

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW: READING COMPREHENSION, DEVELOPMENTAL LEARNING THEORIES AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

*'Comprehension is not just something that just happens;
comprehension needs to be taught'* (NRP, 2000:17)

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of Chapter 3 is to present a theoretical and conceptual framework which will determine the direction of this study. An extensive review of the literature assists in building a theory and understanding of reading comprehension. The theoretical and conceptual framework is directed by the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. In Chapter 2 and 3, I gave an historical account of the relating to the teaching of reading comprehension to young children.

Ever since education began and became formalised it appears that teachers have been engaged in determining how children develop and learn. For this reason, several educationalists and psychologists have developed systemic, yet contrasting, theories of learning. Each learning theory implies a set of related classroom procedures. Apparently, teachers' teaching practice maybe influenced by these psychological views on the teaching of reading comprehension. Consequently, teachers who support a specific learning theory make professional decisions based on this theory, which in turn, affects their classroom procedures.

In their view, Bigge and Shermis (1999) define learning theories and their importance in teaching and learning as:

Designed for the development of a pattern of ideas accompanied by a planned procedure carrying it out. Hence, it is a policy proposed and followed as a basis for action. A learning theory, then, is a systematic integrated outlook in regard to the nature of the process whereby people relate to their environment in such a way as to enhance their ability to use

both themselves and their environments in a most effective way (Bigge & Shermis, 1999:2-3).

My study focuses on the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. In this chapter, I explained the interconnectedness of the different theories applicable to the teaching of reading comprehension to learners. These theories relate to the focus of the study and serve as background and also as the basis for developing an observation schedule, focus group discussions that were used as data gathering instruments. The study is informed by the assumption that a learner is a social being that can learn to read and understand only if there is guidance from the more knowledgeable adult. The constructivist learning theories are important because they indicate that teachers cannot provide learners with knowledge. In a learning situation, learners must be able to construct knowledge in their own minds (Slavin, 1994). In this research project, the act of comprehending texts was seen as both a cognitively and socially constructed process. This is the reason why the four mentioned theories Piaget (1983), Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1986), Ausubel (1963) and Bandura (1977) serve as a basis of the study. Constructivists encourage children to constantly use prior knowledge to understand new information.

The various theories discussed in this chapter serve as a point of reference for appreciating the various stages and processes of the child and how these stages affect their development and learning capacities (Mooney, 2000). These theories assisted me to explore the research-based strategies that brought about success stories in other countries. These strategies could be helpful to the teachers because learners do not learn at the same pace. The theories may assist teachers to consciously plan and teach learners how to use strategies independently. These theories have influenced current notions of the teaching of reading comprehension and have also informed this study. The questions that can be asked are: should reading comprehension be left to the learners, or should there be guidelines for the teachers on how to teach learners not just to bark at print, but to read the text with understanding and therefore become proficient readers?

Although the work of Piaget (1983), Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1986), Ausubel (1963) and Bandura (1977) varies greatly, each articulates a similar context of

learning and development. Eggen and Kauchak (2001) state that while constructivists see learning as an active process that requires learners to construct meaning, social constructivism suggests that knowledge exists in a social context and is initially shared with others instead of being represented solely in the mind of the individual. This study enabled me to employ Zimmerman's (1998) applied social-cognitive model of self-regulated learning will be dealt with. The concept of self-regulated learning is developed within the framework of social-cognitive theory, through observing and imitating social models, and then internalising the skill to achieve self-control and eventually self-regulation (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997). The four theories of Piaget (1983), Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1986), Ausubel (1963) and Bandura (1977) formed the basis of Zimmerman's applied model of self-regulated learning and can be applicable to the teaching of reading comprehension. This model links with reading comprehension because learners should be able to use reading comprehension strategies independently such as self-monitoring during reading (Zimmerman, 1990:4-5).

3.2 Developmental learning theories and reading comprehension

Knowledge of child development is important when planning to teach reading comprehension. It is essential for the teacher to understand the particular life stage of the individuals for which learning interventions are planned. Haas and Parkey (1993:108) endorse this when they state that being conversant with developmental theories provides "a point of view with reference to learners: they should be studied as individuals so that the programme of institutions can be shaped in part, by the individuals' own nature and needs." It is important for the teacher to understand the learners' individual, physical, emotional, social and cognitive abilities and limitations so that appropriate teaching strategies related to reading comprehension can be implemented.

Though all aspects of human development are important and interdependent, the cognitive development of the learner in the Foundation Phase should be taken into consideration. It pertains to the learners' mental capacities and specifically the intellectual abilities that are involved in thinking, knowledge and problem solving, in relation to the age of the individual and the information to be imparted (Mwamwenda, 2004:89). Cognitive development occurs progressively as it builds

on previous experience and teachers should provide reading comprehension strategies, such as problem-based learning experiences.

The family is the most important early influence on the socialisation of the learner. Social development starts in the home and expands as the child's interpersonal contacts extend outside the family. Children begin to learn how to adapt to other people at home, and then apply their skills to the schools and broader community environment as they venture into the outside world. The early influence of values, attitudes, worldview and modes of adaptation at home directly affects how children cope with the environment of the school (Mwamwenda, 2004:55-56). Social experience is important, because at school the learner is expected to relate to the teachers, follow a new set of rules, make new friends and learn to get along with them successfully.

Learners need to acquire the cognitive and behavioural skills necessary for school success. These skills and others are learnt in and outside of the classroom, at home and in the community (Cortese & Middleton, 1994:166; Louw, 1993; 1991:13). Cooperative learning is one strategy to use to encourage learners to work together on a particular reading comprehension project (Bender, 1997:72-73). Emotionally, the Foundation Phase learners are greatly influenced by the interpersonal climate in the school. They may experience fear if the school atmosphere is unfriendly and hostile and if they are humiliated, shouted at or physically punished. Walsh and Murphy (2003:14-15) state that a negative atmosphere which also includes exclusive competitiveness and is associated with poor academic performance of the learners.

