward in itself.

Children become and especially remain avid readers because they are intrinsically motivated learners. Extrinsic rewards may encourage the young reader to read books, but once they reach a Stage 2 reading level or transfer to secondary school, they only read voluntarily because they want to. Unless a learner is intrinsically motivated regarding the acquisition of reading experiences, none will become enthusiastic readers, despite teachers' efforts. Guthrie and Humenick (2004:339) reiterate that one of the crucial findings of numerous research projects is the fact that learners' purposes are closely related to their motivations. Furthermore, when learners are given choices of reading activities, not only did their interest and the time spent in reading increase exponentially, but also their competence in employing cognitive strategies in the information-seeking task in reading (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004:341).

Contrary to expectations, there is no real evidence gained from the results on this investigation to confirm the existence of a general reading decline. At least seven of the ten respondents claimed that they were reading as avidly as before, in spite of time constraints. The two respondents who indicated that they were reading less were mostly extrinsically motivated learners, and the third respondent was not a definite intrinsically motivated learner. However, it is clear that learners can cognitively transition from a Stage 2 to a Stage 3 reading level, but not become (or remain) avid voluntary readers. This explains why many high achievers function well in professional, even academic careers, without avid reading, or as anecdotal reports assert, with no voluntary reading experiences at all.

Another finding also concerns Stage 2 to Stage 3 transitioning. Some people never attain the higher reading developmental stages and, therefore, despite the fact that they are adults with mature interests, they do not experience a need to read the books that would have been to their tastes and enhanced the experiences of their interests. A avid adult reader can be forgiven for thinking that such intelligent people have simply not learnt how rewarding reading can be. However, this remains a hunch, derived from personal bias and I did not explore it in the extant literature. A second hunch concerns the internalisation of speech, but again this was not explored in this study. These, then, will point towards valuable new directions for future research.

Another assumption that has been disproved is the fact that unless learners acquire salient reading habits by the time they transition from primary school, they never will. Simpiwe stated clearly that he had only become an avid reader in his Grade Seven year. Neither did he consider this to be unusual. Anecdotally, but not rigorously researched, I have found this to be true of many other people who start reading voraciously towards the end of secondary school and even later. A new insight is that learners are not simply classified as extrinsically or intrinsically motivated readers, but that they can develop into the latter later, or that they are both, depending on the activity. However, it can generally still be argued that the intrinsically motivated reader reads avidly because he or she chooses the activity for its intrinsic benefits, whereas the extrinsically motivated readers in this study indicated that reading no longer held the same attraction it did at primary school when teachers had been more encouraging.

7.4.3 Literature: an open book

The South African *Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005* (Chisholm *et al.*, 2000:44) declares rather bluntly that “we are bereft of a strong reading culture” and states that the 35 school-based studies commissioned for the President’s Education Initiative showed that in most schools, “Books are little in evidence and reading is rare”. Chall (1996:96) found (admittedly in research conducted in America, but in the light of South Africa’s reading deficit quite pertinent, as well as corroborated by some of the respondents) that one of the reasons for lacklustre reading practices is the fact that reading in the language classes depends too heavily on the textbooks with short selections and unexciting exercises in workbooks and on worksheets. Although such practice helps learners to develop fluency, increase vocabulary and comprehension skills, it can hardly be considered an effective strategy to enhance the pleasure principle. To create a desire for reading in addition to advancing learners’ reading strategies, more reading, and certainly of more challenging and enticing texts is imperative. To transition to ever more advanced levels, an exponential increase in the cognitive demand of texts, especially in the subject areas at secondary school, is also required.

Research has shown that one of the most successful classroom strategies for reading promotion is the creation of a classroom library. Three research participants reported that their language teacher in Grade Seven had class libraries and they were given free choice of a variety of genres, including a good supply of trade books. Such encouragement of voluntary reading resulted in enthusiastic reading practices for at least the three respondents; however, although it is also true that all three of these learners are avid readers, it cannot be scientifically proven that the former caused the latter. Neither can it be assumed that this approach enthused all learners in class, although the strategy has been advanced by many researchers over many years.

However, class libraries should not only be found in language classrooms, but in all other subject classes too. David, an avid reader with a well-developed individual interest in local history, for instance, referred appreciatively to a youth novel about the Anglo-Boer War prescribed for language instruction, but reported no enticing historical texts in a class library in the history class. The use of class reading textbooks in the language class too often tends to focus on reading method, or the instruction of a certain skill, for instance, the acquisition of vocabulary, or exercises in syntax. Little attention is usually paid to the experience of sheer pleasure, despite the fact that the teacher's influence is only second to the parent's because it is believed that the "mediation of literature to children by a literate, sympathetic adult is the single most important factor in the creation of a desire among children to read and to read adventurously" (Chambers, 1985:46).

