RESEARCH REPORT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS IN EDUCATION

(COURSEWORK)

TEACHING AND ASSESSING READING TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE COSC ENGLISH EXAMINATION IN SELECTED LESOTHO HIGH SCHOOLS

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters in Education in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University, nor has it been prepared under the aegis or with the assistance of any other body or organization or person outside the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

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Abstract

The comprehension of English plays a significant role in Lesotho's education system, as it determines students' access into tertiary studies. Teachers of English therefore have an important role to play in developing students' English reading comprehension skills. The COSC examinations provide a formal assessment of reading comprehension in English. This study investigates how Lesotho English teachers teach and assess reading comprehension to meet the requirements of the COSC English examination in six selected Lesotho high schools. Data was collected through interviews and the reading comprehension tasks that the six teachers devised for COSC students. They also drew marking memoranda for the tasks. Five selected COSC English past question papers were also analysed against the tasks devised by teachers. The results indicated that all the six teachers did not teach effective reading strategies to students. Although they asked questions of high instruction in the tasks, the data collected also reflected that teachers did not teach students to read as text users nor text analysts. This also was the case with the five selected COSC past question papers that were analysed. Both the COSC questions and the teachers asked questions that tested readers' roles as text participants. Recommendations in this study are that another research be made on teaching English as a subject which will encompass other elements of English teaching which were not within the scope of this research report.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract 3

List of appendices.....6

List of abbreviations.....7

Introduction.....8

Rationale.....10

Teaching reading comprehension and reading assessment.....12

Aim.....23

Research questions.....24

Literature review and Theoretical framework.....26

Research design and methodology.....49

Methods of data collection.....49

Sampling.....53

Ethical issues.....54

Limitations of the study.....55

Data analysis and interpretations.....58

Discussions and conclusion.....104

Appendix A.....111

Appendix B.....112

Appendix C.....113

Appendices D-I.....130

Appendix I.....134

References.....138

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A…… Questionnaire

Appendix B…… Interview schedule.

Appendix C…… Reading comprehension passage

Appendix D.....Teachers' tasks

Appendix J.....2007 COSC English comprehension

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COSC …….. Cambridge Overseas School Certificate

CIE……..... Cambridge International Examination

ECoL…… Examination Council of Lesotho

JC…….. Junior Certificate

UCLES…….. University Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate

PLSE……. Primary School Leaving Certificate

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Although English is an official language in the kingdom of Lesotho, Southern Africa, the first language of many of the inhabitants of Lesotho is Sesotho (Lesotho Constitution, 1993, chapter 1 section 3.1). Both these languages are used as languages of instruction in the public schooling system, with Sesotho being the medium of instruction used at the start of primary education, from Grade 1 to Grade 4. By Grade 5, students are expected to be sufficiently competent in their use of the English language for it to become the language of learning and teaching. English therefore plays a dual role in the education system of Lesotho, as both the medium of instruction and a subject in the curriculum. Students have to conduct their learning through this language and are even assessed in English. Teachers expect students to understand their instruction and to produce written documents in academic English (Tamara, Villegas & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008:1).

The chairperson of Examination Council of Lesotho (ECoL) in 1995, Thakholi observes that Lesotho students' knowledge of and competence in understanding English language continues to be low despite the prevalence of English within the education system. This suggests that many of the students in Lesotho struggle with the comprehension of English texts, both in learning English as a subject in its own right, and in access to other subjects in the curriculum which are taught through the medium of English. Thakholi further indicated that to prepare students for the examinations, "teachers must be equipped with effective methods of teaching English language" (Setoi, 1996: 112).

However, Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000:93) argue that it is not a simple matter of inappropriate teaching strategies that constrain teachers' ability to mediate English. They argue that the realities of teaching the ex-colonial languages like English in Africa "do not allow for their adequate acquisition". They argue that those languages "often play no meaningful part in the lives of the communities" from which those students come. To them, this unsatisfactory level of proficiency is caused by the fact that the students have almost no exposure to the English language other than within the school classroom.

Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000:93) observe that teachers who function as role models for the students, very often have only a limited proficiency in English themselves (p. 293). In English language teaching, command of the language is central to what teachers will be able to achieve in the classroom and even the students "achievement will fall somewhat short of the target set by teachers in the form of their own skill in the language" (Wilkins, 1974: 53). If teachers have a difficulty in the language, they are "not going to succeed in giving pupils a command of the spoken language" (Wilkins, 1974: 53). More importantly for second language learners, the ability to use language orally in target language is the foundation for reading and writing, because it is in oral language in which grammatical, vocabulary knowledge, and cultural understandings they need are embedded. Without this foundation, second learners' ability to read and write could severely be hampered.

English Language teachers are expected to teach language knowledge and skills as stipulated in the national curriculum, but Setoi (1997:256) claims that teachers differ tremendously in the way they teach the content

depending on their knowledge of the requirements of the examiner. Setoi argues that teachers who have intimate knowledge of the expectations of the COSC examiners are better able to prepare their students for their final examinations.

Therefore teachers have formed English associations where they get assistance from 'their more experienced peers within the schools and outside from the resource centers" and anywhere else where there is useful material that enhance their teaching experiences (Mohapi, 2008:109). Teachers try to help one another in those informal associations with content of various components of the English language, teaching techniques, marking and other issues that they find crucial in the improvement of their way of teaching and the teachers who offer this kind of help are a few teachers who are national markers. However, teaching a student to become proficient in a language involves more than preparing them to cope with passing their examinations.

RATIONALE

It appears that the teaching of English in Lesotho is fraught with difficulties, from English teachers themselves not being sufficiently fluent in the English to be able to mediate learning in and through English; to English being compartmentalized in the students' lives as a language which occurs only at schools; to expectations of the examiner and the added pressure of the central role that English plays in access to tertiary studies. Even teachers who are fluent in English need pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of students' background in order to find appropriate ways to make English as a medium of instruction and a subject, accessible to learners.

Many studies located in the education system of Lesotho concentrate on the performance of the students (Setoi, 2005; Seelen: 2002) and on education assessment (e.g. Chabane & Lefoka, 1992; Sebatane, 2009). This study investigates how teachers engage with the demands of the reading comprehension section of the COSC examination. Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000: 308) argue that much of second language teaching in Africa aims primarily at "correctness" in language usage. They claim that a lot of teaching is geared towards teaching mastery of grammatical rules rather than "developing communicative ability". They also claim that teachers wrongly assume that students will be able to use rules they learned in their communication.

They have also observed that this happens to the reading lessons as little is done to demonstrate to students, ways of dealing with textual information that will enable them to adequately understand texts and respond appropriately to given questions, yet for many students explicit teaching of reading strategies is required (McKay 2006:220). Teachers 'read to students, listen to students reading and encourage students to read on their own', however they 'do not teach reading' hence too many students do not make satisfactory progress in reading (Dean 2003: 30). The educational system as a whole will therefore be enriched by deeper understanding of how English teachers in Lesotho understand, measure and design reading comprehension tasks that they consider being of high intellectual quality.

Given the importance of comprehension of English to the success of students in the Lesotho education system, the targeted teaching of comprehension skills is an area that needs further investigation. While this study acknowledges from the outset that all teachers, regardless of their subject are responsible for developing English comprehension, the English teachers have a particular contribution to make, which is to teach reading comprehension. Teaching and assessing reading comprehension will be the focus of this study. First, I will review literature on reading and assessment.

TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION AND READING ASSESSMENT

Reading is an interactive process that goes on between a reader, a text and a context-specific activity (Caskey 2008: 171). Readers 'interact dynamically with the text as she or he tries to elicit meaning' (Alousef 2005: 143). The product of reading is reading comprehension. Comprehension of a reading text is defined by Lumzer (1976) in Anderson as the "willingness and the ability to reflect on what is read". It is a process "of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language".

Thus, comprehension is a "requisite cognitive process for successful reading in academic settings and in life-long learning (Caskey 2008: 171). There are differences in comprehending reading in one's first language and comprehending reading in a second language. In their home language, students usually understands words as they read them, whereas in an additional language, many words may be new and that can hamper the process of reading (Douglas 1998:181). Nevertheless, there are skills

and knowledge that can be transferred across the two languages and new understandings that need to be gained about particular cues in the text to make meaning in the new language (McKay 2006: 220).

SCHEMA THEORY AND SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Reading comprehension can be explained from different theoretical views. McKay (2005: 221) states that from a constructivist view of reading, children "bring their own background and cultural knowledge, schemata" as they read. This information plays a significant role in facilitating reading comprehension. Schema theory is concerned with the way readers match up incoming data from the text with existing mental representations of situations, events or phenomena. It has a great impact on understanding reading comprehension in first and second language (Al-lssa 2006: 44). If a reader's schemata does not resonate with ideas in the text, such a reader, 'will have greater difficulty in reading' than a reader who has similar ideas to the text (McKay, 2005: 221). In addition, readers' schemata can vary greatly, and it is likely that readers can interpret the text differently and gain different meanings from the text. However, teaching reading comprehension aims to enable students to construct an interpretation that is 'closer to the shared understandings of the discourse community in which the written text belongs' (McKay 2006: 224).

Wallace (2003: 22) argues that 'schema changing rather than schema confirming is one of the key principles of reading', and that texts that should be valued are the ones which 'have a schema breaking function, and that which will give readers opportunities to engage critically with texts' (Wallace 2003:22). McKenna and Robinson (1997:24) claim that

when a reader progresses through print, ‘Schemata for the concepts may lead to a new schemata being formed or the existing one being expanded or the existing schemata being changed’ (p. 26).

Teachers thus, have to be ‘sensitive to potential comprehension difficulties which English as Second Language (ESL) readers may encounter with a text’ because of lack of ‘the culture-specific content the text presumes’ (Al-lssa 2006:44). They should give their students reading material that has familiar content that include relevant cultural information in order to minimize reading difficulties (Al-lssa 2006:44). The importance of students’ background knowledge has three main implications: the teacher has to take into account the knowledge in which any written text is based; Secondly, if a reader is not actively using his or her background knowledge, a significant part of the reading process is not taking place; thirdly, teachers should have as their principal objective, the development of problem-solving, creative, interpretive strategies in which the students can exploit knowledge or resources they may have (Al-lssa 2006:45).

Another theory that Caskey (2008: 172) claims to form basis of reading comprehension is the sociocultural theory of language and literacy. This theory according to Vygotsky (1978), ‘hypothesizes that individuals acquire language and literacy through social interactions with more expert peers and adults (Caskey: 172). Through scaffolding and guidance from teachers or knowledgeable classmates or peers, ‘readers can learn to comprehend text, which is beyond their independent knowledge and ability levels’ (Cakey 2008: 172).

METACOGNITION

Metacognition is one of the approaches that can be used to improve comprehension instruction (Caskey 2008: 175). Metacognition enables good readers to identify what they understand and what they do not understand. In a case where they come across what confuses them, e.g. a difficult word, they 'think about which strategies to employ to figure out the meaning of the word' (Robb: 135). This process occurs while students self-monitor themselves while reading. Teachers need to make students understand that 'all readers experience 'clunks' when they 'bump into reading stumbling blocks', so 'fix it strategies' to use at that point 'should be easy and quick to apply' in order that the reader does not disconnect from the text (Robb 2000:135).

METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES

To enable reading comprehension, the teachers should use strategies that will facilitate learning for students. Semantic mapping, which visually displays categories and associations, can be employed prior to reading. It can be 'effective for vocabulary development and increases learners motivation'.

Another strategy is experience-text-relationship (pre-reading, reading, post-reading strategy). It is aimed at discussions connecting what the reader already knows to what he or she will encounter in the text. It has three steps (Alousef 2005: 148): in the experience step, the teacher leads the students' in the discussions on their own knowledge or experiences

that are related to the passage to be read (Alousef, 148). This step is crucial for activating students' schema. The text step, allows students to read short parts of the text (a page or two pages), then the teacher pauses every now and then to ask questions on parts read. The teacher can also correct any misunderstandings students have of the text. The aim is develop students' ability 'in tackling texts by developing their linguistic and schematic knowledge' (Abraham 2002:6). In the final step, the teacher helps students to draw relationships between the content of the text and their outside experience and knowledge. This way the teacher will be guiding students systematically through the cognitive processes related to comprehending a written text (Alousef 2005:149).

Teachers have to encourage students to self-monitor themselves through practising metacognition which take quite some time. This strategy starts with beginning readers and should be practised until students 'can self-monitor and access 'fix it' strategies on their own' (Robb 2000:). When readers have internalized the instructional principles demonstrated and can use them independently, the support can be withdrawn.

READING COMPREHENSION ASSESSMENT

Processes of reading are usually assessed through continuous, formative assessment in the classroom and reading comprehension is generally assessed through both formative and summative assessment (McKay 2005:224). Assessing reading can only be measured through students' actions, speaking or writing. When students are given reading tasks and texts are selected, the familiarity of texts needs to be taken into consideration so that all students can draw on their background knowledge or to ensure that no one is excluded by the specifically

cultural content that they may not know. McKay (p. 230) claims that familiar texts are ‘helpful for formative assessment’, but teachers need to ‘bring out a new unfamiliar book for informal reading assessment’, from time to time. He argues that this, gives teachers a clear picture of how children read without the support of a familiar text.

FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Formative assessment is a ‘classroom-based assessment that can influence daily student success’ (McKay 2005: 253). It evaluates students in the process of ‘forming their competencies and skills with the goal of helping them to continue that growth process’ (Brown 2004: 6). The key to such formation is ‘delivery by the teacher and internalization by the student of appropriate feedback on performance’, with the aim of continuation of learning. On the other hand, summative assessment aims to ‘measure or summarize what a student has grasped’ (Brown 2004: 6). It usually occurs at the end of a course or unit of instruction. McKay (p. 253) observes that it is usually used to ‘describe school success’. It is argued that summative assessment looks back ‘how well a student has accomplished objectives’ yet it does not necessarily paves way to future progress, e.g. final examinations.

It has been found that (Stiggins and Conklin 1992) there is ‘large discrepancies in teachers’ ability to accurately assess students’ consequently, ‘many teachers do not feel comfortable in conducting classroom-based assessments’(McKay 2005: 253).

READING COMPREHENSION ASSESSMENT AND COSC CURRICULUM

The scope of students' reading ability that is to be assessed is usually determined by the curriculum and the theoretical perspectives underpinning that curriculum (McKay 2005: 226). With the COSC English reading comprehension, the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) syllabus stipulates the aims of the reading comprehension examinations as 'developing the ability of candidates to: communicate accurately, effectively and appropriately in speech and in writing; to understand and to respond appropriately and imaginatively to what they read and experience; and to enjoy and appreciate reading texts in the English Language' (English Language Syllabus 1123, 2009:1). Questions that are asked on the provided passage, 'test the candidates' ability to understand the content and argument of the given text and to infer information and meanings from it' (English Language Syllabus 1123, 2009:2). McKay (2005) also points out that although curriculum influences the scope of the reading abilities to be assessed, some teachers still 'reach beyond the curriculum and draw on their professional perspectives to teach and assess reading (p226).

CHARACTERISTICS OF READING ABILITY

McKay (2005) tabulates examples of contributing knowledge and skills in reading comprehension (based on Bachman and Palmer's (1996) model of language knowledge) which teachers can teach and monitor over time in their classrooms.

1. Organizational knowledge

Grammatical knowledge: children need to decode letters and words, and /or recognize words/characters by sight. Their vocabulary knowledge

needs to deepen and broaden. Their syntax needs to increase in accuracy. They need to be able to understand a range of structures.

Textual knowledge: children need to read a broad range of texts, for the range of purposes for which they need to write in the target language. They need to employ textual knowledge to understand the meaning of the text. For example, they need to understand the meaning of conjunctions that join sentences and paragraphs together and be aware of different text structures or genres to predict the purpose and meaning of the text?).

2. Pragmatic knowledge

Functional knowledge: children need to understand the purposes behind the language they read, even when those purposes are not directly stated.

Sociolinguistic knowledge: children need sufficient knowledge and experience of the target language culture to understand the cultural references in the text. Their schemata need to expand through experience in the new culture towards understanding the cultural references in their reading. Children also need to understand when language is appropriate or inappropriate to the context perhaps leading to humour or embarrassment for the story character. They also need to understand humour, the attitudes, beliefs, customs, ideals and values inherent in the text. Children also need to begin to analyse the text, that is, to look for assumptions and biases in the text.

This model presents knowledge that is central to learning and teaching of language.

