

**Exploring grade 12 rural learners' conception of reading for
comprehension and their approach when reading English literature in
Acornhoek schools, Mpumalanga Province**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into grade 12 rural learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension. The study also examines and interrogates grade 12 rural learners' approach(es) to reading English literature in the classroom. This study was inspired by evident academic literacy problems that exist in higher institutions of learning, which resulted in exploration of existing research on conceptions of reading for comprehension in grade 12 learners and their reading approach of English literature in rural areas. In order to contribute to the existing knowledge on conceptions of reading for comprehension in FET, particularly grade 12 rural learners, this study interviewed twelve grade 12 rural learners from Acornhoek, Mpumalanga Province who were selected using purposive sampling strategy. The study further conducted five non-participatory, semi-structured classroom observations in order to ascertain learners' approach(es) when reading English literature. Given the research question and sub-questions, the study adopted the qualitative approach in order to obtain rich, in-depth data and also to illuminate everyday patterns of action and meaning from the perspective of those being studied (Creswell, 2012).

Since the study intended to interact with learners in order to understand their conceptions of reading for comprehension and their approach(es) when reading English Literature, phenomenological methodology was used to bring to the fore the true meaning of learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension which were described by the learners from their perspectives. The findings demonstrated two different but interrelated interpretations of the learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension. The first group of learners presented reading as a process of decoding the text, which is synonymous with learning to read and the bottom-up approach to reading. The results suggest that this group of grade 12 learners engage with reading to serve a short-term purpose, probably because they read to memorise the information to regurgitate it during an assessment without necessarily drawing meaning of it. These learners further indicated that they utilize the taxed-based approach when they engage with English literature, which could be the contributor of the lack of comprehension skills amongst learners in FET. The second group of learners considered reading as a process that involves the understanding of the text, including the construction of meaning from such text. The learners who hold this conception of reading identified their approach to English literature as an interactive approach to reading, which entails active interaction with the text in order to predict the meaning of the text and construct own meaning. Establishing this

conception of was encouraging because it indicated that there are some high school learners who are capable of reading for comprehension, despite the ongoing concerns of lack of comprehension skills amongst FET learners.

Keywords: learners, reading, reading for comprehension, conception, rural, approach(es), English literature

ABBREVIATIONS

ANA - Annual National Assessment

CAPS – Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements

DUT – Durban University of Technology

EDC – Education Development Centre

FET – Further Education and Training

MKO – More Knowledgeable Other

LAD - literacy acquisition and development

PIRLS - Progress in International Reading and Literacy Studies

SACMEQ - Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality

UK – United Kingdom

UKZN – University of KwaZulu Natal

UNISA – University of South Africa

USA – United State of America

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I hope that one day you will also take this baton and pass it on to our future generations.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

“The only important thing in a book is the meaning that it has for you” (W. Somerset Maugham)

This quotation emphasises the importance of encouraging learners in school to engage with reading for the purpose of developing a relationship with a text to make meaning of what they are reading, because books are written to share information to be deconstructed and reconstructed depending on the meaning being made. A universally accepted goal of primary education is the mastery of reading comprehension, since reading comprehension provides the basis for most learning that takes place in secondary school (Combrinck, van Staden & Roux, 2014). It is therefore important to understand what is being read, especially in English literature for this study, because of its ability to engage learners affectively, cognitively, linguistically and socially, thus if the information is not comprehended the reading practice becomes meaningless (Bharuthram, 2012). Thus, reading in general, and reading for comprehension in particular, is one of the important skills for learners to continuously develop, in order to participate in the world of written texts as one way of sharing information and participate in the discussions. Developing reading skills does not happen automatically, it is a process that involves learning to read and reading to learn, and both are important as they depend on each other for comprehension to happen. Chall and Jacobs (2003) describe learning to read as the time when simple, familiar texts can be read and the alphabetic principle is acquired through guidance, and the child can start making sense and meaning of what is written in the books individually and with the help of an adult or siblings. This means learning to read starts as early as age two at home by interacting with different written prints and even picture books for children, with the help of adults or siblings. It thus plays an important role in setting the foundation for learners to acquire and learn the skills of reading to learn.

Conversely, reading to learn, which is also referred to as reading for comprehension, involves critical analysis and interpretation of the text to understand the event from its context, which is constructing meaning from the text (Smith, 2011). Chall and Jacobs (2003) posit that reading to learn is developed from fourth grade onwards when texts become more varied, complex, and challenging linguistically and cognitively, and learners start utilising reading as

a tool for learning what Paul Freire (1998) calls reading the word to understand the world. Reading the word and the world for Freire (1998) does not just involve the interpretation of the written words, but is preceded by and entwined with the knowledge of the world. Of importance is acknowledging the interdependence between learning to read and reading to learn, thus if learners do not establish strong foundation of reading skills as early as possible they might struggle with reading throughout their lives (Bharuthram, 2007). Without overlooking the above, it is also important to take cognisance that not every learner who lacks a strong foundation of reading skills struggles in his or her academic life, some learners improve their reading skills during the course of their academic career through determination and tenacity. Of concern are learners without the opportunity to develop the skills to learn to read and the comprehension skills to read for meaning making, as they are expected to engage with English literature which is a complex process that requires learners to recall, retrieve and reflect on their experiences or memories to construct meaning of the text (Busaidi & Sultana, 2015). Considering the above, this study intends to critically explore grade 12 learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and their approaches when reading English literature. According to Nkambule, Balfour, Pillay and Moletsane (2011) little research exists that focus on rurality and rural education, especially understanding learners' conceptions of reading and reading approaches.

1.2 Background of the study

In South Africa, the majority of Black African¹ people were deprived of quality education by the apartheid government, resulting in the continuing different education challenges in the post-apartheid era (Nkambule, 2012). The effects of the past era are still experienced in a democratic South Africa, as learners continue to perform poorly in different English and literacy tests, such as Annual National Assessments (ANAs), Progress in International Reading and Literacy Studies (PIRLS), Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ), (Spaull, 2013). The challenge of learners' poor performances in English language tests could be attributed to their under-preparedness for literacy acquisition and development (LAD), which might be influenced by teachers who were undertrained for different subjects in teachers' training colleges, especially Black African English teachers (Mbatha, 2014). This, according to Hlatshwayo (2000, p. 15)

¹ The term South African Black African refers to black people of South African origin. It excludes Indians, Coloured and Chinese of African origins, particularly for some affirmative action policies as they are believed to have not suffered as much as black South African people under the apartheid government (Wikipedia).

“confined the black child’s encounter with English to the classroom with teachers, who themselves are the products of the deprived learning experiences, with little gained knowledge of teaching methods or competence in English from training colleges”. While this inequality applied to the majority of teachers, especially Black African teachers in township schools, farm and rural teachers were the worst affected, because of the little or lack of attention that was paid to these schools and contexts (Mashiya, 2011). This suggests that inappropriate teaching and learners’ under-developed reading skills might be some contributors to the evident under-preparedness to read independently and lack of comprehension skills that exist amongst some students in higher institutions of learning. It is because of this background that this study intends to explore grade 12 rural learners’ conception of reading for comprehension and their reading approach to English literature in Acornhoek, Mpumalanga Province.

The challenges of reading for comprehension, English proficiency and critical thinking, are experienced from the foundation phase to FET and higher institutions of learning (Mgqwashu, 2007). Although it is unclear what causes the continuation of learners’ poor performances in various English and literacy assessments, and without sounding controversial, it seems that teachers and consequently learners, not overlooking the education system, have a role to play in these results. Of concern is that farm and rural schools are most affected by poor performances in Maths and English language, especially if it is considered that they have a limited number of qualified teachers, insufficient teaching and learning resources, and proper infrastructure (Masinire, Maringe, and Nkambule, 2014). For example, SACMEQ II (2000) and SACMEQ III (2007) showed that there was no improvement in South African grade 6 literacy performance over the seven-year period (Spaull, 2013). In these tests, the learners from the rural areas performed worse than their urban and township counterparts. The SACMEQ III (2007) further indicated that the learners could not read a short and simple text, neither could they extract meaning, with rural learners being the most affected (Lawrence, 2011). It was noted that 49 per cent of all grade 6 learners in Limpopo were found to be illiterate, while only 5 per cent of learners were illiterate in the urban areas of Western Cape (Spaull, 2013). Without overlooking the different contexts of the provinces, the learners’ poor performances in English language is experienced in all nine Provinces, and in 2013 and 2014 ANA results show that Mpumalanga performed below the national average in lower grades, particularly grades 1 and 3.

If some learners are not reading at grade level, it possibly means that they have not been exposed to appropriate teaching and learning skills about how to learn to read to be able to read to learn the word and the world (Freire, 1998). This highlights the fact that reading does not only entails decoding of text and surface reading, but it also encompasses internalising the text and learning about its underlying significance. Hence, failure to develop this skill in early years such as foundation phase can contribute to lack of comprehension skills in later grades, such as grade 12, which is not ideal given the fact that comprehension skills, critical thinking and critical analysis skills are crucial for academic success in higher institutions of learning (Bharuthram, 2012). Furthermore, educational research studies have revealed a correlation between reading and academic success (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016; Zimmerman, 2014), making it important to explore grade 12 rural learners' conception of reading, reading for comprehension and their reading approach to English literature in Acornhoek, Mpumalanga Province.

1.3 Problem of the Statement

To clearly understand the nature of learners' continuous poor performance in South Africa, it is crucial to present different international, regional, and local English test results in order to contextualise this discussion. As mentioned earlier, the evident South African learners' continuous poor performance, specifically in Mpumalanga Province, and particularly in farm and rural schools, is a problem for this study considering the discourse of redressing the inequities of the past. For example, in addition to SACMEQ results, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) reported that "more than three quarters of South African grade 5 learners had failed to master basic reading skills and achieved the lowest scores in a literacy study of Grade 4 and 5 learners in 39 countries" (Lawrence, 2011, p. 14). In addition, literacy problems are said to be greater amongst disadvantaged learners from rural and township areas, with rural and township learners often two and a half years behind the former Model C school children in reading (PIRLS, 2011). Similarly, Spaull (2013) attests that rural learners, such as those in the Eastern Cape, are on average 1.8 years behind the benchmark in terms of reading and curriculum, and when they reach grade 3 the gap widens further to 2.8 years behind the benchmark. These results highlight the extent of the educational illiteracy² problem that exists in our education system, as well as the need to explore rural learners' understanding of reading for comprehension and their approach to

² Educational literacy refers in an individual's ability to put their writing and reading skills to work in shaping the course of his or her own life (Education Development Centre).

reading English literature with the hope of contributing information to the context that appears neglected by researchers. Although, existing illiteracy research is dominated by the illiteracy challenges that are experienced by rural learners in Eastern Cape, however Masinire et al. (2014) posit that it is also crucial not to homogenising rurality into a ‘one-size-fits-all’ definition of rural places, but rather explore the diversity of rural schools and the myriad of challenges and opportunities that lies within each rural school context.

Of concern for MacDonald (1990) and Pretorius (2002) is that the literacy crisis that is illustrated by SACMEQ and PIRL results are not confined to primary schools, and the same challenges are also experienced in secondary schools. This is despite most research having focussed on primary education, with little literacy research having been conducted in secondary schools (Mbatha, 2014; Lekota, 2014). This is a concern given that secondary school learners might have developed reading challenges from primary school education, because it is expected that teachers in primary school should explicitly teach reading skills. Furthermore, although not the focus of this study, it is important that attention is also paid to the teaching of reading at secondary schools in relation to what was taught in primary school (Ofuani & Gbenedio, 2016). Yet, there is little existing knowledge about FET conceptions of reading for comprehension and the manner in which they approach reading English literature which encourages critical reading and thinking in rural learners, like rural learners in Mpumalanga Province. Hence, the focus of this study to explore grade 12 rural learners’ understanding of the concept of reading for comprehension and their reading approach to English literature in Acornhoek, Mpumalanga Province.

1.4 Rationale of the Study

Literacy problems are said to not only compromise the matric pass rate but can also contribute towards the academic literacy issues that exist in higher institutions of learning (Nkambule, 2012). This was earlier identified by Pretorius (2000a) and Webb (1999) studies that some of the first year Humanities students at UNISA read with 53% comprehension, which is below the university standards, whilst other first year English Second Language students in DUT (Durban University of Technology) were reading at the grade 8 level. Similarly, Fleisch (2008) also argues that a portion of teachers enrolled in an honours level degree in UKZN (University of KwaZulu Natal) cannot read proficiently and find themselves struggling to read for comprehension. Some of these evident academic literacy problems in higher institutions of learning have been attributed to the fact that many students enter the

higher institutions of learning with lack of comprehension skills and not adequately prepared to read independently by the grade 12 teachers (Schermbucker, 2016). This suggests the under-preparedness of grade 12 learners to engage with academic material that exists in higher institutions of learning, resulting in perpetuation of inequality in academic success. The academic literacy problem highlights the importance of understanding the underlying reasons for learners' struggle to advance from basic reading to the stage of reading for comprehension, that is, gaining insight on learners' awareness or lack thereof of the relationship between learning to reading and reading to learn in place-based rural schools.

Although the South African democratic government has introduced a number of development initiatives in rural communities, it is of concern to realise that rural and farm communities are still marginalised from the injustices and inequalities that were created by the apartheid government. It is well known that since the end of apartheid in 1994, rural development has remained on the margins of progress that has been made in improving people's lives (Nkambule et al., 2011). In addition, South African rural areas have demonstrated high illiteracy rates and this is partly due to the historic inadequacies of school education provisions, especially among Black South Africans (Nyathi, 2007). However, it is important to highlight that illiteracy challenges are not confined in rural areas but they also exist in urban and township areas and some learners are further disadvantaged if their parents are also illiterate as they also cannot read to their children or teach their children reading skills, including reading for comprehension. All these made sense during my teaching practicum when I informally observe, grade 11 and 12 learners struggle to comprehend text that was read in class, which might have been shaped by various factors. The observed lack of comprehension seemed to be driven by rote learning approach that was used by most of the learners I interacted with, which often deprive learners of the opportunity to read for comprehension. Of concern for me was that the learners will progress to higher institutions of learning, with seemingly little comprehension and critical reading skills that are required in that context. I started searching for research that focusses on rural learners' conceptions of reading and reading for comprehension, and realised that researchers have not conducted much research in this context. I became interested in conducting research with learners in rural secondary schools to understand their experiences, since rural areas are characterized by high educational illiteracy rate (Nyathi, 2007). In addition, Mulkeen (2005) argues that lack of reading proficiency problem is quite prevalent within rural and farm learners, due to less qualified teachers as most teachers prefer to teach in urban schools.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is three-fold. Firstly, it is to gain insight into grade 12 rural learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension. The study further examined and interrogated grade 12 rural learners' approach(es) to reading English literature in the classroom. Lastly, the study seeks to understand the factors that shape learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are:

- a. To explore learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension
- b. To examine grade 12 learners' approach(es) to reading English literature
- c. To understand factors that shape learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension

1.7 Research Questions

1.7.1 Main research question:

What are grade 12 rural learners' reading approach of English literature in Acornhoek, Mpumalanga Province?

1.7.2 Sub-questions

- a) What are grade 12 learners' understanding of reading?
- b) How do learners conceptualise reading for comprehension?
- c) What are the factors that shape learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension?

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the study by highlighting the importance of reading, particularly reading for comprehension, influenced by primary and secondary learners' continuous poor performance in various literacy tests such as ANAs, PIRLS and SACMEQs. Learners' poor literacy performance has been identified as a predominant challenge amongst rural learners and yet there have been very few studies, if any at all, that explain why rural learners are performing worst on these literacy tests. Instead, most of the studies tend to generalise the findings of the literacy studies based on urban schools as also applicable to the rural schools, which undermines the dynamics that exist in rural schools. Hence, the focus of this study to explore the grade 12 rural learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and their approaches when reading English literature.

1.9 Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter One: This chapter provides the introduction and background of the study including the problem statement and the rationale of the study. It also elaborates on the purpose and the objectives of this study as well as the study's research questions.

Chapter Two: The chapter reviews the existing literature on reading and reading for comprehension which contextualize the dynamics that exist both locally and internationally regarding reading, particularly reading for comprehension. Given the context of the study, the chapter also features some discussion about rurality which is aimed at locating the study and understanding the dynamics of rurality and rural schools.

Chapter Three: The focus of this chapter is on discussing the theoretical framework of this study. In this study, the theoretical framework provided the study with an analytical lens to understand the emergence of learners' conceptions of reading and reading for comprehension and their reading approaches of English literature.

Chapter Four: This chapter outlines the blueprint on how this study was conducted and also provide the rationale for the chosen research paradigm, methodology, design, approach and methods. The chapter further describes the sampling and data collection strategies that were adopted by the study and conclude by discussing the ethical considerations that were observed in the study.

Chapter Five: In this chapter, the findings from the data analysis are discussed in conjunction with the reviewed literature and the study's theoretical framework.

Chapter Six: This is the final chapter of the study which reiterates the study's research questions and also outlines the summary of the findings, the significance and implications of the study as well as the limitations of the study. The chapter concludes by presenting recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

Understanding learning to read and reading to learn

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature within the field of reading and reading for comprehension within a rural context. The first section examines the literature on literacy and reading, since they are interrelated and form the basis of reading for comprehension. The second section reviews reading within the rural context where this study is located. This section discusses the nature of rural educational illiteracy and the factors that have contributed to the current high educational illiteracy rate. The chapter further looks at the two components of reading, namely learning to read and reading for comprehension. In the discussion of these two components, the literature on models of reading, views of reading and levels of reading are also reviewed in order to understand the acquisition and development of reading for comprehension skills. The chapter concludes by looking at the different reading approaches, namely deep, surface and strategic approaches that learners use when they engage with reading.

2.2 Literacy and reading

Reading is an important element of literacy, thus it is impossible to discuss reading without reviewing the concept of literacy. Literacy is central to high quality education, which provides learners with the ability to read and write (Baatjies, 2003). Wlodkowski (2011) equates literacy with social power because reading and writing skills are critical for anyone who wants to succeed or understand general everyday life information. Despite the important role of literacy, Fletcher and Nicholas (2016) identified low academic literacy levels within international institutions such as in the UK, USA and South African tertiary institutions. According to Bharuthram (2012), some studies have viewed low literacy as a language problem instead of a reading problem, as these studies assume that language proficiency and reading ability are the same thing. Zimmerman (2014) finds the illiteracy problem to be linked to a reading problem and suggests attention needs to be paid to developing reading that improves comprehension skill, which also improves language proficiency. This suggests that for learners to improve their literacy levels, they need to improve their reading speed, word recognition, and deconstruction, which is not limited to English materials only but also

includes reading books in other African languages (Mbatha, 2014). Lekota (2014) posits that recognising the importance of improving learners' reading skills could rectify the existing low literacy levels, given that reading is fundamental to the learning process. This highlights that reading is one of the critical elements in the development of children's writing because of the existing relationship between the two skills. Klapwijk (2012) posits that sentiments expressed by some scholars regarding the effect of poor levels of English academic literacy (especially poor levels of English reading comprehension) which are prevalent in schools, are actually a worldwide challenge.