Analysis of the course of reading development indicates that there should be greater concern about what children read. In view of the fact that interesting texts are highly motivating and increase comprehension, it is important to note that learners' interests in a text is increased when they have some background knowledge about it (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004:344). Whereas this may facilitate the matching of book and avid reader, it also means that interests, motivation and prior knowledge engage in a spiral motion, with reluctant readers, or children from deprived backgrounds finding it ever more difficult to enter into a relationship with voluntary reading.

One of the reasons for this does not only concern the matter of texts, but also of time. That texts should change qualitatively with regard to complexity of subject matter, syntax and vocabulary is clear (Section 4.3.2). What is less apparent and has received less attention in research is the requirement of quantity with regard to reading experiences (cf. Section 3.1.5). For optimal development of reading skills, a sheer volume of practice is required, for in fact, “no children read enough in school to become readers. They all need a different kind of help outside school; they need time” (Meek, 1984:93). However, as research and respondent experiences have shown, this is hardly the case. In Arthur’s affluent school, no time had been given to pleasure reading for the first eight months of his Grade Eight year, and the text planned for the second semester is a 19th century one that does not promise to keep the adolescents riveted to the pages.

7.4.4 Adolescence: they went with songs to the battle ⁸²

Although adolescence is one of the four domains in the theoretical framework, adolescence *per se* is here mainly considered in terms of its influence on the research participants’ reading and transitional experiences. Vygotsky’s (1978; 1997; 1998) work on adolescence, and specifically on transitions and interests, proves most valuable in an understanding of the factors underpinning adolescent choices. The respondents displayed little of the celebrated “negative content of development”, which Vygotsky maintains is, after all, “only the reverse

⁸² The title of a poem by Laurence Binyon, written in February 1914, in an attempt to kindle sufficient patriotic fervour to persuade young volunteers to enlist in the British army. The third and fourth stanzas read as follows (and no irony was intended by the poet):

*They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted:
They fell with their faces to the foe.*

*They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*

Some irony, however, was intended here, since the experiences facing the adolescent over school transition and the courage required during this time of turbulence can be considerable.

or shadow side of positive changes of the personality that make up the principal and basic sense of any critical age” (Vygotsky, 1998:194). Vygotsky also explains that the “crisis” that is often observed at thirteen years of age manifests itself in declines, especially in a temporary decrease in the production of cognitive and creative work (and consequently also in voluntary reading). These declines are caused by “a change from attention to what is obvious to understanding and deduction”, and are merely a transition to “a higher form of intellectual activity” (Vygotsky, 1998:194).

Not all researchers are this positive about adolescent ‘negativity’. Stone (1996), in his criticism of the concept of developmental models, states that such empathetic Vygotskian views lead to

schools in which attendance is compulsory but study is not. Students are expected to make an effort only if they feel interested and enthused. Study is expected to be more like fun than work. If students waste time and educational opportunity because they find schoolwork boring, their behaviour is not merely tolerated, it is understood and excused as the product of insufficiently stimulating instruction, i.e., instruction that fails to facilitate the emergence of the postulated ideal (1996, online doc.).

Chall (1996:152) cautiously asks the same question about reading instruction, because the popularity of learner-centred education has made such views anathema:

One wonders how it came about that the strongest incentive offered to the child for learning to read is fun. It came no doubt before the universal availability of TV because TV provides an easier way for the child to get the same content. Indeed, it takes most children until the end of Stage 3 (Grade 8) for reading to be as efficient as listening. One might well ask whether the major focus of the beginning readers of today should be on fun.

The respondents’ experiences, however, make it clear that the pleasure principle is essential for a continued interest in voluntary reading past Stage 2 (cf. Figure 1.1). Their responses also bear out much of Erikson’s and Vygotsky’s tenets regarding adolescent transitional behaviour. Many confessed to either being quite lazy at times, but doing what is required “in the end”. Most admitted that a lack of orderliness, or (as three of them happily described it) “messiness”, was often a bone of contention in their homes, as well as moodiness.