READING ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

There are reading assessment strategies that teachers can use to assess reading in the classroom. These are some of the strategies that can be used:

ORAL ASSESSMENT

1. Teacher-student reading conference

This strategy involves a teacher listening to reading, asking comprehension questions, analysing errors, and checking on the child's attitude and motivation. The teacher can also check the students reading strategies, ensuring that they are able to predict from the context, sound out unfamiliar words and self-correct themselves. (McKay 2005:233)

2. Oral reading

In this strategy, students read aloud for the teacher, individually or in a group. When oral reading is used as a tool for assessment, skills such as word pronunciation, recognition of punctuation, speed of reading, understanding of meaning (checked through intonation, stress and voice modulation revealing shades of meaning) can be assessed. The task of teachers will then be to ensure that students do not 'word call' or 'bark at print', but read word by word in a meaningful manner.

Context for this study:

In order to obtain the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) which provides access to tertiary education, it is necessary for Lesotho

students to obtain a pass in English as a subject, and pass their examinations in other subjects through the medium of English. COSC candidates normally do seven subjects of which six must be passed so that they can be awarded a certificate. The six subjects must include the English language. Sebatane (1995:5) emphasizes that poor performance in English language leads to poor overall performance in the examination as he points out that "when a candidate fails English language he or she is awarded a General Certificate of Education (GCE) even if s/he obtains an overall aggregate that would otherwise put him or her in the first or second division".

In the final COSC examination, English language has two papers. Paper 1 assesses candidates' ability to write composition. This paper will focus on Paper 2 which assesses candidates' reading comprehension.

COSC English requirements

University Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (UCLES) provides the Basotho people with the COSC examination syllabus, which is designed for students whose first language may not be English and outlines its aims and the objectives (CIE, 2009). The syllabus does not have explicit guidelines regarding what topics or components of English to teach in order to achieve the set objectives.

However the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) stipulates the aims of the reading comprehension examination as "developing the ability of candidates to: communicate accurately, effectively and appropriately in speech and in writing, to understand and respond appropriately and imaginatively to what they read and experience and to

enjoy and appreciate reading texts in the English Language" (English Language Syllabus 1123, 2009:1).

In the reading comprehension (paper 2), candidates are provided with a reading passage of selected prose. It is followed by questions that are intended to "test the candidates ability to understand the content and the argument of the given text and to infer information and meanings from it" (English Language Syllabus 1123, 2009:2).The ability to summarize is also tested in order that candidates demonstrate their ability to reduce the text whilst retaining relevant key points of the text. The details selected should be relevant, well organised, rephrased in their own words and sentence structures and presented in academic style. To do all these, they should be able to read texts appropriately.

The Reading comprehension (COSC Paper 2) aims to test students' ability to:

- Select facts from a simple area of the passage
- Select facts from a more complex area of the passage
- Select key ideas from the passage and express them in their own words
- Make simple deductions from various contexts in the passage
- Rephrase words and expressions from the text (Glover, Rodway, Shirley, Toner, 2000:153).

The assessment objectives from the syllabus require that the students be able to:

- recount personal experience, views and feeling;
- use language to inform and explain;

- show an awareness of how spoken and written communication varies according to situation, purpose and audience;
- read a variety of texts accurately and with confidence; select, retrieve, evaluate and combine information from written texts;
- appreciate the way authors make use of language; employ different forms of writing to suit a range of purposes;
- plan, organise and paragraph using appropriate punctuation; choose a vocabulary which is suited to its purpose and audience,
- use the correct grammar and punctuation;
- write in standard English;
- spell accurately the words within the working vocabulary ;
- write legibly, and present finished work clearly and attractively (English Language Syllabus 1123 2009: 1).

AIM

The aim of this study is to explore how English Language teachers in Lesotho assess reading comprehension of their students to meet the requirements of the COSC examination.

Teaching begins with "an act of reason and continues with a process of reasoning and culminates in performances of imparting, involving, or enticing and is then thought about some more until the process can begin again" (Shulman, 1987: 233). Shulman's model of teaching as Pedagogical reasoning and action implies that teachers need to use their knowledge and understanding of the subject they teach to make appropriate pedagogical choices. Hence the way in which teachers use their knowledge is embodied in the learning tasks they design for their students. By requiring teachers to set a reading comprehension task and to

explain their pedagogical thinking for their choices, the ways in which they infuse their understanding of what it takes to develop and assess reading comprehension skills of their students.

This study therefore investigates their understanding of what is required to prepare students for the COSC English comprehension examination.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main question of the study is:

How do a group of English Language teachers in Lesotho teach and assess reading comprehension to prepare their students for the COSC examinations?

My sub-questions are:

1. What roles of the reader are required by the COSC comprehension examinations?
2. How do comprehension tasks set by teachers engage students with these roles of the reader?
3. To what extent do teachers of English align their comprehension tasks with the demands required by the COSC examinations?
4. To what extent do they COSC papers and those tasks set by English language teachers in Lesotho display characteristics of intellectual quality?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I will investigate intellectual quality of comprehension tasks by referring to Christie's framework of Productive Pedagogies, where intellectual quality of tasks is one dimension.

Productive pedagogies

By studying many instances of quality teaching and learning, Christie (2008) introduces the concept of 'productive pedagogies' (PP). Productive pedagogies are the mediation choices that effective teachers make to promote quality learning. It is a model of classroom practice that consists of four dimensions which Christie identifies as:

1. Intellectual quality
2. Connectedness
3. Supportive classroom environment
4. Engagement with and valuing of difference

INTELLECTUAL QUALITY

Christie's (2008) framework of Productive Pedagogies, lists intellectual quality as one of four dimensions that promote productive and effective teaching for learning. Intellectual quality takes students from the superficial level of thinking to a deeper level of understanding of concepts and processes. It enables students not only to know but also to create meanings. The new knowledge that they develop could be used in other situations and times (Christie, 2008: 196). Teachers should

therefore be able to engage the students with the content of the subject at different levels of thinking. She claims that the lessons of quality should "engage students actively and critically with knowledge". In the case of this study, this is expected to be evident in the questions set by teachers for their students. There are six factors that characterize intellectual quality for effective classroom practice and they are discussed separately in this paper. In the context of this study, I look specifically at what intellectual quality could mean in terms of the design of reading comprehension questions.

Different kinds of questions have different purposes in contributing to the intellectual quality of a reading comprehension task. Teachers often fail to ask questions that will require students to 'process and analyze' information thereby denying students a chance to give varied and thoughtful answers (Ryan 1988:466). Comprehension questions need to be constructed in a way that students can show ability in a range of cognitive applications (Ferreira 2009:192). Comprehension questions that teachers design for their students to promote their thinking and understanding of English therefore can be a reflection of how Lesotho teachers engage with the demands of the reading comprehension.

High quality instruction can best measure understanding of reading in students. Understanding the content of a passage 'requires more than the acquisition of individual facts', it also means being able to 'integrate facts both with one another and with prior knowledge', McKenna and Robinson (1997:149) argue. High school students read texts that have heavy concepts and much technical vocabulary about topics that are new to them yet are expected to be able to think about meaning in such a way as to make inferences, draw conclusions, and acquire new learning

(Lenski 2008:43). Thus comprehension questions may be literal, interpretive, critical, creative or text-based questions about grammatical and vocabulary knowledge or teachers can use the revised version of Bloom's Taxonomy of Teaching, Learning and Assessing (TTLA).

1. Higher Order Thinking

To measure whether the reading comprehension tasks promote higher order thinking, I wish to draw on Anderson and Krathwohl's (2005) Taxonomy of Teaching, Learning and Assessing (TTLA) which forms a loose hierarchy that arranges thinking skills from easier ways of working with knowledge to more complex ways (Nelson and Price 2007:20). A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy, the TTLA has become a useful tool that teachers use to recognize the varying degrees of complexity involved in various classroom activities so they could construct questions that promote higher order thinking skills and more complex ways of working with the knowledge in a text. In this way, teachers will be able to check the thinking levels of the questions that they ask, consequently expose students to tasks that will stimulate their thinking abilities in such a way that they will manipulate ideas to arrive at new meanings.

The TTLA classifies the ways in which knowledge can be used to promote thinking skills into six levels, from remembering knowledge to creating knowledge. In this discussion, I will focus on how the TTLA could be applied to the design of reading comprehension tasks:

1.1 Remembering knowledge: Questions that require students to remember knowledge require students to recall terms and details of a piece of prose so the question should enable students

to focus on such information. In reading comprehension tasks, students do not necessarily recall but look up for the information required and reproduce it directly from the text, by locating the relevant information and repeating it as an answer. In this case , students may be asked for main ideas, sequence and recognition of character traits (McKay 2004: 230). These are questions that ask for the direct literal meaning of a word, sentence or idea in context.

1.2 Understanding knowledge: It requires the building of cognitive categories and their interrelationships, the defining features of the categories should be emphasized, making connections between and among concepts and using metaphors and similes to help students make connections. Activities should demand students to transform facts in different ways, to interpret texts, give examples on the theme and be able to explain terms in their own words. When reading, readers connect the story to their own lives, to their community and to the whole world in order to make meanings.

They make interpretations based on their experiences and on the authors ‘words. They move beyond the literal meaning of a text to make inferences. Questions that test understanding knowledge include those which ask for generalizations, cause and effect and the sensing of motives (McKay 2004: 230) some verbs that are used to introduce questions that test understanding are : why, compare, contrast, classify, show, among others.

1.3 Applying knowledge: students should first be shown how to transfer acquired knowledge in a different context so that they can see how and when that knowledge can be used and all the steps that are involved in applying knowledge. In reading comprehension, application “involves the correct utilization of information in different contexts” (Friedman 1980: 152). Students could be asked to write an essay which is supported by parts of the text.

1.4 Analysing knowledge: students are able to analyse a product when they have knowledge and understanding about the product as a whole, and the relationships of the various parts of the product (Wessels 2007:6). In reading comprehension, students can be asked to say what they think about other characters and how they relate to others. Questions can also require students to explain the effect some words or actions have on a situation or other people.

1.5Evaluating knowledge: teachers need to advise students on the criteria they should use when they evaluate knowledge but should not tell them ‘how’ they should do it. Students could be asked for opinions on different situations, debate on the worth or value of people or decisions, thereby making judgments on what they have read.

1.6Creating knowledge: students are required to bring ideas and concepts learned to produce their own piece. They use skills they have learned in class and use different techniques to express their own ideas.

Students should be able to manipulate information and ideas to arrive at new meanings and to analyse things critically. They should also be able to combine facts and ideas in order to generalize, explain, synthesize, hypothesize, or even be able to arrive at conclusion or at their own interpretation.

2. DEEP KNOWLEDGE AND ROLES OF THE READER

Another factor that characterizes intellectual quality is deep knowledge. Knowledge that is deep involves ideas and concepts that are central to a topic or discipline. Students should not only be able to recite fragmented pieces of information but should develop relatively systematic, integrated or holistic understanding of concepts. It is this knowledge that enables readers to adopt various roles while reading. In promoting comprehension of the text, teachers need to ensure that their students engage in each of these roles. In this section, I will discuss the four roles of the reader: reader as a decoder, reader as a participant, reader as the text user and reader as the text analyst as knowledge that students should be equipped with for reading tasks.

2.1 Reader as decoder

In reading comprehension passage, the "text presents letters, words, sentences and paragraphs that encode meaning" (Alyousef, 2005:143) and the reader should also be able to recognize this and the other elements of the writing system: knowledge of vocabulary, knowledge of how words are structured into sentences (linguistic competence) and

understanding the grammatical and lexicon meaning ‘in order to understand the small ideas in the text’ (Pressley (2000) in Caskey 2008). The reader has to operate on those ‘ideas in the text to construct the overall meaning encoded in the text’ (p. 172). The recommendation is that decoding skills be taught and they are usually taught at the ages 6-7 years, which are grades 1-3.

2.2 **Reader as text participant**

One role that a reader is expected to take when reading for comprehension is to ‘understand what the text is both saying and inferring’. According to schema theory, prior knowledge is significant in reading comprehension because ‘it deepens students’ comprehension...which in turn helps them to construct new understandings’ (Robb 2000:117). Teachers are warned of the danger of ‘plunging’ students into texts ‘without activating, assessing, and enlarging their prior knowledge’ as it frustrates them when they have difficulty in understanding a given text (Robb, 2000:117; McKenna and Robinson, 1997: 23).

For students to become text participants, Robb (2000:118) suggests that students be taught ‘different ways to access what they already know’ thereby forming a bridge between themselves and a text. Comprehension strategies are conscious plans that readers use to make sense of texts. They are ‘specific, learned procedures that foster active, proficient, self-regulated, and intentional reading (p118). Teachers can use various strategies to promote their ability to participate in accessing a text. For example:

- Teachers can help students, before they start the actual reading of a text, share information and personal connections to help them to enlarge their prior knowledge, strengthen their personal connections, bring more information to a text, and to improve comprehension of a text (Robb 2000:118).

- Prior knowledge can be activated in the presence of the students. A teacher can relate his/her life to a text setting, or its characters' problems, decisions and conflicts. She/he thinks aloud when predicting, brainstorming and questioning to prepare to read a text. Recreating a natural reading experience is necessary here. The teacher should 'continue to model this process while students are practising it'. Emphasis should be put on how this helps to commit to a book before one reads it and helps to 'further bond to the book' while reading (p. 118).

- When teachers introduce a new genre or a new topic, they can first determine how much students know before they are invited to read. This could be done through listening to their discussions, class brainstorming or through their written responses to questions. It will help the teacher to decide whether to proceed or if there is a need to increase students' knowledge base (p118).

- In both during and after reading, teacher has to 'have students return to their initial ideas later' in order to make these pre-reading strategies meaningful. Robb (2008: 119) asserts that when students are made to 'revisit predictions to confirm and/or adjust them, add new understandings to their brainstorming or categories, and adjust early ideas,' they will understand the powerful message that 'activating prior knowledge is useful and important'. This also

> helps them realize how much they have learned. When students' prior knowledge has satisfactorily been activated, they can start reading a text (Robb 2008:130).

In order to become a 'text participant' there are skills that the reader needs to develop. In this paper seven sub-skills have been discussed and each one will be discussed in turn.

2.2.1 Reading comprehension questions

Before the actual reading of a text, a teacher can have students read the questions they are going to answer before reading the passage on a comprehension test. Although McKenna and Robinson (1997:148) claim that there is research evidence indicating that pre-reading questions makes students focus attention 'so distinctly that content not associated with the questions can be missed'. Beginning a reading comprehension test or examination with reading of questions can help students begin to search for relevant schemata that might help them connect and to process the material. It also enables them to focus on the necessary places in the text that answer the questions (LeNoir 1993 in McKenna and Robinson 1997: 147; Robb 2000:130). When students have familiarised themselves with the questions, they can read the passage in preparation to answering those questions.

2.2.2 Reading for meaning

Most of the students at high school level 'lack strategies to comprehend texts' (Robb 2000:134). For those who know reading strategies, they

cannot ‘independently adapt and apply a strategy to various materials and reading purposes’ (Robb 2000:134). These students need to practice reading strategies during lessons when a teacher is available to attend to their queries and when she/he can ‘guide them’. Robb further claims that ‘insufficient practice’ can hinder students to get to a point where they can access a strategy and apply it to their reading’ (Robb 2000:134).

To help students detect meaning of a word, a paragraph or any part of a text may require a teacher to model in class how it is done. Modelling requires a teacher to think aloud how she/he copes with the problem, like in a tough word; a teacher should think aloud and explain how she/he figured out its meaning by using context clues. Students can improve on the marks they obtain on the vocabulary sections of tests if they can ‘readily detect the meaning of a word by using context clues’ and avoid to skip over such a word or guess its meaning without considering its context(Robb 2000: 138); in a confusing passage, a teacher pauses to recall and reflect while reading. Teacher can use pausing to assess if students are retaining information; or to discuss questions that the text raises yet the text cannot answer (Robb 2000:136).

The teacher needs to also prepare for cases where a reader will be confronted by a passage that has few to no contextual clues, especially for struggling readers. Robb (2000: 140) suggests that a teacher can scaffold (offering students support before, during, and after reading) their reading by: pre-teaching vocabulary to prepare them for tough words, by strengthening students knowledge of vocabulary by teaching them the meanings of prefixes, suffixes and roots. This knowledge can be demonstrated in a think aloud how it can be used. This is significant in the reading comprehension texts as students are often asked to read about

unfamiliar topics. ‘Reading two or three times is a worthwhile investment’, advises Robb (2000:144) as it can ‘often unlock the meaning’ and help students to answer comprehension questions well (p 144).

When students have completed reading, they need to be encouraged to go back to all the predictions they made before and while reading to confirm or adjust them. This enables students to experience favourite parts, to think about a story’s meaning and to relate its themes to their lives. Students can use skimming as a strategy to reread for information that relates to their purposes and to set aside data they do not need at the time (Robb: 166). In a comprehension context, a teacher can teach students to skim through a passage ‘looking for a key word in the question that can help them locate support or information that could have the correct answer. They can also do the same thing when they look for words that they are often required to provide their synonyms. In the following paragraphs, this paper looks at some of the clues that teachers can teach students which are meant to help them to detect meaning as they read.