3.3 Developmental approach and learning theories

To understand the issues that affect the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners, it is necessary to understand the development of children in the early childhood years. Knowledge of the learner is important when implementing a curriculum where developmental and learning theories play a major role in guiding the planning of teaching programmes and can influence the choice of teaching and learning strategies. Learners act as they do primarily because of their stage of development or because of what they have

previously learnt are appropriate ways to act in a given situation. Content is chosen because it meets the learners' needs, is age-appropriate and within the cognitive abilities of the learner (Pollock & Middleton, 1994:15). There are many developmental theories, but I have chosen those that are most relevant to reading comprehension. Even though the chosen theories are different, each could have an influence on the teaching of reading comprehension.

3.3.1 Piaget's theory of cognitive development

Jean Piaget (1968) has provided one of the most comprehensive descriptions of children's cognitive capabilities and development. Piaget's theory is based on a number of assumptions, which underpin the way in which he believed children learn (Kail, 2001:150-152). He maintained that children use schemes to organise, categorise and understand the world. As children grow older, these schemes become increasingly abstract as new experiences are assimilated into the existing schemes. Piaget used the term 'accommodation' to refer to the process of reorganising existing schemes to improve the new information so that equilibrium is achieved. If accommodation does not occur, then disequilibrium occurs and children have to organise their schemes to achieve equilibrium. Piaget states that experiences and interaction with the environment, and not only maturation, that facilitate the development of cognitive structures (Lieberman, Clark, Krone, Orlandi & Wynder, 1992:392). According to Piaget, children's cognitive development progresses sequentially through a series of stages which are linked to certain age ranges. The transition from the sensory motor stage through the preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational stages can be seen as a continuum on which children move from subjective to objective realisation (Gage & Berliner, 1992:105-116).

For Piaget, learning is a process of internal construction. Learners must construct knowledge in their own minds through the guidance of more knowledgeable others. In the context of the study, teachers must teach learners to acquire self-regulatory competence by observing and hearing their explanations, for example, when the teacher is demonstrating the use of the strategy, guiding and giving constructive feedback the learners use the self-directing, self-pacing and self-correcting strategy

and learn how to adjust their skill to change personal, behavioural and contextual conditions to optimise their own learning during reading.

For this study, attention is given to the concrete operational stage lasting from seven to eleven years of age as promoted by Piaget. During this stage, children start to use logical thought processes, such as reversal of concepts, multiple classifications and mental ordering, to begin to solve problems limited to real, observable objects. Centralisation is no longer present during this stage as children begin to realise that there are many sides to a particular problem (Mwamwenda, 2004:95-100; Biehler & Snowman, 1993:61-66; Vasta, Haith & Miller, 1995:35).

Piaget's theory has implications for teaching reading comprehension, as each individual child's current stage of cognition development must be taken into account when the teacher plans learning activities. The theory helps teachers to understand that learners at this level have reached a new level of self-development that allows them to understand some of the ways in which they are related to people. Through interaction with the teacher and other persons, and during play, learners are able to understand the physical and the social world. Here, realistic fiction may encourage learners to interact with characters who are involved in a conflict situation, during reading comprehension. Knowledge about this stage will assist the teacher to understand that the learners are ready to listen to stories and to read about real-life heroes and stories which move between the past and present, such as legends.

The knowledgeable teacher is aware that learners in this stage begin to apply logic to concrete experience, so that they begin to move beyond one-dimensional thinking. Concerning reading comprehension, this enables learners to relate one event to a system of interrelated parts. They gradually start perceiving an event from the beginning to the end and from the conclusion to the beginning. It is therefore important that the environment should be rich to encourage learners to learn and reason about what they read. Learners at this stage have the ability to understand picture storybooks, folk tales, and books written for bibliotherapy. It is critical is for the teacher to guide learners on which strategies to use, showing them when and why and how to apply each strategy correctly.

Piaget's theory relates to this study because reading text should match the developmental stages of learners. Learners should construct the meaning of the text and be able to use it in contexts other than the classroom. Learning activities should match the level of the conceptual development of the learners. The teacher must use the stages as a way to gauge and monitor learners' pace of learning. Piaget's view is that learners must be self-initiated and actively involved in learning. In reading comprehension, teachers must be able to model good behaviour of reading with understanding so that learners will ultimately take responsibility for their own learning. Piaget also emphasised the importance of the environment in learning, particularly the social environment. In reading comprehension, the comprehension development may be influenced by interactions with others. The learners see and hear the teachers and peers reading and then internalise and model what they see and hear. In the following section, I report on the theory of Vygotsky and how it relates to my study.

3.3.2 Vygotsky's socio-historical theory of cognitive development

Lev Vygotsky (1978) attributed cognitive development to the social environment of the child. He noted that children begin learning from the behaviours, attitudes, values and skills of the people around them. The social world and one's culture determine which stimuli occur and are attended to. Vygotsky emphasised the role of adults in influencing the cognitive development of children. Development is enhanced when children work cooperatively or collaboratively with adults and other children. Cognitive development proceeds from behaviours regulated by others to self-regulated behaviour (Zimmerman, 1998). To help children move from a social to a personal psychological form of knowledge, adults should determine the child's actual development level by learning about his capacity to solve problems when working with or without adult help.

According to Vygotsky, when a child is working independently, we see the actual development level of the child. When the child is working with an adult, we see the potential development of the child, under optimal circumstances, while learning with a competent nurturing mediator. The difference between these two levels of functioning is referred to as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Biehler

&Snowman, 1993:63; Gage & Berliner, 1992:122-123). In regard to the importance of the ZPD, Vygotsky (1998:137-138) emphasised:

Everything that the child cannot do independently, but which he can be taught or which he can do with direction or cooperation or with the help of leading questions, 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 ZPD. When children are faced with challenging situations, they can seek help from their teachers and peers, which is termed 'scaffolding' (Woolfolk, 1995:50).