Whereas not one of the respondents viewed himself or herself as typically rebellious, most of them had views on the stressful condition of being in Grade Eight. When asked to reflect on stressful situations and their handling of them, three girls admitted that they cry quite often. The respondents did not ruminate whimsically on the traditional characteristics of adolescence. It is little wonder because they have barely arrived in their teens (with three still only twelve years of age) and, as the juniors in secondary school and treated as such by older adolescents, do not have the required distance to view themselves nostalgically or otherwise. Most of them reported that it was somewhat daunting to be the juniors in secondary school after being significant seniors at primary school only a few months before. Some experienced a slight loss of face, but adapted quickly enough to the new hierarchy at secondary school. Richard admitted to having had “attitude” in Grade Seven but reported that he relinquished it speedily at the start of Grade Eight and of being more “respectful” to seniors at secondary school. Most of the respondents experienced the transition as follows:

- THERESE: Oh .hhh when I got here I felt I’m glad to be in a new school, in high school, and (...) but as things changed, the teachers in primary school always called you by name and now you are § little Grade 8 girl§, and so on (...)
- CT: Yes (.) You were an important {{jokingly}} Grade Seven (...) everybody looked up to you //
- T: // yes, now everybody looks down on you (..) they don’t look as if (....) you are now a prefect or anything

In their renditions of their experiences, the research participants corroborated a basic Vygotskian principle: “Human activity is not simply the sum of unregulated working habits; it is structurally encompassed and regulated by integral dynamic tendencies – strivings and interests” (Vygotsky, 1998:8). Although this certainly does not presume to describe adolescent experiences *in toto*, it does go a long way towards illustrating some aspects of their encounter with voluntary reading.

7.4.5 Policy: a web of significance⁸³

⁸³ San Antonio (2004:17) quotes Clifford Geertz who describes the study of culture as follows: “Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.”

The effects of voluntary reading can safely be considered ‘good’, if not highly beneficial for the individual as well as for the creation of a society with a culture of reading. As Chall (1996:84) facetiously points out:

To reach the most mature stages of reading is of value to both the individual and to society. No evidence suggests that too many highly literate and highly educated people are a burden to society.

Ideally, then, to generate and maximize these benefits, reading instruction at school should include a recreational reading programme that will make reading so enjoyable that it is actively sought as a preferred activity. This has sadly not been the case in South Africa, as verified by some of the experiences of the respondents. If classrooms are to become pockets of enthusiasm for voluntary reading practices, the GDE’s injunction to teachers to encourage the reading of ‘real’ books is a good start, but unfortunately only that. More practicable suggestions should be made. Some solutions are offered by researchers (such as Guthrie and Humenick {2004:351} whose recommendations are claimed to be supported by empirical and experimental evidence) which policy makers would do well to include in a curriculum. However, many researchers are quite cynical about the practicability of such research, while others hold an even more jaundiced view of policy makers’ refusal to heed research evidence:

In essence, these methods texts acknowledge research as a foundation for educational practice but give it little weight in formulating a conclusion about the practices most likely to produce results. Neither do they encourage the reader to rely on research as a basis judging the quality of teaching practices. They seem to wear the mantle of science but oddly neglect its substance and purpose (Stone 1996, online doc.).

Chall (2000:2) more positively divides the proposals for positive changes in school practice to advance learning in general in two broad categories: the first group recommends changes in instructional practices, and the second advocates changes in learner motivation and in aspects of child development (such as learner choices, or bolstering of self-esteem).

That the home is the nurturer and primary teacher of reading is axiomatic. However, its role does not diminish as a child reaches school-going age since research has shown – as also in this study - that most children continue to be readers in homes where books and the acquisition of knowledge are valued. Policy makers can call on parents and caregivers through school guidelines to continue contributing to their children’s reading development.

The government, through policy makers and other initiatives, determines the amount of money that can be spent on the fostering of the reading habit, and it is here that good intentions and lip service have not paved the way for the reading of ‘real’ books in South Africa. The starving of school media centres or neighbourhood libraries through shrinking budgets and funding deficits (and the complete absence of such facilities in less affluent areas) is a sad indication that reading promotion as an extension of literacy development has not been properly integrated in any policy. The community (through semi-private enterprises in South Africa, such as *Biblioref*, the *Family Literacy Project*, the *Molteno Project* and *Read Educational Trust*, to name but a few) has boldly gone much further than political intentions and governmental lip service have managed to do. Such campaigns and projects have enjoyed greater success in literacy development than their limited budgets would have one believe. After all, as Chall (1996:80) maintains: “How well a child or an adult reads at any point depends upon the interaction between personal and environmental conditions. The relationship is dynamic in that changes in personal characteristics require adjustments in the reading environment for optimal stimulation and further growth.”

However, the reading deficit in South Africa is still too great, and further funding is urgently required. It is for this reason that policy makers should elicit community support to help maintain reading programmes and the creation of a culture of reading in South Africa.