2.2.3 Using context clues to detect meaning

To be text participants students need to use context clues to detect meaning. There are different context clues that can be used to figure out the meaning of a particular word within a sentence. By studying the words closely and the details of the surrounding sentences, a reader could come across the following clues (Whorter, 2005) which can help understand the context better: Definition clues; Synonym clues; From examples given, a reader can conclude what the general term means; Contrast clues; Readers can figure out the meaning of a word through

inference; Many words in the English language are made up of word parts called prefixes, roots and suffices. Words can be divided into the three parts and by using the meaning of each part; the reader can find what the word means.

2.2.4. Implied meanings in a text

When readers act as participants in a text, they make inferences, explore implied meanings and they draw conclusions about the characters' personalities and motivations (Robb 167). Inference is an educated guess or prediction about something unknown on the basis of available facts and information (Whorter 2005:305). Whorter claims that each inference depends on the situation, the facts provided and the reader's knowledge and experience (p305). The following are questions that can be used as prompts to teach students to infer from characters 'words, actions, and thoughts:

1. Why did the character say that?
2. Why were the inner thoughts different from the spoken words?
3. Why won't the character say her/his inner thoughts out loud?
4. Does the setting or situation for the dialogue help you draw conclusions about the character's feelings? Thoughts? Personality?
5. Using events that came before these words, explain what motivated the character to speak this way?
6. How does the tone of voice you imagine for the character help you understand his or her mood? Feelings?

7. Try to visualize the character's expression and gestures. What can you infer from these?
8. Can you select words the character says that enable you to infer feelings, attitudes, personality, inner conflicts?

Whorter (2005:305) says that the following guidelines can be used by the reader to make sure that she/he makes appropriate predictions or inferences:

- Be sure to understand the literal meaning, notice striking and unusual details and think about why it is included.
- Add up facts- what is the writer trying to suggest
- Look at the writer's choice of words as it may suggests the writer's attitude towards the subject. E.g. descriptive words, emotionally charged words, are words positive or negative.
- Be sure that the inference made is supportable.

Because readers' prior knowledge and experiences differ, students' connections to the text will also differ but a teacher can 'accept all connections as long as students support them with the text'.

2.2.5 Cause and effect

For students to act as text participants, they should understand cause and effect relationship. Standardized tests and informal reading inventories 'assess students ability to comprehend cause and effect relationships,' it is therefore, an important thinking skill for students to understand. Robb (2000: 177) states that when readers use the cause-and-effect strategy during reading, they 'infer from known and implied ideas in the text are an effect or outcome (p177).

Robb (2000:177) provides guidelines to teaching cause/effect relationship:

- Introduce cause/effect by explaining a cause statement and the term effects. Tell students that cause statements stem from actions and events, and effects are what happen as a result of the event or actions. The event or action can be personal (e.g. Michael didn't invite me to his party) or one character can cause another character to feel a certain way (e.g. that slope is too hard for you to ski down). The effect can also come from the environment (e.g. An ice storm hit our city.).

    - Start with a cause statement from students' experience to help struggling readers understand easily the cause/effect relationship.

    - Invite students to generate a list of effects.

    - Point out that often, effects that are events can also be cause statements, (e.g. I have one hour to clean my room).

    - Have partners create their own cause statements and list the effects. Share with the class.

    - Continue using cause/effect examples from students' lives until they understand the relationship and can create their own cause statements.

2.2.6 Transitions

Transitions are linking words or phrases that lead the reader from one point to another. Students need to be taught different types of language markers to enable smooth reading and understanding of texts that they will have to deal with as text participants. It is important for readers to recognize various structural signals in a text as failure to do so may result

in a more failure in understanding than could inability to understand lexical items, Ellis and Tomlinson (1980:141) argue. These structural devices include: basic sentence structure of statements and questions; concepts of reason; result and contrast; conditions as signaled by coordinators and subordinators and structural devices that enable the writer to refer back to previously mentioned items.

2.2.7 Making connections with a text

When a reader has acquired a role as text participant, such a reader can make different connections to a text. Readers can make connections to their lives, to other books (as a text user), and to the larger world and use what they know to 'construct new and meaningful understandings'. These connections can help the reader to 'deepen their understanding of personal values, family relationships and universal problems, hopes and dreams' (Robb, p164). The following questions can be used as prompts on chart paper so that students can refer to them when discussing texts in class or independently:

1. Do you have thoughts and feelings similar to one or more characters in this book?
2. Have lived through similar situations?
3. Does the setting, plot, conflicts, problems or characters remind you of other books you have read?
4. Do the relationships, conflicts, feelings or dialogue between characters remind you of similar experiences with your parents? Siblings? Friends? Teachers?
5. Can you apply parts of this book to situations at school? At home? To community service projects?
6. What issues does this book raise that you read about in the newspaper, heard your parents discuss or saw in the television?

Teachers can use daily think-alouds to help students make connections by adapting the above questions to the context of the text that is being read at the time. This will encourage them to eventually make the necessary links to their own lives (Robb p166).

3. READER AS A TEXT USER

The encouragement and teaching of reading is a whole school responsibility and therefore the school should ensure that students are exposed to and have access to a wide range of books in order to 'engage the interest of most pupils' (Brindley, 1994:95) and for the range of purposes for which they need to write in the target language (McKay 2005). Students need to be aware of different text structures or genres and be able to use this knowledge to predict the purpose and meaning of the text. Teachers can make space for the 'sharing of reading experience which is relatively unstructured but which is so rich as a source of pleasure and as a stimulus to wider and more ambitious reading' (Brindley, 1994:95).

4. READER AS TEXT ANALYST

Students at schools should also be encouraged to read texts critically. They need to understand the purposes behind the language they read, even when those purposes are not directly stated. Brindley (1994:95) also claims that readers should be 'able to place their own values and experiences in relation to those of the text' and be able to read from different positions. Critical readers also need to be able to draw attention to the ways in which the text offers particular meanings, 'how it is explicit about some of the values it offers and how it naturalises others' (Brindley 1994: 95). Sometimes the author uses a tone in the story that

appears so natural it is difficult for the reader to be aware of the implied. Students should be made aware of such things.

In addition, readers need to be able to explore ‘the choices that have been made in the ordering of the plot, in the construction of character and in the detail of setting’ (p 95). In this way, the readers will be able to ask themselves what the alternatives to the original text could have been that would make it different. Brindley (1994: 95) argues that ‘powerful readers are in a position to see how effects are being achieved’. He says that readers need to make informed judgements about the work of the writer and the ‘nature of their own pleasure and displeasure’ (p95).

Students also need to sufficient knowledge and experience of the target language culture to understand the cultural references in the text. Their schemata should expand through experience in the new culture towards understanding cultural references in their reading. They should be able to tell when language is appropriate or inappropriate to the context. Students need to begin to analyse texts, that is, to look for assumptions and biases in the text from lower grades.

3. Deep Understanding

Deep understanding is the third characteristic of intellectual quality as defined by Christie (2008). Tasks for students and responses to such tasks should show their deep understanding of concepts and ideas. Their understanding of concepts is systematic and therefore can produce new knowledge by discovering relationships, solving problems, constructing explanations and drawing conclusions.

McKenna and Robinson (1997:149) expand on what deep understanding means in the context of reading comprehension activities. They say that understanding the content of a passage "requires more than the acquisition of individual facts". They further argue that students must "integrate facts both with one another and with prior knowledge, to apply them and to realize their significance". They offer a frame in which different kinds of questions that lead to various comprehension tasks can be understood namely:

a. Literal comprehension
b. Inferential comprehension
c. Critical comprehension
d. Summary writing

3.1 Literal comprehension

Literal comprehension requires that students read the lines of print to determine what is said in the text. This level of understanding calls for questions that "require students to recognize explicitly stated information" (McKenna and Robinson 1997:148) and state that information as it is in the text. This corresponds with what Anderson et al calls 'remembering knowledge' (TTLA). Remembering knowledge is the most foundational way in which students can be expected to work with knowledge, as they just have to recall facts (Anderson and Krathwohl 2005:109). It also sets the basis for intellectual quality in learning.

3.2 Inferential Comprehension

Inferential comprehension means to read between the lines of print, inferring what the writer might mean (Clarke 2004:260). To assess inferential comprehension, teachers can ask questions that require students to use "explicit facts in order to reach unstated, implicit conclusions". The result is the identification of new or suspected facts or concepts (McKenna and Robinson 1997:149).

3.3 Critical Comprehension

At this level of understanding, students are able to "make judgements on what they have read". McKenna and Robinson (1997: 149) claim that those judgements can serve a variety of purposes: synthesizing information from a variety of sources, selecting facts that support a particular viewpoint, identifying biased writing, recognizing inadequacies in an author's treatment of the topic, evaluating the literary merits of writing and interpreting information in order to apply it to a new situation. Glover et al (2000:186) says that questions can also require students to explain the effect in the passage of certain words and or phrases.

3.4 Summary Writing

When students use language structures and vocabulary they have learned in class to express ideas and feelings in new and unique ways, their comprehension and thinking is at a higher level that enables them to create something of their own with the knowledge they have acquired.

This happens in reading comprehension tasks, especially in summary writing.

Summary writing requires higher order thinking skills to put down on paper systematically what needs to be said (Ferreira 2009: 149). Students are required to pick out important information in a text from less important information in a text and to convey it in brief. The number of words that are used when writing a summary is always limited (Heaton 1988: 105). Reading for this purpose has the advantage of stressing the interconnectedness of reading and writing. It also gives students the opportunity to reconsider content and to reorder it within their own thinking (McKenna and Robinson 1997: 164).

4. Knowledge Problematic

Christie argues that recognition that knowledge is contested underpins intellectual quality in the use of productive pedagogies. When knowledge is presented as problematic, there is an understanding of knowledge not as a fixed body of information but as being constructed, therefore subject to political, social, and cultural influences and implications. Many contrasting and potentially conflicting forms of knowledge are presented. This is different from when knowledge is presented as a body of truth to be acquired by students. In the context of reading comprehension tasks, students can construct meaning in relation to their background knowledge and a text. The text with "identifiable cultural content influences an individual's comprehension" (Leavell, Ramos- Machail, 2000). The students will construct knowledge as they interpret, give their own views and evaluate the text.

5. Substantive Conversation

Substantive conversation is another characteristic of intellectual quality. Classes that include substantive conversation have considerable interaction among students and between students and teachers about substantive ideas. Substantive conversation is characterized by four features:

5.1 Intellectual substance

It is when subject matter is discussed in the manner that encourages critical reasoning like making distinctions, applying ideas, forming generalizations and raising questions. It is a discussion that goes beyond recounting experiences and facts but encompasses technical language, analytical distinctions and grounds of disagreement.

5.2 Dialogue

Dialogue involves sharing ideas. Extended statements are provided, and comments, questions and statements are directly directed to others.

5.3 Logical extension and extension

It allows the types of dialogues between participants that build coherently to improve collective understanding of a theme or a topic.

5.4 Exchanges

Exchanges in the classroom should go beyond Initiate-Response-Evaluate pattern. It should be sustained and be a related series of linked exchanges that are between students and or between teacher and students.

Substantive conversation can take place when a teacher takes students through the reading comprehension task in preparation for individual written tasks. The teacher could open a discussion in the class that will enable every student to cooperate. The exercise could be a reading task that involves three phase procedures: pre-, while-, and post- reading stages (Alyousef 2005:149). The pre-reading stage motivates students before the actual reading take place by introducing them to the text through things that are familiar to them. While reading stage develops students' linguistic and schematic knowledge and post reading could be similar to reading comprehension in terms of the types of questions asked.

6. Metalanguage

The last characteristic of intellectual quality in teaching that Christie identifies is metalanguage, an awareness of how an author's choice of words or sentence structures or genres of writing work towards creating intended meaning. Janks (2009: 59) says that, in the context of language learning, words such as modality, voice, direct and indirect speech, and tense are part of metalanguage. Students are expected to know what these terms are and how and when they are used in real situations. Although students are not usually asked to define any of the components of speech or metalanguage, reading comprehension tasks require them to show their knowledge and understanding of English metalanguage. Their knowledge and understanding will show in the way that they use language to answer

the reading comprehension questions. Tasks that are high in metalanguage explore about how written and spoken texts work, about how sentences work (syntax/grammar), about how specific technical vocabulary and words work, about meaning structures and text structures (semantics/ genre), and how discourse and ideologies manifest in speech and in writing (Christie 2008).

Summary

Christie's six characteristics of what constitutes intellectual quality will be used in this study to consider how teachers of English in Lesotho understand what constitutes intellectual quality in the reading comprehension tasks that they will devise for their students. Therefore, these six characteristics of intellectual quality and four roles of reading, TTLA, McKenna and Robinson's frame of kinds of comprehension, will be used to analyse the ways in which teachers ask questions to help their learners work with a given text. They provide the analytical tools with which I will analyse the extent to which teachers of English in Lesotho embody principles of intellectual quality in the tasks they set for their learners. I will be able to measure the levels of thinking required by the tasks, and whether the tasks given to students help them to find meaning in a text beyond the recall of facts and technical 'correctness' of language that Webb and Kembo-Sure state typifies the teaching of English as a second language in Africa.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Understanding how teachers understand demands of the tasks they set is a social issue that is not easily measured quantitatively. People, individuals, and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions are often better described and analysed through qualitative research. The researcher therefore needs to adopt a more indirect approach that is used for evidence gathering, which involves "evidence that reflects the experiences, feelings or judgements of individuals taking part in the investigation of a research problem or issue" (Verma and Mallick 1999:27). Qualitative research is "an enquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words" (Leedy, 1997:105).

Qualitative research is also an enquiry whereby the researcher collects data in a face-to-face situation by interacting with selected people in their natural setting. In this study, I worked with English teachers about their understanding of the work they do.

Methods of Data Collection

I used a number of sources of data collection in this study. The use of different sources of collecting data is 'likely to increase the reliability' of the study (Mouton, 1997: 156). The use of a variety of methods when collecting data is called triangulation (Denzin, 1978 as cited by Mouton, 1977). Insights gained in one data set were verified by checking against another. Triangulation therefore strengthened the reliability of the findings in this study. It was important to triangulate because even when

methods have biases, when there is a number of them, they can complement one another (Michael, Miles, and M. B. 1994:266).

Comprehension passage and tasks

The primary source of data in this study is a comprehension task designed by each of the six teachers which they would be able to use with their class of learners. The teachers were given a common piece of prose of the researcher's choice as the basis for a comprehension assessment task. The story they were given is 'Snapshots of a Wedding' by Bessie Head. Based on Shulman's (1987) conception of teaching as reasoning and action, the teachers' questions embody their understanding of effective comprehension tasks and those questions formed the basis for a follow - up interview about their perceptions of intellectual quality in the comprehension assessment task that they have devised.

The task will allow the researcher to analyse the types of questions they ask, the knowledge in the marking memo they supply, but also form the basis of an interview seeking to explore their understanding of the intellectual quality of the comprehension tasks they devised. The task is to reveal their conceptions of what could constitute questions that require higher level thinking, promote deep knowledge, deep understanding, present knowledge as problematic, and develop students' understanding of metalanguage.

Reading comprehension passages were personally distributed and collected to and from schools. Letters requesting permission to conduct the study were also distributed by the researcher with the reading passages. I explained the task to the informants and we talked about it together so that they could understand what was expected of them. All the

teachers were asked to devise a full paper for their high school (Form E) students.

Interview

An interview is "a conversation between two or more people where two or more participants take the responsibility for reporting the substance of what is being said" (Powey and Watts 1984 as cited by Mallick and Verma, 1999:122). An assumption that one make when conducting a qualitative interview is that the "perspective of others is meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit'. It cannot be observed "how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world" (Patton, 2002: 341), to understand all of those, we have to ask them questions about their experiences.

Letters soliciting permission to interview were delivered with the questionnaire and the reading comprehension passage. The six teachers were interviewed by the researcher at their own schools. The researcher interviewed teachers after they had devised their reading comprehension tasks. The conversations were not voice-recorded although I had intended to do so for the reason that it would help me to focus on the conversation with the informant (Green; Camellia, & Elmore, 2006: 365), but because of limited resources this was not logistically possible. I took notes in all the interviews I conducted. The semi-structured format of the interview allowed me to probe teachers' answers where I found their answers were not clear to me.

Questionnaire

A biographical questionnaire was personally distributed and it was a self-completion type, designed for the respondents to complete it with no

researcher present (Verma and Mallick 1999:117). The intention of this questionnaire was to acquire the teachers' background information. I also asked more on some of the answers that the informants gave on the questionnaire during the interview.

The questionnaire was attached to the reading comprehension passages for the teachers to complete. Completed forms of the questionnaire were collected with the questions and the marking memoranda from teachers on the days of interview.