Although reading is said to be a complex cognitive task, it is an essential skill in the learning process and failure to learn reading at the primary level may result in poor self-esteem, lack of motivation and academic problems, thus causing scholars to be alienated from the regular curriculum (Cekiso & Madikiza, 2014). Reading, according to Jamaludin, Alias, Khir, DeWitt and Kenayathula (2015) is a basic life skill and a cornerstone for a learner's success at school and throughout life, considering that information is predominantly written in a text form. Similarly, Bohlmann and Pretorius (2008) posit that if learners have not properly mastered reading, which is essential to their learning, it has the potential to handicap their learning success as some learners who lack a strong reading skills foundation often struggle with reading in their academic life. Learning from primary to high school and also at institutions of higher learning depends on learners' and students' ability to decode and make meaning of the information from different texts, which requires a particular engagement with reading to participate in the discussion with authors. The nature of engagement that is needed includes reading for meaning-making, as learners are expected to engage with English literature that is a complex process requiring learners to recall, retrieve and reflect on their experiences or memories to construct meaning of the text (Busaidi & Sultana, 2015). This suggests that reading is the essence of all formal education, for example, "in academic settings it exists within the context of a massive amount of print information" that the students need to access through reading (Bharuthram, 2012, p. 62). Educational research has also revealed that there is a strong correlation between reading and academic success as failure to develop reading skills in early years, such as at foundation phase, can contribute to lack of comprehension skills in later grades, such as grade 12, which is not ideal given the fact that comprehension skills, critical thinking and critical analysis skills are crucial for academic success in higher institutions of learning (Bharuthram, 2012). Comprehending a text includes a reader constructing meaning by participating in a series of recursive

interactions which makes comprehension critical as it fosters analysis, critique, evaluation and synthesis of information from various sources, thus enhancing higher order thinking skills; thus lack of comprehension adversely affects academic performance because it requires these abilities from individuals (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016).

2.3 Rurality and the nature of reading in rural schools

It is still noticed in South Africa that 20 years after democracy the education system is still “plagued by seemingly insurmountable challenges, with little change in sight for those who need it most, especially those who live, work, and learn in rural, informal and other marginalised communities” (Moletsane, 2012, p. 1). Despite the government initiatives to improve reading levels to redress learners’ lack of reading skills, this problem is still rife, particularly in rural areas (Hlaithwa, 2013). Large scale studies, for example, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) reports that, “Almost half of the Grade 4 learners came from schools in remote rural areas and achieved more than 100 points less than their urban peers”, which is equivalent to two to three years of schooling (van der Mescht, 2015, p. 3). Considering that the rural context and schools are diverse and complex, it possibly presents some challenges for teaching and learning in general, and particularly of reading English literature for comprehension because the reading practices should be understood from the place-based context (Masinire et al., 2014). Despite the complexity of the rural context, the limited research on the nature of schooling suggests that the rural context has not been a focus and interest for education researchers in South Africa. Nkambule and Mukeredzi (2017) state that there is a critical need to conduct research education projects to understand different and dynamic ruralities, including exploring grade 12 rural learners’ conceptions of reading for comprehension and their approaches when reading English literature, which is the aim of this study. The small amount of existing research in rurality, rural schooling and with rural teachers and learners makes it difficult to understand the complex reasons for learners’ underperformance in different tests. Although it is unsurprising that reading problems are still prevalent in rural areas due to the limited number of qualified teachers, insufficient teaching and learning resources and the lack of proper infrastructure, this study acknowledges that reading challenges are also evident in urban and township areas (Masinire et al., 2014). The national challenge with reading is noticed in the various international and national literacy tests which show general learners’ continuous poor performance in South Africa.

2.4 Research on reading

According to Suggate, Schaughency and Reese (2013), it is important to expose children to reading and reading skills as early as possible because it has a long-term impact on future reading expectations and skills. Furthermore, Duke and Pearson (2002) posit that good comprehension instruction requires both explicit instruction in specific comprehension strategies and a great deal of time to be dedicated to reading, writing and discussion of text. If good comprehension requires dedicated time to actual reading, writing, and discussion of texts, it means a teacher's understanding of the processes of reading and knowledge of teaching strategies plays an important role in the development of comprehension skills. Similarly, Huitt, Monetti and Hummel (2009, p. 2) define explicit reading instruction as being unambiguous and clear, leaving a student with "no need for inference or difficulty in understanding instruction". Thus, clear and unambiguous instructions are critical for the development of independent reading for comprehension amongst learners because it further minimises confusion and misinterpretation of text.

Although the current research does not focus on understanding teachers' reading pedagogical approaches, it is still important to gain insight into their pedagogical practices because they shape learners' reading approaches. This could be a research to be pursued at doctoral level in relation to the learners' engagement with reading. Researchers of young school children have found that the understanding of reading improves with grade level or age, especially when the grade is aligned with the child's ability level (Hughes, Im & Wehrly, 2014). This suggests that if some learners are not improving their reading skills with grade level, there is a gap that is left unfilled and might result in lack of proper reading for comprehension in later grades. Along the same line of discussion, Hughes and Zhang's (2007) findings point to the influence of classroom social organisation, specifically focussing on the connection between the conceptions of reading and classroom experiences. This aspect of classroom and social organisation is important to observe, particularly in classrooms with few teachings and learning resources, to understand the nature of classroom organisation and the relationships during the teaching and learning of reading. This will provide a picture of learners' experiences with reading which might shape their conceptions and engagement with reading in and out of school context.

2.5 Reading models and reading for comprehension

Research states that explicit strategies and instruction are needed before students can acquire the skills necessary for all levels of reading continuum. Explicit instruction of inferring, connecting, questioning, for example, increases comprehension (Scott & Saaiman, 2016; Nathanson, Pruslow, & Levitt, 2008). This section presents three models that discuss different ways of engaging with reading, the various views of reading for comprehension and the levels of reading. The discussion further addresses different ways of understanding the complexity of reading and reading for comprehension in relation to the study.

2.5.1 Bottom-up model

The bottom-up model argues that children learn to read by decoding the text for the purpose of reading the author's written message in sentences, which means it introduces learners to the basic information of the text (Damber, 2010). The emphasis of this model is on teaching learners to read through phonics and decoding the text, and is linked to words and sound recognition and not necessarily reading for meaning and comprehension (Hlaethwa, 2013). This model plays an important role in setting the foundation for learners to acquire and learn the skills of reading to learn. Although learning to read is crucial in setting the foundation to acquire the skills for reading to learn, the challenge arises when learners continue to utter sounds of words without comprehending their meaning, which has been evident in foundation and lower primary schools, particularly those serving Black African learners (Mbatha, 2014). Earlier, MacDonald (1990) was concerned that in the majority of South African Black primary schools the bottom-up model promotes rote learning which hinders the ability of learners to learn the skills of reading for comprehension.

However, Masinire et al. (2014) argue that it is important to acknowledge that reading challenges are not just confined to South African Black primary schools. The fact that White educational issues, especially literacy and literacy issues, have not been interrogated and problematised by Black African, Indian and Coloured researchers does not necessarily mean that former White schools did not experience literacy challenges (Nkambule, 2012). Nonetheless, the concern remains that in South Africa teachers only use decoding of text instead of teaching reading for the development of comprehension skills to enable learners to learn from reading and thus improve their critical thinking skills. This possibly suggests that teachers might have challenges with teaching reading for comprehension of the text or the teachers were also not adequately trained to teach reading (Van Staden & Bosker, 2014).

Despite that, it is imperative to teach reading skills to learners in order to ensure proper acquisition and development of meaning-making, which addresses the importance of systematic and explicit instruction in promoting reading achievement (Stockard, 2011). It is however problematic if learners are not taught how to move beyond decoding because that contributes to learners' lack of comprehension skills and evident struggle that learners experience with reading throughout their academic career.

2.5.2 Top-down model

The top-down model teaches learners to read for meaning-making by introducing them to the sentence and the meaning of the sentence as a whole, which encourages learners to make meaning or understand what they are reading rather than purely focussing on decoding and sounding each word (Hlaithwa, 2013). The emphasis is therefore on seeing words as a whole and learning to recognise them on sight. Thus, the main objective of this model is to enable learners to comprehend texts by using the prior knowledge, culture and context that they bring to the text in order to predict the meaning of the text (Damber, 2010). According to this model, a learner's background knowledge enables the learner to predict meaning of the text and thereafter comprehend such text, which suggests that learners with little background knowledge and who have only mastered decoding of words might struggle to predict meaning of text and comprehend it (Bernhardt, 2011). This means the teacher's knowledge and skills of reading teaching approaches are also important in ensuring that the learner is exposed to appropriate skills, not only for schooling purposes but also for the future. Moghadam and Adel (2011) refer to this approach as a whole language approach since it encompasses all aspects of language, including what the learner already knows. This approach is silent on learners who might be coming from families without the cultural capital of reading, which enables them to use their prior knowledge to interpret unfamiliar words. As a teacher, it is important to consider learners' sociocultural backgrounds before making assumptions that all learners have appropriate reading skills in a particular grade.

2.5.3 Interactive model

The interactive model involves the interaction between the reader and the text in order to extract the meaning from the text, which the reader achieves by simultaneously decoding the text and relating it to their previous knowledge (Bharuthram, 2006; Hlaithwa, 2013). In this model the learner learns to read by using both the bottom-up and the top-down models at different levels, whereby phonics, whole word and experience are incorporated when a

learner is learning to read (Damber, 2010). For instance, Hlaithwa (2013) explains that learners utilise the bottom-up model when studying for their vocabulary test which involves letter-by-letter, word-by-word learning experiences, and use the top-down model when reading literature which requires learners to learn meaning and spelling intuitively by syntax and repetitive visual sightings of words. Similarly, Graesser, Li and Forsyth (2014) confirm the simultaneous use of the two models and state that learners use the top-down model when reading material they are familiar with, and use the bottom-up model when reading material that is unfamiliar to them. Of importance is that this model tends to put equal emphasis on both sound recognition and comprehension (Soffronow, 2015) because they are interdependent. Considering the different reading models, it is therefore important that teachers understand the different reading models to teach learners how to read for different purposes. The way a teacher reads and engages with a text and also teaches reading skills might shape learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and their approaches to reading texts. The latter is the focus of the study, to explore grade 12 rural learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and approaches when reading English literature.

2.5.4 Reading for comprehension in English literature

Smith (2011) argues that teaching learners to read and providing them with phonics and decoding skills is not sufficient, learners also need to make meaning and comprehend the text, hence the importance of reading for comprehension. Reading for comprehension pertains to understanding the meaning of the text, constructing meaning of the text and interpreting an event from its context in order to derive an understanding (Smith, 2011). Equally, Mudzielwana, Joubert, Phatudi and Hartell (2012) describe reading for comprehension as understanding a text that is read, or the process of constructing meaning from a text, that is, developing critical thinking and critical analysis skills. Freire (1985) regards these skills as crucial for the emancipation and conscientisation of individuals as it enables them not only to read the word but also to read the world and understand the socio-political issues that exist in their environment. Similarly, Emsley (2011) posits that reading comprehension occurs when the total meaning of the passage is fitted in a way that is meaningful, which implies that learners should understand the texts by interpreting the text relevantly and according to the intentions of the writer.

2.5.4.1 Three views of reading for comprehension

In an attempt to establish the importance of comprehension in the context of reading, Granville (2001) draws three views of reading that are critical in teaching reading, particularly reading for comprehension, namely the text-based view, the interactive view and the critical, socio-cultural view. The text-based view offers limited comprehension of the text as it focusses on comprehension activities that require learners to read the text and then respond to the comprehension questions (Chaka & Boo-Ncetani, 2015). Comprehension in this discussion entails learners' understanding of the given comprehension story and the ability to answer questions that are based on the comprehension passage, which is quite restrictive as learners are not allowed to construct their own meaning from the given text. The problem with this view lies in the fact that the meaning of the text is one dimensional, and the reader is expected to be a passive receiver of the text that the writer produces (Mkhize, 2013). Granville (2001) posits that such comprehension questions place learners in a thoughtless reading practice, and actually prevent them from understanding and responding to the text.

The interactive reading view emphasises the interaction between the reader's prior knowledge and the text, thus regards the learner as an active meaning-maker who does not have to rely on the meaning that is unproblematically embedded in the text (Chaka & Boo-Ncetani, 2015). This view allows the reader to interact with the text whilst formulating his or her own meaning, based on his or her prior knowledge. As a result, the reader is not tied to a single meaning of the text, instead plurality of meaning is promoted in this view, provided the readers can substantiate their views through the text in order to avoid semantic confusions (Granville, 2001). Teachers using this model of reading instruction tend to use a whole language approach as it allows learners to use all aspects of language, including learners' cultural contexts and experiences (Moghadam & Adel, 2011). The benefit of this view is that it enables learners to comprehend the text by interacting with the text and making their own meaning, which suggests that learners' comprehension of the text might therefore vary. Hence, the focus of this study to explore grade 12 rural learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and their approaches when reading English literature.

Similarly, the third view, which is referred to as critical socio-cultural reading, advocates that the meaning of the text does not lie in the text itself but rather in the context in which the text, the writer and the reader are embedded (Chaka & Boo-Ncetani, 2015). This view emphasises that readers need to appreciate where the meanings come from, including the socio-historical,

political and economic context, as such awareness enables readers to comprehend and critically interrogate the ideological forces at play in the construction of text (Granville, 2001). English literature is one of the areas in English as a subject that encourages learners to develop critical engagement with the text and become critical readers. Thus, this view not only provides the readers with the ability to comprehend text but further provides the readers with the critical reading skills which they acquire by analysing and critiquing text. The three views of reading are also related to different reading levels that also need to be considered by teachers and learners when reading for comprehension of text.

2.5.4.2 Three distinct levels of reading comprehension

According to McCabe (2011), there are three different levels of reading comprehension that distinguish various readers, namely the independent, instructional and frustration levels. As mentioned earlier, the levels relate to the models and views of reading the learner has been exposed to in school, which means teachers explicitly teach the different reading models, views and levels. The independent level pertains to skilled readers who can effectively learn from the text that is appropriate to their level of maturity without being assisted and can fully comprehend the given text in line with their grade (Chaka & Boo-Ncetani, 2015). Learners reading at independent levels are able to understand the meaning of the text using their own context as well as the context of the writer, which enables the learners to draw multiple meanings of the text. At the instructional level, the reader has minor reading problems, though is still able to comprehend some text but with assistance from the teacher (Chaka & Boo-Ncetani, 2015). The focus for the learners that are reading at instructional level is on the ability to understand the text in order to answer questions rather than construction of their own meaning (Moghadam & Adel, 2011). The frustration level addresses a reader with a major reading problem, who struggles with the comprehension of the text (Pretorius & Matchet, 2004). Thus, the reader who is at this level reads below the grade appropriate level and requires a remedial programme. Research states that the majority of South African learners are reading at instructional and frustration levels, which is attributed to the evident lack of comprehension skills amongst learners who struggle to read for comprehension. The three levels present a picture of different kinds of readers existing in the classroom, and suggest the need for teachers to understand learners' reading levels, especially in rural schools due to the absence of information about these learners' reading levels.

2.6 Research on learners' reading approaches

The discussion on reading models and levels links with understanding reading approaches that learners utilise when they engage with reading texts. There are various reading approaches that exist such as six cognitive and metacognitive comprehension strategies, however, this study focusses on Marton and Siljo's (1976) levels of processing, which are triggered by the student's perception of the instruction about the task at hand or a particular occasion (Baeten, Kyndt, Struyven & Dochy, 2010). Thus, learners' reading approach is determined by the task at hand, which suggests that learners use different reading approaches depending on the purpose of reading. For instance, learners utilise different reading approaches when they read for leisure and when they read to make sense of the author's position and the message of the text in relation to the world and for assessment. Understanding how learners talk about their approaches when reading English literature forms part of this study, which requires critical engagement with texts for meaning-making.

According to Marton and Siljo (1976), there are different levels of processing that students use when they are learning, namely the deep and surface levels of processing the information, which also apply to reading, depending both on the context and the content they are engaged with. Learners utilise the deep approach when the intention of reading involves actively seeking to understand the material or the subject and they want to interact vigorously with the content, as well as when they read and study beyond the course requirements (Lublin, 2003). This implies that the deep approach can be used when reading for comprehension, similar to the top-down and interactive approach which focusses on teaching learners to read for understanding and meaning-making. Learners who prefer the deep approach thrive on stimulating and challenging readings that require them to apply their critical thinking and analytical skills (Baeten et al., 2010). As a result, the deep approach is considered to be about transformation and processing of information, which makes it instrumental for the development of learners' critical thinking and analytical skills. Freire (1985) regards these skills as crucial for the emancipation and conscientisation of individuals as it enables them not only to read the word but also to read the world and understand the socio-political issues that exist within their environment.

On the other hand, the surface approach is about reproducing and decoding information instead of understanding the subject. The main focus of the surface approach is on reading in order to repeat what has been learned, and tends to be associated with rote learning (Lublin,

2003). Learners prefer the surface approach when they work with pre-digested information which does not require thinking critically, resulting in memorising of information for assessment purposes (Baeten et al., 2010; Lublin, 2003). In addition to the deep and surface approaches, there is the strategic or achieving approach which learners utilise in conjunction with the deep and surface approaches in order to achieve positive outcomes in terms of obtaining a pass in the subject (Biggs, 1993; Baeten et al., 2010). The learners' emphasis is placed on organising time and distributing their effort to the greatest effect, without focussing much on reading to comprehend the information in a text (Lublin, 2003). The focus of this approach is not on reading for comprehension but on achieving good marks and using previous assessment questions to obtain the good results. Ironically, Entwistle (2000) posits that the strategic approach is a well organised form of surface approach which can help learners to achieve high academic success. This demonstrates that achieving high academic success in a particular subject does not necessarily translate to an understanding of that particular subject, as might be the case with some South African learners who pass matric with distinctions but lack academic literacy. Considering the different approaches, this study intends to gain insight into grade 12 learners' reading approaches to English literature given that it needs specific ways of reading and meaning-making.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature related to reading, reading within the rural context and reading for comprehension, including the various models, views and levels of reading. Of significance is that reading for comprehension is key to learners' academic success and in addressing learners' poor performance in various literacy tests, which is demonstrated by rural learners' performing worse in literacy tests than their urban counterparts (Spaull, 2013). In addition, developing strong competency in reading for comprehension can also address the academic literacy challenges that are experienced by the first-year students at the higher institutions of learning (Bharuthram, 2012). According to the literature, reading for comprehension is critical for the development of learners' critical thinking skills and can be developed through effective adoption of the three reading models and placing more emphasis on understanding the text, rather than purely focussing on decoding and sounding each word of the text (Hlaithwa, 2013).

CHAPTER THREE

Reading for comprehension as a socially mediated process:

Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore grade 12 rural learners' conception of reading for comprehension and their approaches when reading English literature. Given the aim Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory was used as a lens to make sense of the data, due to its principles that learning is a socially mediated process which is influenced by the learner's complex socio-cultural factors (Topçiu & Myftiu, 2015). Thus, the theory is used to understand the emergence of learners' conceptions of reading and reading for comprehension and their reading approaches of English literature. The starting point for this study is that the human mind is mediated activity tied to cultural, institutional, and historical settings, since these settings provide the cultural tools that are mastered by individuals (Lantolf, 2000). The learners' conceptions of reading and reading for comprehension cannot be distanced from the cultural, school as institutional setting and home as a historical setting.

3.2 Vygotsky's sociocultural theory

A basic goal of sociocultural theory is to create an account of human mental processes that recognizes the essential relationship between these processes and their cultural, historical, and institutional settings (Topçiu & Myftiu, 2015). So, although a primary interest of a sociocultural theory is human mind (development of human mind), the theory tries to provide accounts of human mind through processes that the human mind adopts (Kyungsoon, 2000). For this study a sociocultural theory of learning to read and reading to learn examine the mental processes and activities involved while learning the reading skills primarily at the social level, by conversing with learners and observing their manner of engagement in class during the teaching and learning of English literature. Thus, learning cannot be explained without the examination of social interactions that the human makes. Although the learning process is generally considered to be individualistic, for sociocultural theory learning takes place not at the individual level but at the social level. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory maintains that learning, and learning to read for this study, is a socially mediated process, whether consciously or unconsciously, which is influenced by the learner's culture, language and nature of social interactions with knowledgeable others. The three key elements

of the theory are presented below in Figure 3.1, and have been used to make sense of grade 12 rural learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and their approaches when reading English literature.