Research has shown that the amount of independent reading, as well as the choice of texts, may be greatly influenced by the media, and especially TV. Although the respondents in this study did not report a great deal of TV watching (cf. Section 6.3.2), there is ample evidence that few people realise how much time they actually spend watching TV. Although there is little consensus on whether TV will prove harmful to learners’ cognitive or reading development in the long run, there is little doubt that its influence is pervasive. Although Trelease’s (1982:29) view that TV’s impact is pernicious is more than two decades old and much research has been conducted on the influence or the lack of effect of TV violence on a young audience, his views are still quoted by concerned educators:

No study of reading habits or use of leisure time fails to reflect on the role of television . . . In its short lifetime, television has become the major stumbling block to literacy in America. For all its technological achievement, television's negative impact on children's reading habits - and therefore their thinking - is enormous.

Enormous, but unresolved. However, as a major cause of procrastination, TV has few equals. Consequently, strong incentives are required if voluntary reading has to compete with facile pastimes such as TV. Books selected for class reading must be so eminently readable, interesting, and above all, available that they can compete with electronic media for the few hours of leisure that the average adolescent has. According to Chall (1996:27), to assist learners in their negotiation of a successful transition from Stage 2 to Stage 3, policy makers and teachers must carefully consider “the appropriateness of the optimal challenge, the proper materials and instructional strategies”. The perfect matching of learner and book (and challenge) is fundamentally important.

However, the fact that secondary school teachers spend less time on reading practices and promotion, affects the developing reader acutely at this crucial time of transition. Since reading instruction is traditionally the domain of early childhood education, secondary school teachers can be forgiven if they take the view that if learners can read independently by the age of nine or so, it hardly seems necessary to take precious time away from a more curriculum-driven approach at secondary school for reading instruction and practice that should have taken place years before. Their case can be argued, of course, especially with avid readers, or children who have grown up being read to, with access to a variety of books and no barriers either at home or at school. There are reading researchers (especially of the whole language persuasion) who argue that such learners can teach themselves to read, and some report that even children growing up in adverse conditions can and do learn to read (Clark, 1976:59 & 89; Meek, 1984:20 & 38 & 84). However, it is patently obvious that this is not the norm, although Chall (1996:53) admits that this view has its attractions:

I do not take the position that the ‘naturalistic’ view does not work at all; it works, but I believe, mainly where the learners have high motivation, high cognitive and language development, much stimulation and help in their homes, and highly individualized teaching in school with a plentiful supply of books. But even these children appear to achieve better when reading is taught in a more developmental manner.

The flipside of the ‘naturalistic’ view is that in South Africa, as elsewhere, children can grow up *aliterate* if they are not actively taught. And as argued above, direct instruction, albeit of a different and more advanced nature, needs to continue throughout a child’s school career. Transitioning to Stage 3 requires above all reading instruction with a view to acquire new exact knowledge (cf. Section 4.3.2.1). Unfortunately a circular problem now arises: learners require prior knowledge to continue reading at a more advanced level, but unless they read adequately, they will not acquire the requisite prior knowledge. Such learners often suffer from low self-efficacy views which can prevent them from rising to the challenge of more advanced reading, and feelings of inadequacy can proliferate. One can almost argue that generally readers who read little will know less, and the less they know, the less they will read, as reading becomes more cognitively demanding and such a threat to their self-concept is best avoided. The fact that the trained and well-intentioned secondary school teacher can help a learner to step outside this *Catch 22* situation, is one of the most powerful arguments for advanced reading instruction at secondary school.

However, ignorance of the importance of voluntary reading promotion at secondary school is certainly one of the major causes of the problem, and not only in South Africa (cf. Chisholm *et al.*, 2000:80), but also in America where the lack of proper teacher training in reading support is a reality. McCardle and Chhabra (2004:39) report that several studies and surveys of teacher knowledge about reading development indicate that many teachers are “underprepared” to teach reading. They also blame the little formal instruction in reading development that most teachers receive during both their undergraduate and graduate studies, stating that “the average teacher” only completes two reading courses in their years of study.

Educational policy is, therefore, the *primum mobilum* in this regard, and must therefore design and direct reading instruction and reading promotion strategies. Schools need to be advised how to continue reading instruction and teachers must be guided towards best instructional practices. The intrinsically motivated learner, as seen in Chapter 5, the child for whom reading is akin to thinking and feeling, continues reading through secondary school and will probably do so long after leaving school. The extrinsically motivated learner requires additional

encouragement at first, and later other strategies to keep reading. Four of these strategies are cited by Guthrie and Humenick (2004:348) and have been shown to be effective in numerous research studies. The first is the setting of *content goals* focused on the mastery of knowledge. Learners are intrinsically motivated by teachers who give them content goals in the form of intriguing questions and assignments that require the integration of a multiplicity of texts and a network of knowledge. Mastery learning - and not extrinsic rewards - is the key to the success of this strategy.