Documents

Documents that were analysed are past COSC comprehension question papers from 2003 to 2008, tasks that teachers devised for students and their marking memoranda. They were all generative sources of data because I used Shulman's work to argue that these embody pedagogical thinking and reflect the teachers' understandings of what constitutes high intellectual quality. This was also helpful to the researcher because questions that allowed the teachers to reason for decisions they made for their work were asked. Past COSC comprehension question papers were analysed in terms of distinctions provided by classification of the different types of comprehension tasks (McKenna et al, 1997) and the Taxonomy of Teaching, Learning and Assessing (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2005). This structural form of the COSC papers were compared to the comprehension questions that the teachers set on a given reading passage. This comparison revealed the intellectual structure of the COSC examinations and the extent to which the teachers' own comprehension tasks followed such a structure. The reading comprehension questions set by teachers were analysed by what Christie and the literature in this paper identifies as intellectual quality.

Comprehension tasks, interview, and questionnaire

Data was analysed with the teachers' actual words cited to strengthen the analysis.

Sampling

Sampling is a selection of a group of people from a larger population to be studied with the expectation that it will provide us with a better understanding of the behaviour of the general population. In the case of this study, purposeful sampling was employed. In this type of sampling, the people and situations were selectively picked and it was those that were likely to "yield fruitful data about the research questions that were chosen" (McMillan, & Schumacher, 2006:343). The purposeful sampling involved selection of six high schools in the Maseru district. This district was chosen because it has more high schools than most of the districts. The English teachers who were teaching at the COSC level at these six targeted high schools therefore made up the sample of teachers used. The schools were therefore purposefully selected and the teachers involved in the study then were approached as a consequence of teaching English at the selected schools.

The six teachers were all trained to teach at high school level and had been teaching over five years. They were also teaching at high school level at the time the study was undertaken and some of them had experience of being national markers in the COSC examinations. The information about the teachers is tabled below.

	Academic qualification	Teaching experience	Marking experience	English association
Teacher 1	B.Ed	5 yrs	yes	yes
Teacher 2	B.Ed	7 yrs	no	no
Teacher 3	BA.Ed	20 yrs	no	no
Teacher 4	B.Ed	18 yrs	no	yes
Teacher 5	BA Honours in English and Literature	35 yrs	yes	yes
Teacher 6	BA	16 yrs	no	yes

Table 1: Teachers' background

In each case, permission to collect data was obtained from the Lesotho Department of Education, the principals of the schools and informed consent was obtained from teachers.

ETHICAL ISSUES

All researchers are obliged to provide legal and ethical protection to the subjects. This was done through the use of fictitious names for people, institutions and places (Mallick & Verma 1999:114). Ethical issues applied to this study because it was dealing with people. Even though teachers are adults, and no risk seemed to be there, I had to speak to them to assure them of confidentiality and anonymity. Letters that informed them of the research project was hand delivered by the researcher. I explained the purpose of the study to participants, what I will do with

data collected and that I will not reveal their names or the names of the schools at which they are working.

I also produced forms that gave full details of my names and the name of the institution that requires the undertaking of this study and the purpose of the study. The informants who were willing to work with me signed the agreement forms of participation. Teachers were told that they were free to withdraw from this study at any time. The subject of my study was the teachers and the manifestation of their pedagogical thinking in developing comprehension tasks. The students were not the subjects of this research report, and as such, the study did not focus on people who are considered to be vulnerable.

I was granted clearance from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Witwatersrand. This was for clearance to carry out research that involves human beings. Letters requesting permission to conduct the study were also distributed by the researcher.

The limitations of the study

Limitations exist with every method of data collection. I will consider some of the limitations in this design.

The disadvantages of the interview are that if the interviewer is not well schooled in conducting interviews, s/he may steer the interview to confirming his or her pre-conceived ideas (Rossouw 2005: 50). If the interviewer is not competent enough to conduct the interview, the respondent may be “uncomfortable in the interviewee and unwilling to report the feelings”. Therefore, the interviewer should be seen as a neutral person who can be trusted and confided in (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993: 250). It is also important for the interviewer to be well contained

because in face-to-face conversation, it is possible to read one's facial expression. If it happens, the interviewee may respond to what the interviewer may seem to want to hear. To minimize these concerns, I gave the respondents a chance to read the notes that I have on the answers that they provided so that they could confirm change or add on what I had written.

The primary data is the comprehension tasks designed by the six teachers in the sample. This is a small sample, and the findings would in no way be able to generate findings that could be applied to Lesotho teachers of English in general.

To allow comparisons to be made between the approaches and questions asked by the teachers in this sample, a standard text was used for all teachers. However, designing a comprehension task is a time-consuming task requiring substantial amounts of thinking and planning. A limitation of this research design is that the everyday demands on teachers' time are high and it is possible that teachers were asked to design this task at a time when pressures were high and that some teachers were able to put more time and thought into the design of the task than others.

In order to analyse the results, the mark allocation decided by the teacher will be used to formulate a profile of the nature of the test (e.g. in terms of the TTLA). However, teachers may allocate marks differently so there may arise a situation where a teacher asking a complex question allocates fewer marks than another teacher who awards more marks to a more straightforward question. While such comparisons of profiles may generate useful insights, the inferences should be cautiously drawn.

One teacher in the defined sample knew the researcher from the previous interaction as a professional English colleague, but that did not interfere with the interview. Some teachers did not want to be interviewed in English at all because they felt more comfortable speaking in Sesotho. Another problem was that some teachers may not have fully explained their points of view because they may have assumed that, as a teacher I knew and understood what they were talking about. I asked for clarification where I felt this was necessary.

Comprehension teaching is one element of English language teaching. There are other elements, including composition writing, poetry, grammar, letter writing and so on, but attention on these elements are beyond the scope of this research project. The investigation of a concept (like intellectual quality) in relation to one small element of language teaching will be necessarily focused. It is unlikely that comprehension assessment and interview would reveal much about certain dimensions of intellectual quality, for example substantive conversation. However, the focus on comprehension tasks is likely to yield some insights around the other dimensions of intellectual quality.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS and INTERPRETATION

This chapter analyses and interprets data collected through comprehension tasks, interviews and questionnaire in terms of the literature reviewed in this paper. In particular, what the comprehension tasks and interviews reveal about how teachers understand the teaching and assessing of reading comprehension will be the focus of this analysis. First I will present the concerns, challenges and insights raised by each of the six teachers in this study. The main source of this data collected from the interview and the reading tasks.

TEACHER 1

Teacher 1 set a reading comprehension task and devised a marking memorandum. When he was asked in an interview how easy or difficult it was for him to devise a the task, he complained that the passage was too long in comparison to the ones that are given to the ones that are given to the COSC students. Other than this, he said he had to base himself with the COSC structure, 'I had to break the passage into paragraphs so that it resembles COSC passage structure', he stated.

Types of questions

In response to what types of questions he has asked, he said, 'these questions are based on thinking levels.' He said that some questions are about facts, inference, they compare, vocabulary, and summary. He further gave an example from the task he has set:

He said Question 2a-*With evidence from the paragraph, show the difference between the modern wedding and the traditional wedding*, requires students to see the implications in the way the modern and traditional weddings have been described. He also argues that, 'the passage does not say a traditional wedding requires diphiri, meat or samp but it is implied that those are the things one will find in a traditional wedding.

Teacher 1 also referred me to Question 3b- *Pick out and write down two consecutive words which show that the two girls have a differing concern in marriage.* He called it a vocabulary (two-word) question. He said that the trick in answering this question is in that 'consecutive' means 'one after another in one line, not in two consecutive lines.' He said that the examiner also expects such a question to be answered 'only' in two words.

Expected responses

When he was asked about the kind of responses that he was expecting from students, he said that when he marks students', he considers 'anything that matches [his] marking memorandum is okay' for him. He said the reason for this is that his marking memo is 'often flexible' and when a student's response is correct but does not appear in his memo, he takes the student's point and add it to his list of answers.

Preparing students for comprehension tasks and for final examinations

When he was asked how he prepares students for reading comprehension tasks of the nature he had set, he said that he usually, teaches types of questions in isolation without a text, ‘I improvise with students and come up with questions that fit into the types of questions,’ he mentioned to be the types he has asked in the task he has devised. From there, ‘I make them practise with previous COSC question papers,’ I make them identify the type of questions I introduced for them,’ Teacher 1 reported. He stated that he also teaches different ways of approaching those questions to get correct answers.

He said that when he prepares his students for COSC examinations, he drills students with past question papers, ‘I draw my own marking memorandum and before I mark, I compare it with the examiner’s’. He said that if something on his memo differs from the examiner’s , ‘I go for what the examiner suggests as the right answer even when I do not understand how she/ he got to that answer.

Challenging questions

Teacher 1 said that the most challenging types of questions for his students are inference questions.

TEACHER 2

Challenges by the task

Teacher 2 devised a task without a marking memorandum. When he was asked how easy or difficult it was to devise the task, he complained about a too long passage. He added that, 'I do not like reading at all; I find it boring especially when I have to do it to teach'. He said 'comprehension passage was easy, the names of the people are familiar and the students are culturally familiar with the events that occur in the story'. Teacher 2 stated, 'I struggled when I had to ask questions, at some point I thought I was lenient, and at times I felt like I was asking too difficult questions.' He said he kept on rewriting questions in order to find ones that would suit his students.

Types of questions he has asked

When he was asked how he could describe the types of questions he has asked, he said they were: questions that seek information; questions that seek students to think beyond the text; own words; vocabulary questions; questions that seek students to show understanding of the text. He said he had to ask these type of questions he said, these students must know how to answer these questions, they have to get used to it otherwise they will fail, 'they must think!' he responded.

Expected responses

In response to what kind of responses he would expect from his students or what his idea of a quality response is, he said that information questions 'require them to identify the area in the text where they will get the answer.' He said for the ones that require thinking beyond text, 'they [students] must use the words of the author to respond to the questions asked.' When I asked him why he had not drawn the marking memo, he

said, ‘It’s not easy to write down your own marking memo’. He continued to say, ‘I know it’s awkward to mark without a marking memo, but most of the time I do and if I get stuck, I discuss it with my colleagues and they help me find the answer and I continue marking.’

Questions that challenge students

He said that his students often get most of the short answers wrong but they are particularly challenged by ‘questions that require thinking beyond text’. He said that they are most ‘difficult even for [him] as a teacher, I sometimes can’t even explain to them why I say the answer is that, because it is also difficult for me to understand’. He added that one thing that makes it difficult for him to even care whether he explains or not is because he knows that, ‘once they get a different text, they will not be able to tackle such questions, so I spoon feed them to get them ready for final examinations.’ One other type of question that challenges his students is vocabulary questions. ‘They get excited when they see words that they know their dictionary meanings and forget to check with the context of the passages so they fail’.

Preparations for this task and COSC examination

When he was asked in the interview how he prepares his students for examinations, he said that he teaches them ‘different approaches to each of the questions and I use the past question papers to do this’. When he finishes drilling them with questions, he practise them speed and other skills required for COSC examinations. He reported, ‘I do the same thing throughout the two years, I use question papers and get marking memorandums from ECOL’.

He also pointed out that even though he uses the examiners' marking memos, they frustrate him because sometimes he does not understand why the examiner says the answer is this not that. He said that when that happens, he gets help from his head of English department who used to be a COSC national marker.

TEACHER 3

When teacher 3 was asked how easy or difficult it was to devise the reading comprehension task, she said she encountered problems 'with the passage that has no clear paragraphs for reference. She then decided to 'ask questions haphazardly without following the order of events in the text'. She referred me to Question 8 in the task she has set; she said that type of question is 'context questions' and that in COSC final exams, each word is given reference in terms of the line it appears in from the passage so that it is easier to locate it.

Types of questions asked

When asked to describe the type of questions she asked, she said that because she is aware that it is not okay if recall questions are many in one question paper, she asked questions that will help students to apply what they learned from the passage in their lives.

She said that Question 1 is a recall question and that when she realised what the answer was going to be, 'I knew I had to ask a follow up question,' she stated. She argued that to her, 'it is useless to ask questions that give a name, a place and so on and never make a student to think about it some more.' She said that is why she asked Question 1b.

In Question 6, she ‘wanted to bring an aspect of grammar because this should not only be about understanding of the story but I try to always make many things out of it to improve their language.’ She further explained that in Question 7, she wanted students to apply the events of the story to their own lives. Question 8 is a context question. She said, ‘students do not use dictionaries here but they find meaning in context’. She explained that this type of question requires a flexible marking memorandum. She said that sometimes one word has more than one possible answer, but in this reading passage ‘maternal’ has one synonym.

On summary question, she explained that COSC exams usually require students to use 160 words when answering the summary question. She says that although it tests general understanding of the text, students are directed by the question as to what ideas have to be included in the summary and are told the paragraphs they should use as reference. She claimed, ‘It has its own guidelines’.

The reason she asked the questions

When she was asked why she asked the questions she asked, she said, ‘comprehension questions are asked to test understanding of students at different levels, to see if they can use reading skills like scanning and skimming efficiently. It is also to test if they can think beyond the text.

Her idea of a quality response

When she was asked to say the kind of responses she was expecting or her idea of a quality response, she said her idea of a quality response is the one that ‘followed procedures I taught in class and a procedure that helped a student to get the correct answer.

Preparing students for a comprehension task

She said that when she teaches reading comprehension, she follows pre-reading, while-reading post-reading procedure. She commented, 'I still believe that students fail to read reading comprehension passages the way they are supposed t be read.' First, she says together with her students, she discusses the title of the passage: its key words and what the title could mean. They then discuss what the story could be about.

She said, 'then I read to them. I go through every question with them, what they think each question requires. She then gives students he own interpretation of the questions, what it requires them to do and the proper approach to answering each one of them. She said that she uses COSC past question papers as her teaching material for reading comprehension lessons. She added, 'We make a thorough analysis of the questions'. She said that she always tells her students that the best way to go with comprehension questions is to: understand the question, locate the answer and phrase it appropriately and say why it is the right answer.

The most challenging questions

The most challenging questions are inference questions, 'students do not seem to be able to reason, think beyond the text, but some students master it', she observed.

Preparing for COSC final examinations

When asked how she prepares her students for COSC examinations, she said, 'when students are in Form D, I pick easier passages from past COSC question papers for them'. She said that she changes the level of difficulty until students get to Form E but she said that she does 'the exact

things in Form D and in Form E'. She added that to keep the COSC standard, they always use the examiners' marking memos. She says that the marking memos have a lot of instructions that help them to mark according to the examiner's expectations. She however points out that sometimes she does not even understands why the examiner says one answer is right and the other is not.

TEACHER 4

Teacher 4 set a reading comprehension and drew its marking memorandum. Teacher 4 complained that the passage was too long and that it should have had numbered sentences and paragraphs to make it easier for her to ask questions. She argued, 'there must always be logic in the way questions are asked, they should be asked from one paragraph to another, the COSC paper is like that'. She further indicated that the reading passage that was provided is not COSC material, 'It is too easy and inappropriate for a summary question'. For that reason she said she did not set a summary question. She argued, 'when you ask a summary question, you have to make sure that answers will appear in consecutive paragraphs. Students do not have to skip other paragraphs to get to answers'.

Types of questions

When she was asked to describe the type of questions she asked, she said that the first question requires students to go back to the text and lift the answer. 'It is straightforward', she said. She said Question 1b is a vocabulary question and Question 1d is the type of question she refers to as 'sieving', she said 'students read the text and pick the necessary

information and then write it in their own words'. She said that 'students have to pick only and only the necessary information because once the unnecessary information is added to the answer, the learner lose marks. She explained that 'own words' means they have to change key words and substitute with their own words to get marks.

She said Question 3a is one of the questions that are always in the COSC final examination question paper. 'It either says 'pick one', 'pick two or 'pick three' words'. She explained that those words should be exactly the number required in the question, there should not be any use of a conjunction. She described Question 8 as a context question. 'There is no dictionary usage here' but she said students must read a sentence where the word appears and the surrounding words to find the meaning of the word in the way it is used in the text.

Preparing students for tasks and COSC final examinations

When asked how she would prepare students for this type of a task, she responded, 'I make them read and teach them different types and how to identify them in a question paper', she further gives them a lot of exercises to make sure that they understand before she goes on to the next type. She said that when students get to Form E, she uses more question papers to 'drill' them. She also mentioned that she uses a book which is a compilation of past question papers with their marking memos. She concluded that if she would never use a question paper without a marking memorandum from ECOL.

Teacher 5

Teacher 5 devised a reading comprehension task and drew the marking memorandum. When asked how difficult or easy was he complained that

the passage was not a good choice for COSC level. He said, ‘It does not have progression’ and that made it difficult for him to ask questions. Another difficulty he faced was setting of questions, ‘We never set questions for our COSC students but we do it for JC students’.

Types of questions

He listed the type of questions he asked as : interrogative, inference, own words, vocabulary and contextual, quote/ consecutive words and summary question.