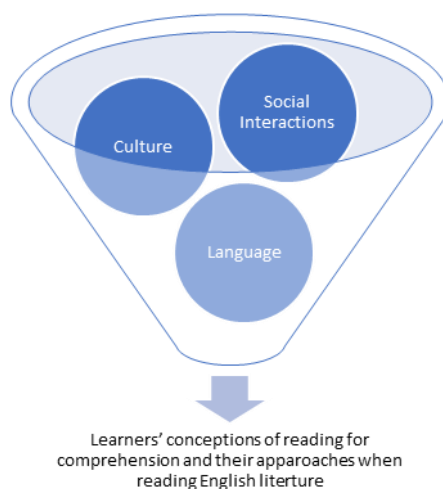


Figure 3.1. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning

3.2.1 Culture

According to Vygotsky the word 'culture' is equivalent to the word meanings that exist in that culture including the cultural practices, as the meaning(s) of the word shapes the society (Mackerras, 2010). Thus, the meaning that reading has in a specific society influences the nature of practices associated with the word. Furthermore, cultures for Vygotsky (1978) are formed through the use of tools and symbols such as environmental and psychological tools, and learners develop reading skills by internalizing the tools that are being provided in the specific culture, which could be home and school culture. The child's cultural development appears into planes which are interpsychological plane, and then within the child as an intrapsychological plane, that is, social plane and psychological plane (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 163). Considering the planes, this study believes that the learning of reading also happens in both social and psychological place, where a learner is taught how to learn by parents, siblings and teachers, which could happen informally and formally, and then internalise the skills for own development leading to reading to learn. The externally learned skills of reading and reading for comprehension is internally reconstructed by an individual adding the personal values in it through social interactions (Topçiu & Myftiu, 2015). Thus, considering the learner's interaction with different knowledgeable others, the conception of reading and reading for comprehension could be influenced by the institutional and socio-historical

perspectives a learner interacted with. This further addresses the role that context plays in the interaction between the experienced and the novice in nurturing the process of learning to read and acquire higher order thinking skills. Cross (2010, p. 120) states that “an increased awareness of the situated and socially distributed nature of learning has highlighted the need for a better understanding of the complexities of the contexts within which learning takes place.”

Similarly, this study takes into consideration the situated nature of learning to reading and reading to learn, a reason re-searching with learners rather than for learners was prioritised to understand the complexities of the contexts within which learning takes place. Given that learners use their ways of reading, thinking and communicating influenced by psychological and social plane, it is crucial to understand how they read English literature text that is written in a different language that represent a particular culture. Emsley (2011) state that learners bring their home cultural meanings and practices about reading into their learning classroom environment, which shapes the manner of reading the text for comprehension that might be in alignment or not with the meaning in the English literature text. This makes reading complex for some learners if they don't have good reading foundation skills from home and school preparedness, which is, learning to read the text and explicate the meaning(s) within the text using reading to learn skills. Thus, learners who come from homes with cultural capital that is aligned with the school tend to read fluently and possess good reading comprehension skills, as compared to the learners who lack the cultural capital or their cultural capital favours orality (Bourdieu, 1986). Given that learners have different cultural backgrounds that influence their reading behaviours, it is therefore important that teachers are aware of the learners' cultural differences and how they may affect their reading behaviour.

The process of mediation (physical or psychological) is important and is explained as a culturally constructed 'auxiliary device' in an activity that links “human to the world of objects or mental behaviour” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 418). The nature of mediation plays a significant role in the interaction between the novice and expert in the process of learning different reading skills, which also involves appropriating language as a mediational tool and as an object (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). The term “appropriation” stands for learners' ability to use the mediational tool “purposefully and flexibly in particular environments” as they get to know such a tool 'sufficiently'. As such, the learner's ability to access and use the

language of teaching and learning, which is English, to purposefully read English literature text within the school context to comprehend it is important, although grade 12 learners' proficiency in English language to engage with reading for comprehension of the text is currently not known in rural schools. Thus, learners' conceptualisation of reading and reading for comprehension will reveal the nature of social interaction and appropriation of language and the mediational tool at a psychological plane.

3.2.2 Language

Language is a basic feature of sociocultural theory, as it emphasizes the notion of mediation of the genesis of individual's activity (Allahyar & Nazari, 2012). Learning to read and language use are interrelated processes and present opportunities for reading to learn texts for conscientization and transformation of information in English literature to make sense of the social practice. While learning to read for comprehension, learners could also learn to produce and use the language as a means of negotiating, socially constructing and reconstructing meanings, notions and actions (Mantero, 2003). For Vygotsky (1978); Allahyar and Nazari, (2012) language emanates from the symbols and tools that emerge within a culture, and children learn a new language, English as representing a particular culture in this study, through social interactions with the knowledgeable other. Lantolf and Thorne (2006) further explain that language development, including reading development, is a socially mediated process which begins at home between the parent or sibling and the child, through the use of cultural symbols. This suggests that language is influenced by culture and is acquired by the child through interaction with parents at home or society they live in using speech or text. Given that language development is facilitated through tools such as speech and text, it therefore suggests that reading plays an important role in the development of language and acquisition of culture. Thus, the more a learner reads for a purpose and pay attention to the context and meaning of the text, the more language and reading comprehension skills are developed.

Language, according to Vygotsky (1978) is influenced by culture, which means that learners' language development will also differ based on their cultural backgrounds, especially since each language has its own distinct rules and structure. Thus, learners' comprehension of text would also vary depending on the rules and structure of the learners' home language, especially when the text is written in a different language like English literature for the study. For this study, learners whom English is their second additional language are confronted with

the English text which has different language rules and structure from their home language. The learners in this study had different home languages, they either had Tsonga or Northern Sotho as their home language. This subsequently poses challenges for them in terms of reading for comprehension, since the comprehension of text is facilitated by the learners' cultural background. According to Damber (2010), learners comprehend texts by using their prior knowledge, culture and context that they bring to the text in order to predict the meaning of the text. Given that learners use their cultural background to comprehend the text, it is therefore assumed that learners' interpretation of the text will also differ based on their home language and culture. This study argues that such research is lacking, especially with rural grade 12 learners from families that speaks Tsonga and Northern Sotho. Hence, the importance of this study to explore grade 12 rural learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and their approaches when reading English literature.

The problem with the inability to develop the child's reading skills at home before the child starts school is the possible long-term effects of the lack of strong reading skills, which often manifests in the lack of comprehension skills (Bastug, 2014). It is worth mentioning that language and reading are also linked to the notion of power, and considering that reading and language use are interlinked in engaging with English literature, the prestige of English literature over African language literature and used is unsurprising when the entrenchment of reading skills is discussed. In the context of this study, learners are expected to interpret English literature text, which often makes it difficult for them to comprehend such text given their language background. This study therefore sought to understand the influence of grade 12 learners' language on their conceptions of reading for comprehension and approaches when reading English literature, given that they have been in school for 11 years engaging with different English literature texts. Their conception of reading and description of reading and reading to learn will explain the reading practices that learners have been possibly using for 11 years, and given the habit, might continue using in a new education institution after grade 12.

3.2.3 Social interaction

Social interaction provides learners with opportunities to use the learned skills about reading and reading for comprehension, which is the output of mediation and language usage. Empirical studies by Swain (2001) and Swain and Lapkin (2002) showed that it was in collaborative interactions that teachers and students could work together to produce

intellectual activities and create conditions for learning to read and reading to learn. Sociocultural theory argues that cognitive development happens through interaction influenced by effective mediation of reading skills. Thus, during social interaction, a more capable participant, through the use of language and other supportive conditions, may help the learner move forward to a higher level with the knowledge and skills owned (Turuk, 2008). The concepts of intrapsychological and interpsychological planes are still significant for social interaction, in order to construct own meaning and new knowledge. The transition from social to personal position according to Vygotsky, is not a mere copy, but a transformation of what had been learnt through interaction, into personal values and, as mentioned earlier, occurs through the process of appropriation. For the study this means learners do not merely copy a teacher's or peer's reading strategies, rather they transform what teachers or peer taught them during the processes of appropriation. Thus, considering that learners are in grade 12, it is assumed and expected that they have transformed and improved what they have been learning about reading and reading for comprehension from home, peers and teachers, and should be able to clearly articulate their conceptions of reading and reading for comprehension and also describe their approach while reading English literature.

Considering the rural context for this study, I acknowledge that some learners might have parents or siblings who cannot read and write, thus constraining the opportunity to acquire basic reading skills at home before they begin schooling. As a result, the social interaction that learners have with the teachers at school could be the first encounter for some learners to learn how to read and develop reading comprehension skills, depending on teacher's knowledge and teaching approach which could be problematic given that failure to establish strong foundation of reading skills as early as possible put the learners at risk of struggling with reading throughout their lives (Brown, 2014). Of concern for this study is that if learners do not learn to read early enough through their social interactions at home, they miss the opportunity to gain foundation for strong reading skills which tends to manifest in lack of comprehension skills. Therefore, given the place-based rural context, learner's socio-cultural and educational background, this study sought to understand how grade 12 learners conceptualise reading and reading for comprehension, which could be influenced by the nature of home and school interaction and further shape reading approach(es) learners use in English literature.

Thus, through semi-structured individual interviews with learners, the study wanted to find out which knowledgeable others influenced learners' conceptions of reading and reading for comprehension as well as their reading approaches of English literature. This was in consideration that social interactions occur at the multiple levels, namely the society, home, school, church, and have different knowledgeable others that could help a learner develop some reading skills. So, because a school is also part of a society, they teach specific values of reading and reading for comprehension that might be different with the values at home. For instance, learners who come from the families where parents constantly read to them, those learners tend to also do well at school in terms of reading and reading for comprehension. A reason it is important for this study to gain insight of learners' conceptions and the factors that influence the conceptions of reading and reading for comprehension, given the different social interactions.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the theoretical framework based on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which state that learning is a socially mediated process that is guided by the child's socio-cultural factors. The theory was adopted as a framework to establish the influence of socio-cultural background on learners' conception of reading, reading for comprehension and their approaches when reading English literature. For this theory, learners do not only learn independently but rely on their culture, language and social interaction for their development of reading skills and approaches to reading English literature. This chapter further reviewed the learning process within the context of three key elements of socio-cultural theory, namely culture, language and social interactions. In essence, language development including reading, is a socially mediated process which should begin at home between the parent and the child, through the use of cultural symbols such as language, speech and text. This implies that social interactions between the child and MKO which are facilitated by the language play a critical role in passing down the culture. This suggests that reading plays an important role in the development of language and acquisition of culture. Given this, the study sought to establish the influence that culture, language and social interactions have on learners' conception for reading and reading for comprehension as well as their approaches when reading English literature.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Methodology for Exploring Learners' Reading Approaches

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology procedures that have been used in this study to investigate grade 12 rural learners' conception of reading for comprehension and reading approaches of English literature in Acornhoek schools, Mpumalanga Province. The study had four specific objectives outlined in Table 4.1, which informed the chosen methodology to engage with the research questions and focus of the study.

Objectives of this study	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. To explore learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension;b. To establish learners' conception of reading.c. To examine grade 12 learners' approach(es) to reading English literature;d. To understand factors that shape the conceptions and reading approach to English literature.
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Table 4.1 Objectives of the study

The first section of this chapter discusses the interpretivism as the paradigm for this study since it takes cognisance of learners' socio-cultural background and the influence of such background on learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension. The second section presents case study research design to understand the learners within their social context, particularly since the learners' social context, language and cultural background have an influence on learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and their approaches when reading English literature (Vosloo, 2014). The third section discusses its research methodology in relation to paradigm that emphasizes the need to place the analysis in its context (Mafuwane, 2012). Accordingly, phenomenology enabled this study to describe the meaning of the learners' conceptions of reading as lived experiences or practiced by the learners. The fourth section engages with qualitative approach and further provides rationale for the use of selected data collection methods as well as the chosen sampling criteria. In addition, the ethical issues were observed such as confidentiality, informed consent,

anonymity as well as a right to withdraw in the final section of this chapter. In summary, Figure 4.1 outlines the graphical structure of this study's design and each element of this diagram is discussed in details in the different sections of this chapter.

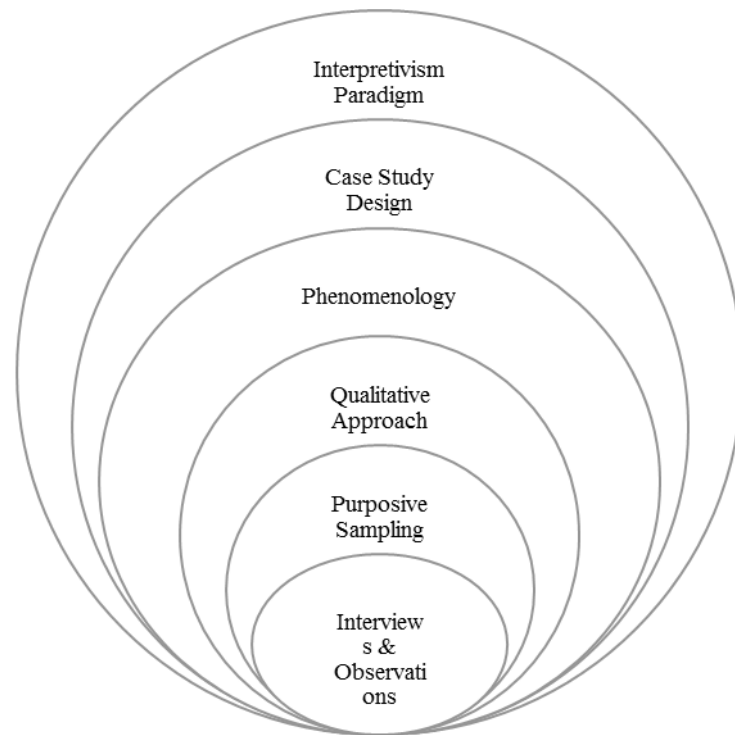


Figure 4.1: A diagram of the study's methodology and design

4.2 Research paradigm

Kuhn (1977) defines paradigm as a research culture with a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that a community of researchers has in common regarding the nature and conduct of research, which suggests that paradigm is synonymous with assumptions that informs how the study should be conducted. Lather (1986) further explains that research paradigms inherently reflect our beliefs about the world we live in and want to live in. This study's paradigmatic perspective was informed by my ontological, epistemological and methodology assumptions that constitute my worldview about what signify knowledge and reality, and this subsequently informed the methodology strategy that was undertaken for this study. Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality or knowledge and focusses on "What is reality" or "What we think the world is" which in turn influence the manner that we believe we can know the world (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2003). The ontological stance for this study assumes that the reality can be constructed by the individuals involved in the research situation, which means that learners' conception of reading for comprehension and their approaches when reading English literature are also socially contracted (Creswell, 2012).

Epistemology refers to what is possible for one to know and the relationship of the researcher to what is being researched, including the approach they will utilise in pursuit of that knowledge (De Vos, 2002). According to Scotland (2012) epistemology's focus is on "What and how can I know reality or knowledge" which essentially pertains to how we access the knowledge or reality and this includes the different ways of studying the knowledge. Thus, this study's epistemological stance is based on Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2012) view that reality needs to be interpreted in order to uncover the underlying meaning of the given event and address the chosen methodology that is determined by the purpose of the study.

Given the above brief discussion, this study is therefore located within the interpretivism paradigm. Collis and Hussey (2009); Rubin and Babbie (2010) explain that the objective of interpretivism is to understand and interpret the individual's experiences, social structures and the values that the individuals uphold. This correlates with Vosloo (2014) argument that social reality is subjective since it is influenced by the perceptions of the participants together with the values and aims of the researcher. Thus, the interpretivists focus on the need to put analysis in context and advocates that observation, reality or knowledge is socially constructed by individuals in different ways depending on their culture, values or prior knowledge (Benton & Craib, 2011). Given the study's theoretical framework of socio-cultural theory, its purpose and the interpretivists focus on observing the social phenomenon in its social context, this study therefore located itself within the interpretivism paradigm. Interpretivism paradigm focus on understanding the world from the individual's point of view, in this case this refers to interpreting the responses that the learners provide about the meaning of reading for comprehension. In this study, people's interpretations relate to uncovering learners' understanding of the concept of reading for comprehension together with the approaches they use when reading English literature. Given each learner's social background, it is therefore possible that learners will also have different understanding of the concept of reading for comprehension and that their approaches when reading English literature will differ too. Hence, the need to interpret learners' utterances or understanding of reading for comprehension as well as their proclamations on their approaches for reading English literature. The benefit of this paradigm lies on the fact that it tries to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them and this study does not want to make assumptions rather through the nature of social interaction with learners wants to gain insight of their meanings of reading and reading for comprehension (Thomas, 2010).

Considering that learners' conceptions of reading and understanding of reading for comprehension do not emerge in vacuum but are influenced by their socio-cultural background, namely social interactions, culture and language, interpretive paradigm also emphasizes that consideration should be given to the role that the above backgrounds play on ones' construction of knowledge about a phenomenon. This correlates with Myers (2009) argument that interpretivism provides the researcher with access to reality through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings. Essentially, the emphasis remains on social construction of learners' views and understanding, hence it was befitting for this study to adopt both socio-cultural theory framework and the interpretivism as its research paradigm in its quest to establish learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension (Reeves & Hedberg, 2003).

4.3 Research design

Durrheim (2004) describes research design as a strategic framework of action that serves as a bridge between research questions and implementation of the research strategy. It further contains a detailed plan upon which the research is undertaken. For Thomas (2012, p. 308), the role of research design is to "plan, structure, execute" the study in order to maximise the "validity of the findings". Mouton (1996) further clarifies that research design enables the study to predict what the appropriate research decisions are likely to be, to maximise the validity of the eventual results. This suggests that the research design provides the structure that ensures the collected data present the information that is required to answer the research questions (Vosloo, 2014). However, research design is often confused with research methods yet it is different from the research method which is used to collect data, hence Yin's (2003) clarification that research design deals with a logical problem and not a logistical problem. In this study, research design is adopted as a logical structure of the study rather than as a data collection method. Given the focus and research question for the study, a case study design was chosen because it focusses on understanding human beings in their real-life context, by interpreting their actions as a single group, community or a single event or a case, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2003). Through the case study design, this study sought to understand the unique perceptions and concerns of individual participants in a real-world situation, that is, identifying learners' unique conceptions and approaches when reading English literature within their school environment. In addition, the case study design was appropriate because it allowed the study to use individual semi-structured interviews, to understand learners' conceptions of reading

for comprehension, as well as classroom observations to establish the approaches that the learners utilised when reading English literature. Utilising the case study design, together with research methods provided the study with a variety of learners' perspectives of reading for comprehension and approaches when reading English literature, which provided the study with the rich data to analyse and construct meaning.