Vygotsky believed that language is an important tool because it is internalised by the child to affect thinking and problem-solving (Bukatko & Daehner, 2001:27; Shaffer 1996:279). The role of the adult is to assist children to acquire language in ways that enable them to take control of their own learning (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001:84). Teachers can focus on effective communication, meaning, comprehension and respect for language in the classroom. Vygotsky's theory has implications for teaching reading comprehension because in facilitating learning, the teacher must take the cultural context of the learners into consideration as it influences their thinking and actions. Learners can be given problem-solving activities with instructions, for the task of reading comprehension. Thereafter the learner should work independently using his or her own knowledge and skills with the guidance received from the teacher. Two approaches are pertinent to teaching reading comprehension, based on the views of Vygotsky, namely reciprocal teaching and scaffolded support.

3.3.2.1 Scaffold support

Scaffolding involves the provision of support that is focused on a learner's particular capacities within Vygotsky's ZPD. When teaching comprehension strategies to Grade 3 learners, teachers need to shift the responsibility to the learners at some time, gradually releasing responsibility to learners so that they learn to master their own learning. Teachers take all the responsibility for applying a newly introduced

strategy by modelling. Learners in turn must observe, imitate practices and then self-regulate themselves and create meaning from the written text by using the strategy appropriately. As time goes on and learners get more exposure and practice using the strategies, teachers slowly withdraw their responsibility. This is to enable learners to manage their own learning by making use of the strategies. Teachers work collaboratively with the learners and the strategy, giving and taking as much as necessary to create meaning. Eventually, learners take more and more responsibility as they become confident, knowledgeable and capable. Finally, they are able to work independently (Pardo, 2004:278; McMahon & Oliver, 2003:5). Shanahan (2006) refers to the gradual release of responsibility as the 'I do it–We do it–You do it' approach to teaching reading comprehension. According to Shanahan (2006), this can benefit the learners if the teacher provides guidance beforehand. What is important is the support given to learners, the available resources and appropriate activities for engaging them.

3.3.2.2 Reciprocal teaching

Teaching reading comprehension has been a challenge for decades. To address the challenge, Palincsar and Brown (1984) developed an approach to teaching reading comprehension called reciprocal teaching. Reciprocal teaching is an instructional procedure to improve learners' comprehension skills and is related to Vygotsky's ZPD and scaffolding (Lysynchuk & Vye, 1990). This approach has three main components, namely, dialogue between learners and teacher, each taking a turn in the role of dialogue leader. Reciprocal interactions is where one person acts in response to other and structured dialogue using four strategies, namely generating one's own questions, summarising parts of the text, clarifying word meanings and confusing text passages, and predicting what might come next in the text.

Reciprocal teaching takes place through scaffolded instruction of four comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring strategies. In reciprocal teaching, these strategies pertain to ongoing dialogues with a dialogue leader, who can be a teacher or a learner who models the use of the strategies, provides conditional knowledge about strategy use, and helps learners to apply a strategy to a passage. As the learners in the group become familiar with the strategies and the

procedure, the dialogue leader's involvement lessens and learners take turns as discussions leaders. The assumption is that by applying the strategies in a group process, poorly self-regulated learners can learn from their highly self-regulated peers.

The overall goal of reciprocal teaching is to promote self-directed and flexible use of the learnt strategies through scaffolding instruction collaboration (Sporer *et al.*, 2009:273). According to the NRP (2000), reading comprehension is the construction of meaning of a written text through the reciprocal interchange of ideas between the reader and the message in particular. It has been described as a gradual release or transfer of control or responsibility (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Shanahan, 2006).

According to the NRP (2000), the focus of reciprocal teaching is upon the actual teaching approach, which is relevant to this study. Reciprocal teaching involves four instructional procedures for explicitly teaching four strategies namely summarising, questioning, clarifying and predicting (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). The NRP (2000:22) explicitly describes the reciprocal teaching procedure. The teacher begins with a group of learners discussing the text. The teacher starts by modelling each strategy. The demonstration includes a clear explanation of what the strategy is, a description of how and when to use it, and an explanation of why it is useful for enhancing understanding. After explaining and modelling the strategy, the teacher asks learners to read, providing an abundance of guidance and support (Zimmerman, 1998; Shanahan, 2006). The teacher must gradually release the leadership role to learners, encourage cooperative learning and peer support amongst the learners. Reciprocal teaching is an approach that can assist learners from guided practice to gradually taking on responsibility and development and using strategies appropriately. During this process, the teacher monitors learners' use of the strategy, reminding them where necessary to apply the strategy, repeating much of the explanation from demonstration.

After some time, the teacher's support is reduced and learners progress to self-regulated learning. Learners take turns to lead the discussion about specific parts and applying the strategy. One learner serves as the discussion leader, asking questions about key ideas in the text, and other learners answer the questions and ask questions of their own. The learner leader helps the group clarify difficult words

or passages that might hinder comprehension. Next, the leader summarises the text that had just been read and predicts what might come next. The process continues for each part of the text, with learners taking turns leading the discussion. In this way, learners are actively involved in their own learning.

3.3.3 Bruner's theory of learning and development

Jerome Bruner (1986) developed a theory of cognitive development in which he maintained that thinking and reasoning are integrated into a single process. He stated that a child passes through several stages of development which he termed the inactive, iconic and symbolic modes. The inactive mode is seen in infants when they reach and grasp objects. In the iconic mode, the child will give meaning to previous experiences as he thinks about these experiences. The child then proceeds to the symbolic mode, which is regarded as the highest form of thinking wherein the child can attach names to objects or items in his surroundings because of his increased language ability (Mwamwenda, 2004:104-105). Bruner's theory advocates learning through discovery and active learning where the problem-solving skills of learners are encouraged. Bruner's theory is important for my research project. He regards human beings as primarily information processors, learners, thinkers, creators and storytellers (Bigge & Shermis, 1999:133). Like Piaget and Vygotsky, Bruner regards social and cultural factors as important in cognitive development (Driscoll, 1994:208). These aspects are relevant in the teaching of reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning (Snow & Sweet, 2003:1). This implies that the purpose of reading is to read the text with understanding.