Secondly, Guthrie and Humenick (2004:349) emphasize the importance of choice in reading motivation. Thirdly, an abundant variety of enticing reading materials is crucial, and it is policy makers' responsibility to make texts available for all learners. Lastly, another empirically tested recommendation that policy makers can prescribe to teachers is learner collaboration while interacting with texts. It is Guthrie and Humenick's contention that most learners' intrinsic reading motivation is increased when they read together with their peers, share information and are given opportunities to present their knowledge to them; in addition, when learners engage with texts and are motivated to do so over years by well-meaning teachers, their achievement in reading comprehension increases exponentially. More strategies suggested by Guthrie and Humenick (2004:351) include reading aloud, posing questions, encouraging expressive reading, linking writing to reading activities and "tailoring instruction to individual student needs", but they caution that, although these motivational strategies have been advocated by many teachers, they have not yet been investigated empirically. However, Guthrie and Humenick (2004:352) maintain that although it is vital to understand that

as important as intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and self-efficacy are for reading comprehension, they are not sufficient for successful reading instruction. To enable students to improve in reading comprehension, teachers must foster the development of vocabulary, comprehension skills, and related writing activities. A motivated reader is not likely to automatically gain these complex cognitive competencies independently. The unmotivated reader, however, is quite unlikely to gain these reading competencies at all. Therefore, motivation is a necessary part of a comprehension plan for reading instruction that ensures growth in reading comprehension.

It is clear that policy makers should chart advanced reading instruction at secondary school. Of course this is easier said than done. How is it to be structured? Chall (1996:23) argues that

one form of secondary school reading instruction can take place through formalised teaching. Assignments in the various subjects, not only in the languages, by using textbooks, primary or secondary sources, novels, newspapers, and magazines afford opportunities for reading instruction. When learners are challenged – and guided – to deal with opposing facts, various theories, and multiple viewpoints, they are trained in the acquisition of progressively more complex concepts and in learning how to acquire new knowledge and perspectives through reading.

To reiterate, the continuation of progressively more advanced reading instruction at secondary school is imperative. As Chall points out (1996:28; cf. Section 4.3.2.1), if transitioning to a Stage 3 reading level requires new skills to enable learners to read to acquire new exact knowledge, learners already lacking in Stage 2 reading skills should actively be taught by their secondary school teachers to aid the development of more cognitively demanding reading skills. To reach an even higher reading level, in addition to the acquisition of much knowledge, reading skill, and efficiency, the ability to analyse and synthesise is also required. As learners encounter new knowledge areas, they need to acquire more low frequency words. They do so by developing the ability to deduct their meaning from context and learn them by using dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and other reference texts. It has traditionally been the language teacher's responsibility to teach vocabulary; however, in practice, (as seen in the experiences of many of the respondents) if reading takes place in the secondary school language classroom, it is the vehicle for grammar and comprehension instruction, or literary endeavour.

However, policy makers will then also have to indicate whose responsibility is the teaching of reading in the secondary school, as well as the core curriculum for such instruction. Reading is not only used in the language classrooms. To maximize results, reading instruction should take place in other subjects too. Especially since learners at this age often change from fiction to nonfiction, the reading required for assignments in other subjects is a most valuable opportunity to develop advanced reading skills. This idea is not new: Ingham (1981:30), twenty years ago already, argued that reading instruction should be the responsibility of all secondary school teachers, not only the language teacher's; neither, of course, is it the

exclusive domain of the early childhood development teacher's. However, it is easy to understand that the secondary school or subject teacher traditionally takes the view that reading instruction is 'dealt with' in the primary grades and may possibly resent being held responsible for advanced reading instruction. It is also true that some secondary school language teachers may not be too pleased either, but Ingham (1981:30) has little sympathy for such a view:

My contention is that English cannot be well taught by a person who is lacking in enthusiasm, and that it is a pity to put teachers who have no interest at all in children's literature or the English language into a situation where they are expected to convey their non-existent enthusiasm, and usually minimal knowledge, to their pupils. To compound the problem, many children come to a reluctant English teacher at a stage when they are in danger of becoming reluctant readers and are, therefore, particularly in need of sensitive and informed help with book choice (Ingham, 1981:30).