4.4 Research methodology

According to Du Toit (2010) research methodology can be regarded as the theory of correct scientific decisions, or a framework of theories and principles on which methods and procedures are based. For Babbie and Mouton (2008) research methodology pertains to the general approach that is used in carrying out the research study, thus refers to the framework of theories or an approach that the study is based upon. Along the same line of discussion, earlier Mouton (2001) viewed research methodology as a research process that focusses on the kind of tools and procedures to be used in relation to the specific task (data collection) at hand, including the individual steps in the research process and the most "objective" procedures to be employed. The view of research methodology that has been adopted by this study is that of Du Toit (2010), Holloway (2005) and Babbie and Mouton (2008) which consider research methodology as a framework of theories, principles and approaches upon which the study's methods and procedures are based on. Although there are various types of research methodologies, each study's chosen research methodology is determined by the study's research purpose and its paradigm. Holloway (2005) describes phenomenology as a science whose purpose is to describe particular phenomena, or the appearance of things, as lived experiences which is conducted with an intention to enrich lived experience by drawing out its meaning. The reason for choosing phenomenology for this study is that it allows the "true meaning of the phenomena to be explored from the social phenomenon's experiences as described by the individual", which linked with the purpose of this study to solicit the meaning of reading for comprehensions from the learners themselves based on their own circumstances and environment rather than seeking the general definitions that they have been taught (Kothari, 2014). For Creswell (2012) phenomenology helps to bring to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives, by describing the experiences of the particular participants in their social context. It is the purpose of this study to explore learners' understanding of what they think or believe is the meaning of reading for comprehension. Thus, in order to enable the study to explore and understand the lived experiences of the learners' understanding of reading for comprehension and their approaches

when reading English literature, it was imperative for the study to use phenomenology. Furthermore, phenomenology enabled the learners, through classroom observations to present their own meaning of their experiences of how they approach English literature. It was the use of the hermeneutical phenomenology in particular which allowed the study to draw out concealed meanings of learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension (Holloway, 2005). Drawing out learners' subjective and concealed meanings of reading for comprehension was facilitated by immediate probing during interviews with each learner, which enabled the learners to elaborate on some of their statements and asserted meanings (Burns & Grove, 2003).

4.5 Research approach

This study used qualitative approach because it describes and interprets life experiences of the participants with an intention to give participants' life experiences a meaning, without subjection to rigorous statistical analysis (Mamabolo, 2009; Creswell, 2012). Mafuwane (2012) explains that qualitative research offers an improved understanding of human behaviour and experience, which this study sought to establish by exploring learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and their approach(es) when reading English literature. Thus, the relevance of qualitative approach was driven by the intentions of this study to provide rich insights of learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and reading approach of English literature, which requires specific engagement to extract meaning within a context of the text. Qualitative approach provided the required 'real', rich, in-depth, information about their conceptions of reading and reading for comprehension from the real place-based diverse rural context, and also illuminated everyday patterns of action and meanings of reading approaches of English literature from the perspective of grade 12 rural learners (Creswell, 2012). I achieved this by immersing myself with the lessons and learners at schools in order to understand their conceptions of reading for comprehension and approaches to English literature, which enabled me to generate in depth data that provided learners' different conceptions of reading for comprehension.

4.6 Sampling strategy

Sampling, is concerned with the process of selecting individuals or sample from the target or defined population the researcher plans to study with an intention of representing or generalise the particular target population (Creswell, 2012; Vosloo, 2014). The sample for this study was purposive sample which consisted of grade 12 learners and two high schools

which were purposively selected from the Acornhoek schools and are part of the Wits Rural Teaching Practicum and Wits Education Research Project. Maree (2008) explains purposive sampling as “the selection of participants because of some defining characteristic that makes them the holders of the data needed for the study”. The selection of the two schools was based on the schools’ interest to participate in this study as well as the relationship that existed with teachers. The two schools have been referred in this study as School 1 and School 2 for confidentiality purposes. Given that the focus was on Grade 12 English FAL learners, purposive sampling was used to select six learners from each school, with a total sample of 12 learners. Selection of learners was done with the assistance of the teachers, since they had close involvement with the learners (Kothari, 2014). The learners were selected based on their performance in various English FAL assessments, which were classified into bands that are illustrated in Table 4.2.

Bands	Subject performance scores	School 1	School 2
Below average	0 – 49%	2	2
Average	50 - 59%	2	2
Above average	60 – 100%	2	2

Table 4.2. Selection criteria and sample size

The teachers played a crucial role in identifying the learners within each of the three categories, which helped to ensure a good representation in terms of learners’ performance on the subject, as was the aim of the study to provide a representative view of learners’ conception of reading for comprehension and approaches when reading English literature.

4.7 Research method

Given this study’s qualitative approach, individual semi-structured interviews and non-participatory classroom observations were utilized as data collection methods. According to Thomas (2010) the two methods are designed to help researchers to understand the meanings people assign to social phenomena, in particular learners for this study. In this study the meanings that the learners hold is synonymous to learners’ conceptions of reading for comprehension.

4.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

Brinkmann, Jacobsen and Kristiansen (2014) describe an interview as a social encounter between speakers which is aimed at producing retrospective and prospective accounts or versions of their past or future actions, experiences, feelings and thoughts. Vosloo (2014) further explain that interviews can be very productive because they afford an interviewer a platform to pursue specific issues of concern that may lead to focussed and constructive suggestions. In addition, Kothrani (2014) argues that interviews can yield rich data that is not usually attainable in other ways due to the fact that they enable the researcher to probe and ask the participants follow up questions, which can support or be supported by other data from questionnaires and standardized test responses. According to Zengele (2007) interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured depending on the research problem, and this study chose the individual face to face semi structured interviews considering the significance of social interaction in qualitative study. The study utilised the individual face to face semi-structured interviews because it allows the researcher to probe for more information and encourage participants to talk freely within the framework of the interview guide and without being subject to closed ended questions (Creswell, 2012). The individual face to face semi structured interviews were utilised because they enabled the learners to elaborate on their responses and provided more relevant information, which presented the study with rich data (Creswell, 2012).

As indicated earlier, 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted and split evenly between the two high schools, namely 6 interviews per school. Despite the cancellation of 2 interviews from each school due to the learners who pulled out of the interviews, the teachers played a major role in ensuring that I still achieved my goal of interviewing 6 learners per school. The semi-structured interviews commenced in School 1 with the two interviews that were used to pilot the interview questions in order to ensure that the interview questions were aligned with the research objectives and questions. The two pilot interviews were excluded from the sample of the study because one of the questions had to be refined due to its ambiguity for the learners. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in schools in order to provide learners with comfortable and secure environment, which helped to make the learners feel relax because they were familiar with the environment. In school 1, the interviews were initially conducted in one of the offices but due to high level of noise from the learners who were talking along the corridors, the venue had to be changed to a remote storeroom in order to avoid the noise. Despite the trouble to move to another venue, the noise levels continued to

interfere with our interviews until one of the teachers requested the learners to move away from the room that we utilised for the interviews. In school 2 the interviews were conducted in a classroom that was utilized as a store room for unused school furniture and the noise was not experienced as learners had to either remain in their classes to do their homework or use that time to study. Each interview took approximately 50 – 60 minutes depending on learner's responses to the questions and were conducted after school to avoid disrupting learners during their lessons. The interviews were based on the interview guide which consisted of 16 open-ended questions that all learners were expected to answer (see Appendix 11). Furthermore, the interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of both the learners and parents, to ensure that learners' responses were captured accurately without any missing information, which could have been missed if I only relied on taking the notes while they were talking (see Appendices 5 and 7).

According to Creswell (2012), the audio-recording ensures that the information is captured accurately and enables the interviewer to focus on what the participants has to say in order to make necessary probes. This further enabled me to observe the learners' body language without the trouble of taking notes whilst also trying to concentrate on their responses. The 12 interviews were covered in 12 days, because of interruptions, cancellations and learners' absence from school. The interviews have been summarised in Table 4.3.

	Number of Interviews Per School	Number of Days Spent at Each School
School 1	6	6
School 2	6	6
Total	12	12

Table 4.3: Learners' interview schedule

Although I manage to complete all the interviews, however the interview process was also not seamless, as mentioned above, due to language barrier between the interviewer and the interviewee. Although the interviews were scheduled in advance and at the convenient time for the learners to avoid disruptions with teaching and learning, last minutes withdrawals and cancelations were experienced with few individual learners. The withdrawals were due to extra-classes which the teachers organised randomly in order to catch up with the syllabus and learners' absenteeism due to unforeseen family matters, which were accommodated in the data collection dates. I planned three weeks of data collection, to accommodate the

possibilities of different challenges in the research field. As a result, some interviews had to be cancelled, which reduced the sample from 14 learners to 12 learners. Although there was a challenge of a language barrier, however this challenge was marginal as most of the interviewed learners were proficient in English language. It is actually their proficiency that made me look forward to hear their conceptions of reading and reading for comprehension, and also the manner of reading English literature. For the three learners who were not proficient in English language, I used vernacular to explain some of the questions to them.

4.7.2 Classroom observations

This study utilised the non-participatory, semi-structured classroom observations to examine learners' manner of engagement with English literature during the English lessons, in relation to their individual explanation of their reading approach to English literature during interviews. Non-participatory semi-structured classroom observations are defined as a process of gathering first-hand information through observing people at their research site (Creswell, 2012). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) also posit that observations enable the researcher to look afresh at everyday behaviour that otherwise might have been taken for granted, and no behaviour, action and participation or lack thereof of learners during lessons was taken for granted because it meant something. Observations afforded me a chance to verify some of the information from the interviews, and also assisted with the platform to establish learners' approaches when reading English literature. Accordingly, non-participatory semi-structured classroom observations presented this study with opportunities to observe learners' behaviour that is not easily describable or captured by the audio-recorder during the interviews, such as the nature of participation or lack thereof during English literature discussion because it could suggest a particular reading approach and understanding of the text. In total, five classroom observations were conducted due to the fact that the other English lessons were used to teach other sections of English, such as language and creative writing. The imbalance classroom observation did not influence the process of the study, because of importance was to understand how learners engage during discussions of English literature lessons. The five observed lessons have been summarised in Table 4.4, and to be noted is that they do not correspond with the number of days in school because I decided to be in schools most days.

	No. of Lessons Observed	Average Number of Observed Lessons Per Day
School 1	2	1
School 2	3	1
Total	5	2

Table 4.4: Lessons observation schedule

The observations took place during the English literature lessons and the initial plan was to conduct 8 observed lessons, however this did not materialise as mentioned above. In addition to this, the two English literature lessons were cancelled in school 1 because the teacher was absent from school. Nonetheless, each observed lesson lasted approximately an hour, which was the duration of the English literature lesson. The observed lessons were video-recorded to capture the behaviour that is not easily describable, and the permission to record the lesson was obtained from the teachers and parents of the learners through the consent forms (see Appendix 9). Although my presence had affected the ‘normal’ teaching and learning, it did not interfere with the learning for long as learners eventually got used to the video camera and my presence in the classrooms. For instance, initially the teachers were a slightly apprehensive about being observed and recorded, but after a few minutes, they were able to teach freely and carried on with their lessons. Similarly, the learners also got excited to be video recorded and briefly refrained from concentrating on the lesson, but after a short while they calm down and began to concentrate on their lesson. I also refrained from being drawn into some of the discussions during the observed lessons and limited my presence to video-recording the observed lesson only.

I further tried to minimise my movement within the classroom and made them less intrusive in order to avoid disrupting the teaching and learning, by identifying an angle in the classroom that allowed me to video record all the learners that participated in the lesson and the teacher. This angle was at the front of the classroom in the corner, and the observations were kept open-ended in order to capture learners in their natural behaviour as much as possible. For this study the observations further helped to validate learners’ responses from the interviews, whilst also trying to establish the learners’ classroom practices in terms of their approaches to reading and engaging with English literature lessons. For instance, the learners’ responses on their approaches of English literature were reconciled with their practical engagements which were video recorded during the classroom observations. The

convergence and divergence of the asserted approaches from the interviews and the practical approaches from observed lessons are discussed in chapter five.

4.8 Data organisation and analysis

According to Kothari (2014), data should be processed and analysed in accordance with its research objectives, to ensure that the collected data is relevant to the focus of the study and research questions. Burns and Grove (2009) further describe data analysis as a mechanism for reducing and organising data to produce findings that require interpretation by the researcher. For Ngunyulu (2013) qualitative data analysis involves “working with the data, organising them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesising them, and searching for patterns”. In a qualitative study, data analysis is viewed as an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns among them (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Similarly, this study utilised the inductive approach to analyse its data since it focusses on the core meanings such as reading, reading for comprehension and importance of reading, which were evident in the text and were also relevant for the evaluation of research objectives (Thomas, 2006). The inductive approach further enabled me to extract relevant interpretations from the learners’ exhaustive statements that form part of the generated data.

The data analysis commenced immediately after I conducted the first two interviews that I used as pilot interviews. I began by listening and re-listening to the pilot interviews in order to ensure that the interview questions were aligned with the objectives of the study (Creswell, 2012). Once all the interviews and observations were conducted, the formal data analysis began, which was guided by Creswell’s (2014) six steps data analysis approach. This study adopted five of the six steps that were relevant to this study and this was still in line with Creswell’s (2014) argument that although the six steps are interrelated, however they do not necessarily follow in the order they are given. For Creswell (2014), the first step involves the organisation and preparation of data for analysis, familiarisation with the data by listening and re-listening to the interviews, confirmation that the data was accurately captured as well as the filing of the data, namely the filling of interviews and observations into different computer folders (Creswell, 2012). The organisation of data was then followed by transcription of all the interviews word for word including pauses, exclamations or laughter, which took almost three months because some learners often repeated and paraphrased their responses which made the transcription process of their interviews even longer (Burns &

Grove, 2003) (see Appendix 12). Post the transcriptions of the interviews, the summaries of the observations were also developed with specific focus on the interactions of the learners with the literature that related to the part of the focus of this study which was about learners' approaches when reading English literature.

Creswell (2014) posits that the second step to data analysis is reading through all the data, and I read and reread the transcripts in order to immerse myself with the data and interpret its meaning (Lefoka, 2011). I also made some notes on the transcripts in order to capture the general ideas such as interesting or important ideas that were emanating from the data (Creswell, 2009). In line with Creswell (2014), the third step that followed was the coding of data, whereby the data was categorized into segments or grouped into similar topics and allocated a code or phrase representing the specific segment or category. Theron (2015) argues that coding is a cyclical act and rarely is the first cycle of coding data perfectly attempted, thus a research goes through numerous attempts before generating workable categories. Similarly, this study also underwent various codes and categories before the final categories were generated (see Appendices 12 & 13). The fourth step, which entailed the description of the themes for analysis commenced after coding and categorising data (Creswell, 2014). Since the coding process yielded a list of codes, these codes were therefore examined for overlap and thereafter collapsed into categories (Creswell, 2012). The different categories were therefore combined in order to establish meaningful relationships between different categories, which helped to develop the themes and sub-themes that are illustrated in Table 4.5, which were further used to write the findings of this study (Creswell, 2009). These themes and sub-themes have been used to structure the findings and discussion chapter.

Themes	Sub-Themes
Learners' perception of the importance of reading	
Learners' conceptions of reading	Reading as a process of decoding the text
	Reading as a process of understanding the text
Learners' approaches when reading English literature	Text-based approach
	Interactive approach
Factors that shape learners' conception of reading for comprehension	

Table 4.5.: Themes and sub-themes

Once the workable themes were developed, the interpretation of the findings commenced, which Creswell (2014) posits it the last step of data analysis process. This step is focussed on the usefulness of the findings towards theorising and is covered extensively in chapter five.

4.9 Trustworthiness, credibility and confirmability

The procedures that define and establish the standards for judging the quality of qualitative study are trustworthiness and authenticity (Kumar, 2011). In line with the qualitative study, the trustworthiness in this study was derived through the careful consideration and implementation of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007). These four measures are discussed in the next sections and the way they have been applied in the study.

4.9.1 Credibility

Credibility involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research (Chen & Liu, 2014). According to Netshisaulu (2012), peer debriefing is one of the methods of ensuring credibility of the study as it allows the research to consult those who have expertise in the methods of enquiry, the phenomenon or both. Similarly, peer debriefing was also utilised in this study through regular consultations with my supervisor who has knowledge with

methods of enquiries in qualitative approach, and peers who have experience in the field of rural education and are more familiar with rural context and its dynamics.

4.9.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of the study can be transferred to other contexts or settings, which can be a challenge for a qualitative study given that social contexts and variables are not always the same (Kumar, 2011). However, this study adopted a phenomenology as its research methodology, which if replicated in other similar contexts could yield close enough results to original study but not similar results because, irrespective of the similar context, the process of data collection and the sample might influence the transferability. One of the means to ensure transferability is to conduct member checks, whereby the data is verified with the members of the study from whom the data was collected (Holloway, 2005). For this study, transferability was ensured by verifying the data and findings with my research supervisor who has expertise in rural education since the research field is geographically faraway, which made it impossible for me to go back for verification of certain information.

4.9.3 Dependability

Dependability can be established through inquiry audit, which assess if findings of the study are supported by data (Padgett, 2016). Again, the supervisor played a role in confirming that the data, findings, interpretations and recommendations were supported by the data. As a result, this study reflected on the importance of ensuring dependability through detailed data, analysis and engagement with findings that were interpreted using the chosen theory in relation to the paradigm and design of the study.

4.9.4 Confirmability

De Vos (2002) argues that confirmability is concerned with ensuring neutrality and that the findings of the study are objective and free from bias. For instances, both peer debriefing and member check from the supervisor helped to guide me against my biases by ensuring that I did not contaminate or distort the data with my preconceived ideas. This was achieved by ensuring that the interviews were transcribed word-by-word in order to guarantee that the data was not manipulated to suit any pre-conceived findings and that the findings were supported by the data. The sample of the transcript is available on Appendix 12.

4.10 Ethics

Whilst researchers have the right to collect data through methods like interviews and observations, they also have the responsibility to ensure that researchers do not collect data at the expense of the participants' right to privacy (Babbie & Mouton, 2007). This means that I needed to conduct the study in an ethical manner, by respecting the research field and the participants' rights in the study. This included that I maintained high level of honesty in the reporting of the study's results as well ethical management of the participants' information (Creswell, 2012). In line with the Ethics protocol, this study also ensured that the required ethical standards were maintained, namely the participants' rights to confidentiality, anonymity, withdrawal and the right to exercise informed consent or voluntary participation (Cohen et al., 2007). Therefore, the next sections discuss the way the ethical protocols were implemented in this study.

4.10.1 Confidentiality

The concept of confidentiality in a research study requires the researcher to keep the information shared by the participants during the data collection period confidential, and not linked to the participants' identity publicly (Cohen et al., 2007). Assurance was given in writing through the information letters to the learners, teachers, parents and principal ensuring that their information and identities would be kept confidential, and that information gathered through the study would only be used for academic purposes and publication on certain journals (see Appendices 5, 6 & 10). Hence, the information gathered from this study is restricted to the purpose of my degree requirements, the main project that this study feeds into and publication on certain articles but irrespective of where this information will be used, the identities of the participants will be kept confidential.

4.10.2 Informed consent

According to Cohen et al. (2007) social research requires the researcher to obtain the consent and cooperation of the participants of the study, including significant others in the institution that is providing the research facilities, namely the principal, the Department of Education and District Office in the respective province where the research is taking place. For this study, I obtained permission from Wits University Ethics committee to conduct the study (see Appendix 3). The permission to enter the field was also obtained from the Mpumalanga Department of Education, District Office as well as the principals of the different schools (see Appendix 1). In addition, information letters were issued to the learners, parents and teachers

which informed them that their participation in this study was voluntary and that they reserved the right to withdraw from the interviews or observations at any time without any penalties (see Appendices 4, 6 & 7). The learners and teachers' participation were obtained through written consent forms (see Appendices 5 & 9). In the case of learners, both above and below the age of 18 years old, parents' written consent was obtained through the parents' information letter and content forms that were forwarded to the parents (see Appendix 7).

4.10.3 Anonymity

The need to keep the participants' identities anonymous has been of utmost importance in research, and requires that the information provided by the participant should in no way reveal their identity (Cohen et al., 2007). Therefore, in this study the learners' identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms that will be difficult to be associated with them. For instance, the learners' real names were replaced with alphabetical letters like Learner A or Learner B, instead of using their real names. Assurance of anonymity was given in writing to learners, parents and teachers through information letters and consent forms (see Appendices 5-9).