The implications of this theory for teaching reading comprehension is that new concepts should be presented repeatedly, initially at a simple level and overtime at an increasingly difficult level, a concept Bruner referred to as the 'spiral ordering of content'. By applying this theory, the teacher is able to deal with important reading comprehension issues. A supportive environment will encourage learners to share information with their peers and to develop their problem-solving skills. Making use of problem-solving activities would also be a way of utilising Bruner's theory when teaching reading comprehension.

3.3.4 Ausubel's cognitive field theory

For meaningful learning to occur learners must be ready and willing to relate new concepts to their current experience, and the new material should have the potential to be related to what the learner already knows. Meaningful learning occurs when learners actively process the information they are asked to learn. Ausubel (1963) refers to his theory as verbal learning, because most of what is learnt in the classroom is based on language as a means of communication, whereby learners are presented with all possible information on a given topic in its final form. Another concept of Ausubel (1963) is called 'reception learning', which means that learners receive information, think about it deductively and then apply this information. Ausubel believed that learning occurs because of the relatedness of what learners know and what they learn. Information is said to be meaningful if it can be related in some way to the learners' present, past or future experiences (Haas & Parkay, 1993:144).

Ausubel's theory has implications for teaching reading comprehension because teachers must be aware of the fact that certain minimal levels of intellectual maturity are necessary before various subjects can be taught with a reasonable degree of efficiency and with hope of success. Therefore, teachers must use the existing interests of learners, consider their point of view and take into account their limitations in the command of language and their grasp of concepts.

3.3.5 Bandura's social learning theory

Bandura (1977) developed a social learning theory in which he postulated that children use rewards, punishment and imitation to understand the working of the world (Kail, 2001:459). According to Bandura (1977), the environment plays an important role in the child's life, because this is where he/she interacts with people who can provide important information about the world. These people can also act as role models to the child.

The child's interaction with other people is based on observing their norms, values and beliefs within the context of a particular society and the child is most likely to imitate adults with whom he or she has an emotional or nurturing bond which

Bandura calls 'natural models'. In his theory, Bandura (1977) refers to this concept as 'modelling', which means that learners learn positive or negative behaviour patterns from observing behaviour. When the learner interacts with people, he/she is being socialised and as a result, he or she adopts and lives according to what has been seen (Mwamwenda, 2004:203).

Another concept in Bandura's theory is that "experience gives learners a sense of self-efficacy, which refers to learner's beliefs about their own abilities and talents" (Kail, 2001:16). This means that learners will have a good sense of what they can or cannot do and therefore will mostly not imitate the actions of someone if they feel their own abilities are not similar. The imitation of a model is important in a classroom situation; learners are expected to pay adequate attention to what the teacher says so that they can understand what is being taught. With memory, what is being observed must be processed into short-term and long-term memory for storage, so that it can be retrieved when such information is needed. Observation is important because the behaviour displayed by the model should be reproduced. For an observed behaviour to be reproduced perfectly, practice is important. Reinforcement also plays an important role and if modelled behaviour is rewarded, the chances of this behaviour being repeated are high (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1981:246-249; Engler, 1985:391-401).

This theory is very important for reading comprehension because learners imitate what they see other people doing, be it parents or teachers. Teachers are regarded as good models as they usually have positive and nurturing relationships with the learner. They should therefore display positive reading comprehension strategies so that learners can imitate and internalise these.

The above-mentioned theories formed the foundation of Zimmerman's applied social-cognitive model of self-regulated learning. For example for the learners to become independent readers who could master of their own learning they should be actively involved in their own learning, think independently, recall, analyze information and construct meaning from the text. Learners should gain confidence through regular practice which involves modelling.

3.3.6 Zimmerman's applied social-cognitive model of self-regulated Learning

According to Zimmerman (1989; 1990), self-regulated learning involves the regulation of three general aspects of academic learning. Firstly, self-regulation of behaviour involves the active control of the various resources learners have available to them (Garcia & Pintrich, 1994; Pintrich, Smith, Garcia & McKenzie, 1993). Secondly, self-regulation of motivation and effect involves controlling and changing motivational beliefs such as self-efficacy and goal orientation, so that learners can adapt to the demands of a course. Thirdly, self-regulation of cognition involves the control of various cognitive strategies for learning and these strategies result in better learning and performance than learners showed previously (Palincsar & Brown, 1989; Garcia & Pintrich, 1994; Pintrich, Smith, Garcia & McKenzie, 1993).

In the context of the study, teachers must motivate learners to be actively involved in reading with understanding instead of memorising words on the page. It is important for teachers to encourage learners to think positively about reading comprehension and believe that they can read and understand the text, and to condition their satisfaction to reach their goals. Thus, poor motivation can impede acquisition of self-regulatory competence (Zimmerman, 2000). In addition, learners can learn how to control their emotions and apply positive ways to improve their learning. Literature suggest that self-regulation of cognition involves the control of various cognitive strategies for learning, such as the use of deep processing strategies that result in an improved learning performance (Garcia & Pintrich, 1994; Pintrich *et al.*, 1993).