However, the injunction that subject teachers also be held responsible for advanced reading instruction gives rise to a further complexity, namely the training of these teachers. If secondary *language* teachers do not receive training in basic reading instruction, there is little hope at this stage to contemplate having subject teachers trained in advanced reading instruction. It is also difficult to prescribe at this stage what such advanced reading instruction entails, and whether literary or subject texts should be used, or how advanced comprehension skills should be taught.

In an UNESCO document about reading promotion, Irving (1980:33) suggests emergency measures to combat the difficulty of eliciting response from all stakeholders:

In a perfect world all teachers, parents and other adults with whom children and young people have contact would appreciate the need for voluntary reading and would do everything in their power to promote it. In the real world, however, it may only be possible to provide courses to help those who actually seek help, and to recommend to institutions with a responsibility for training teachers that elements of their training should include techniques for the promotion of voluntary reading throughout the total schooling period of a child.

One of the basic guidelines for such promotion of voluntary reading, and an attempt to optimise both learners' reading skills and their exercise by the avid reading of texts for pleasure, is to understand and accommodate the changing reading needs at each successive

stage. If not only teachers are involved in this endeavour, but parents, policy makers and the community likewise understand the importance of voluntary reading, some headway can be made towards the creation of a culture of reading in South Africa

Reading is not a singular endeavour, neither is it permanently ‘acquired’ in the early grades - the skill and the desire for it have to be embraced throughout a lifetime by an individual who rises to each new challenge brought by increasingly more demanding (and consequently also more rewarding) texts.

7.5 WAY, WAY BEYOND

7.5.1 Reading the way

It is axiomatic to state that research has to continue to find ways in which to encourage the individual learner to embrace throughout a lifetime the reading of challenging texts, and Brown and Dowling’s (1998:145) injunction must be kept in mind: “Essentially, no piece of research is of any value at all unless it does impose upon the way in which you interpret the world on subsequent occasions”. However, not all reading research is geared towards fostering the reading habit.

Consider, for instance, the justification of reading programmes; that is, educational interventions designed to improve students’ reading skills. It is of course correct that empirical research on information processing of the written word would be relevant to the design and execution of such programmes. But does research serve to justify such programmes? No. It does not for the same reason that research concerning, e.g. effective torture techniques would justify efforts to help students become effective torturers. In both cases the intervention must be justified independently of research; though of course once justified, research is clearly relevant to the planning and execution of the intervention (Modgil & Modgil 1985:xiv).

One of the most important directions that future research on voluntary reading can take is the link between motivational factors and voluntary reading processes. A theoretical framework in which motivational theory is a key domain would greatly aid an understanding of the way in

which cognitive and affective factors are integrated to produce motivational patterns that greatly influence voluntary reading. Although I assumed that motivation is a key factor in the fostering of voluntary reading habits (as seen in my initial framework, (Figure 2.1), I perhaps did not quite realize its crucial nature from the outset and assigned to it a more peripheral role. In follow-up studies this link should be investigated more rigorously.

Sweet (2004:21) reports that America's reading deficit was one of the leading topics in President Clinton's 1996 State of the Union Address in which it was stated that forty percent of Grade Four learners could not read at the required grade level. The Clinton administration funded \$2,6 billion to "encourage volunteers across America to read to students and thus encourage more attention to improving reading skills". A further solution was advanced in 1998 when the Reading Excellence Act allocated \$260 million annually to "offer professional development and purchase instructional materials and diagnostic assessment instruments to implement what was termed *scientifically based reading instruction*" (Sweet, 2004:21). It then became imperative to define what the latter was, and the following definition was finally presented in the Reading Excellence Act:

The term 'scientifically based reading research' –

- A) *Means the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties, and*
- B) *shall include research that –*
 - i) *employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;*
 - ii) *involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;*
 - iii) *relies on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observes across multiple measurements and observations, and*
 - iv) *has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review*

<<http://edworkforce.house.gov/hearings/107th/edr/oeri22802/whitehurst.htm>>

Research studies regularly investigate the link between early reading success and the fact that parents, caring siblings or other caregivers read or told stories to the avid readers. Ingham (1981:170), for instance, states that none of the reluctant readers in her enormous study had

stories read to them when they were small, and Trelease's (1984) views on the importance of having books read aloud to toddlers are well-known. Fewer studies, however, investigate the role of reading parents on the avid reader. Most respondents here came from homes in which books were valued, but the investigation did not research this adequately as the parents were not involved in the study. An investigation into these factors may prove a valuable addition to the body of research on voluntary reading. The most important direction, however, that future study can take concerns motivational factors and the internalisation of speech and their impact on voluntary reading. The force of motivation in its impact on cognitive and affective mediators that influence voluntary reading has been subject of rigorous research for little more than a decade only (Heckhausen & Dweck, 1998:1). Much remains to be investigated of the dynamic processes that influence voluntary reading, and the internalisation of speech in this regard is underresearched.