4.10.4 Right to withdraw

As mentioned briefly above, in a research study the participants are further entitled to the right to withdrawal, even after they have given their voluntary participation or informed consent (Cohen et al., 2007). In line with this right, the participants of this study were also informed in writing through the information letter and consent form that their participation was voluntary, and that they reserve the right to withdraw from the interview or observation at any time without any penalties (see Appendices 5-9). This right was further reiterated to the participants at the beginning of each interview and observations to ensure that the participants were still willing to continue with the interviews and observations.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the study's chosen research paradigm, design, methodology and approach which were influenced by this study's research purpose. Given this study's focus to explore the grade 12 rural learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and their approaches to English literature, the study adopted the qualitative approach which provided the study with in-depth information and rich narrative of the learners' conceptions of reading, particularly reading for comprehension and their approaches when reading English literature. The chapter further

elaborates on the two data collection methods that the study utilised, namely the individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The semi-structured interviews provided the learners with freedom to express their views in their own terms, whilst the classroom observations enabled the study to examine learners' approaches when they engage with reading English literature in class during the English FAL lessons. Furthermore, the chapter elaborates on the data analysis process that was used in this study. The chapter concludes by discussing trustworthiness and ethical issues which were observed by the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

Learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and their approaches to English literature:

Findings and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the empirical findings of this study, which explored the grade 12 rural learners' conception of reading for comprehension and their approaches when reading English literature. After a comprehensive data analysis, the findings have been organized under the following themes and sub-themes, which are discussed in the sections below.

Themes	Sub-Themes
Learners' perception of the importance of reading	
Learners' conceptions of reading	Reading as a process of decoding the text
	Reading as a process of understanding the text
Learners' approaches when reading English literature	Text-based approach
	Interactive approach
Factors that shape learners' conception of reading for comprehension	

Table 5.1: Themes and sub-themes

5.2 Learners' perceptions of the importance of reading

This theme reviews the learners' perceptions of the importance of reading as it is likely to guide their conceptions of reading, particularly their conception of reading for comprehension which is the focus of this study. Unanimously and to a certain extent unsurprisingly, learners regarded reading as important, because of the social discourse about reading. One group of participants maintained that reading is important because it provides them with knowledge to

make sense of the world in relation to their situations. **Learner J** gave a detailed response “It [reading] helps you to *explore* many things about life... you get to know what’s happening *outside*. Because if you don’t read you won’t know what’s *happening* and you’ll be like helpless...” and **Learner D** said: “... knowledge, it comes from reading ... reading books, knowing everything”, similarly **Learner I** attest that: “if you read, I think you get knowledge, you’ll *know things* that happened in the past and things that happened to someone that got hurt.” These responses suggest that reading is about gaining knowledge and being exposed to the world through words, and be informed about life in general from the eyes of the writers. The enhancement of knowledge depends on constant relationship a learner has with books, and inform him/her about the past to make sense of the current happenings. Thus, because reading is about exploring different things about life and understanding what is happening in far places without being there, reading helps to keep the learner informed about the matters that occur beyond the learner’s current context. Equally, Hlaithwa (2013) posits that reading is important as it opens one to a vast world of information, whilst also providing the reader with some fulfilment and enjoyment. This affirms that reading can be utilized as a tool for learning and understanding what is happening in life, which correlates with Paul Freire (1998) view of reading the word to read the world. This suggests that we get to understand things that are happening in the world around us through the words that we read from the text, hence reading is important for ones’ enlightenment and development. Thus, reading is the gateway to learning and ultimate access to knowledge, which means reflect on what is read to develop new modes of thinking.

Furthermore, other participants pointed out that reading also offers motivational support and creativity. This sentiment was echoed by **Learner E** who said:

I’m a teenager, we go through some stuff, some problems, like we wanna give up on education, so when I read more about the motivational books, like, I get the courage to go on and to fulfil my dreams and just take on the world ... reading it’s all about imagining what’s in the book. When you read you imagine, it’s like your own fantasy world.

This response indicate that reading can offer inspirational support and possibilities to life when formal education does not make sense, through courage and making sense of how other people fulfil their dreams and make things possible through the power of words in the books, newspapers or magazines. Importantly, reading is perceived to be instrumental in stimulating someone’s imagination and see possibilities where none initially exists, while imagination also plays a critical role in developing creative and critical thinking. The reading of English

literature, and also African literature, need learners to be creative and see beyond the immediate text through imagining what is not known of the world to take on the world. Creativity and critical thinking are important in school as learners require these skills to engage with literature, and also to develop their comprehension skills not for immediate learning context but also for future as these skills are required. Considering the different purposes of reading, some participants address the importance of reading to unwind from academic reading, which need a particular approach to reading information. This was evident in **Learner F**'s statement *"If I am stressed I just take a book and I read. And then now when I don't have anything else to do, I just take my book and I read."* This response confirms the view that reading can also serve as another form of escapism, particularly when someone needs to take a break from academic reading, as is often the case with some learners when they are studying. There is recognition that continuous reading improves reading speed and fluency which further assist with identifying spelling of words and enhance vocabulary. The response also suggest that the participant is aware of the importance of knowing the different purpose of reading activity, which influence the decision for the appropriate reading strategy to use. Such a response makes it interesting to hear learner's response on the reading approach of English literature, considering the specific purpose of the activity.

Most participants identified the contributions reading make in learning a new language and improving ones' spelling and pronunciation of new words. **Learner E** illustrate this point: *"... it [reading] makes you to practice reading, learn other things, to speak English fluently, because I realise that some people, even myself, I can't even speak English fluently, so reading will help me a little bit ..."*. **Learner I** elaborated on aspect of new language acquisition by stating that *"... you also learn languages ... reading help me to know how to speak in English, how to write"*, and **Learner F** added that *"... you like benefit more in terms of how to pronounce the word, they can take the book and then go to somebody else and then they help them in terms of pronouncing that word"*. While it is not surprising that participants associate reading with English language, given the association of literacy with English and not necessarily with the development of literacy in African or mother tongue, there is acknowledgement that continuous reading improves various skills and competency in English. This was also identified by Mbatha (2014) that for learners to improve their literacy levels, they need to improve their reading speed, word recognition, deconstruction and frequency of reading, which is not limited to English materials only but also includes reading books in other African languages. Not only does reading improve fluency but it also develops

writing skills through words recognition and meaning making, and also advances sentence construction. It is interesting that in grade 12 participants acknowledges that they still cannot speak English well, including members of the community, and recognise that constant reading, possibly aloud or silently, could improve their communication and writing skills in English language. Given the rural context, again it is unsurprising that the learning of language is associated with learning English language as the powerful and prestigious language of opportunities. This statement does not overlook the general status English language has nationally, but the acquisition of it in rural context is highly recommended to escape the marginalised place. Taking into consideration the ‘low’ status of African languages in South Africa, it is worth mentioning that various literature including PIRLS has identified that learners are unable to read in African languages because the focus is on learning English language to ‘survive’ (Kapp, 2000). Evidently, it is therefore expected that English language is still prioritized over African languages by the CAPS document in schools.

In this theme learners’ responses suggest that reading is perceived as playing various roles ranging from providing knowledge, motivational support and creativity, is instrumental in learning a new language and improving one’s vocabulary. These perceptions show that reading and have reading skills are identified as important in individual’s life, irrespective of the purpose, as they play different roles.

5.3 Learners’ conceptions of reading

Considering the responses on the importance of reading, this theme presents learners’ conceptions of reading, which should be read in relation to the previous theme. In order to establish learners’ conception of reading for comprehension, it is important to first ascertain the learner’s conception of reading in relation to their conceptions of reading for comprehension. In this study, expectedly so, learners did not present a single interpretation of what reading is, from the responses two different but interrelated interpretations of reading were identified. The first interpretation views reading from a practical perspective, as a process that involves decoding of text and is referred to as bottom-up model of reading. As discussed in chapter 2, bottom-up model of reading is essential when teaching learners how to read, as it introduces learners to the basic information of the text and it sets the foundation for learners to acquire and learn the skills of reading to learn (Zimmerman, 2014).

The second interpretation of reading considers reading beyond just the decoding of text but as a process that encompasses the understanding of text as well as construction of meaning, which is synonymous with reading for comprehension and reading to learn. This interpretation correlates with the top down model of reading, which focus on teaching learners to read for meaning making by introducing them to the sentence and the meaning of the sentence as a whole (Hialethwa, 2013). Similarly, Smith's (2011) argues that knowing what is written is also not sufficient if one cannot comprehend what is written, hence the importance of reading with the purpose of learning and understanding the meaning of the text. As a result, the discussion on learners' conceptions of reading is presented in two sub-themes, with the first sub-theme being reading as a process of decoding the text and the second sub-theme being reading as a process of understanding the text. Thus, the discussion commences with the first sub-theme which is reading as a process of decoding of text.

5.3.1 Reading as a process of decoding the text

In this sub-theme, the learners presented a procedural perspective of reading, which pertain to the practical aspect of reading, and construes reading as a process of perusing the book and interpreting the words. This was evident from some of the learners' responses, and **Learner G** stated that: *"Reading is when you take a book and read what's in the book"* and **Learner A** said: *"Just take something go through it.... and scan it, visualize it"* and **Learner F** mentioned that is about *"Taking that book and then start singing those words."* **Learner B** also illustrated by saying: *"...just read even though you don't understand the kinds of things that you are reading about"*. These responses indicate that the focus of reading for these learners is on 'scan it' as in skimming through the text that is in the book as well as browsing through the book like 'reading what's in the book' irrespective of whether they understand the text or not. Hence, the focus is on going through the text 'even though they don't understand it' and not necessarily on comprehending the text. As a result, for these learners the purpose of reading is to temporarily save the information from the text for quick easy access when needed, and not necessarily to comprehend because 'just taking it' and 'sing the words' is prioritized. The choice of words suggest that the purpose of reading is to get the general idea of the text by memorising the information through singing the words, because the information being read is not understood. It is possibly because of lack of relationship with the information being read that reading is about scanning and visualising, not to understand the information but to take in as much as they can to regurgitate it back. Bharuthram (2012) refers to this literal aspect of reading as the decoding of text, which

focuses on the utterance of the sounds of words without necessarily comprehending their meaning. The purpose of reading for these learners is not to understand the meaning of different texts and how they function, but to just read different subjects because the purpose is to pass the test or exam. It could be argued that the learners' responses also suggest that they could be reading at frustration level, because the focus is on absorbing words without understanding the meaning of the words. Considering that they are in grade 12, it is of concern that they have been possibly engaging with reading at surface level. Armbruster, Lehr and Osborn (2001) state "if readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading they are not reading." If this is the case, it makes sense that learners scan and sing the words not to understand, although it is worrying that they are not considered as reading.

Of concern with the views, is the lack of focus on comprehending the text that is being read, which is demonstrated by the learners' emphasis on decoding the text. According to Norton (2007), this notion of reading can be associated with the concept of learning to read and bottom-up approach reading, which is concerning if it is considered that participants are in grade 12 and have been possibly engaging with information for the purpose of rehearsing it. The statement does not overlook the roles that learning to read and bottom-up approach play in the development of phonic and reading skills, which are used for the transition and acquiring skills of learning to read leading to comprehension. The problem with this view of reading as a process of decoding of text lies on the fact that it tends to promote the undesired rote learning, which has been identified as dominantly existing in many South African schools. While decoding the text without comprehension of its meaning plays an important role in getting basic ideas of the text generally, particularly in the early years of schooling (MacDonald 1990), it is however concerning if there's no progression into comprehension of text. Instead decoding of text remains a dominant form of reading, even in high school where learners are supposed to read with some level of comprehension. Thus, learners' responses cannot be taken for granted because they suggest that learners prioritise reading for short term memory, without recognising to progress to reading for comprehension and development of knowledge which needs reading for understanding by engaging with the information. Given the concerns about some learners' inability to progress beyond the decoding of text to comprehension of meaning of text, the next section examines the second interpretation of reading, namely reading as a process of understanding the text.

5.3.2 Reading as a process of understanding the text

This sub-theme discusses the second interpretation of reading, which considers reading as a process of understanding the text. In this study, reading as a process of understanding the text is regarded as synonymous with reading for comprehension, which in this context provides insights to learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension. Given that the purpose of learning to read is to set the foundation for reading to comprehend information, it was therefore encouraging to see that some learners interpreted reading as a process of understanding the meaning behind the text instead of only decoding of the text. This indicates that some learners do progress from learning to read to reading to learn, which correlates with Lawrence's (2011) view that the development of the reading skills begin with learning to read and thereafter progress to reading to learn or reading for comprehension. For these learners, reading is the process that enables one to gain knowledge, for instance, **Learner H** explained that: *"Reading is something you are taking in ... taking in something you didn't know [gain new information] and make it something you know [the new information then develops into knowledge].* **Learner L** said; *"Reading is to know or teach yourself **how** to speak or **how** to read ... reading is to know and understand ... It gives you knowledge"*. The responses suggest that participants do not only think of reading as "taking in" unknown information, but it is fundamental to "make it" known by teaching oneself the manner of engagement with the knowledge. There is recognition from these learners that "to know and have knowledge" involves more than "taking in" information, it is important that learners participate and apply various "know how" skills or reading to access the knowledge within a text (Granville, 2001). These responses suggest that learners are at instructional level as they recognise that only decoding information is not enough, it is also important to form a relationship with the information being read by making it something new. One of the important skills to develop is the comprehension skill, which enables the learners to construct the meaning from the text in order to comprehend what they are reading.

In addition, **Learner E** elaborated that: *"... so when you read you learn a lot, through reading one gets to know new information, so reading is about learning.* Equally, **Learner G** also said: *"...it's difficult to know things, to acquire new information without knowing to read, being able to read with comprehension"* as well as **Learner K** who said: *"Reading is the way or you want to know some information, you want to know more information about something that you reading ... when you read you gain knowledge ..."* These responses indicate that learners consider reading to be an activity that enables them to acquire new

information which makes them consider reading to be synonymous with reading hence they maintain that it is through reading that they discover new knowledge from text, which they wouldn't necessarily without the ability to read thus makes reading fundamental to the learning process. The learners recognised the significance of reading to learn and comprehend what is read in order to know things beyond current context and gain more knowledge. Although, Smith's (2011) argued that knowing what is written is also not sufficient if one cannot comprehend what is written, which is also recognised by these participants. These responses were interesting, considering the literature which states that rural areas have been associated with high illiteracy rates based on their poor performance in various literacy tests such as ANAs, PIRLS and SACMEQs (Spaull, 2013).

Given the findings of the first sub-theme, it means that in rural schools there are learners that read at frustration level and also those that read at instructional level, possibly addressing the dynamics in rural schools. Along the same line of discussion, Cross (2010, p. 120) states that "an increased awareness of the situated and socially distributed nature of learning has highlighted the need for a better understanding of the complexities of the contexts within which learning takes place, with a related focus on teachers." Even though the current study did not focus on teachers, it does consider the role that teachers play in influencing learners' conceptions of reading, as the knowledgeable others within a complex rural context. Using the word 'situatedness', Donato (2000, p. 47) focusses on the point that "learning unfolds in different ways under different circumstances", and in this study, it seems that learning to read and reading to learn also happened differently at home and also at school highlighting the different conceptions of reading.

Thus, the idea of situatedness is in line with Vygotsky's idea of higher mental functioning that places human consciousness and the functioning of the human brain in the external processes of social life (Blanton et al., 2001). The preparation of learners to learn reading skills involves social interaction and mediation of different reading skills to encourage reading for comprehension. Nel, Dreyer and Kopper (2004) describe reading for comprehension as understanding a text that is read, or the process of constructing meaning from a text, in order to develop critical thinking and critical analysis skills. **Learner J** also elaborated that: "*...I'm reading to understand, then I'll use the information for something else*", suggesting that learners read to gain knowledge which they can apply later on. This further implies that comprehension of text does not only enables the learners to gain

knowledge but also helps learners to develop long term memory. Given these responses, it is evident that the learners conceptualised reading for comprehension as understanding of the text, including the extraction of meaning from such text. For instance, **Learner A** also echoed a similar view when he said: “...read in order to understand, in order to learn something new. Even in magazines you are reading to benefit something ... you are learning something [new knowledge]”. The purpose of reading the text is to learn something new that was not known before and understand the meaning of it, which is not only in school books but can also be found in magazines considering that they can be motivational and inspiring depending on how they are read. Bharuthram (2012) also maintains that reading the text without comprehension is inadequate as learners who have difficulties with reading tend to have some difficulties in obtaining information from texts, which also results in them experiencing some learning difficulties in school. Hence, it is important to comprehend the information that is being read. Considering the importance of reading for comprehension and the learners’ conceptions of reading for comprehension, it is therefore important to also understand the approaches that the learners use when they read the English literature.

5.4 Complexity of learners’ approaches when reading English literature

English literature is part of English language subject and includes components such as poetry, short stories and novels. According to CAPS (2011, p. 16), one of the main reasons for teaching of literature in the classroom is to develop learners’ sensitivity to special use of language that is more refined, literary, figurative, symbolic, and deeply meaningful than much of what else they may read. In addition, English literature is offered in schools to develop and enhance learners’ analytical skills, critical skills, evaluation and synthesis skills. Considering the brief information, this theme presents learners’ descriptions of their approach(es) when reading English literature text, as mentioned in this chapter, which is linked with the classroom observation activities. Learners talked about the different genres of English literature when describing their approaches, for example, **Learner F** said:

When I’m reading a short story, firstly I, I read to myself without reading out loud, I just read first and then after that, then I read very well, then I go down, ja. But for poems, uh, no, I don’t know how to read a poem.

In this response, the learner expresses the different ways in which she approaches a short story. She indicates that she uses different approaches when engaging with English literature depending on the genre of literature that is being read. For example, in her response the learner explains her approach when reading a short story, which she is not necessarily the same with how she would approach a poem given that she doesn’t know how to read a poem.

Nonetheless, the learner describes that her approach to a short story begins with silent reading possible her first silent round of reading is done to familiarise herself with the text and to gain confidence. The learner further elaborates that once she's familiar with the text, she reads it again upon which she reads it fluently and reads it further 'go down' either to answering questions or proceed with reading without much reluctance. At this stage, the learner's approach changes from silent reading to reading out loud when she's then familiar with what she is reading 'I then read very well'.

However, the learner also implies that the two approaches are not applicable when reading poems, which she claims to be less proficient in terms of reading them. The learner's use of silent reading and reading out loud approaches correlates with Ali's (2012) argument that learners start with silent reading approach in order to familiarise themselves with the text they reading and to get the pronunciation of the words correctly which subsequently gives learners the confidence to read out loud to their classmates. In addition, Rosseau (2012) further argues that silent reading is further effective in increasing other areas of students' reading achievement, including students' reading comprehension and reading attitudes. Evidently in this case, silent reading enables the learner not just to familiarise herself with the text but to comprehend the text and improve her reading ability or fluency. The learner's response presents some of the approaches namely silent reading and read out loud approaches that the learner uses when reading a specific genre of literature. Thus, the following sections present two detailed sub-themes about learners' approaches to reading English literature.