The teacher must teach learners to acquire self-regulatory competence in order to become independent readers and learn to read and use the appropriate strategies needed for the text. These processes are planned and adapted to support the pursuit of personal goals in changing learning environments. Zimmerman (1998) proposed the idea of learners themselves being the source of plans, intentions, strategies and the emotions that are necessary to create meaning from the written text. According to Zimmerman (1998), teaching multiple strategies is important, since the self-regulatory strategy will not work for all learners and using a few

strategies will not work on all tasks. Zimmerman (1998;1990) and Zimmerman and Hutchins(2003) suggest multiple self-regulatory strategies rather than a single strategies and states that learners can be taught to become more self-regulated. This view is linked to the constructivist theory where learners should be able to construct meaning from the written text. By learning to self-regulate a skill from peers, parents or teachers, each new generation of learners can build on the achievement of prior generations and avoid the mistakes of the past (Zimmerman, 1998).

According to Zimmerman (1989), self-regulated learning involves the regulation of three general aspects of academic learning. Self-regulation of behaviour involves the active control of the various resources learners have available to them, such as their time, their study environment and their collaboration with others, such as peers, to help them (Garcia & Pintrich, 1994; Pintrich *et al.*, 1993).

In her view, Zimmerman (1998) postulates that the applied social-cognitive model of self-regulated learning can be organised within a learning cycle based on three types of self-effective thoughts. This includes the following (Zimmerman, 1998):

- Goal-setting and strategic planning;
- Self-monitoring of one's accuracy in implementing a selected strategy;
- Self-assessment of strategy outcome and task performance.

These processes are considered cyclic because each process entails information that can lead to changes in a subsequent step of the cycle, and they are integral to reciprocal teaching. These processes qualify as self-reflective cognition activities and the associated corrective processes are central features of each step included in the cycle (Sporer *et al.*, 2009:273). Drawing on Zimmerman's applied model of self-regulated learning, during reciprocal teaching, learners are engaged in cognition and metacognitive activities, and they alternate between prompting, using a strategy, applying the selected strategy, and monitoring its accurate implementation (Sporer *et al.*, 2009:273). A self-regulated learning perspective on learners' learning and achievements has profound implications for the way teachers should interact with learners and the manner in which schools should be organised. Zimmerman's social-cognitive model of self-regulated learning provides a theoretical basis for suggesting the effects of strategy instruction and reciprocal

teaching, namely, strategies are taught and how they are taught and practiced effectively. In the context of the study if teachers can be exposed to Zimmerman’s applied social-cognitive model of self-regulated learning may enhance reading comprehension of their learners.

3.4 Conceptual framework

In Figure 3.1, I present the conceptual framework and relevant theories that directed this study. Figure 3.1 is a visual representation of the most important arguments based on the concepts and theories, and their relationship with reading comprehension as dealt with in Chapters 1, 2 and 3. In the following paragraphs, I describe the concepts in-depth with reference to related theories.

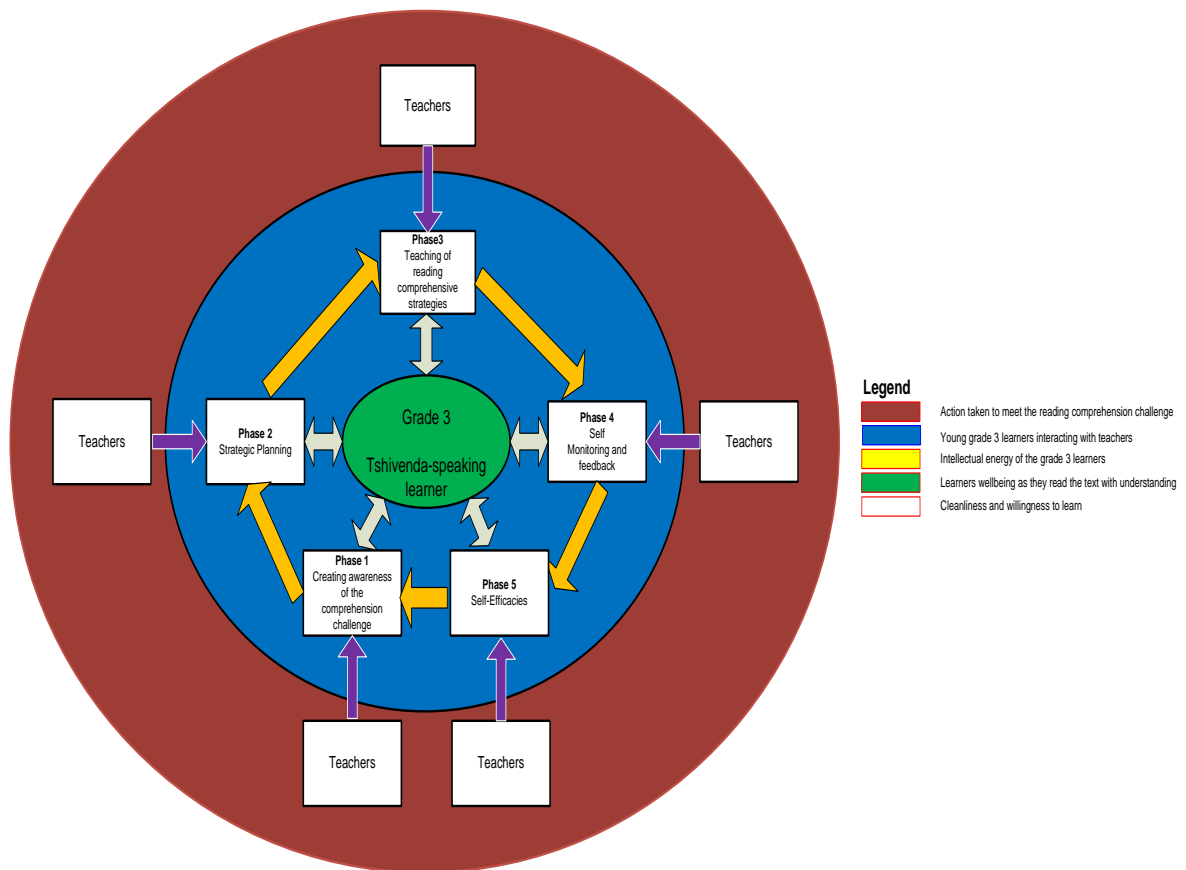


Figure 3.1: Conceptual framework related to the teaching of reading comprehension