Reasons for asking those questions

When she was asked why she asked those questions she said, ‘comprehension is about teaching reading and understanding’. He argued that it is important that different questions are asked in order to find out if students have a general understanding of the text and if they can go beyond the text to give other meanings to the text. He indicated, ‘I must emphasise every aspect of the text through questions that I ask’.

Responses expected

When I asked him the kind of responses he would expect from his students, he said that Questions 1-4 in his question paper are simple questions that require students to ‘lift’ answers from the text. He explained that interrogative questions require one word answer and students ‘can lift from the text when they answer such questions. He said that in ‘thinking type’ questions, students have to give reasons. Requirements here overlap with those of inference questions. He said in inference questions, there is usually a tricky word and students have to locate it. He said in ‘own words’ questions, students paraphrase at most

two key words and vocabulary questions are answered according to how words are used in the context of the text.

He said that ‘quoting’ and ‘consecutive words’ require students to lift words as they are from the text. In summary writing, ‘students are given a question and where they will find answers, what students have to do is locate points and write them in continuous writing.

Preparing students for comprehension tasks and final examinations

When he was asked how he would prepare his students for this type of a task, he answered, ‘I would only ask them a full paper when I have taught and drilled students on the requirements and expectations of the syllabus. He said he teaches them skills like scanning and skimming in order to master reading. He gives his Form D students simpler passages and questions. He said when he gets to Form E, he uses a lot of question papers for practice and use marking memos from ECOL or from national markers he knows.

Challenging questions

When I asked him if there are questions that challenge his students, he said they are mostly challenged by inference questions. He said that the problem is ‘the COSC passages are too specialised, concentrated and abstract’. He said it becomes even ‘a bigger problem’ because students ‘lack reading culture, they never read books because there are no libraries at schools’. Because of that, they lack understanding.

TEACHER 6

Teacher 6 devised a reading comprehension task and drew a marking memorandum. When he was asked how easy or difficult it was to devise

the task, he said that the passage gave him a problem as it does not have paragraphs on the passage for ease of reference.

Types of questions and reasons he asked those types

He described the type of questions he has asked as: interpretation, factual, vocabulary and summary questions. He said 'those are the kind of questions COSC paper asks'. He explained that he used one of the past COSC papers as reference.

Responses expected

When he was asked what kind of responses he was expecting or what his idea of a quality response is, he explained the requirements of each of the types of questions he has asked: with factual questions, a student has to directly locate the answer from the text, pick it as it is from the text and write it as the answer, then the answer will be of broken. He gave examples of this type of question as 1a; 1b and 1c from the task he has set.

With vocabulary questions, he said he strictly follow past COSC question papers. He said a response to this type of question must be a synonym or a phrase of less than seven words as per the examiners' expectations.

He said that questions that require students to do their own interpretations tests if students have caught the gist of the story. Summary question requires students to be able to write in prose. He said that when he marks students, he is not strict with how they have used language, as long as he understands what the students wanted to say.

Preparing students for the task and final examination

When I asked him how he prepares his students for this type of a task, he said he said: he chooses a passage, he reads in class because some students cannot read, sometimes he asks students to read in turns, he teaches different types of questions in class. When he is through with those, 'I begin drilling students with past COSC question papers'. When he gets to Form E, he says he drills them with as many COSC papers as possible.

Summary

Several of the teachers indicated that they needed to number the paragraphs in the reading passage before embarking on the task of devising questions. Most were aware of the need to ask questions at different levels, but none felt at ease with devising their own learning tasks.

This section turns its attention to an analysis of the tasks that each teacher devised on the given reading passage. I use the characteristics intellectual quality as described by Christie. In particular, what the comprehension tasks and interviews reveal about how teachers understand the characteristics of higher order thinking and deep understanding will form the major part of this analysis. In this chapter, I will also respond to the literature in light of my findings where relevant.

1. Higher order thinking

Christie's first characteristic of intellectual quality is higher order thinking. All the teachers interviewed indicated an awareness of the need to ask different types of questions in their tasks, and this awareness was demonstrated in the questions they asked and emerged during the interviews. Teachers are aware that they have to teach students thinking skills and they know that the purpose of a reading comprehension task is to test understanding and thinking abilities of students. They expressed this matter in different ways. For example, Teacher 5 explained how "different questions are asked in order to find out if students have a general understanding and understanding beyond the text" and Teacher 3 indicated how the questions that are asked in a comprehension task have to make students "think".

Students' thinking skills are extended through questions at different levels of the taxonomy. Teacher 3 expressed her understanding that it is important "to test understanding of students at different levels". She further said that when she first saw the reading passage, it struck her as one that would allow recall questions only but she sought to devise other kinds of questions because "recall questions should be asked, but should not be [too] many in a question paper". She further reasoned that she

"wanted to ask questions that will find out if they have understood the story and the kind of questions that will help them apply whatever they have learned in their lives"

She gave an example of one of the questions she asked. *What is your view of 'sex before marriage'? Support your answer*. She said that she wanted the students "to go beyond what is in the text, not just knowledge they acquired". However, although this question asks for students' views, her question worked independently of the comprehension text yet reading comprehension should be an interaction between the reader and the text. She further explained that when she asks questions, she knows that she has to vary questions to make sure that they are not of the same level.

There are two major reasons teachers said they had for devising the kinds of questions they did. Firstly, they said they know that their final COSC examination will demand that students have knowledge of questions that usually appear in the question papers and they will be required to show the ability to answer them. Secondly, teachers also revealed their understanding that reading texts should give students the ability to among others, select, explain, interpret and combine information.

In order to analyse the extent to which questions asked in the comprehension tasks designed by teachers engage students in lower or higher order thinking skills, I have used Anderson & Krathwohl's TTLA to classify each question asked. Bearing in mind the limitations of using mark allocations, I have nevertheless constructed a profile of each teacher's comprehension paper so that the range of thinking skills and spread of marks can be compared to what the teachers say about their tasks and compared to a similarly constructed profile of the COSC papers from the recent past.

Below is a summary of the types of questions that are in COSC reading comprehension papers 2003 to 2008. Following that is a summary of the questions teachers asked, classified according to the levels of thinking in the TTLA. The percentages have been calculated using marks allocated to questions testing different skills.

Table 1: Analysis of thinking skills (TLTA) tested in past COSC papers

	remembering	understanding	applying	analysing	evaluating	creating
2003	14%	76%	0	10%	0	0
2004	12%	66%	0	0	6%	0
2005	20%	66%	0	14%	0	0
2007	14%	72%	0	10%	4%	0
2008	10%	74%	0	12%	4%	0

From the table, it can be seen that the COSC comprehension papers ask some recall questions, corresponding to 10 – 20% of the total marks of the paper. The 2005 paper had a particularly high percentage of recall questions, compared to other years. The COSC examination papers focused mainly on testing understanding of the reading passage (with 66 – 74% of the marks in the papers analysed). None asked application questions, but in several of the past examinations papers presented students with opportunity to analyse and evaluate the texts. These would constitute higher order thinking skills and would be indicative of what Christie would describe as intellectual quality.

Table 2: Percentages of marks allocated to thinking skills of questions asked in the Comprehension tasks designed by six teachers in this study:

	Remembering	Understanding	Applying	Analyzing	Evaluating	Creating
T 1	23%	43%	0	31%	0	0
T 2	26%	67%	0	13%	0	0
T 3	23%	46%	6%	10%	4%	0
T 4	20%	60%	0	20%	0	0
T 5	8%	76%	4%	10%	0	0
T 6	30%	60%	0	10%	0	0

In comparison, it can be seen that for several of the teachers, 20-30% of the paper required learners to recall answers straight from the text. This reflects a higher proportion than compared to the COSC papers. Teacher 5 asked relatively few recall questions but a higher proportion of questions in which students worked with understanding the text. Like the COSC papers, there were no application questions asked, which is to be expected in a comprehension text, where the emphasis is on understanding the meaning of the provided text. However it is significant that only one teacher asked learners to make a personal response to the text. *E.g. what is your view of 'sex before marriage', support your answer.* According to the marking memorandum drawn by the teacher, the teacher showed that she would expect students to give their own perspectives based on their general knowledge.

Table 2 shows that questions that require simple recall do not dominate the comprehension tasks set by teachers. Instead, a significant amount of analyzing and understanding questions were asked by teachers. In several cases, these amounted to nearly three quarters of the paper. There were no questions on creating knowledge on all the tasks devised by teachers. This was to be expected given that the purpose of this exercise was comprehension rather than research or creative writing.

Almost all questions that tested analyzing skills took the same structure in all the teachers' tasks. E.g. Teacher 5 asked:

Choose five of the following words or phrases. For each one of them give one word or short phrase (of no more than seven words) which has the same meaning as the word or phrase in the passage. (Answers in brackets).

1. *Shimmering* *(smouldering)*
2. *Ascertain* *(to be sure)*
3. *Appalling* *(very bad, disgusting ,terrible)*
4. *Bemused* *(funny, humour)*
5. *Communicated* *(show, reveal)*
6. *Sedately* *(beautiful, regally, like a prince)*
7. *Symbols* *(sign, omen)*
8. *Immobile* *(frigid, not moving, stationary)*

All the teachers gave at least two alternative answers for this question except for Teacher 6 who gave one synonym for each word. Again they did not all ask for meanings of the same words but each asked a different list although there were similarities because they picked words from the same passage.

Understanding knowledge questions were asked in different ways by teachers and each teacher had many questions to ask on this category like the percentages show above (43-76%). Below are examples of the type of questions that were asked by different teachers but which seemed to be common throughout all the tasks set by teachers. I have highlighted by underlining phrases that were generally used by teachers in their questioning. Teachers also used the same phrases to name the types of questions they teach to their students, e.g. one word question, consecutive words, in your own words questions and so on. Below are examples asked by teachers:

1. Teacher 1: *<u>Pick out and write down two consecutive words</u> which show that the two girls have a differing concern for marriage.*

   (1)

With this type of question, some teachers expressed the importance of instilling in students the skill of how the words should be picked from the text and how they should be written. They displayed their understanding of what this question requires and some teachers explained that they do not understand why the examiners should be so particular about the presentation of the answer to this question.

2. Teacher 3: *'Oh she is not a person', is a phrase that can be regarded as literal translation from Setswana. How would the same sentence be phrased in English?*

This question has been asked in a far different way from that COSC papers have asked in the question papers that I looked at. By having asked this question, this teacher demonstrates her ability to ask questions depending on what will make students think and learn in the passage but

not what COSC often tests only. She has deep knowledge of her work which made her realize that students should be able to change that sentence to Standard English which students are always encouraged to use. It also shows that Teacher 3 has deep understanding of the types of questions she can ask students. When students understand knowledge, they should be able to transform facts in different forms without distorting meaning; this is what this question expects them to do.

3. Teacher 4: *Why according to Neo's relatives was Kegoletile marrying her? Answer in your own words. (1)*

Many teachers asked 'in your own words question'. In this question, students are expected to substitute at least two words with synonyms of the words. Teacher 1 said that when students answer this question they have to look at the marks allocated to that question as it often serve as a guide to the number of words to be substituted.

Questions on the COSC question papers showed almost the same pattern as of questions teachers asked. This was revealed by the analysis of questions asked by both teachers and COSC examiners.

The past COSC papers, like the teachers' tasks, have high percentages of marks allocated to understanding knowledge (66-76%). It has been tested in different ways in each of the question papers reviewed and in ways that resemble ways in which teachers asked questions. E.g. in 2008 question paper the following questions were asked:

1. Benjamin realized 'his preconceptions of the job were different from its reality'. Explain in your own words what this means. (2)
2. 'Ahmed was the entertainer and the classroom was his theatre'. Pick out and write down the single word used later in the paragraph

which continues this idea.

(1)

3. One of Benjamin's difficulties in his job was caused by Ahmed and the senior class. But there was 'another problem'. Explain fully what it was. (2)

Teacher 4 explained that if a question instructs students to 'explain fully', the expectation is similar to the 'own words' question.

4. *Using your own words as far as possible, write a summary in which you explain how it became increasingly clear to Benjamin that there was a snake in the classroom, how the students reacted to the snake, and the actions that Benjamin took to solve the problem.*

   Use only the material from line 44 to line 85

   Your summary, which must be in continuous writing (not in note form), must not be longer than 160 words including the 10 words given below.

   Begin your summary as follows:

   Walking over to the bin, Benjamin was surprised to see…

   (25)

All teachers who asked a summary question also asked it in this way. They explained that the purpose of the beginning words is that they guide students into the first point of the summary. The COSC summary question gives students reference from which they should pick points to answer the question. Because the passage the teachers were given to use was not numbered by lines or paragraphs, teachers complained that it

gave them problems when they had to ask questions like summary questions, to an extent that one teacher could not ask a summary question.

Remembering knowledge questions accounts for a low percentage of marks in the question papers. Analyzing knowledge also has a low percentage of marks and like the summary question, they have the same instruction in all the papers analysed in this study. They are also towards the end of the paper just before the summary question. This is where the teachers who devised the tasks put the same kind of question. They also phrased it the same way as COSC examiners. E.g. they all read as this:

Choose five of the following words or phrases. For each of them give one word or short phrase (of not more than seven words) which has the same meaning that the word or phrase has in the passage.

Questions that test evaluating skills are asked in COSC papers studied; three papers tested it although at a very low percentage of marks as the table above indicates. The fact that this level is not tested on students by teachers interviewed for this study, may be because teachers do not understand this type of question, how it is asked, what the question of its nature requires a student to do in order to get the answer to it. Teachers talked as if they knew all the types of questions COSC examinations ask, yet not a single teacher mentioned this type of question during interview sessions or a teacher that asked even a question testing evaluating. This means that teachers fail to ask some questions that could have a positive impact on students thinking skills and accurate use of language. The following are examples of COSC questions that test evaluating skills; in 2007 the question paper had this question:

The writer says that the women were 'clattering about' in the kitchen. What effect is created by this expression that would not have been created by the word 'moving'? (1)

2008 question paper:

1. *What effect do you think Miss Siti intended when she 'reminded Benjamin of his days as a student at the school'? (1)*
2. *Benjamin's laughter at Miss Siti's stories was 'hollow'. What does this show us about his 'true feelings' at this point? (1)*

Summary

There is evidence of higher order thinking in the teachers' tasks especially in understanding knowledge and analysis. Questions that test understanding knowledge are awarded marks that range from 43% to 76%. Remembering knowledge was also asked with percentages ranging from 8% to 30 %.

This is also evidence that that Lesotho English reading comprehension teachers are aware of the need to vary the levels of thinking in the questions that they ask learners about texts. They were able to ask questions that allow students to process and to analyse information in the texts which Ryan (1988:466) observed that if students are denied that chance, they could not have a chance to give "varied and thoughtful answers".

Whereas the COSC papers included questions where students were asked to evaluate knowledge in the text, similar questions were not included by teachers in the comprehension tasks that they devised for their students. COSC papers also have higher percentages on questions that test

understanding knowledge while remembering knowledge and analysis are lower.

2. Deep knowledge

The next characteristic of intellectual quality is deep knowledge. In assessing teachers' ability to promote deep knowledge, I will consider the roles of the reader that students are expected to assume and the teachers' marking memoranda. The COSC English Syllabus 1123 indicates that among other things candidates should be able to: read a variety of texts accurately and with confidence, select, retrieve, evaluate, and combine information from written texts, appreciate the way authors make use of language. Looking at the comprehension questions in the selected past COSC question papers, I found out that the questions asked are an attempt to address some of the abilities that the syllabus stipulates as skills that students need to acquire and that which need to be imparted onto the students. The questions test the role of the students as text participants and there is no single question that tests students' abilities as text users or as text analysts, as the syllabus states one of the aims as 'developing the ability of candidates to enjoy and appreciate reading texts in the English Language' (English language Syllabus 1123, 2009:2).

In the same manner, there is no single question in the teachers' tasks that tests students' skills as text users or as text analysts. The questions require students to be able to act as a participant in the text to be able to answer the questions. As much as McKay claims that some teachers reach beyond the curriculum and draw on their professional perspectives to teach and assess reading (p. 226), the six selected teachers are those who their assessment of students is not even influenced by the curriculum but the question papers by the COSC examiner thereby denying students

to discover themselves as text users and as text analysts. Teacher 2 is the one who stated that he 'hates' reading, especially if he has to do it to teach, and if he so does not like reading, it may be difficult for him to try to impart love for reading various material in students.

While the ability to assess the teachers' understanding of deep knowledge in the context of setting a reading comprehension task is limited, the answers they provide in their marking memos is indicative of what sort of answers they would expect from learners. Teachers said it took them long to complete the task because they struggled with both asking questions and drawing marking memoranda. One teacher did not even attempt to draw a marking memorandum for his question paper, saying, "I never make a memo, at Ecol (Examination Council of Lesotho) we always find memos for whatever year we want".