5.4.1 Text-based approach

Given learners' interpretation of reading as a process of decoding the text, it was not surprising that that the same learners' description of their approaches when reading English literature focussed on what Chaka & Boo-Ncetani (2015) refer to as text-based approach. The learners' text-based approach to English literature can be attributed to how the learners were taught to engage with literature. Text based approach to reading entails teaching learners to answer questions from the text, as it focusses on comprehension activities that require learners to read the text and then respond to the comprehension questions (Chaka & Boo-Ncetani, 2015). For instance, **Learner J** described his approach as

I read it twice ... Ja, maybe thrice, to get to like understand before. If there are some questions I read it twice and then so that when I start answering the questions I won't forget, like ok, this paragraph talks about what, what, what; it then said what, what, what, and then the question comes. Ok, if that paragraph was in line what, what,

what, then I go back there to, ja, and then get to understand what they are, what the topics talk about

Similarly, **Learner E** also corroborated that; “

You must read the short story, then when you read the short story maybe you read it for 3 times, then you try to summarise ... In order to pick up some other words because when you read you might not understand some other words ... So, when you read several times you will be understanding what's going on in that book ... Then summarise that book ... When you summarise it, then you pick up past, previous question papers, then you will relate those questions and try to answer those questions. The time you try to answer those questions, is the more you understand the short story. So, you can tackle other questions in the upcoming test.

These responses indicate that the learners read the text twice or three times in order to ‘understand’ although the word ‘understand’ is not necessarily used in the context of comprehension. Instead, the word ‘understand’ is used in the context of familiarity with the text that is being read and the structure of the text so that it would be easier for the learners to refer to specific paragraph when they have to answer the comprehension questions, ‘when I start answering the questions I won’t forget, like ok, this paragraph talks about’. Learners’ responses suggest that a learners’ approach to reading is guided by the task at hand that needs to be done and the questions that relate to the text, hence the statement that said ‘then you pick up past, previous question papers, then you will relate those questions and try to answer those questions’. This statement demonstrates that learners strategically read paragraphs in relation to questions looking for answers. The intention of reading a paragraph for comprehension and to draw meaning out of the text is not prioritised as the focus is on providing correct answers to the question and to achieve high marks. Entwistle (2000) refers to this view of reading as strategic approach as it presents a well organised form of surface reading, which means its focus also lies on reproducing information and decoding information, instead of understanding it. This demonstrates that achieving high academic success in a particular subject does not necessarily translate to understanding that particular subject, as might be the case with some South African learners that pass matric with distinctions but lack academic literacy.

Learner K’s response also presented a text-based approach to reading English literature when he said: *“Oh, first thing I will read the theme of the poem ... and then after that I will, I will read the heading ... and understand what does it mean ... And then the third thing, I’ll go through the poem and read it... And then the fourth one I’ll, um, do some work, I’ll do some questions for that poem.* Evidently, this response indicates that the learner is mostly concerned with familiarising himself with text so it easier to identify the answers when he is

given questions that are based on the short story, poem or novel. Although, the learner uses the word ‘understanding’ but it is not used in the context of comprehension. Instead, the use of ‘understanding’ is synonymous with familiarity in this response. Text-based approach to reading was further evident in the lessons that I also observed in School 2, where the teacher read the story or pick one learner to read the story for the whole class. The teacher paused the learner at certain intervals to ask learners questions about the text that has been read already. This style of teaching short stories correlates with **Learner K**’s statement of *‘third thing, I’ll go through the poem and read it... And then the fourth one I’ll, um, do some work, I’ll do some questions for that poem’*. The questions that the teacher asked were mostly text-based and comprehension activity questions that require learners to read the text and then respond to the comprehension questions instead of the questions that encourage learners to develop and apply their analysis, application, synthesis and evaluations skills. Given that reading comprehension is meant to help learners improve their skills on story recalling and drawing up inferences, this means that reading comprehension is necessary for setting foundation for the comprehension of text in later grades (Chaka & Boo-Ncetani, 2015). This type of learning the literature also direct the focus towards text-based approach and further restricted the learners to being passive receiver of the text that the writer produces (Granville, 2001). As a result of this approach, learners are tied to a single meaning that is presented by the writer of the text as seen in the above responses, where learners were also not given the opportunity to develop their own meaning of the given text during observed lesson. Despite its limitation, text-based approach is effective in improving language, particularly reading, speaking, listening and writing due to explicit pedagogy that focusses on things such as structure and grammar.

Of concern is witnessing the considerable number of grade 12 learners who utilise the text-based approach to reading, because this implies that they have not develop the analysis, critique, evaluation and synthesis skills which according Bharuthram (2012) are required for academic success in higher institutions of learning. Lack of such critical reading skills is attributed to lack of comprehension skills which often lead to students entering higher education underprepared to handle text that require them to read independently, hence academic literacy problems that exist in the higher institution of learning. Of further concern is that this kind of engagement with the text often leads to rote learning, which hinders the ability to read for comprehension and other skills such as critical analysis and synthesising of information from other sources.

5.4.2 Interactive approach

Apart from the text-based approach to reading English literature, the learners who considered reading and reading for comprehension as the process of understanding the meaning behind the text and constructing own meaning presented a different approach to the taxed-based approach. This group of learners demonstrated an interactive approach when reading English literature, for instance **Learner A** explained that: “... *if we start a poem or a short story we basically just help each learner to read, then we explain, we give our different views on what we have read and what we have gone through ...*” **Learner J** also echoed a similar view by saying; “... *in reading some poems, there are some, ok, you have to find, there are some personifications ... you should be able ... You should be able to like see them [figure of speeches] and then explain [them], ja, the kind, what do they mean?*”. **Learner F** said: “... *then they ask you, what is meant by this or what is the writer trying to tell us about this? Then, ja, figure of speech of the most important thing*”. In these responses, learners indicate that they’re well familiar with the approach they use in engaging with literature in particular the interactive approach and imply that the approach is entrenched within them which they inferred to by saying ‘basically just’ as in, it is something that is in their system already or is second nature to them.

The learners further indicate that they interact with the text in order to identify the meaning of the text, by identifying figure of speeches like personifications and the meaning behind each personification so they can comprehend message in the poem. Once the learners comprehend the text they proceed to share their understanding of the text amongst each other ‘by helping each other out’. By analysing the figure of speeches, the learners understand that the text they are reading carries multiple meanings hence they search for figure of speeches and try to unpack the meaning behind each figure of speech in order to construct meaning of the given poem. Granville (2001) refers to this kind of approach to literature as interactive approach, which regards the learner as an active meaning-maker who interacts with the text with an intention of formulating his or her own meaning instead of relying on the single meaning of the text. In Marton and Siljo (1976) term interactive approach is synonymous with deep reading, which the learners use when they actively seek to understand the material or the subject, and they interact vigorously with the content. This infers that both the interactive and deep approaches to reading enable the learners to read not only for understanding but for meaning-making as well, which also help them to develop their critical thinking and analysis skills.

This was also evidenced in **Learner N's** response that said

You have to read it. Then after reading it go back from the first sentence, then try to understand what does the first sentence mean and the second sentence, until to the end. Understand every sentence. That's what he said ... And another thing is that you must know [explain] the figure of speeches ... because poems, many of them are in turn using the figure of speeches, so I must know [describe] them [figure of speech] ... Mmm. Like you first read, ne? ... Then you go to every sentence. Then while you are going through the sentences you will find figure of speeches, that's where you can find them ... Mmm. Then try to understand what kind of a figure of speech is it and try to understand again what does the sentence mean.

In this response, the learner emphasises the need to comprehend the text in each sentence and not just familiarise herself with the structure and the words in the poem. The learner also discusses the need to critically analyse the text by saying 'explain and describe the figure of speech' and the manner in which the learner engages demonstrate deep approach to reading. This kind of approach was witnessed in one of the lessons I observed from school 1, where learners actively identify and analyse the figure of speeches and also went on to interrogate and problematise hidden meanings behind the figure of speeches with their teacher. This kind of approach and interaction with the text does not only play a crucial role in developing learners' comprehension skills, but also helps to build learners' critical thinking, creativity and analysis skills. Given the learners' conceptions of reading, reading for comprehension and their approaches when reading English literature, it therefore also important to understand the factors that shape learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension which are discussed in the next section.

5.5 Factors that shape learners' conception of reading for comprehension or lack thereof

Given the learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension, this theme thus reviews the factors that shape learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension. Social context is one of the factors that learners presented as one of the factors that shape learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension. In their discussion of reading for comprehension, learners explained that comprehension of text is facilitated by their social context, including culture, language and social interactions. For instance, **Learner M's** statement that said:

Some of the things that we are reading about make us ask is there's something that is happening in our life, like at home. Sometimes we can learn at school and think ... but it's happening ... some of the things that we are learning is based on our lifestyle or our normal life where we're living ... you are reading to learn and know what happened there.

In this response, the learner explains that they sometimes try to link the information that is read at school with what is happening in normal life and in some instances, the information that is read at school correlates with what is happening in normal life. Thus, being able to establish the correlation between the information being read and what is happening in normal life enables the learner to relate the information that is being presented in text, and gain the knowledge that is being presented. This means that the learner relies on his or her social context to predict and construct the meaning behind such text which helps to deepen ones understanding and creates more effective learning. This response correlates Chaka & Booi-Ncetani's (2015) argument that the meaning of the text does not lie in the text itself but rather on the context of the text and that of the reader as well. Hence, learners comprehend texts by using their prior knowledge, culture and context that they bring to the text in order to predict the meaning of the text (Damber, 2010).

Similarly, **Learner J** further said: “... *to get related to such thing that you are reading about you are reading to learn and know what happened there*”. This response indicates that being able to relate to the text through learner's prior knowledge or social context enables the learner to understand the text and know the message that is being relayed by the text. Thus, social context plays an important role in the comprehension of the text as some of the information that learners draw from the text were linked with their real-life scenarios, and therefore helps make it easy for learners to understand the text whilst also provide them with real-life lessons. The learner's reliance on relating information that is read at school with normal life in order to understand the text that is presented, correlates with this study's theoretical framework which argues that language including reading is a socially mediated process that influenced by learners' socio-cultural factors such as social interactions, culture and language. In the context of **Learner M** and **Learner J**'s responses, the statement about 'normal life' refers to the experiences within context of her culture or language which suggests that learners' culture or language play a crucial role in enabling or disabling the reader to comprehend the text as this learners' social context made a positive impact in enabling the learners' comprehension of the text that was presented.

The need to keep the information from the text memorable and store it long term and not forget it also constitute one of the factors that shape learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension. For instance, **Learner D** said: “...*when I learn, I can't forget things easy ... I can even remember some things. Like even now I can tell you about Adolf*”. In this response

the participants suggest that the purpose of making sense of the text while reading it helps to address the long-term understanding of information as well. This further posit that remembering information also relies on whether the information was understood or not, and implies that lack of comprehension can make it difficult for learners to remember what they have read, hence the importance of reading for comprehension.

In addition, learners also identified the need for development and need to pass a subject at school as other factors that influence their conceptions of reading for comprehension. The learners explained that the knowledge that they gained through reading also help them to develop their minds as well as to pass their subjects at school. For instance, **Learner C** said: “...we reading and we learn from reading ... reading is the only way you can pass ... to mature your mind by learning something ...we can learn from reading”. The response recognises that while one of the roles for reading is to pass, it also extends by acknowledges that through reading one also learns some new information which helps in terms of developing and maturing the mind. Thus, maturity through reading exposes the mind to the new things, confirming Taylor, Graves and van den Broek (2000) that reading is important for the cognitive development of human faculties that are key for ones’ learning. The learner’s need to mature the mind plays a significant role in shaping the learner’s conception of reading as well as reading for comprehension. This makes reading crucial for ones’ development and acquisition of knowledge since it impossible for someone to learn about the documented information which can develop the mind if they have not acquired the reading skills, particularly the comprehension skills. Given this, it is therefore understandable why the learners advocated that reading facilitate learning and further explain they recognised that there’s a strong link between reading and learning, which influenced the conception of reading as maturing the mind.

Although the study did not focus on teachers, however it important to also acknowledge that the approach the teachers use to teach reading is likely to influence conceptions that the learners would have about reading for comprehension and thus constitute one of the factors that shape learners’ conceptions of reading for comprehension. For instance, **Learner A**’s explanation of reading for comprehension said “*Reading to learn’ is your, you know how to read, but you want to know how do you read, like what way...*”. In this response, the learner interprets reading for comprehension also known as reading to learn as receiving feedback from the teacher on her method of reading which could possibly improve the learner’s

reading process. The need for the teacher's evaluation of the learner's reading endorses Vygotsky's (1978) the view that reading is a social mediated process which is influenced by the learner's complex socio-cultural factors, including learner's social interaction with more knowledgeable other such as the teacher. Thus, the teacher's feedback on the learner's reading is important for her development. In this response, the learner's misconception of reading for comprehension requires the teacher to correct it. If this learner's misconception of reading for comprehension is not corrected by the teacher, the learner will continue to maintain the view that reading for comprehension is synonymous with learn to read which is about the decoding of text. If decoding is popular in South African schools, it possibly means teachers might have challenges with teaching reading for comprehension of text. This suggests that inappropriate teaching might be one of the contributors of the evidenced grade 12 learners' under-preparedness to read independently and their lack of comprehension skills, which according to Bharuthram (2012) has some adverse effects on learners' academic success particularly in higher institutions of learning where lack of comprehensions often manifest itself in academic literacy problems

Apart from the approaches that the teachers use to teach reading, learners' disregard for the value of reading for comprehension as well as their inability to progress beyond learning to read also constitute one of the factors that shape learners' lack of reading for comprehension skills. For example, **Learner B** also explained that: *"...just read even though you don't understand the kinds of things that you are reading about"*. This response indicates that the learner's focus is on going through the text even though they don't understand it' instead of comprehending the text. As a result, the focus is on decoding the text and prioritising reading for short term memory instead of understanding the text. Hence, the evident lack of comprehension skills that exist amongst some grade 12 learners which according to Damber (2010) contributes to the students who enter higher institutions of learning under-prepared to read independently and engage with academic material that exists in higher institutions of learning. Thus, it is important that the learners recognise the value of reading for comprehension in order for them to progress from decoding of text to comprehending the text that is being read.

The learners' responses show that the factors that influence reading for comprehension or lack thereof vary from social context, to the need to for development, to pass the subject at school as well as the need to relate to the text and need to make the information memorable.

In addition, the approaches that the teachers utilise to teaching reading and reading for comprehension also constitute one of the factors that share learners' conception of reading for comprehension or lack thereof. Learners' disregard for the value of reading for comprehension as well as their inability to progress beyond learning to read also constitute one of the factors that contributes to learners' lack of reading for comprehension skills.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter began by reviewing the learners' perceptions of the importance of reading, in order to contextualize their conceptions of reading and reading for comprehension. Unanimously, the participants of this study regarded reading as important for various reasons which range from providing knowledge, motivational support and creativity, to being instrumental in learning a new language and improving one's vocabulary. In order to establish the learners' conception of reading for comprehension, this chapter further sought to ascertain the learner's conception of reading as the views that the learners hold about reading are likely to inform their conceptions of reading for comprehension.

Expectedly so, learners presented two interrelated interpretations of reading. The first interpretation viewed reading as a process of decoding the text, which is synonymous with learning to read and the bottom-up approach to reading. The second interpretation considered reading to be a process of understanding the text and this view correlates with reading to learn or reading for comprehension as well as top-down approach to reading. Given that the purpose of learning to read is to set the foundation for reading to comprehend information, it was therefore encouraging to see that some learners interpreted reading as a process of understanding the meaning behind the text instead of only decoding of the text. This indicates that some learners do progress from learning to read to reading to learn.

The chapter further reviewed the approaches that the learners adopt when reading English literature. This study established that there are various approaches that the grade 12 learners utilise when they engage with English literature, including text-based, interactive approach, surface reading and deep reading approach. Based on the learners' responses, the use of each approach is determined by genres of literature that is under review and the manner in which learners were taught to engage with such genre of literature. Interestingly, the approaches that the learners presented were also linked to the conceptions of reading for comprehension that the learners hold, namely learning to read conception was linked to text-based approach and

the reading to learn conception was linked to interactive approach. The learners who adopted text-based approach focussed on familiarising themselves with the text and structure of the given story or poem, so that they can answer the questions that are based on the short story, poem or novel. On the contrary, the learners who adopted the interactive approach actively interacted with the text in order to draw out the hidden meaning from the text, so they can predict and construct their own meaning of the text in order to comprehend the text. The chapter concluded by discussing the factors that shape learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension or lack thereof. These factors vary from social context, to the need for development, to pass the subject at school as well as the need to make the information memorable. In addition, the approaches that the teachers utilise to teaching reading and reading for comprehension also constitute one of the factors that shape learners' conception of reading for comprehension or lack thereof. Learners' disregard for the value of reading for comprehension as well as their inability to progress beyond learning to read also constitute one of the factors that contributes to the learners' lack of reading for comprehension.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion and Recommendation

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore grade 12 rural learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension. The study further examined and interrogated grade 12 rural learners' approach(es) to reading English literature in the classroom. Given the purposes, this study sought to answer to the main research question, which was encapsulated as, "*What are grade 12 rural learners' reading approaches of literature in Acornhoek, Mpumalanga Province?*" In order to provide an answer to this question, this study engaged with the following two questions;

- How do learners conceptualise reading?
- What are learners' perceptions of English literature?

This study was motivated by evident academic literacy problems that exist in higher institutions of learning, which have been attributed to fact that many students enter the higher institutions of learning with lack of comprehension skills and not adequately prepared to read independently by their secondary school teachers (Bharuthram, 2012). Yet, there is little existing knowledge about FET, especially grade 12 rural learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and the manner in which learners' approach reading of English literature, particularly in Mpumalanga Province. The study adopted Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory as the theoretical framework and was used to establish how learners' socio-cultural factors, namely culture, language and social interactions influence their conceptions of reading, reading for comprehension and their approaches when reading English literature. Given the study's theoretical framework, the study used phenomenology as its methodology and interpretivism as its paradigm which necessitated the approach for this study to be a qualitative approach. This chapter therefore presents an overview of the findings of this study in response to the study's purpose and research questions, which have been discussed in chapter 1. In addition, this chapter proceed to review the implications and limitation of the study. Given the limitations of this study, this chapter then concludes by making some recommendations that will need to be considered when conducting further research.

6.2 Summary of the findings

Given that this study's focus to explore learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and their approach(es) when reading English literature, the findings of this study have also been presented in that respect.

6.2.1 Learners' perceptions of the importance of reading

Considering that learners' perceptions of the importance of reading are likely to influence their conceptions of reading for comprehension, this study therefore began by establishing learners' perceptions of the importance of reading. Unanimously and to a certain extent unsurprisingly, learners regarded reading as important, because of the social discourse about reading and the value that they associated with reading. Learners maintained that reading plays various roles which range from providing knowledge, motivational support and creativity, is instrumental in learning a new language and improving one's vocabulary. These perceptions show that reading and having reading skills are identified as important in individual's life, irrespective of the purpose due to different roles that reading plays.

6.2.2 Learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension

The study needed to establish learners' conception reading first in order to ascertain learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension since the conceptions they hold about reading are likely to influence the conception they have about reading for comprehension. Expectedly so, learners presented two interrelated interpretations of reading. The first interpretation viewed reading as a process of decoding of text, which is synonymous with learning to read and the bottom-up approach to reading. The purpose of reading for these learners was not to understand the meaning of different texts and how they function, but to just read even though they don't understand the information they are reading. The purpose of engaging with reading was to pass the test or exam, because they identified that as important to achieve.