3.4.1 Overview of the framework

From the literature it became clear that to teach reading comprehension effectively, principals, heads of departments and teachers need to be actively involved in the education of their learners. The teacher needs theoretical knowledge and be strategic in planning, creating an atmosphere conducive for learning. Teachers should be able to motivate learners to participate actively in the reading comprehension process. Teachers need to develop skills, knowledge, and self-regulatory strategies to support learners until they can read independently. It is critical that teachers must be aware of the fact that to practise research-based strategies in the classroom may assist learners to read the text with understanding. Activities must be planned accordingly, with more emphasis on self-monitoring activities coupled with constructive feedback.

As depicted in Figure 3.1, I intend to refer to these concepts and theories when seeking answers on how teachers teach reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. The literature of Shanahan (2006), NRP (2000), Van Keer (2004) and Oczkus (2004) about concepts and theories indicates that the teacher must be strategic, know about cognitive processes in reading and how and when to teach reading comprehension strategies before, during and after reading the text as discussed in Chapter 2. This implies that teachers should be competent and clear about the use of strategies. The teacher has to demonstrate such strategies to the learners and give them opportunities to use each strategy until the learners can use them independently. This implies that reading comprehension can be taught and learnt. Learners can construct meaning from the text by means of using strategies before, during and after reading of the text, and so become self-regulated, strategic readers.

3.4.2 Structural description of the framework

The model depicted in Figure 3.1 is cyclical and is adapted from the theories promoted by Piaget (1983), Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1986), Ausubel (1963) and Bandura (1977), as discussed in sections 3.3.1-3.3.4. Zimmerman's (1998) applied social-cognitive model of self-regulated learning as described in section 3.1 informed the study. The five theories and Zimmerman's applied social-cognitive

model of self-regulation forms the framework for understanding the teaching of reading comprehension.

The conceptual framework related to the teaching of reading comprehension for Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners as depicted in Figure 3.1, starts with the teachers on the outer circle (red) which represents the seriousness of the reading comprehension challenge and that the teachers are willing to take action and contribute towards each phase within the inner circle.

The inner circle (blue) represents that it is important for teachers and learners to interact and this includes all the phases towards effective teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. Each phase leads into the other. Teachers will employ baseline assessment to evaluate current status quo of reading comprehension challenges. The assessment will form the basis of discussion during strategic planning to address the challenges identified in the baseline assessment. Teachers will then implement those strategies as per planning in phase 2. In phase 3, teachers should teach learners reading comprehension strategies. This is followed by phase 4, where teachers monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the comprehension strategies taught during phase 3. In phase 5, teachers evaluate their self-efficacy levels to ensure they teach with confidence.

The arrows (yellow) represent the intellectual energy of the teachers and movement from one phase to another in order to help learners to read the text with understanding. The green colour in the centre represents the well-being of the Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learner who should be able to read and understand the text if all the phases have been carried out well.

All five phases, namely, creating awareness of the reading comprehension challenge, strategic planning, teaching of reading comprehension strategies, self-monitoring and feedback and self-efficacy are interdependent and form a continuous cycle.

Each phase is discussed below.

Phase1: Creating awareness of the reading comprehension challenge

The objective of this phase is for teachers to identify the reading comprehension challenges, to develop learners' awareness of the reading comprehension process and reading comprehension strategies.

To address this, teachers will do reading comprehension checks across the Grade 3 classes, for example, they should conduct baseline assessment to find out the learners' levels of ability.

During their cluster meetings, Grade 3 teachers must discuss methods they think will be appropriate in building reading comprehension skills in the classrooms. When this phase has been implemented properly, teachers will be able to plan strategically for the next phase.

Phase 2: Strategies planning

Strategic planning involves planning and motivation. It is important for teachers to plan, and, most importantly, to know how to motivate the learners. Teachers can foster reading comprehension in learners by motivating them to read. The simplest way to do this is by modelling enthusiasm for reading. It should be noted by teachers that if they show excitement about their own reading, learners also will become enthusiastic about reading. Teachers must create time to talk with the learners about importance of reading and what benefits the learners can if they read with understanding, for example, for enjoyment, pleasure and for information.

In addition, teachers must choose texts that are age appropriate and could speak to the learners' lives. Graded readers should move from simple to complex text in order to encourage independent reading level. As such learners' comprehension skill will become stronger and stronger.

The objective of phase 2 is for the teachers to understand the challenges and to identify the necessary support to address the challenges. The teachers should take the necessary decisions for their individual classes and determine how they can encourage learners to master their own reading comprehension (Zimmermann, 1998).

The role of the teacher is to plan a reading programme that incorporates and emphasises the teaching of reading comprehension strategies. The teacher should gain a deeper understanding and practical knowledge of teaching reading comprehension. This can be attained by reading literature and research done on this subject. Armed with this knowledge, the teacher is able to address reading comprehension challenges in the classroom by incorporating some of these practices and strategies during the actual teaching of reading comprehension.

If this phase is well done, during the next phase, teachers will be able to plan the reading comprehension lessons and focus on teaching reading comprehension strategies with better results in mind.

Phase 3: Teaching of reading comprehension strategies

Since reading comprehension is a challenge, therefore, it must be taught. It is true that in most classes in nationally and internationally, learners cannot read and understand the written text (PIRLS, 2006; Reeves *et al.*, 2008). Learners need to be instructed in a variety of reading comprehension strategies. It is important for the teachers to give learners opportunities to practice various strategies in a variety of texts. For this reason, as depicted in Figure 3.1, and as explained by theorists, the partnership between teachers and learners plays an important role. In Chapter 2, it was discussed that teachers should work with learners as a whole class, in guided reading groups, on one-on-one to foster individual skills.