Teachers revealed that they seldom set papers and do marking memos for COSC students because they use past COSC question papers which already have marking memos drawn by the examiners. This was therefore a new experience for them. Some teachers pointed out how different the examiners' answers in the marking memorandums are from answers they often expect.

Teacher 3 revealed how she regarded the marking memo provided by COSC examiners as a learning opportunity, she said "You find a lot of instructions on how to mark" and she said often, it is things they do not easily understand. COSC examiners' marking memorandums state how markers should award marks and types of answers that should be awarded marks. Teacher 4 said that they teach their own students to answer questions "precisely and concisely" as the examiners' marking memos always show that when unnecessary information is added to the answer

“excess denies”. For these reasons, they found making their own memorandums a challenge.

These teachers also revealed that when they use past question papers and marking memorandums they make their own marking memos before they look at that of the examiner and then come to compare their own with the examiners’. This way they said they were able to see where they may not have understood the questions and some teachers said they try to dig deep into how the examiner found the answer although most of the time they fail to understand the answers provided. Other teachers said that once their answers differ from those of the examiner’s, they do not bother to try to understand, they give it to students as it is. Teacher 1 said that it is the examiner’s examination and he cannot argue with him. He has to do as the examiner wants things to be done so that his students pass the exam.

Other types of questions that teachers said need attention in the way that they are answered are questions that ask for a certain number of words, e.g. ‘quote two words’ from the passage, and in two ‘consecutive’ words. Teacher 1 said that when the examiner says ‘consecutive’, it must be one word after another on the same line, if written otherwise then such a student forfeits marks. This indicated a technicist rather than conceptual view of “correctness”.

Teachers’ marking memorandums for this task were brief and seldom and they hardly went past a sentence; some are so because they asked a lot of factual questions that could be answered in one word, e.g. Teacher 5 has 30% of marks allocated to factual questions, and therefore he had mostly one word answers in his memo.

Most teachers asked one or two questions that require students to draw contrast but in their marking memorandums do not show any sign of language of contrast that can be used in the answers. Teacher 1 asked:

With the evidence from the paragraph, show the difference between the modern wedding and the traditional wedding. *(3)*

Answer in the marking memorandum:

Traditional wedding

- Preparation of diphiri
- Traditional breakfast of pounded meat and samp
- Church services

Modern wedding

- Traditional courtesies left out
- No church services
- No hidden pregnancies

Even though the question calls for analysis, the memorandum is on the level of factual content only. The differences between the two are not discussed in relation to one another, but each are described separately. Thus, the answer does not reflect how the teacher expects students to use language to show contrast.

Teacher 6 asked:

It is stated that the groom "seemed to go through a secret conflict."Explain fully and in your own words what the conflict was. (3)

The answer is: *Though he was going to marry the bride, it was clear that he still had feelings for the other girl.*

In the above case, Teacher 6 did not give a full explanation of what the conflict was in the marking memo, of how we know he still had feelings for the other girl or alternative answers to the question yet there could possibly be other ways of answering that question. Teacher 4's answer to the same question is more detailed as it provides some evidence for her assertion:

He seemed to have conflicting ideas regarding his choice of a bride, he has chosen Neo yet he keeps going to Mathata's yard and showering her with all sorts of gifts.

Even though it shows that some teachers have difficulties with making marking memoranda, the responses that teachers were expecting were in their marking memoranda. Teacher 3 said that she teaches her students how to tackle different types of questions therefore she expects them to give her answers that followed the procedures she taught them. She insisted that answers "must be correct and well-supported". Teacher 4 said, "Look at my marking memorandum" when I asked her what she would consider as quality answers from her students. This meant that she was expecting the students to give answers that are in her marking memorandum.

The teachers are also so used to using COSC material that when reading comprehension text is not of the same structure as of COSC reading comprehension passages they are not able to engage with it until they have converted it into a familiar form. For example, Teacher 4 said that she had to break the passage into paragraphs to make it easier for her to

ask questions. She argued that “there must always be logic in the way questions are asked.” All teachers said that the passage should have had well-defined paragraphs and that lines of sentences should have been shown at the end of each of the paragraphs. Teachers adjusted the passage to resemble the COSC examination question paper structure. This shows teachers’ insecurity with devising tasks beyond what is given.

Some teachers expressed their concern on reading comprehension passages, which often fail to culturally appeal to Basotho students. However they commented this reading passage for having something that students could relate to and saw this as something needed in all the papers that Basotho students sit for as second language speakers of English. Their take on this factor is in line with the literature review in this study (Robb 2000) which shows that students perform better on a reading passage that stimulates their cultural background or if a schema for such a culture can be build before the actual reading so that students can act as text participants.

Teacher 2 claimed that the passage is easy and that “the names of the people are familiar and the students are culturally familiar with the events that occur in the story”. Teacher 6 said that the most worrying problem he often has with comprehension passages “is cultural bias”, where Basotho students do not understand some concepts not because they have poor English, but because English is not their first language, they fail to understand.

These views are in alignment with Leavell and Ramoss- Michail (2000). They are of the opinion that the text with identifiable cultural content influences an individual’s comprehension and enable him or her to be act as a participant in that text (Robb 2000). This means that if students were

given this paper to write, students would easily construct meaning in relation to their background knowledge and the text and in that way knowledge would have been presented as problematic to students. Their understanding of the text and construction of their own meaning would be easy.

Summary

Teachers seemed to be guided by form and structure of COSC examinations rather than deep knowledge of language. One teacher could not set a summary question because she said she realized that the answers could not be accessed from the paragraphs in the same manner in which they are usually found in COSC summary questions. Another teacher felt unable to set a marking memorandum because he had always used COSC examiners' marking memorandums, and this was a new task for him which he felt unable to do.

3. Deep understanding

All the teachers that were interviewed talked about the types of questions that COSC reading comprehension usually tests: factual, inference, and summary writing. They explained what each question demands from students and how students have to answer them. They even showed how necessary it is that they teach and ask COSC examinations, but they did not ask all the questions that COSC questions ask, like questions testing evaluation skill, a skill that can be done by someone who has a critical understanding of a text. Below is an analysis of the COSC examination question papers. McKenna and Robinson's frame was used to make an analysis of the questions teachers asked:

	factual	inference	critical	summary
Teacher 1	23%	49%	0	29%
Teacher 2	26%	28%	0	46%
Teacher 3	23%	31%	4%	42%
Teacher 4	20%	80%	0	0
Teacher 5	8%	39%	0	51%
Teacher 6	30%	20%	0	50%

Table 3: Analysis of deep understanding through McKenna and Robinson's frame.

Teacher 4 does not have marks for summary writing because she did not ask a summary question. She felt that the text that was provided was "too easy and inappropriate for a summary question" and therefore she decided not to include a summary question. She said she would not be able to draw points accordingly, from the consecutive paragraphs as COSC examinations do. Yet other teachers asked the summary questions and drew answers for the questions they asked from all over the passage without considering the order of the paragraphs in which points are found. This shows that this teacher believes that the only correct way to assess reading comprehension is the way COSC examinations do it.

There is only one teacher who asked a critical question although like argued earlier, the question could not allow students to interact with the comprehension passage but their own general experience. The reason teachers could not set question that tests critical thinking even though COSC papers do, could be that they are the questions that teachers complained that they fail to understand how the examiner get to their answers. When Teacher 1 was asked which question was challenging to his students, he said inference questions were tough especially in cases

where he as a teacher could not even understand how the answer was reached.

Teacher 2 also said that questions that require him to think beyond the text gives him problems as a teacher, ‘I sometimes can’t even explain to them why I say the answer is that’. He said that is the reason he relies so much on the examiners’ marking memorandums. Teacher 3 said that the most discouraging thing is that sometimes even when they have attended workshops with the hope that the marking memos will be clarified, the markers often tell them, ‘the marking memorandum says so!’. All these point to a lack of deep knowledge as teachers are not able to set some of those questions and could not draw marking memorandums that have enough alternative answers.

Every teacher seemed to be more knowledgeable on inferential questions. They talked about a lot of different ‘sub-inferential’ questions and how they are identified and how they can be answered. Each one of the teachers talked about the following types of questions:

- In your own words questions
- Vocabulary questions
- Quoting and consecutive words questions

These that teachers call types of reading comprehension questions, Glover et al (2000) refer to them as ways that language is tested in a Cambridge reading comprehension examinations.

When teachers were asked what would be their idea of a quality response, they explained how they expected students to approach each of the types of questions asked. Some teachers were very general about it, like Teacher 4 who said that a quality response would be, “the one that shows

understanding of the questions and the ability to phrase it correctly." Some teachers expressed their idea of quality response according to how each type of question has to be approached. I will categorize their responses into the "major types" of questions they discussed:

Literal comprehension – It was clear in the way teachers explained this question that they have deep understanding of it. They seemed to know what students need to do and that they are able to give a clear guidance on how to approach it when they come across questions that test literal comprehension. Teacher 4 said that literal questions "require students to go back to the text and lift the answer because they are straightforward." Teacher 6 added that "Students have to directly locate the answer from the text, pick it as it is then the answer will be of a quality."

Inference questions have sub types. These sub –types took their names from the way they are always phrased in the COSC reading comprehension examination. Teachers said they have to teach and drill their students on these types of questions.

Teachers 2 said that when students answer to vocabulary questions they "have to check with the context of the paragraph before they decide on the meaning of the word." Teacher 6 further clarify that a response to such question "must be a synonym or a phrase of less than seven words" as indicated in one type of a vocabulary question. "These are the examiner's instructions. We have to adhere to COSC model", she added.

Teachers know most of the types of questions students need to know to be able to answer questions on COSC. But teachers themselves need deep knowledge of the language in order to help students work on the text from different levels of thinking. Teachers also need broad vocabulary

that can challenge students into broadening theirs. From the way they drew their marking memorandums, especially on questions that tested vocabulary, teachers' vocabulary is not broad enough as their marking memorandums on vocabulary questions were not exhaustive enough.

'Own opinion' questions ask for students' opinion, judgement, suggestions, among others, on what they have read. For a quality response Teacher 5 said that "the question is indirect and students need to apply their intelligence in order to interpret it." Students need to use their intelligence in order to answer to those types of questions. Usually they are given facts but they have to use the facts to produce an interpretation of the situation. This type proved to be the most difficult to both teachers and to students.

It becomes even more difficult to teachers when they have to teach something they are not confident in. Teacher 2 confirmed this and said "I can't even explain answers to them so I tell them, that is the answer." If teachers do not understand this type of questions then it cannot be easy for students who depend on the knowledge of the teacher. The students are bound to have a problem in understanding 'own opinion' questions.

Teacher 4 said that students write excessively and sometimes it looks like "they do not understand what it requires." Teacher 6 argues that the problem is the reading comprehension passages; "they are too specialised, concentrated and abstract yet students lack reading culture." He said that they never read books and because of that, they lack understanding and it creates problems when they have to answer inference questions.

Deep understanding of a text also requires that one has a cultural background of a text and the text itself. This teacher knows well that the

students require a text that students can associate with. The teachers also need to learn the requirements of each of the questions and seek help where necessary because learners cannot be taught a concept by a teacher when that teacher does not understand it and be expected to have a deep understanding of that concept.

Comprehension of a reading text requires linguistic competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence and general knowledge of the language. It is understandable to a certain extent that both teachers and students struggle with English reading comprehension passages.

Summary

Some teachers failed to show how important proper reading is to their teaching. Only 30% of the teachers claimed the importance of reading appropriately for understanding of the text. Their interest seemed to be primarily on teaching students how to answer questions set by COSC examiners and this helped them to ask questions of different levels of the revised Bloom's Taxonomy. This may lead to students' failure to answer questions appropriately as they will not have been able to interact with the text. Thus, this study confirms Setoi's claim that teachers must be equipped with effective methods of teaching English language. The teaching methods will enable them to teach students reading well enough for students to comprehend a text from different views.

Teachers asked factual questions, inferential questions, and summary questions but could not ask critical questions and this could be that it is one of the types of questions that they sometimes fail to understand in COSC papers.

Allocation of marks to questions by some teachers showed discrepancies as some marks could not match the requirements of the questions. This showed that those teachers did not know well enough about assessment.

4. Knowledge problematic

In this section, I look to see whether the answers supplied on marking memorandums allowed for several options or interpretations.

When teachers were asked what would be their idea of a quality response, Teacher 1 said anything that matches his memorandum should be a quality response. Teacher 1 reveals rigidity in his memorandum, which does not allow for alternative but relevant answers. This could be too limiting for students especially on questions that ask for the opinions or ask students to suggest or give their own thinking. Because that will mean that if their thinking does not match with their teacher's then the answers are wrong. E.g. Teacher 1 asked in his question paper,

'As they approached his yard, an old woman suddenly dashed out and chopped at the ground with a hoe.' How is this contrary to Neo's status? Answer*: she is a secretary and would never work the land to plough. (1)*

One student could also see this as the appropriate answer given the fact that Neo is first depicted as a classy and a boastful person. But towards the end of the story, Neo's behavior changes as she realizes that people hate her and that she may lose Kegoletile. For these reasons students who may give a different answer from the one in the marking memo would probably be marked incorrect, although providing a legitimate answer. While Teacher 1 and other teachers believe that a quality response is what is in their marking memorandums yet they do not give an exhaustive list of answers.

Teacher 5 asked a question that asked for opinion: *Can you think of a possible reason Neo 'had all this time been stiff'? (1)*

Answer: *she was thinking about Mathata, uneasy, feeling quilty*

According to the marks he allocated to this question, he was looking for one possible reason but he stated 3 in his marking memorandum. This shows that he was not expecting one particular answer from students.

Teacher 5 asked*: 'Girls like her offered no resistance to the approaches of men'. What does the author imply here? (2)*

The answer: could be seduced, naïve, gullible, foolish, not experienced.

He gave some alternative answers that show he expects that there can be a lot of different answers to the question.

Summary

While some of the teachers in this study gave an indication of several valid interpretations of the text in their marking memo, others expected students' answers to be exactly what was stated in the marking memos. Together with their comments about how they mark students' scripts, this reveals the way in which such teachers accept the authority of an official marking memo and feel insecure to consider other possibilities, either for themselves or for their students. This case study then shows that in this study, teachers did not see knowledge as problematic or the provided text as being open to alternative interpretations.

5. SUBSTANTIVE CONVERSATION

Christie says the use of substantive conversation characterizes pedagogies high in intellectual quality. However, the nature of the comprehension tasks set for this research project would not lend themselves to substantive conversation in the classroom context, so the research limits the extent to which the teachers' understanding of what could constitute substantive conversation can be explored.

Teacher 1

When Teacher 1 teaches types of questions, he said he does not prepare a reading passage for that. He says he explains to students the characteristics of each type of the questions. He then asks them to make their own questions and say what type they are. When he is satisfied with this exercise, he makes students identify the types he taught from the past COSC reading comprehension question paper and 'I teach them different ways of approaching those questions'.

Teacher 1 reveals his inability to recognise reading as the important stage of teaching reading comprehension. To him what is important is teaching questions and how to answer to them. This gives him and the students a little chance to engage in substantive conversation, which in this case would involve discussions about the story before it is read, while it is being read and after it has been read. It would also give this teacher a chance to teach his students how to read for meaning among others.

Teacher 2

Teacher 2 said he teaches students approaches to answering each type of questions that often appear in the final examinations and he does the same thing when he prepares students for the examinations.

Teacher 2 also skips the most important stage in reading comprehension, teaching reading. Although he did not say much on steps he usually takes as he teaches the types of questions, it does not look like teaching questions can have matter that can be said to be substantive. In the same manner as Teacher 1, they deny students a chance to read and widen their scope of knowledge and thinking since they fail to even activate students' schema with a discussion that prepares them for reading a text.

Teacher 3

Teacher 3 said she teaches students, share ideas with them and students learn to share ideas amongst one another as she conducts her reading comprehension lessons. She says she encourages her students to reason for the decisions they take in class. She orally discusses the title of the passage, from key words, what the title means to what the story could be about. She said she reads the story for the students and they then make analysis of each question, "I follow the pre-, while-, post reading procedure". In this way she even equips them with metalanguage of English as they communicate with the teacher and among themselves about the content of the text during 'while reading' phase of reading. She said she teaches them questions from the past COSC question papers by analyzing each one of them in as many question papers as possible.

To her what is important is for students to understand what the question requires of them, locate and tell the whole class where the answer is, so that they can discuss amongst one another if the answer could be correct. She says she first go through all those steps with them, playing a leader and when she feels that they understand what they have to do, she lets them do it on their own and she takes a role of a monitor in class, as Robb (2000) advises as well.

She said that pre-, reading and post-reading procedure gives her students a chance to share ideas with one another and also to consult her where they have difficulties.

Teacher 4

Teacher 4 said she makes students read comprehension passage and then she teaches them different types of questions and how to identify them in a question paper. She gives them a lot of written exercises on each type of question.