7.5.2 The last word

Children have so much to tell us about their education. Along with their teachers, they are the experts (Oldfather & Dahl, 1994)

One of the most salient features of the investigation was the frankness and responsiveness of the research participants. That their youthful candour was exhilarating was a bonus – far more significant is the fact that their responses were highly revelatory, and so readily disclosed their views on individual and adolescent reading and transitional experiences. It would serve policy makers and teachers – and parents - well to take note of learner experiences and align prescriptive systems with the reality of being the crucial age of thirteen in a period of upheaval. The following vignettes (perhaps indicative of what Cohen *et al.* {2000:120} term “the loudest bangs or the brightest lights”) attempt to illustrate a number of points, with their views on voluntary reading, adolescent transition and literacy experience:

ARTHUR: I think I read fewer books because there is more work and I have less time to read. Yes, so I read far less, but I still like reading. So this didn't change.

DAVID: They haven't really given us prescribed works to read. .hhhhhh The teacher just says, like all other teachers are saying, that you must read (.) as much as you can (.) but they haven't really given us specific things and specific (.) .hmm how many books we have to read.

CT: Can you think of three things that changed for you from last year to this one. §

IRIS: Academic work. It is just so much more work .hhh The activities. When you get to high school, there are just so many more things to do. There are more kinds of sport, and there is choir. And there is orchestra. There is everything.

CT: Apart from academic work §

I: Friends also changed, you made many new friends. And old friends of the primary school, you only greet them.

CT: So the friendships can't always //

I: // yes, not all

CT: Can you think of books that you really disliked the past two years §

MARY: I think *Short Stories*. Because it has many stories.

CT: A short story book §

M: Yes. It is also very old. I don't understand (...) So one doesn't understand what was really going on. Yes.

CT: Why do you think your teacher selected the book as a class reader §

M: I don't know. Perhaps because it is life story. No, it is not very interesting.

CT: So it had nothing to say to you.

M: No, it didn't mean anything to me.

CT: Tell me, do you think you read more or fewer books than your friends §

NINA: No, many more. Children in my class (...) children in general do not read many books. I (..) read many more. My one friend, she also reads a lot. Some of my friends also read a lot. But in general they don't (..)

CT: Why do you think do the children not like to read §

N: I don't know if they don't find it interesting. If they don't (..) They don't read boring books. If it clashes with their other things. But there are also children in my class who really read a lot. But a year ago, yes (..) So I don't think they want to read again. They would rather, you know, watch TV.

CT: Do you have a library period at school §

N: No.

CT: Is the library open every afternoon §

N: No. It is open during break. And I think (...) you have to make an appointment (..) if you want to go to it in the afternoon.

CT: Do you have an IT lab at school §

N: Yes.

RICHARD: OK. First thing is, I'm no longer so big in the school because (.) there everybody knew about you and here nobody knows about you. I think one (...) let's say, had attitude in Grade Seven and now you no longer have it. (.) And (.) I think in primary school you don't have (.) so much respect for your school and things but now you have more

SIMPIWE: In Grade Seven (..) It's like the kids are afraid of the teachers. In Grade Eight the kids are like cheeky, they think, they're still in Grade Seven. They are naughty in class.

CT: Is that so §

S: Ja. Others read magazines in class while the teacher's teaching. They (..)

CT: Quite remarkable. OK (...) Give me two instances in which you are a typical teenager.

S: .hhhh I don't know. Seriously, I don't know.

CT: What would your parents say §

S: .hhhhhh, mam. I've started to be a little (...) cleaner, neater. And I've started to (..) learn a bit more.

THERESE: I must over the weekends, I must study for tests a lot (..) > like last weekend, like I finished studying for two tests < then during the week, or when I'm dancing, and I have to teach the others, and then I have to study for the other tests. So that becomes very stressful and when I don't finish writing the test, then (..)

CT: How do you handle work stress at school §

T: No, I cry (.) I cry a lot, now during the high school years (.) Because there is a lot of stress but it is not as if (.) like (...) I get very angry about it. After the test I know it is over, I (...) I can't do anything about it anymore, then I only focus ahead.