In order to foster learners reading comprehension of the variety of texts they will encounter, teachers need to equip learners with research-based reading comprehension strategies to draw from when needed.

The objective of phase 3 is for the teacher to plan and facilitate reading comprehension lessons. Learners have the opportunity to listen to the teacher reading the comprehension and using the reading comprehension strategies before, during and after reading the text.

The role of the teacher is to teach comprehension strategies explicitly to assist learners to understand what they are reading. The teacher incorporates before, during and after reading comprehension strategies. Research confirmed that

learners who have been trained by modelling specific regulatory techniques, describing their form, and improving enactive feedback are better and competent readers than learners who have not been trained (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994).

Before reading, teachers should teach learners how to activate background knowledge, establish a purpose for reading, generate questions, and make predictions. During reading, teachers should model how to engage with the text, use metacognitive and cognitive strategies, verify and reformulate predictions, integrate new information with prior knowledge, self-monitor comprehension, construct a graphic organiser and summarise the text. During reading comprehension, the learners should be able to monitor, pace and direct themselves by making use of different strategies, for example fix-up strategies, to understand the reading text. Learners could connect personal experience to something that happened in the book. After reading, the teacher should teach the learners how to reflect on what they read, evaluate predictions, examine questions that guided reading, respond to text through discussions, retell or summarise the text.

If phase 3 is done successfully, learners will be able to become masters of their own learning. They will be able to regulate and monitor their own reading comprehension by making use of reading comprehension strategies and when problems occur, they can use fix-up strategies, for example, they will know when and how to use self-directed strategies.

The framework in Figure 3.1 reflects a pathway in which teachers must provide support to the learners. This means the challenge of reading comprehension should not be left to the Grade 3 teachers only, but the learners should be responsible for their own learning (Zimmerman, 1998). Teachers must be accountable for creating a conducive atmosphere for the learners to read and know how to use comprehension strategies effectively during reading. The learner develops understanding of the reading text within the historical, cultural and social context. In the classroom, Grade 3 teachers must interact with the learners and facilitate learning. Reading comprehension strategies must be taught in a social context with a variety of interesting texts that learners may interact with and that will increase their understanding (Vygotsky, 1978). This may influence learners' comprehension in a positive manner. Learning then becomes a dynamic process in which learners

play an active role, constantly interacting with the environment and people around them. The teachers and learners must participate actively in all the phases.

Phase 4: Self-monitoring and feedback

Teachers must be able to develop and implement self-monitoring and feedback intervention strategies. This will change teachers' behaviour and attitudes towards teaching of reading comprehension. Here the issue of professional development as discussed also in the findings and recommendations becomes prominent. Teachers should be aware that self-monitoring and feedback is a two way process. It involves both teachers and the learners. That is the reason why teachers should be trained to in order to improve their skills of teaching reading comprehension in the class.

During this phase, the teacher must make a record of teaching reading comprehension, for example, how they approach their teaching, what kind of teacher they are in a real classroom setting and what they can do to improve their practice. Do they involve all the learners during the reading comprehension? This can be a private record. This process allows the teacher to judge him/herself and to identify what works and what does not work well with the learners. The objective of phase 4 is for teachers to monitor their own teaching and to give feedback in a form of report or discussions with colleagues; and to determine learners who are in need of intervention strategies.

A feedback mechanism is built into phase 4, for example, if the learners are experiencing reading comprehension problems, this is where the teachers assists the learners, making them aware of the importance of reading comprehension and give them proper guidance (Bandura, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978). The interactive view of reading comprehension regards reading as the interaction between the learner, his background knowledge and frame of reference places the learner at the centre of the framework.

Phase 5: Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy has its foundation in social cognitive theory and can be applied to the teaching of reading comprehension to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. Social cognitive theory originates from the works of behaviourism and social psychologist.

Social cognitive theorists see people as active participants in their own contexts. People can be changed by constantly by other factors.

This can be applied in teaching reading comprehension. Learners can learn to read and understand the written text by observing the more knowledgeable others. Self-efficacy does not measure the skill that one has but a belief about what one can do under different sets of conditions with whatever the skill one possess (Bandura,1997:37). Self-efficacy can allow the spirit of promotion and success in schools. That is why Bandura (1994) makes the following suggestion:

Schools in which staff members collectively judge themselves capable of promoting success imbue their schools with a positive atmosphere for development that promotes academic attainments regardless of whether they serve predominately advantaged students.

Self-efficacy can improve or decrease teachers and learners' belief in themselves. That is why it is important for teachers to monitor their teaching sothat they can improve their skills of teaching reading comprehension if they have low self-efficacy.

It is important and helpful to the teachers to introduce peer observation amongst themselves. However, for the teacher to be observed by a peer he/she should be comfortable otherwise this will be a fruitless exercise. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people think, feel and how they can motivate themselves and behave accordingly. According to theories of learning and development, teachers must understand the stages of child development know and understand the reading comprehension strategies as well as implementing. Teachers need to be comfortable and confident in their ability to work with the learners and to assist them to become proficient readers. Teachers with high self-efficacy may influence their learner because they belief that they can do their job well and reach each individual learner in the class. Teachers who believe strongly in their ability to promote learning may create mastery experiences for their learners (Zimmerman,1998; Bandura,1997). In the classroom, teachers must teach learners how to use to read and use strategies to understand the text.

The objective of phase 5 as shown in the conceptual framework is for the teacher to check on their capabilities of teaching reading comprehension and the correct use of comprehension strategies.

Part of the tools and techniques of this phase include referring to the baseline outcome completed in the first phase and determining how that is linked to validate the self-efficacy levels at this phase.