Teacher 4 gives students a lot of written exercises, which could be good for students but she does not create an environment for these students to engage in conversations that spreads and deepen understanding in class. The students' reading of the text does not mean that they will automatically acquire language without talking about it. Again reading a comprehension passage may not necessarily mean students grasp what they are reading, but the manner in which she describes the reading part of her lesson, leaves no doubt that she does not have much interest in whether they can read but in whether they can answer questions.

When Teacher 6 was asked how he would have prepared his students for the type of task he devised, he said he follows this routine:

1. I choose a passage
2. I read it in class because some students cannot read
3. Sometimes I ask them to read in turns
4. I teach different types of questions in class
5. I then begin drilling them with past COSC reading comprehension question papers.

For COSC examination, he still follows the same routine as above, but he uses question papers more to drill students.

Teacher 6 makes an attempt to help students to read properly because he is aware that some students do not do it well enough to be left on their devices. This is so important for their understanding of the text.

When teaching reading comprehension, one of the basics that need to be taught is reading. Students should be able to recognize letters, words and their meanings and so on in order to make sense of what is being read. A lot of students lack the reading skills but teachers do not give reading the priority it deserves so that students can interact with a given text. Teacher 4 mentions that her students are made to read but the fact that she does not dwell in how the students conduct the reading, one may claim that it is only done so that she can teach questions but not because she understand the importance of the reading stage for students to get involved with the text.

Teacher 3 and 6 talk about the importance of reading and Teacher 3 in particular conducts her reading lessons in such a way that may encourage open discussions in class. She talks about the text before reading while and after reading which could be a better way of teaching students how to read and how to interact with the text, which will enrich their reading, speaking and understanding abilities.

Summary

Although I managed to make the above comments, the task given to carry out this project was not appropriate for testing substantive conversation. I was able to learn that which I have discussed above from the way teachers answered questions on how they prepare their students for tasks

and examinations. From that bit, teachers do not seem to pay enough attention on conversations that construct thinking abilities of students in their classes.

Mainly, these teachers do not appreciate the potential a reading text has on helping students ideas to talk about in class, of which if done under the teacher's guidance could also help students acquire substantial amounts of language. This is shown by the fact that teachers only allow students to read in order to be able to answer the reading comprehension questions. There is an exception of one teacher who when conducting a reading comprehension lesson, do not only read for students but she also give them a chance to talk about what they have read.

Most of these teachers see teaching types of questions as a more important aspect of reading comprehension while they ignore to help students to find ways to interact with the text and to get involved with the text in order to build a better understanding of how ideas are developed in writing, how spoken or written language can be used and so on. So, with the little information this study managed to get from teachers about how prepare their students in class for reading comprehension tasks, this study has discovered that most teachers do not deal with reading texts in a way that could lead to students engaging in substantive conversations.

6. Metalanguage

COSC past question papers tested a range of questions which included questions testing metalanguage. A number of questions in the COSC examination ask students specifically to consider authors' intentions in light of the purposeful selection of particular words or phrases. Although these metalanguage questions accounted for a very low percentage of

marks, three question papers out of the five examined asked questions that required students to give their opinions on what could have been the authors' intention by using particular words but not the others. E.g.

> From 2007: Yusuf tells us that, in his mind, the events of Grandfather's party 'replayed like an old, familiar movie'. What does this show about his memory of that day? (1)
>
> From 2005: The writer tells us that the men 'combed' the outbuildings and the lighthouse itself. What does 'combed' tell us about the way they searched. (1)

In the interviews, some teachers revealed their perception that it is important for students to be aware of the language structures of the English language. For example, Teacher 4 explained that it is important for students to use correct tense when they answer questions. Tense of the answer is determined by the tense of the question. She further explained "sometimes students have grammar problems, and then as a teacher you have to teach the correct usage of tense so that they know how and when to use it." Teachers need to be knowledgeable on English grammar and tense in order to do all of these. But Teacher 5 made it clear that although he teaches students how to answer the questions, "but when I mark my students, I am not strict with English because that is what they do when they mark reading comprehension at COSC final examinations marking". He said he realized this when he was marking at national level. This means that he would not even stop in his teaching to make students aware of the effect.

In stark contrast, this is one type of question that not one of the teachers in this study asked in the questions they devised on the provided reading

task. Not one teacher asked a question that required students to move beyond the text and consider the selection of particular words or phrases by the author to create particular moods or meanings. This stands in great contrast to other questions, which were modeled strongly upon the typical COSC format of the examination questions. This analysis shows how the teachers focused their comprehension tasks at understanding what the author had produced, but were not directing students' attention to the process of using language to create meaning.

I have argued that the teachers asked a lot of questions that required interpretation of the text but did not explore how language was used by the author in the text to create meaning. In addition to that, they do not expose their students to texts or prepare those students in their teaching to become text users or text analysts. It is the way that they have set questions that have also revealed that they do not even assess those abilities. However, even a focus on understanding the passage stands in contrast to the claims made by Webb and Kembo-sure (2000) that teachers of English in African Countries would not focus on meaning and understanding but rather on the 'correctness' of grammatical rules. This study then refutes Kembo-sure's (2000) claim.

Summary

The fact that teachers did not test students on metalanguage was particularly significant in the design of this study. Whereas in all other categories, teachers' comprehension tasks followed the format and structure of the COSC examinations very closely. The COSC examinations have included questions that deal with metalangauge but

not one of the teachers' comprehension tasks included a question that explored students' understanding of metalanguage. Neither did any of the teachers raise this in the interviews conducted. Teachers did not naturally include metalangauge issues into their tasks, and this is probably reflects a gap in the intellectual quality of their teaching of comprehension, as indicated by Christie's framework of productive pedagogies.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the previous chapter, I presented my findings, in light of the Framework that Christie provides for gauging Intellectual Quality. I also used my findings to respond to the literature, where relevant. In this final chapter, I seek to look at my findings holistically and bring together what this study has found about how teachers of English in Lesotho understand intellectual quality.

Thinking Pedagogically

According to Shulman's (1987) Model of Pedaogical Reasoning and Action, the way in which a teacher transforms materials and content for learning involves a process of pedagogical reasoning so that the design of teaching tasks (like presentation of knowledge or assessment tasks) does not involve simply a mechanical procedure but is an embodiment of professional teacher knowledge and thinking. This research report asked six teachers of English in Lesotho to design a comprehension assessment task and then to discuss their task. Through this process, I hoped to investigate their understanding of what intellectual quality means in the context of promoting comprehension of English in Lesotho.

The most striking finding of this study was that the teachers in this study were surprised by the request to design a comprehension task. For nearly all of them, this had been something that they had never been required to do before. Similarly, they were unused to drawing up marking memoranda for the assessment tasks. This revealed immediately that teachers in Lesotho are being provided with the teaching and assessment material they should use in their teaching. In their daily practices, they are not involved in the process of designing tasks to promote learning. They

see themselves then, not as professionals with an expert knowledge but as there to implement and deliver the material that has been prepared for them. In this way, the pedagogical reasoning practices of English teachers in Lesotho are being stifled by this culture of dependency.

The second striking finding of the study is that when teachers agreed to set their own questions and marking memoranda, they felt insecure to do so until they had converted the text to the same format used in the COSC examinations (for example, paragraphs numbered). Several complained that this conversion had been a time-consuming process for them. Their inability to use a piece of prose until it had been formatted in a particular way reveals their insecurity to deviate from the familiar. This shows that for some, it was the format of the prose that enabled them to devise tasks, and not the substance of the prose itself. This reveals how teachers of English in Lesotho feel somewhat intimidated by engaging with materials beyond what has been processed for them, and feel reluctant to draw on their own subject knowledge and knowledge of texts beyond what is officially provided to enable learning.

Thirdly, when teachers devised their tasks, their questions followed the COSC formula very closely. Several teachers simply repeated standard questions, simply with adjustments to the provided text. Such questions included the sort of "find words that mean the same as…" It was interesting to see how the six teachers, at six different schools, devised comprehension tasks with virtually the same structure, modeled on the COSC structure. Although they had the freedom to design the comprehension tasks in any way they saw fit, they all stuck closely to the structure. This reveals that they are all well versed with the expectations

of the COSC examiners but also struggle to imagine possibilities outside that structure. This finding confirms Setoi's assertion that teachers teach according to their knowledge of the examiners' expectations. However, this study shows that a clear understanding of examiner expectations and the structure of the examinations can be enabling for teachers to some extent and provide a framework for them in which to exercise their attempts to design learning and assessment tasks.

Fourthly, of significance is that certain teachers were reluctant to devise their marking memos, insecure in their own interpretation of the piece of prose. Even those teachers who did draw up marking memoranda provided fairly limited answers. This with their interview responses reveals that the English teachers themselves do not feel confident in their own subject knowledge or their practices of analyzing literature. They were much more comfortable with being required to work with officially provided memoranda. Several indicated that indeed such support helped them to understand the work better before they taught it.

While acknowledging that this was a very small scale study, the findings of this analysis reveal a major problem in the teaching of English in Lesotho. By providing teachers with all materials, assessments and marking memos that they need to teach the COSC syllabus, teachers themselves do not seem to be taking any responsibility for their own professional growth or engaging actively in tasks that develop their own ability to think pedagogically. This kind of material development is crucial if teachers in Lesotho are to develop their own expertise in teaching English. The teacher associations may be able to play a vital role in this regard.

Intellectual Quality

Christie's framework for thinking about intellectual quality in the lessons they teach identified several characteristics of intellectual quality, namely, higher order thinking; deep knowledge and understanding; knowledge being problematic; substantive conversations and the development of metalanguage. In this study, this framework was applied to the design of reading comprehension tasks.

Reading comprehension involves simultaneously extracting and building meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. Teaching reading is a necessity when teaching reading comprehension and Douglas (1998:81) says it is crucial for a teacher to help students become "good readers" who will be able to extract information "efficiently" from what they have read. Several teachers in this study emphasised how important it is for students to properly interact with the text, to read appropriately. Several, but not all of them, mentioned how they allocate time in their class for reading. Even for those who said they read with their students, believe that they as teachers are the ones who can read but do not impart those skills into their students. This confirms Kembo-sure (2000)'s claim when he says that African English teachers do little demonstration to students on how to deal with textual information in a way that will enable their critical understanding of reading passages and to answer questions appropriately.

Some teachers complained that their students have a problem with inference questions. This is a consequence caused by the teachers who do not teach reading skills to their students. The six teachers do not make attempt to go through the passage bit by bit with the students they already know are struggling, to teach them to read for meaning yet McKenna and

Robinson argued that understanding of a passage “is more than the acquisition of individual facts,” However, from the task teachers devised, teachers managed to ask questions that would enable students to think beyond the text unlike a claim by Ryan that teachers fail to ask questions that make students “process and analyse information”. Teachers tested students on analytical skills which would require students to give “varied and thoughtful answers”. The teachers in this study devised comprehension questions that displayed two characteristics of intellectual quality, namely questions that engaged learners in higher order thinking and questions that promoted a deep understanding of the text.

All teachers in this study asked questions of the text beyond mere recall questions. For all of them, the focus of the paper was on understanding the meaning of the text which shows that teachers expect students to act as text participants yet they do not teach them how. Just like the COSC examinations, none had questions of application (which is appropriate to a comprehension type task). All of them had questions where students were asked to analyse an issue in the prose. However, while the COSC papers included questions asking students to make an informed evaluation, only one of the teachers in this study did so. Even then, her question was not directed as a response to something in the text, but rather asking learners for their personal opinion, in a manner that did not require engagement with the text at all. So while a range of higher-order questions were asked by all, the teachers in this study stopped short of asking their students to evaluate.

The fact that teachers did not ask students to offer a personal evaluation on any aspect of the given text aligns with teachers marking memos which were nearly all very straightforward in terms of clearly stating which the “correct” answer was. An evaluation allows for different

interpretations and as such promotes a view of knowledge as contested. The teachers in this study felt uncomfortable with this position, and this was reflected in their marking memos, the avoidance of questions asking learners for judgments and in their interviews.

Another important observation in this study is that both the COSC question papers and those of the selected teachers did not assess students on their ability as text users or as text analysts, which are seen as significant roles that a reader should be able to take while reading.

In conclusion, the teachers in this study showed some understanding of the intellectual quality of the comprehension tasks they devised. They are very aware of the need to develop learners understanding of the meaning of the text beyond decoding of the reading passage. Furthermore they see comprehension tasks as a way of developing understanding of the English language as a whole and promoting thinking skill through the questions that they ask. However, the study shows that they do not teach reading skills at all and thereby fail to prepare students reading skills that will enable them to answer questions that require them to have read for meaning.

The study also shows that teachers are not expected to design their own tasks or marking memoranda, and this means that they are not developing internal expertise in material development and extending their own pedagogical thinking. As much as the COSC exams provide a comfortable structure in which these teachers can work, it is also contributing to a dependency culture where teachers second guess themselves, their own expertise in the subject they teach and their ability to assess their students, without an officially sanctioned marking memo.

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

Academic background

What qualification do you have?

.....

.....

.....

Teaching experience

How many years of teaching experience do you have?

.....

.....

Have you marked COSC reading comprehension (paper 1) at national level before?

.....

.....

.....

Teacher organisations

Do you or your department belong to any English teachers association?

.....

.....

.....

APPENDIX B

Interview schedule

1. How easy or difficult was it to devise this task?
2. Describe the type of questions you asked.
3. What were your reasons for asking each of these questions?
4. What kind of responses are you expecting from your students? What would be your idea of a quality response?
5. How would you prepare your students for this type of a task?
6. Which questions challenge your students intellectually? Why do you say so?
7. How do you prepare students for the COSC examinations?

APPENDIX C- READING COMPREHENSION PASSAGE

BESSIE HEAD

Snapshots of a wedding

Wedding days always started at the haunting, magical hour of early dawn when there was only a pale crack of light on the horizon. For those who were awake, it took the earth hours to adjust to daylight. The cool and damp of the night slowly arose in shimmering waves like water even the forms of the people bestirred themselves at this unearthly hour were distorted in the haze; they appeared to be dancers in slow motion, with fluid watery forms. In the dim light, four men, the relatives of the bridegroom, Kegoletile, slowly herded an ox before them towards the yard of Mmakhudu, where the bride, Neo, lived. People were already astir in Mmakhudu's yard, yet for a while they all came and peered closely at the distorted fluid forms that approached, to ascertain if it were indeed the relatives of the bridegroom. Then the ox, who was a rather stupid fellow and unaware of his sudden and impending end as meat for the wedding feast, bellowed casually his early morning yawn. At this, the beautiful ululating of the women rose and swelled over the air like water bubbling rapidly and melodiously over the stones of a clear, sparkling stream. In between the ululating all the while, the women began to weave about the yard in the wedding dance; now and then they bent over and shook their buttocks in the air. As they handed over the ox, one of the bridegroom's relatives joked:

"This is going to be a modern wedding." He meant that a lot of traditional courtesies had been left out of the planning for the wedding day; no one had been awake all night preparing Diphiri or traditional

wedding breakfast of pounded meat and samp; the bridegroom said he had no church and did not care for such things; the bride was six months pregnant and was showing it, so there was just going to be a quick marriage ceremony at the police camp.

"Oh, we all have our own ways," one of the bride's relatives joked back. "If the times are changing, we keep up with them." And she weaved away ululating joyously.

Whenever there was a wedding the talk that preceded it were appalling, except that this time the relatives of the bride, Neo, kept their talk a secret among themselves. They were anxious to be rid of her; she was an impossible girl with haughty, arrogant ways. Of all her relatives and she was the only one who had completed her "O" levels and she never failed to rub in this fact. She walked around with her nose in the air; illiterate relatives were beneath her greeting- it was done in a clever way, she just turned her head to one side and smiled to herself or when she greeted it was like an insult; she stretched her hand out, palm outspread, swung it down laughing with a gesture that plainly said: "Oh that's you!" Only her mother seemed to be bemused by her education. At her own home, Neo was waited on hand and foot. Outside her home nasty remarks were passed. People bitterly disliked conceit and pride.

"That girl has no manners!" the relatives would remark. "What's the good of education i it goes to someone's head so badly they have no respect for the people? Oh she is not a person."

Then they would nod their heads in that fatal way, with predictions that one day life would bring her down. Actually life had treated Neo rather nicely. Two months after completing her "O" levels she became pregnant by Kegoletile with their first child. It soon became known that another girl, Mathata, was also pregnant by Kegoletile. The difference between the two girls was that Mathata was completely uneducated; the only work

she would ever do was that of a housemaid, while Neo had endless opportunities before her- typist, bookkeeper, or secretary. So Neo merely smiled; Mathata was no rival. It was as though the decision had been worked out by circumstance because when the families converged on Kegoletile at the birth of the children- he was rich in cattle and they wanted to see what they could get- he of course immediately proposed marriage to Neo; and for Mathata, he agreed to a court order to pay a maintenance of R10, 00 a month until the child was twenty years old. Mathata merely smiled too. Girls like her offered no resistance to the approaches of men; when they lost them, they just let things ride.