CT: So, you rather became sad instead of angry

T: Yes §

CT: And is this the way your friends also handle the stress §

T: Yes. No, I (..) they know I cry easily, I am a crying person.

CT: Can you tell me in which three things you are very much a teenager §

WAYNE: (...) My room is really messy

CT: According to you or your mother §

W: According to my mother. hhhhh (...) I am also very naughty.

CT: Details or not §

W: .hhhhh I (...) fool around in the class mostly.

CT: Is that so § OK. In which three aspects are you not a typical teenager §

W: I really read a lot, mam. Most other people don't read much.

CT: Why do you think is that §

W: .hhh Because I don't see much (.) other boys reading. As much as I do.

CT: So why would you say you read such a great deal §

W: It is just not cool for a teenager to read.

CT: So, you like reading. So, obviously, you don't give in to peer pressure.

W: No mam.

CT: What exactly does reading do for you §

W: It takes my mind off things, mam.

CT: In what way are you a typical teenager § In which ways are you not §

ZELDA: Well {{*Laughs*}} my room is always a mess. I am a teenager in that way. I am a typical teenager there. And I am also terribly moody and am jealous of my privacy. But (...) .hhhh I don't know. {{*Sighs*}} They say teenagers fight a lot with their parents but I don't really fight a lot with my mother. She and I understand each other. She knows I am now moody.

CT: .hh Why would you say do you read such a lot of books §

Z: When I was young and my mother worked, then I lived with my grandmother. And she taught me to read from a very young age. And since then (..) and everyday she read to me and I read a little. And it was just very nice to me. It was as if you enter another world where you forget everything around you. And it is just something (...) it is something to look forward to when you get home. And you know your homework had been done and you can go on with the story and you forget everything. So. Yes, it is an adventure.

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SUMMARY

A basic premise of the investigation is that the acquisition and exercise of advanced reading skills are essential for effective adolescent learning. For the benefits of reading to accrue maximally, learners should continue to read avidly during leisure and long after basic reading instruction, traditionally the domain of the primary school, has ceased. The purpose of this study is to investigate factors that influence the voluntary reading of some South African adolescents, specifically at an age when they undergo emotional, intellectual, social and physical changes which influence their behaviour, habits and choices. The research problem focuses on the transition from primary to secondary school, since extant literature shows that numerous factors influence adolescents' reading habits during this phase, sometimes resulting in declining voluntary reading.

Parameters for the investigation are set by the theoretical framework, centring on four domains that highlight the research problem, namely adolescence, literature, literacy and voluntary reading. Facets of these domains are explored, specifically motivation, qualitative change and the influence of home, school and community. Vygotsky's theories on adolescent development underscore the research, as well as research on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation since, axiomatically, reading strategies develop optimally with high motivation. Stage-environmental fit theories - applied to motivation, self-efficacy or reading development - assert that learners have different sets of psychological, cognitive and psychosocial needs at different developmental levels, and unless these needs are met, academic achievement, appreciation for learning and effective reading development can decline. The often critical transition from primary to secondary school can result in a variety of lifestyle changes, and periodicity theories support the pattern and scaffolding of these transformational factors.

Merging the relevant domains with developmental theories creates a matrix of Piagetian cognitive stratification. Chall's model of developmental reading stages crafts an

epistemological foundation and further refines constructivist principles developed by Vygotsky. Together they form a network explaining factors of transitional change that influence adolescents' voluntary reading activities.

The study's methodology is delineated and followed by a description of the qualitative research design, data collection, data analysis strategies and ethical considerations. The course of the inquiry is refined in a closer focus on three domains and an explanation of the research instruments. The strengths and limitations of the study are discussed, as well as issues of reliability, validity, authenticity and generalisability.

The empirical results are extrapolated from face-to-face interviews with ten respondents and their views generate the findings after a four-tiered analysis of the interview transcripts. Themes and conclusions are couched in three domains of the theoretical framework in an endeavour to address the research problem. The final chapter offers a synthesis by interweaving the theoretical outline and empirical findings. A hypothesis opening future avenues for investigation is identified, namely the factor of the internalisation of speech on reading in general and voluntary reading in particular. Two significant findings indicate that developmental stage theories effectively describe the transitional nature of the reading experiences of Grade Eight learners, and that intrinsic motivation, mastery learning and self-efficacy views play central roles in the continuation of voluntary reading.

KEYWORDS:

Adolescent reading
Adolescent transitions
Independent reading
Leisure reading
Periodicity
Reading motivation
Reading promotion
Recreational reading
Voluntary reading