The second interpretation considered reading to be a process of understanding the text and this view correlates with reading to learn or reading for comprehension as well as top-down approach to reading. For these learners, reading was conceptualised as the process that enables one to gain knowledge or to access the knowledge that is embedded within a text. This implies that this group of learners considered reading for comprehension to encompass the extraction or construction of meaning from the text, which facilitate the comprehension of text that is being read. For this group of learners, reading for comprehension is crucial

because it enables them to comprehend the text which subsequently exposes them to new knowledge that is beyond their current context, and also allows them to understand its meaning whilst gaining more knowledge. Hence, reading for comprehension is crucial for these learners because it helps to deepen their understanding of the text and link with the situations in the community, which is reading beyond their immediate classroom context whilst also enabling more effective learning. Given that the purpose of learning to read is to set the foundation for reading to comprehend information, it was therefore encouraging to see that some learners interpreted reading as a process of understanding the meaning behind the text instead of only decoding of the text. This indicates that some learners do progress from learning to read to reading to learn with the assistance of knowledgeable others at home, teachers and peers in this study.

6.2.3 Learners' approach(es) when reading English literature

This study further established the approaches that the grade 12 learners utilise when they are reading English literature, and these approaches are determined by genres of literature that are offered at the particular school but also linked to the conception of reading and reading for comprehension that learners hold. The established approaches involved silent reading, reading out loud, text-based, interactive, deep and surface approaches. It was also not surprising that the learners who conceptualised reading and reading for comprehension as a process of decoding the text, described their approach when reading English literature as a texted-based approach. The focus of these learners when engaging with English literature was on understanding the given story or poem so that they can answer the questions that are based on the short story, poem or novel. Furthermore, the text-based approach that learners demonstrated when they engaged with English literature also appeared to be characterised by surface reading, as it concentrated on reproducing information and decoding information instead of critically analyse the subject. As a result, the learners seem to read with an intention to repeat what they have learned which suggests that the learners viewed the text as one dimensional, and therefore accepted meaning given by the text instead of interrogating the text or constructing their own meaning. This kind of engagement with the text often leads to rote learning, which hinders the ability to read for comprehension and other skills such as critical analysis and synthesising of information from other sources. Of interest, is that this kind of approach was predominantly used by learners when they engaged with short stories and hardly used by learners who engaged with poems. This could suggest that certain type of literature genres encourage certain type of approaches.

Apart from text-based approach, the learners who regarded reading and reading for comprehension as a process of understanding the meaning behind the text demonstrated an interactive approach when they engage with English literature. This group of learners did not consider the text to be one dimensional, instead interact with the text with an intention to draw out the hidden meaning of the text. For instance, these learners would identify the figure of speech and then try to unpack the multiple meaning contained in different figure of speeches. Evidently, this group of learners were not only reading for understanding but they were reading for meaning-making as well, which was demonstrated by the manner in which they actively and vigorously sought to interact and understand the given material. They would further try to read deeper in order to critically analyse the poem and construct their own meaning. Of importance to mention is that, this kind of approach to text was only seen from the learners when they engaged with poems and was not witnessed from the learners who engaged with short stories. This suggests the point that has already been raised above about the possibility that certain approaches are more aligned with certain genre of literature.

Interestingly, the approaches that the learners presented were also linked to the conceptions of reading for comprehension that the learners hold, namely learning to read conception was linked to text-based approach and the reading to learn conception was linked to interactive approach. The learners who adopted text-based approach focussed on familiarising themselves with the text and structure of the given story or poem, so that they can answer the questions that are based on the short story, poem or novel. On the contrary, the learners who adopted the interactive approach actively interacted with the text in order to draw out the hidden meaning from the text, so they can predict and construct their own meaning of the text in order to comprehend the text

6.2.4 Factors that shape reading for comprehension

The study also established the factors that shape the learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and lack thereof. The learners' responses show that the factors that influence reading for comprehension and lack thereof vary from social context, to the need to for development, to pass the subject at school as well as the need to relate to the text and need to make the information memorable. In addition, the approaches that the teachers utilise to teaching reading and reading for comprehension also constitute one of the factors that shape learners' conception of reading for comprehension or lack thereof. Learners' disregard for the value of reading for comprehension as well as their inability to progress beyond learning

to read also constitute one of the factors that shape their lack of reading for comprehension skills.

6.3 Significance and implications of the study

The significant of this study lies in its aim to add the rural dimension which is currently absent, since there isn't much research conducted in rural secondary schools, specifically research that seek to understand learners reading experiences. Contrary to some preconceived ideas that rural learners are not proficient in reading, particularly reading for comprehension, the findings of this study indicated that not all rural learners have inaccurate conceptions of reading for comprehension. In fact, the findings of this study presented some rural learners who possess accurate conceptions of reading for comprehension and approaches to English literature. It is significant for education policy makers to understand that something good is happening in rural schools, rather than to perceive them 'backward'. At the same time, it is also important for policy makers to be aware of the need to conduct further research with teachers and learners in rural schools, to have in-depth information about the nature of teaching and learning reading skills. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to continue to generalise that all rural learners do not have understanding of reading for comprehension or can't read for comprehension when this study has proven that some rural learners can actually read for comprehension.

6.3.1 Implications of the study

The findings of this study further present some of the implications that emerged from this study. The implications include the need for further research on grade 12 learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and their approaches when reading English literature as well as teachers' conceptions of reading and reading for comprehension and the approaches that learners are taught to utilise when they engage with English literature.

6.3.1.1 Further research on learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and their reading approaches when reading English literature

Given that some grade 12 learners in this study consider reading to entail the decoding of text, this indicate that these learners' engagement with reading is not aimed at understanding the meaning of different texts and how they function, but to just read even though they don't understand the information they are reading so that they can pass the test or exam, because

they identified that as important to achieve. The learners' focus on the decoding of text suggest that these learners have not progressed to reading for comprehension which is a concern given that they in grade 12 and they are expected to be reading for comprehension. The evident lack of reading for comprehension skills from these grade 12 learners correlates with Bharuthram's (2012) argument that there are some students who enter the higher institutions of learning with lack of comprehension skills and not adequately prepared to read independently by the grade 12 teachers. Thus, it is important to replicate this study with the other grade 12 learners in different areas and provinces in order to establish the magnitude of the lack of reading comprehension skills amongst the grade 12 learners. The extension of this study into other areas and provinces might further enable the study to identify some measures to address the problem of the learners' lack of reading comprehension.

6.3.1.2 Research on teachers' conceptions of reading for comprehension and the approaches that learners are taught to utilise when they engage with English literature

Although the study did not focus on teachers, however this study identified that the approaches that the teachers use to teach reading is likely to influence conceptions that the learners have about reading for comprehension, particularly since reading is a social mediated process which is influenced by the learner's complex socio-cultural factors which include including learner's social interaction with more knowledgeable other such as the teacher. Given that majority of Black African teachers were undertrained for different subjects in teachers' training colleges, especially English teachers in rural and farm schools (Mbatha, 2014). This suggests that inappropriate teaching might be one of the contributors to the evidenced grade 12 learners' under-preparedness to read independently and their lack of comprehension skills. Hence, the need to conduct the study that explores teachers' conceptions of reading for comprehension and the approaches that learners are taught utilise when they engage with English literature. Such a study might reveal the source of evident problem of lack of reading for comprehension amongst learners.

6.4 Limitations of the study

Given that the study was conducted to fulfil the requirements of the Masters degree, the study was therefore confronted with some limitations. The fact that the study was located in another province imposed some limitations on this study, because the distance between Acornhoek, in

Mpumalanga Province and Johannesburg confined the study into three weeks of data collection due to the limited budget that was available to finance the collection of data. The confinement with the data collection period further limited the study into a smaller sample size, as the study could not afford to spend more time on the field in order to conduct more interviews and classroom observations. Other limitations were experienced during data collection due to the language barrier that existed between the researcher and the participants of the study, specifically the learners who spoke Tsonga and Northern Sotho as their home language which necessitated that the interviews be conducted in English despite the fact that some of the learners struggle with it. This caused some of the learners to provide incomplete and ambiguous responses as well as the responses that did not necessarily answer the research questions. The fact that the study was located in providence made it impossible for me to travel back to Mpumalanga to verify some of the responses with the participants.

6.5 Recommendations

Given the limitations of the study discussed above, it is therefore recommended that the findings of this study be validated through a larger and a representative sample size that includes learners from other rural areas in other provinces as well as teachers. Although the study did not focus on teachers, however it is important for the future study to also examine teaching approaches that the teachers use during English literature lessons. If decoding is popular in South African schools, it possibly means that teachers might have challenges with teaching reading for comprehension of text.

Future research will also be required to ensure that the scope of the research is increased in order to allow for more interviews and classroom observations. Mostly importantly, the future research will also need to enable the study to explore other aspects as well, including the rigorous exploration of the factors that shape the learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension which could be achieved in the current study given its limited scope. The other recommendation pertains to the learners' approach(es) when reading English literature. If the learners' approaches to English literature vary depending on the genre of literature that they engage with, therefore it is recommended that the genre of literature that is done at schools be standardised in order to provide learners with equal opportunities to develop the skills that are prescribed in the curriculum statement.

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Appendix 1

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FOR DR T. NKAMBULE



education
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Building No. 5, Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Mpumalanga Province
Private Bag X11041, Mbombela, 1206.
Tel: 013 766 5552/5115, Toll Free Line: 0800 253 119

Letso la Tsefundo, Umjango wa Fungo

Departement van Onderwys

Ntsewiso ya Dyondzo

Enquiries: A.H. Baloyi
Tel: (013) 766 5476

Dr T. Nkambule
2307 Oasis Security Estate
Cnr Pyp Avenue and Orange rivier Drive
Kempton Park West
1619

RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: DR T. NKAMBULE

Your application to conduct research was received on 25 February 2015. The title of your study is: "Conditions of teaching and learning that facilitate and/or constrain learning in rural high Schools." The research objectives, significance and overall design of your study give an impression that the outcomes of the study will be useful and valuable in improving teaching and learning in rural schools. Your request is approved subject to you observing the content of the departmental research manual which is attached. You are required to discuss with the principals of the sampled schools regarding the approach to your observation and data collection as no disruption of tuition will be allowed. You are also requested to adhere to your University's research ethics as spelled out in your research ethics document.

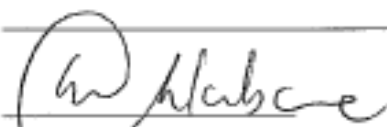
In terms of the attached manual (2.2. bullet number 4 & 6) data or any research activity can only be conducted after school hours as per appointment. You are also requested to share your findings with the department so that we may consider implementing your findings if that will be in the best interest of the department.



APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FOR DR T. NKAMBULE

For more information kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5476 or a.baloyi@education.mpu.gov.za. The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.

APPROVED/NOTAPPROVED:



**MRS MOE MHLABANE
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT**

07/03/15
DATE



Appendix 2

Wits School of Education

27 St Andrews Road, Parktown, Johannesburg, 2193 Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, South Africa
Tel: +27 11 717-3064 Fax: +27 11 717-3100 E-mail: enquiries@educ.wits.ac.za Website:
www.wits.ac.za



25 March 2015

Protocol Number: 2015ECE006S

Dear Thabisile Nkambule

Application for Ethics Clearance:

Thank you very much for your ethics application. The Ethics Committee in Education of the Faculty of Humanities, acting on behalf of the Senate, has considered your application for ethics clearance for your proposal entitled:

Conditions of teaching and learning that facilitate and/or constrain learning in rural high Schools

The committee recently met and I am pleased to inform you that clearance was granted. However, there were a few small issues which the committee would appreciate you attending too before embarking on your research.

The following comments were made:

- Please correct small errors on the letter to the principal, paragraph 4: 'establish with' not 'established as'. Check wording.
- Information sheet to parents – adapt the letter as many parents will not be able to understand what they are being invited to consent to. They might not know what semi – structured interviews are. Take their social and educational circumstances into consideration.
- Participants need to know why audio and videotaping is necessary.
- They also need to know what the end-uses of data are.
- How will a child whose parents have not agreed to participation, be able to remain unobservable and not audio or videotaped in the classroom? Clarity is needed here.
- Paragraph 4 also needs to read: 'I have chosen your child' not 'I have chosen your child's class'.
- 'Interviews with teachers' not 'teachers' interviews'.
- Research question 12 – 'Can you describe how your learners participate ...' not 'Can you please explain'.
- Research question 14 - exists not exist
- Parental involvement, research question 4: 'Would you please say more about...

rather than 'Can you please talk....'.

- Parents focus group discussion questions 7, 8 and 9: Clarity that there are conditions surrounding teaching and learning. Question 2: exists not exist
- Parents' participation (p4) and parents' involvement (p5): change to parental participation and parental involvement.

Please use the above protocol number in all correspondence to the relevant research parties (schools, parents, learners etc.) and include it in your research report or project on the title page.

All the best with your research project.

Yours sincerely,



Wits School of Education

011 717-3416

Appendix 3

Wits School of Education



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13 March 2017

Student Number: 483387

Protocol Number: 2016ECE050M

Dear Nonhlanhla Kunene

Application for ethics clearance: Master of Education

Thank you very much for your ethics application. The Ethics Committee in Education of the Faculty of Humanities, acting on behalf of the Senate, has considered your application for ethics clearance for your proposal entitled:

Exploring grade 12 rural learners' conception of reading for comprehension and their reading approach of English literature in Acornhoek schools, Mpumalanga Province

The committee recently met and I am pleased to inform you that clearance was granted.

Please use the above protocol number in all correspondence to the relevant research parties (schools, parents, learners etc.) and include it in your research report or project on the title page.

The Protocol Number above should be submitted to the Graduate Studies in Education Committee upon submission of your final research report.

All the best with your research project.

Yours sincerely,

M Mabele

Appendix 4

Information Sheet for Learners

01 August 2016

Dear Learner,

My name is Nonhlanhla Kunene. I am a student at Wits University, studying towards the Masters degree in Education.

I would like to invite you to participate in the research study that I am conducting as part of my degree requirements. The purpose of this research is to explore grade 12 rural learners' conception of reading for comprehension and their approach when reading English literature in Acornhoek schools, Mpumalanga Province. It further seeks to understand the factors that shape learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and choice of particular approach(es) when reading English Literature. This research is also part of the larger project that is led by my research supervisor, Dr Thabisile Nkambule and it is aimed at studying the conditions of teaching and learning that facilitate and/or constrain learning in rural high schools.

This research involves learners' semi-structured interviews and classroom observations from secondary schools in Mpumalanga, Acornhoek Municipality. These schools have been chosen based on the existing relationship between the schools and Wits School of Education. Therefore, I would like to request your participation in this research study and invite you to an interview, which will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

However, I would also like to advise you that both the interviews and the classroom observations will be recorded to ensure that the information from interviews and classroom observations is accurately captured without any missing information. The interviews will be recorded through audiotape whilst the classroom observations will be recorded through video recording. Although the interviews and classroom observations will be recorded but I would like to assure you that your participation will be kept confidential and anonymous. For instance, in the video footage your face will be blurred or pixelated in order to protect your identity. Your name and surname will also not be used in the recorded interviews. Please also note that the information gathered through the interviews and classroom observations will be kept in a secured laptop protected by a password, and will be kept for a period of 5 years upon which it will be destroyed. In addition, I would also like to advise you that your participation in the study is voluntary, and that you will be able to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. Your parents have also been given an information sheet and consent form, considering that you are still under your parents' guidance according to the law.

I thank you for your help and request you to let me know if you need any additional information.

Yours sincerely,

Nonhlanhla Kunene

14 Ambassador Park, Northriding

Email: NonhlanhlaK@vodamail.co.za

Cell: 0829084850

Appendix 5

LEARNER CONSENT FORM

Research Study: Exploring grade 12 rural learners' conception of reading for comprehension and their reading approach(es) of English literature in Acornhoek schools, Mpumalanga Province

Name of Participant:

I, _____ agree to take part in the above study. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

I have been assured that my participation will remain confidential YES/NO

I have been assured that my identity will be kept anonymous YES/NO

Signature

Date

Appendix 6

Information Sheet for Parents

01 August 2016

Dear Parent

My name is Nonhlanhla Kunene and I am a student at Wits School of Education, studying towards the Masters degree in Education.

I am doing research to explore grade 12 rural learners' conception of reading for comprehension and reading approach(es) when reading English literature in Acornhoek schools, Mpumalanga Province

The purpose of this research is to explore grade 12 rural learners' conception of reading for comprehension and their approach when reading English literature in Acornhoek schools, Mpumalanga Province. It further seeks to understand the factors that shape learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and choice of particular approach(es) when reading English Literature. This research is also part of the larger project that is led by my research supervisor, Dr Thabisile Nkambule and it is aimed at studying the conditions of teaching and learning that facilitate and/or constrain learning in rural high schools.

The reason for choosing your child is because of recommendation by the teacher. I was wondering whether you would mind if I invite your child to participate in this research study by attending an interview, which will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Your child will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way, and will be reassured that s/he can withdraw her/his permission at any time during this project without any penalty. The only foreseeable risks would be that your child might come home later than his/her usual time because s/he might need to stay after school to attend the interview. I would like to apologize in advance for the inconvenience of coming home late, due to the interview. I would also like to bring to your attention that your child will not be paid for this study.

Your child's name and identity will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. His/her individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study. Participation in the study is voluntary, and your child can withdraw at any time without prejudice. I further assure you that your child's participation will be kept confidential and anonymous. The information gathered through this interview will be kept in a secured laptop protected by a password, and will be kept for a period of 5 years upon which it will be destroyed.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Nonhlanhla Kunene

14 Ambassador Park, Northriding

Email: NonhlanhlaK@vodamail.co.za

Cell: 0829084850

Appendix 7

Parent's Consent Form

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to allow your child to participate in the research project is about: Exploring grade 12 rural learners' conception of reading for comprehension and their approach(es) when reading English literature in Acornhoek schools, Mpumalanga Province.

I, _____ the parent of _____

Permission for questionnaire/test

I agree my child may be fill in a questionnaire for this study

YES/NO

Informed Consent

I understand that:

- my child's name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- he/she does not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- all the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Sign _____ Date _____

Appendix 8

Information Sheet for Teachers

01 August 2016

Dear Teacher,

My name is Nonhlanhla Kunene. I'm student at Wits University, studying towards Masters degree in Education. I am doing research to explore grade 12 rural learners' conception of reading for comprehension and reading approach(es) when reading English literature in Acornhoek schools, Mpumalanga Province

The purpose of this research is to explore grade 12 rural learners' conception of reading for comprehension and their approach when reading English literature in Acornhoek schools, Mpumalanga Province. It further seeks to understand the factors that shape learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and choice of particular approach(es) when reading English Literature. This research is also part of the larger project that is led by my research supervisor, Dr Thabisile Nkambule and it is aimed at studying the conditions of teaching and learning that facilitate and/or constrain learning in rural high schools

This research involves the interviews and classroom observations with grade 12 English First Additional Language from secondary schools Mpumalanga, Acornhoek Municipality. These schools have been chosen based on the existing relationship between the schools and Wits University. Thus, I would like to request your permission to observe learners during your English literature lessons. I would also like to advise you that the classroom observations will be video recorded to ensure all the information is captured so that nothing is missed, this will be done in line with the ethics protocols. I also want to assure you that given that the focus of the study is on learners and not teachers, you will not be recorded should you not be comfortable with being video recorded. If you don't want to be video recorded, to ensure that the video camera only focuses on the learners, I request that participants sit in one row during your lessons.

If you choose to participate in the study, it is voluntary and you will be able to withdraw at any time without prejudice. I further wish to assure you that your participation will be kept confidential and anonymous. The information gathered through this classroom observations will be kept in a secured laptop protected by a password for a period of 5 years upon which it will be destroyed.

I further wish to thank you for your help and request you to let me know if you need any additional information.

Yours sincerely,

Nonhlanhla Kunene

14 Ambassador Park, Northriding

Email: NonhlanhlaK@vodamail.co.za

Cell: 0829084850

Appendix 9

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

Research Study: Exploring grade 12 rural learners' conception of reading for comprehension and their reading approach(es) of English literature in Acornhoek schools, Mpumalanga Province.