During this phase, the teacher's role is to:

- motivate learners to self-regulate their own learning, for example by using comprehension strategies when difficulties occur (Zimmerman, 1998).
- check if they have achieved the goal they have set in phase 1 and if they have the capabilities for attaining the set goals.
- assess if they are good or bad to fulfil the task of teaching reading comprehension.
- identify gaps and misunderstandings and think critically as to what must be done to remedy the situation.
- reflect on how certain or confident they are now to teach reading comprehension, hence self-efficacy by Zimmerman (1989;1990;1998).

Finally, if all the phases are well done, the following are some of the indicators (Zimmerman, 1998):

- Learners become intrinsically motivated and actively involved in reading comprehension;
- They are positive about reading and where there are a variety of books, they choose to read difficult text because they can understand the text;
- They are able to show a sense of agency to motivate their learning through the use of self-regulatory process such as goal setting, self-monitoring, self-evaluation and correct use of various comprehension strategies, for example, before reading they use predictions by thinking about the pictures.

The process will start again and the teachers will support the learners to attain autonomy, which will lead to competency and self-regulatory learning as depicted from the conceptual framework. It is important that teachers must be equipped with

skills to teach reading comprehension, as indicated in Chapter 6 below. The learners must acquire the comprehension strategies that will enable them to interact and construct meaning from text (Vygotsky, 1968) and that are the “essence of reading” (Durkin, 1993).

3.5 Summary

The conceptual framework shows teachers the steps to be followed when teaching reading comprehension. The aim is for teachers to improve learners’ reading comprehension level.

The framework in Figure 3.1 reflects a pathway to enable teachers to provide support to the learners. This means the challenge of reading comprehension should not only be left to the Grade 3 teachers only, but the learners should also be accountable for their own learning (Zimmermann, 1998). The learner develops understanding of the reading text within the historical, cultural and social context (Bandura, 1977). In the classroom, Grade 3 teachers must interact with the learners and facilitate learning.

Reading comprehension strategies must be taught in a social context with a variety of interesting texts that learners may interact with and increase their understanding (Pardo, 2004). This may influence learners’ comprehension in a positive manner. Learning then becomes a dynamic process in which learners play an active role, constantly interacting with the environment and people around them (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001). In the applied social-cognitive model of self-regulated learning, the teachers and learners move together to each phase, proving that the teaching of reading comprehension is a power-sharing relationship (Zimmerman, 1998).

The circular shape of the framework indicates that the reading comprehension process continues and moves from one phase to the next. The teachers are critical role players in the phases of the framework, driving the teaching of reading comprehension process to a success. The teachers should internalise the skills, theoretical knowledge and be able to function autonomously in order to help learners to attain self-regulated reading comprehension strategies. In my view, this may motivate the teachers and enhance reading comprehension to learners.

The framework (Figure 3.1) reflects five phases that follow one another consecutively namely creating of the reading comprehension challenge, strategic planning, teaching of reading comprehension strategies, self-monitoring and feedback and self-efficacies. The phases are continuous and each one is based on the previous one, moving in a circular pattern. Teaching of reading comprehension requires competent teachers who are committed and have practical and theoretical knowledge about the teaching of reading comprehension. The teachers have a direct impact on the language of the learner, because within the school context the learner develops linguistic ability and knowledge of reading, and is taught comprehension strategies and their role in understanding the reading text (Garcia & Pintrich, 1994). If the learners are experiencing reading comprehension problems, this is where the teacher assists them, making them aware of the importance of reading comprehension strategies (NRP, 2000; Dole, 2000).

What emerged from the conceptual framework is that reading comprehension is a social event in which the teachers and learners should collaborate (Dewitz, 2006; Bandura, 1977).

It emerged conclusively that reading comprehension cannot take place in a vacuum. Learners need to be taught comprehension strategies and how to apply them correctly (NRP, 2000). The applied social model of self-regulation of Zimmerman encourages the teacher to give learners opportunity to become involved in their own learning. Then teachers should release their responsibility gradually so that learners can own their own learning.

3.6 Conclusion

What emerged from Chapters 2 and 3 is that teaching reading comprehension is a complex task and that it involves metacognitive and cognitive processes. However, the combination of theoretical and practical knowledge of learning theories and reading comprehension strategies can help teachers to teach reading comprehension effectively. The discussion in Chapter 3 demonstrated my understanding of the five theories discussed and how these theories can be helpful in teaching reading comprehension especially to Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners.

Because reading comprehension is a thinking process, the theories of Piaget (1986), Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1986), Ausubel (1963) and Bandura (1977) are relevant to the discussion of teaching comprehension and help to explain the cognitive concepts formed by Grade 3 Tshivenda-speaking learners. Learners construct their own meaning as they are actively participating in reading activities (Piaget, 1986), as depicted from the conceptual framework.

Reading comprehension is based on behaviours modelled and supported by competent adults (Vygotsky, 1978). As a result, this will encourage learners to change and refine the reading comprehension to a proficient and independent reader who can use both cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies, for example, cognitive strategies emphasise development of thinking skills and enhance comprehension while meta-cognitive strategies enable learners to benefit from instruction and correct use of cognitive strategies effectively. In addition, Zimmerman's (1998) applied model of social-cognitive theory can be useful for the teaching of reading comprehension because in the process of teaching reading comprehension, learners should become independent readers and be able to master their own reading comprehension.

It is important for teachers to use the idea as explained in the conceptual framework. This view is in agreement with the theory of Piaget (1986), Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1986), Ausubel (1963) and Bandura (1977). My understanding is that the teacher and the learner should play an active role during reading comprehension. Therefore, it is critical that the teacher should integrate theories and practice to meet the individual reading comprehension needs of the learners.

Chapter 4 delineates the empirical process of the study. The research design and methodology are explained in detail and the procedure outlining how data was dealt with will be highlighted. Within the context of the study the participants and the sample selection are dealt with.