Name of Respondent:

I, _____ agree to take part in the above study. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice.

Classroom Observation and Video Recording

I have read and understood the information about the research study YES/NO

I agree to participate in the classroom observation YES/NO

I give permission for the use of video recording during the classroom observation YES/NO

Confidentiality and Anonymity

I have been assured that my participation will remain confidential YES/NO

I have been assured that my identity will be kept anonymous YES/NO

Signature

Date

Appendix 10

Information Sheet for School Principal

01 August 2016

Dear Teacher,

My name is Nonhlanhla Kunene. I'm student at Wits University, studying towards Masters degree in Education. I am doing research to explore grade 12 rural learners' conception of reading for comprehension and reading approach(es) when reading English literature in Acornhoek schools, Mpumalanga Province

The purpose of this research is to explore grade 12 rural learners' conception of reading for comprehension and their approach when reading English literature in Acornhoek schools, Mpumalanga Province. It further seeks to understand the factors that shape learners' conceptions of reading for comprehension and choice of particular approach(es) when reading English Literature. This research is also part of the larger project that is led by my research supervisor, Dr Thabisile Nkambule and it is aimed at studying the conditions of teaching and learning that facilitate and/or constrain learning in rural high schools

This research involves the interviews and classroom observations with grade 12 English First Additional Language from secondary schools Mpumalanga, Acornhoek Municipality. I would also like to advise you that the interviews and classroom observations will be recorded to ensure all the information is captured without any missing information and this will be done in line with the ethics protocols. The reason I have chosen your school is based on the existing relationship between your school and Wits University. Therefore, I am inviting your school to participate in this research. The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their participation at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the school will be kept confidential and anonymous at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data gathered through the interviews and classroom observations will be kept in a secured laptop protected by a password for a period of 5 years upon which it will be destroyed.

I further wish to thank you for your help and to request you to let me know if you need any additional information.

Yours sincerely,

Nonhlanhla Kunene

14 Ambassador Park, Northriding

Email: NonhlanhlaK@vodamail.co.za

Cell: 0829084850

Appendix 11

Interview Guide

Introduction Questions

1. Do you enjoy reading?
2. If yes, what do you enjoy reading the most? If no, why not?
2a) Tell me briefly how do you read the (Magazine)
3. What's your favourite subject at school?, Why?

Main Questions

4. Do you think reading is important?, Why
5. What is reading?
6. What is your understanding of 'learning to read'?
7. What is 'reading to learn'?
8. Do you think there is difference between learning to read and reading to learn? If so, how?
9. How did you read in previous grades and how do you read in English literature now?
9.1 Have you been taught how to read English literature
10. Do you have a reader? (book)
11. Given the response of the two "learning to read" and "reading to learn" which one do you use when reading in English literature?
12. When reading English literature (short stories or poetry), how do you normally engage with it?
13. Given what you have said above, do you find English Literature easy or difficult? Which section (poetry or short stories) and Why?
14. Let's talk about your English literature, do you find it easy or difficult? And why?
15. Which section of the English subject do you enjoy the most?
16. Which section of the English subject do you find most difficult

Appendix 12

School A - HPSH010

Nonhlanhla (N): Ok, uh, time now is, um, twenty to four. I am at School A doing a learner interview. I've got my first learner interview for School A. Ok. Welcome sisi, thank you very much for coming.

Interviewee 10 (I 10): It's a pleasure.

N: Ok, all right, I think we're gonna have a problem, I'll have to close to this door.

I 10: Ok, it's fine

N: *[closes the door]* Ok. Um, if you don't mind I just need you to speak up a little bit so that I can pick up your voice on the recorder.

I 10: Ok

N: And the reason I'm recording you is because I can't write fast enough

I 10: Ok

N: So this is like recording our interview, then later on I can write. Ok? All right, relax.

I 10: I'm relaxed, it's fine.

N: Ok. Just as an introduction tell me, do you enjoy reading?

I 10: I do enjoy reading. Mostly I enjoy magazines, newspapers and just reading for fun – even my own textbooks – so ja, I enjoy reading.

N: That's lovely. And then tell me when you read, ok, when you do reading that you enjoy, where, how and where do you do the reading? You know, just ?

I 10: Ok

N: When you're reading your magazines?

I 10: Um, my magazines, obviously at home in my room. Um, when I have free time – any time I have free I just read. Then I read my textbooks during tests, even just to refresh my mind I just read my textbooks. So I just read most of the time.

N: Ok, lovely. And then, when you read the magazine, ok, do you read it differently from when you read your, your textbooks or your, the other things?

I 10: Yes, because magazines are mostly based on celebrities and so, and textbooks are studying the things you're doing. So ja, they are different from each other.

N: Eh hê. So is your reading engagement or your reading approach different?

I 10: Yeah, the approach different.

N: How different?

I 10: Because when I read magazines I only read for fun, but textbooks it's serious stuff – tests, exams – stuff like that.

N: Ok, ok, I hear you. And then, um, explain to me when you're reading a magazine, the background, you know, compared to... the background or the environment compared to when you're reading your textbook?

02:47

I 10: The same environment, but it's kind of different because sometimes I read my magazine, um, as a whole, like with my mom and stuff, but textbooks I'm alone – it's me and my textbooks only.

N: Ok. All right, that's lovely. And then what's your favourite subject here at school?

I 10: My favourite subject? I'd say it's Life Science.

N: Mmm. Ok.

I 10: Yes

N: Why Life Sciences?

I 10: I don't know. Most of us, like grade 12s, ay as a whole we enjoy Life Science because it's practical, it's what happens around us, everything. So I think it is Life Science, yes.

N: Mmm. Ok, that's good. And then from your, from your opinion, ok, your point of view, do you think reading is important?

I 10: Yes it is important because if you don't read then what else can you do? What will you write? It's kind of like the basic, um, the basic thing of schooling it's reading and learning – it's important. Yes.

N: Mmm. Ok. And then, um, what do you think... Uh, if reading is important, ok, what, what base(?) does reading give you as a, as a, as a learner?

I 10: Reading gives you knowledge, marks (of course)

N: *[chuckles]*

I 10: Like yes, because if you study, it's the more you understand things and the different concepts of things, so it is important.

N: Ok. Explain something to me. I know this question is something that we take for granted, you know, but if someone asks you, 'What is reading?' what would you say?

I 10: *[chuckles]* Reading!

N: What is reading? Like suppose a, a small, a baby comes and asks you, 'Tell me what is reading? Explain to me what it is, what you do?'

I 10: From my own perspective?

N: Just your own... just your own ?

I 10: I think reading is just taking something just for fun or even for studying just to read, go through it, understand it, and, um, scan it, visualise it – that's reading for me.

N: Mmm

I 10: Yes

N: Ok. And then, um, have you ever heard... Ok, what do you understand by the term 'learning to read'?

I 10: Learning to read?

N: Mmm

I 10: As I

N: Learning to read

I 10: to read.

N: Mmm

I 10: Learning to read I believe it's when someone is taught how to, um, read certain stuff that, that someone cannot pronounce. Well, I think that's learning to read.

N: Mmm

I 10: Yes

N: Like maybe give me an example?

I 10: Like different languages. Um, it's when I can, I'm good in Sotho but not in Venda, so I'm taught how to read Venda.

N: Ok

I 10: Yes

N: All right. And then, um, what do you understand by the term 'Reading to learn'?

I 10: Reading to learn?

N: Yes

I 10: It's kinda like studying. You read in order to understand, in order to learn something new. Even in magazines you are reading to benefit something you have not yet experienced. You are learning something. Yes, that's my term of learning, I mean, reading to learn.

N: Ok

I 10: Yes

N: All right. And then in your opinion, ok, learning to read and reading to learn, are they different?

06:28

I 10: Yes, they are different because when you... Uh, reading to learn you are basically reading to learn something. You are determined to learn something. When you're just learning to read, you're just practising how to read. It's different from reading to learn, yes I think that.

N: Ok. Ok. Give me another example just to give fresh ? to, to, just so that I understand the difference

I 10: Ok

N: a little bit more.

I 10: Reading to learn it's like holding my Life Science textbook - I'm reading in order to learn something from that. Then learning to read is when I am taught something, like a different language,

I'm taught how to read a certain language. Like for instance I said Venda, so I'm taught how to read it.

N: Ok

I 10: Yes

N: Ok. And then of the two, ok, you do English literature here at school you do your poem, you do short stories and you do drama, né?

I 10: Drama?

N: Ok, you do short stories

I 10: Yes I do

N: which falls under English literature

I 10: Mmm

N: Ok. Which one, which of these two terms do you use when you are either at home or here at school engaging or working with English literature? Do you use learning to read or you use reading to learn?

I 10: I kind of use both of them.

N: At the same time?

I 10: Yes

N: Ok

I 10: I read to learn something new, then I learn to read. I'm understanding different, I mean different – how can I say it – different... different, ? different terms in English. Yes, I'm learning different terms.

N: Eh

I 10: I'm learning them by reading them and understanding them more, yes.

N: Ok. Ok ? And then I want to just draw your knowledge back to your previous grades now, ok. So maybe grade, from grade 8, grade 9 or primary school – ok, try and think a little bit back, ok. How did you read in your previous grade, and how do you read English literature now? Ok, so in previous grades like your other grades when you used to read English literature, whether it was a poem or whether it was short stories, compared to how you're reading it now in grade 12 English literature, is there a difference? Has it changed?

I 10: Yes, it has changed because they're... It's different because the pronunciation of words is more different to me now than before when I was young. I can now pronounce words more clearer than before. So I think it's different. And the previous grades we were not learning this basic – I mean not basic – this tough English. Like now in grade 12 it's more different than the previous grades so it's, ja, I think it's different.

N: Mmm. And then apart from the, the intensity of English as a language, and apart from the difficulty in the words and the pronunciation, how else was the literature in primary school or grade 8 engagement different from now? Like the kind of work that maybe you were doing then with the...

10:11

I 10: Oh, ok. The kind of work that that

N: Or, or, or your engagement with the work? You know, how, how was English literature taught then; how is English literature taught now? Or the value or the benefits then; this is the value and the benefit now?

I 10: Ok. Like in the primary section

N: Yes

I 10: it was not much recognised. English it's either you just knew 'My name is Charlotte' – that's all, that was it, but now it's more complex. Like you, you, like basically you read stuff like short stories; back then we did not have short stories, it was just basic English. Like knowing your name for instance in English you just say, 'My name is this' that's only, but now you have to know poems, you have to know speeches, you have to know short stories and how to answer certain questions, well when questioned.

N: Eh hê. And then, let's do that, uh, this comparison again, grade 12 and grade 8. So let's compare English literature in grade 8 and compare English literature in grade 12. Do you feel that there's a difference? Do you feel that it has changed how you guys used to do English literature, that was grade 8 and this is grade 12?

I 10: Yes, it has changed a lot actually because in grade 12 now, like I said, short stories, more basic, I mean, complex things rather than in grade 8, because grade 8 was just simple English, but I don't know now have they changed anything? I don't know.

N: They have(?).

I 10: But when I was still in grade 8 it was easy things like just things you can know even if you just came from home and said, 'We're writing an English test' you just take your pen and just write anything. But in grade 12 there's nothing like that. You must sit down, you must study, you must know figures of speech – things like that. Yes. So it has changed really.

N: And, um, you mentioned the word 'complex' before, that it is now complex

I 10: Yes

N: Compared to... Uh, explain to me where's the complexity or where ?

12:37

I 10: Complexity is more of the tasks we are given. It's different from back then. Now it's things like, it's not, no longer like easy things like just go and write about yourself in English. No, now it's an essay, it's speeches, it's poems. You can even write... You must know a poem, you must learn how to present a poem, a speech in front of people – things like that.

N: Mmm

I 10: Yes

N: But I'm trying to draw a specific difference in, in either short story or poetry or English literature specifically apart from the, the language, or the comprehension and the speeches because I just want to try and understand, um, the difference in your poems and short stories in grade 8 and the poems and short stories in grade 12, you know. Just comparing apples with apples, not just at this point in time it was English as a whole, just a separate section of English subject.

I 10: All right. Ok.

N: Eh hê

I 10: In grade 8 can I say it was, I mean in grade 12 can I say it has now deep English, like that English that needs you to check the dictionary. It's not just simple English we are used to, but in grade 8, um, it's simple English, you don't need to go check something because you already know the words, so compared to grade 12, yes.

N: Ok, all right. No, that's fine. Thanks. Thank you. And then, um, have you ever been taught to read English literature? Were you taught by someone or the teacher to read short stories, to read poetry, or how to engage or approach or work with them?

I 10: I'm not taught. Actually I don't rely mostly on people, I teach myself. It's either I teach myself or I ask my father, that's it, if I don't understand something because, um, I think I'm kind of shy asking people on helping me on some of the things we are doing, so it's either I teach myself or ask my father.

N: Ok

I 10: Yes

N: But, but in terms of the English literature that you guys do here at school, um, was, were you taught at a specific grade or by a specific teacher in terms of saying. 'Ok, this is literature, this is how we read poetry, this is how we read a short story, this is how we work with ?, these are the things to look for'?

I 10: Yes

N: Uh huh. So you were taught here at school?

I 10: Yes, I think it's grade 10 or 11, yes.

N: Uh huh. Uh huh. Do you still remember how, what are the things that they said you need to do when you work with either poetry or a short story?

I 10: They just, mostly in poetry they indicated that there are different types of poems that we have. For instance sonnet, then, um, on how to identify certain poems, even if it's not a sonnet, the rhyming words at the end of the poem – things like that.

N: Ok, all right

I 10: Mmm

N: I hear you. You mentioned that you sometimes ask your father at home. Can I ask you, what work does your father do?

I 10: He's also a teacher, but not an English teacher.

N: All right. Ok. All right. And when you read short stories or poetry at school, do you have your own book that you use to read either poetry or, or short stories from?

I 10: Like distributed from the school?

N: Ja.

I 10: Yes, we all have.

N: The book that you use here at school and then you take home to be able to use it at home as well?

I 10: Yes, we are all provided with a book.

N: Ok, that's lovely. All right. Ok. Um, when you read... When you guys are reading short stories, um, guys are reading short stories or poetry here at school, how do you normally engage with it? Or how do you work with it, you know? Is there a specific process or method that you use that, ok, if I do a poem ok I start by this – step by step. Is there something like that?

17:16

I 10: We, in the class?

N: Even you. Even in the class

I 10: Ok

N: Or even you

I 10: Just as a whole like the whole class when ma'am is around, if we start a poem or a short story we basically just help each learner to read, then we explain, we give our different views on what we have read and what we have gone through. So that's the basic method we are using.

N: Ok. And then if you've got, you're given a poem and then it's now a test, ok, what do you do? Like you, you, I think before you get into the test, or before you get into the exam and you are that, you expect that there'll be, there might be a poem there, and you've already known(?) how are you going to do it, né?

I 10: Mmm

N: How are you going to approach or work with that poem? I'm interested in that process.

I 10: Poems?

N: Ja, let's do a poem.

I 10: Poem. Ok. Um

N: Are you doing poems in grade 12?

I 10: Not yet

N: Not yet?

I 10: We are mostly doing short stories, we have not started.

N: Ok, let's, let's do a short story, ok? And then let's not do a poem, ok?

I 10: Ok

N: Let's do a short story, stuff that you're working with. Assuming I'm in grade 12, ok, I've just come to Maphutha Ditshabe and where I've come from didn't do short stories, so now I'm preparing for a test or an exam on short stories. I really have no clue – I'd like you to teach me.

18:51

I 10: It's basically is

N: What are the things that I must do? What are the things I must learn?

I 10: Ok

N: What are the things that I must make sure, look out for the things that you know that the teacher will say to you, 'Make sure for short stories you know this, this, this thing for the test and the exam.' What are those things?

I 10: Ok, in the short stories it's very important to know the main character, yes, of the story and who is actually telling us this story. The narrator. Um, there are different short stories and different concepts we cover in short stories, so it's either... We were doing a short story based(?) "Luncheon", so it's basically talking about lunch. If we have that kind of short story you must know what they had for dinner, who that person met with, the kind of environment they were in – things like that. Basic things. And obviously the place they were at. Those are the most, um, things you must look for. And how much they spent on the food.

N: Ok, all right

I 10: Yes

N: Ok, that's good. And then, um, do you think, um, English literature, to engage with short stories like that or doing poems (if you do poems) or other short stories, do you think it teaches you any skills?

I 10: Yes

N: Like?

I 10: It teaches me on my English

N: Eh hê

I 10: How to look at different views of people, basically on short stories. The basic(?), how people... Um, it can, it can even encourage people to even become writers because you can be motivated by the things people are doing, poems. People can become poets, they can be able to address people in front of the crowd. So it's, ja.

N: Ok. All right. And then, given what you said then, eh, do you find English literature – ok, whether it's short stories or whether it's poems – do you find it easy or difficult?

I 10: A bit of both.

N: *[laughs]*

I 10: Yes because

N: Then explain?

I 10: Short stories, you can read it, you can understand it, you can know everything in it but poems, it's different because if you don't know how the poem is, like, um, what is it all about, then obviously you will not understand anything. So it is important to ask, to find help on the poem, mostly, and to understand it more. So yeah, it's easy and difficult at the same time.

N: Mmm. Ok. Now let's talk about just English now as a subject, the whole subject, you know, including now not just literature but including other papers like your creative writing and your language and your comprehension. Ok, which section of the English subject do you enjoy the most?

22:06

I 10: I think, um, should I say is it essay? Is it... What is it called?

N: No, there is, the, the

I 10: Business(?)

N: Where you writing the letters?

I 10: Yes

N: And the invites and all those things?

I 10: Mmm

N: Is that creative writing? They call it creative writing?

I 10: Yes, it's creative writing.

N: Eh

I 10: I enjoy it the most.

N: Why?

I 10: Because I'm able to express my views, my different... Basically in an essay you get to write what you think and your, everything you know, um, everything you want to express on the paper you are able to do that. So I enjoy it the most.

N: Wow! And then which section do you find most difficult of the, of the different sections of English as a subject?

I 10: It's, um, literature.

N: Ok

I 10: And a little bit of comprehension.

N: *[laughs]*

I 10: Mostly the last questions. The first you just read, read and answer

N: Mmm

I 10: But the last they just need knowledge – basic knowledge. So yeah, a little bit of both.

N: Mmm. So English comprehension too?

I 10: Yes. It's... What can I say? Advertisements

N: Mmm

I 10: Yes. If you don't understand them then everything is wrong, from the first answer to the last one. So yes.

N: But they normally say that with the English comprehension, if you read the passage your answers will be in the passage, so

I 10: Mmm yes, but it's comprehension, the passage, then there is the advertisement. There's an advertisement. Like they can bring you a weird thing, strange looking thing and then they say: Interpret what is said on that.

N: Eh hê

I 10: Yes. So it can be difficult.

N: Ok, I hear you. And then generally what are you, what's your English mark? Like what percentage do, do you normally get for English? Like what did you get for last term?

I 10: Last term I think it was 83%.

N: Wow! Wow! Wow! Wow! We've come to the end of our interview. Obviously in the interest of time we had to keep it short so that you can go home. You're supposed to home at 4, and I think the bell has gone already.

I 10: But we are supposed to remain. Yes, we are going to be taught extra lessons.

N: Where? *[laughs]* All right. This is the end of our interview. Thank you very much for your time.

[End of recording]

Appendix 13

Themes	Sub-Themes
Learners' perception of the importance of reading	
Learners' conceptions of reading	Reading as a process of decoding the text
	Reading as a process of understanding the text
Factors that shape learners' conception of reading for comprehension	
Learners' approaches when reading English literature	Text-based approach
	Interactive approach