"He is of course just running after the education and not the manners," Neo's relatives commented, to show they were not fooled by human nature. "He thinks that since she is as educated as he is they will both get good jobs and be rich in no time..."

Educated as he was, Kegoletile seemed to go through a secret conflict during that year he prepared a yard for his future married life with Neo. He spent most of his free time yard in the yard of Mathata.

His behaviour there wasn't too alarming but he showered Mathata with gifts of all kinds- food, fancy dresses, shoes and underwear. Each time he came, he brought a gift and each time Mathata would burst out laughing and comment: "Ow, Kegoletile, how can I wear all these dresses? It's just a waste of money! Besides, I manage quite well with the R10, 00 you give every month for the child..."

She was a very pretty girl with black eyes like stars; she was always smiling and happy; immediately and always her own natural self. He knew what he was marrying- something quite the opposite, a new kind of girl with false postures and acquired, grand-madame ways. And yet it didn't pay a man these days to look too closely into his heart. They all wanted as wives, women who were big money-earners and they were

so ruthless about it1 and yet it was as though the society itself stamped each of its individuals with its own particular brand of wealth and Kegoletile had not yet escaped it; he had about him an engaging humility and eagerness to help and please that made him loved and respected by all who knew him. During those times he sat in Mathata's yard, he communicated nothing of the conflict he feltbut he would sit on a chair with his arms spread out across its back, turn his head sideways and stare at what seemed to be an empty space beside him. Then he would smile, stand up and walk away. Nothing dramatic. During the year he prepared the huts in his new yard, he frequently slept in the home of Neo.

Relatives on both sides watched this division of interest between the two yards and one day when Neo walked patronizingly into the yard of an aunt, the aunt decided to frighten her a little.

"Well aunt," she said, with the familiar careless disrespect which went with her so-called, educated, status. "Will you make me some tea? And how's things?"

The aunt spoke very quietly.

"You may not know it, my girl, but you are hated by everyone around here. The debate we have going is whether a nice girl like man like Kegoletile should marry bad-mannered rubbish like you. He would be far beter off if he married a girl like Mathata, who though uneducated, still treated people with respect."

The shock the silly girl received made her stare for a terrified moment at her aunt. Then she stood up and ran out of the house. It wiped the superior smile off her face and brought her down a little. She developed an anxiety to greet people and also an anxiety about securing Kegoletile as a husband- that was why she became pregnant six months before the marriage could take place. In spite of this, her own relatives still disliked her and right up to the day of the wedding they were still

debating whether Neo was a suitable wife for any man. No one would have guessed it though with all the dancing, ululating and happiness expressed in the yard and streams of guests gaily ululated themselves along the pathways with wedding gifts precariously balanced on their heads. Neo's maternal aunts, all sedately decked up in shawls, sat in a select group by themselves in a corner of the yard. They sat on the bare ground with their legs stretched out before them but they were served like queens the whole day long. Trays of tea, dry white bread, plates of meat, rice, and salad were constantly placed before them. Their important task was to formally hand over the bride to Kegoletile's maternal aunts when they approached the yard at sunset. So they sat the whole day with, expressionless faces, waiting to fulfil this ancient rite.

Equally still and expressionless were the faces of the long column of women, Kegoletile's maternal aunts, who appeared outside the yard just as the sun sank low. They walked slowly into the yard indifferent to the ululating that greeted them and seated themselves in a group opposite Neo's maternal aunts. The yard became very silent while each group made its report. Kegoletile had provided all the food for the wedding feast and a maternal aunt from his side first asked:

"Is there any complaint? Has all gone well?"

"We have no complaint," the opposite party replied.

"We have come to ask for water," Kegoletile's side said, meaning that from times past the bride was supposed to carry water at her in-law's home.

"It is agreed to," the opposite party replied.

Neo's maternal aunts then turned to the bridegroom and counselled him: "Son, you must plough and supply us with corn each year."

Then Kegoletile's maternal aunts turned to the bride and counselled her: "Daughter, you must carry water for your husband. Beware, that at all

times, he is the owner of the house and must be obeyed. Do not mind if he stops now and then and talks to other ladies. Let him feel free to come and go as he likes..."

The formalities over, it was now time for Kegoletile's maternal aunts to get up, ululate and weave and dance about the yard. Then, still dancing and ululating, accompanied by the bride and groom they slowly wound their way to the yard of Kegoletile where another feast had been prepared. As they approached his yard, an old woman suddenly dashed out and chopped at the ground with a hoe. It was all only a formality. Neo would never be the kind of wife who went to the lands to plough. She already had a well-paid job in an office as a secretary. Following on this another old woman took the bride by hand and led her to a smeared and decorated courtyard wherein had been placed a traditional animal-skin Tswana mat. She was made to sit on the mat and a shawl and kerchief were placed before her. The shawl was ceremoniously wrapped around her shoulders; the kerchief wrapped around her shoulders; the kerchief tied around her head- the symbols that she was now a married woman.

Guests quietly moved forward to greet the bride. Then two girls started to ululate and dance in front of the bride. As they both turned and bent over to shake their buttocks in the air, they bumped into each other and toppled down. The wedding guests roared with laughter. Neo, who had all this time been stiff, immobile, and rigid, bent forward and her shoulders shook with laughter.

The hoe, the mat the shawl, the kerchief, the beautiful flute-like ululating of the women seemed itself a blessing on the marriage but all the guests were deeply moved when out of the crowd, a woman of majestic, regal bearing slowly approached the bride. It was the aunt who had scolded Neo for bad manners and modern ways. She dropped to her knees before the bride, clenched her fists together and pounded the

ground hard with each clenched fist on either side of the bride's legs. As she pounded her fists she said loudly:

"Be a good wife! Be a good wife!"

APPENDIX D- TEACHER 1'TASK

Snapshots of a wedding

Paragraph 1

1. a) When did the wedding days stare? (1)

   b) Explain fully what made the forms of people to appear 'to be dancers in slow motion?'(2)

   c) What are the names of the bridegroom and the bride?(2)

d) Give two things the women did to welcome the day. (2)

Paragraph 2

2. a) With the evidence from the paragraph, show the difference between the modern wedding and the traditional wedding. (3

   b) Using the information from the paragraph, mention one character of the brade. (1)

   c) The society and the bride's home have a conflicting view towards the bride. Show this conflict. (2)

Paragraph 3

3. a) Pick out and write down a phrase used in the paragraph which shows that people like Mathata never cared for men even after divorce. (1)

   b) Pick out and write down two consecutive words which show that the two girls have a differing concern for marriage. (1)

Paragraph 5

4. Show how Kegoletile reveals a 'secret conflicting.' (2)
5. Explain how the 'ancient rite' was to be fulfilled. (1)

6. ‘As they approached his yard, an old woman suddenly dashed out and chopped at the ground with a hoe.’

i) How is this contrary to Neo’s status? (1)

ii) Write down an expression which emphasizes this contrast. (1)

iii) Choose five of the following words. For each of them give one word or short phrase (of not more than seven words) which has the same meaning that the word has in the passage.

1. Distorted
2. Courtesies
3. Bemused
4. Humility
5. Dramatic
6. Patronizingly
7. Sedately
8. Rigid (5)

9. **Using your own words as far as possible**, summarize the clashing personalities between Neo and Mathata. (In a note form). (10)

APPENDIX E- TEACHERS 2'S TASK

1. At what time of the day did the wedding days begin? (1)
2. Who were responsible for herding the ox to the bride's home? (1)
3. Why does the author consider the ox to be stupid? (2)
4. Give reasons according to the author why that wedding was considered to be the modern wedding. (3)
5. Why did Neo's relatives keep their talk secret among themselves? (2)
6. Why did Neo get pregnant? (1)
7. In your own words can you describe the difference between Neo and Mathata. (2)
8. What did the author mean when he stated that 'girls like her offered no resistance to approaches of men? (2)
9. The author is describing the main features of wedding in the olden and modern days.

In your own words as much as possible write the summary on the main features of the olden days and how it differs from that one of the modern days. (25)

Begin your summary as follows

In the traditional wedding everybody would spend the night awake...

APPENDIX F- TEACHER 3'TASK

Snapshots of a wedding

Question 1

a) When would weddings usually start? (1)
b) What do you think is the reason to start at that time? (2)

Question 2

What three facts illustrate that the wedding in the passage had not really followed tradition? Number your answers i, ii, iii, (3)

Question 3

a) How did Neo, the bride treat other people and why? (2)
b) How was she treated in her own home? (1)

Question 4

'Oh she is not a person', is a phrase that can be regarded as literal translation from Setswana. How would the same sentence be phrased in English? (2)

Question 5

What secret conflict went through Kegoletile? (2)

Question 6

a) Mention three things that were said to Neo when she visited her aunt one day. (use reported speech in your answer))3)
b) State two ways in which Neo reacted to what the aunt said. (2)

Question 7

a) Why do you think Neo got pregnant six months before the wedding? (2)
b) What is your view of ‘sex before marriage’? Support your answer. (2)

Question 8

Explain the following words and phrases as they are used in the passage.

a) Maternal
b) Decked up
c) Peered
d) Ululating
e) Immobile
f) Regal

Question 9

Write a summary of not more than 120 words of things done in preparation for Neo and Kegoletile’s wedding, how the ceremony panned out and what happened in the end. (20)

APPENDIX G-TEACHER 4'S TASK

Paragraph1

1. a) When according to the passage did the wedding days start? (1)

b) Pick one word from the passage which suggests that people in Mmakhudu's yard were already awake at that time.

c) Why did people in Mmakhudu yard peep at the approaching men? (1)

d) The ox is said to be a stupid fellow, what does this imply. Answer in your own words. (2)

Paragraph 2

2. Quote at least two reasons from this paragraph which characterises this particular wedding as a 'modern wedding' (3)

Paragraph 4

3. a) Write down two consecutive words from this paragraph which suggest that Neo was proud and unfriendly (2)

c) Why does Neo walk around with her nose in the air? Answer in your own words. (2)

Paragraph 5

4. a) The writer says 'life had treated Neo rather nicely.' What information is there is this paragraph that?

c) What gave Neo an advantage over Mathata? (1)

Paragraph 6

5. Why according to Neo's relatives was Kegoletils marrying her? Answer in your own words. (1)

Paragraph7

6. a) The writer says Kegoletile seemed to go through a secret conflict during that year, what conflict is that? (1)

b) What is the R10 which was given to Mathata for? (1)

c) Which two character traits make Mathata a lovable girl/woman? (2)

7. from the whole passage

Choose five of the following words or phrases. For each of them gives one word or short phrase (of not more than seven words) which has the same meaning that the word has in the passage:

1. bestirred
2. distorted
3. astir
4. ascertain
5. impending
6. appalling
7. haughty
8. rival (5)

APPENDIX H- TEACHER 5 TASK

From paragraph 1

1. a) Quote the two adjectives used to describe the early dawn. (2)

   b) What is meant by 'bestirred'? (1)

2. **from paragraph 2**

(a) 'This is going to be a modern wedding' mention two characteristics of a traditional wedding. (2)

(b) Explain in your own words the bridegroom 'had no church and did not care for such thing.'

3. a) 'She never failed to rub in this fact'. What is the fact? (1)

   b) 'She was an impossible girl with haughty and arrogant ways' Explain fully what this means. (2)

   c) What expression is there in this paragraph to show that Neo was treated like royalty at home?' (1)

From paragraph 6

4. a) 'Girls like her offered no resistance to the approaches of men'. What is the author trying to imply? (2)

b) Cite one difference in the real life opportunities of the two girls. (1)

From paragraph 8

5. Give one manifestation of the 'secret conflict' in Kegoletile.

6. What is meant by 'so-called'? (1)

From paragraph 14

7. 'The shock the little girl received' created two anxieties in Neo. Explain them in your own words. (2)

From paragraph 20

8. Can you think of a possible reason Neo 'had all this time been stiff'? (1)

From the whole passage

9. Choose five of the following words or phrases. For each of them give one word or short phrase (of no more than seven words) which has the same meaning as the word or phrase in the passage.

    a) Shimmering
    b) Ascertain
    c) Appalling
    d) Bemused
    e) Communicated
    f) Sedately
    g) Symbols
    h) Immobile

10. Neo and Mathata are totally different girls

Using your own words as far as possible, summarize these contrasts. Use only material from paragraphs 4-9.

Your summary, which must be in continuous writing, not note form, must not be longer than 160 words including the 10 words given below.
Begin your summary as follows:
The relatives of the bride, Neo, kept among themselves, anxious...

APPENDIX I-TEACHER 6

SNAPSHOTS OF A WEDDING

From paragraph 1

a) At what time of the day did wedding start? (1)

b) What was the name of the bride? (1)

c) In whose yard did she live? (1)

From paragraph 2

2 a) Explain your own words what one of the bridegroom's relatives meant when he said it was going to be a modern wedding.

b) Where was the marriage ceremony going to be held? (1)

From paragraph 4

3. a) Why did the bride's relatives want to get rid of her? (2)

b) What level of education had the bride reached ? (1)

From parahraphs 5 and 6

4. a) Another girl was pregnant by the bridegroom. What was her name? (1)

b) How long after leaving school did the bride fall pregnant? (1)

c) According to the bride's relatives, what is the reason for the groom's choosing to marry her? (2)

d) (i)how much money per month was the groom going to pay to maintain the other girl's child? (1)

(ii) for how long would he pay the money? (1)

From paragraph 8

5. It is stated that the groom '...seemed to go through a secret conflict.' Explain fully and in your own words what the conflict was. (3)

From paragraph 15

6. One of the bride's aunts shocked Neo by telling her that everyone hated her, and that the bridegroom ought to marry the other pregnant girl instead. What did the bride do afterwards, which showed that the aunt had really shocked her? Mention two things. (2)

From the whole passage

7. Choose five of the eight words or phrases below. Say what each of the words means-you can us either synonym or a phrase of not more than seven words.
   i) Astir
   ii) Ululating
   iii) Haughty
   iv) Preceded
   v) Alarming
   vi) Patronizingly
   vii) Terrified
   viii) eagerness

using your own words as far as possible, write a summary to show that Neo was a proud girl and that some of her relatives did not approve of her, as well as what she did when she learned that they did not like her. You should write in a continuous form, and your summary should not be more than 160 words long, including the 10 opening words below. (Be sure to start with the 10 words). Use only material from line 32 to line 119.

(25)

APPENDIX J

COSC ENGLISH COMPREHENSION PASSAGE AND COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS 2007

Grandfather's Party

1 'Yusuf!' he exclaimed. 'It is you, isn't it?' There was no mistaking my cousin Ali, standing there in the shopping mall. He was older, certainly, but he retained the cheeky grin of his childhood. We hadn't seen each other for years, as his family had emigrated to Australia when he was ten years old. This had pleased me enormously, because the very mention of his name was a source of embarrassment to me. Recently I had heard that he was back, as a teacher in my home town. 'Yes, it's me,' I stammered, trying to regain my composure. However, standing face to face with Ali, my cheeks burned with shame because, since I had last seen Ali, the events of Grandfather's eightieth birthday party had, in my mind, replayed like an old, familiar movie...

2 Grandfather lived in our house and rarely left it, preferring instead to sit quietly in a chair looking out of the window – always the same chair – watching family members come and go, listening to their conversations but seldom volunteering to join in. He was a quiet, contented old man, whose habits never varied. He had deep lines on his face which, he often told me, were signs of experience and wisdom. When my mother announced that she would give a party to celebrate his forthcoming eightieth birthday, he seemed quite pleased.

3 The big day arrived. Beads of perspiration stood on my mother's brow as she busied herself energetically in the kitchen, putting the final touches to her preparations for the occasion. Back and forth she went, carrying serving dishes to the table, stirring the contents of cooking pots, and taking from the cupboards the huge supply of plates and glasses needed. The pots on the stove simmered and bubbled, sending clouds of hot steam around the kitchen.

4 Suddenly, our house was full of people, as guests arrived at the appointed time. Greetings were exchanged and people embraced, eager to catch up on news. Elderly aunts and uncles chatted to children, who were terribly bored by the routine exclamations about how much taller they had become. My cousin Ali arrived with his mother, who dashed into the kitchen to offer her services to my mother, while he boasted to me about his new sandals as he stepped out of them on the doorstep.

5 Ali never lost an opportunity to show what he perceived as his superiority over me. Smirking, he boasted, 'I've got a new bicycle. I bet it's much better than yours.' We went outside together, where Ali inspected my bicycle. He hooted with laughter. 'That little blue bag on the saddle looks so silly!' he screamed. Because I was trying to compensate for my inferior bicycle, I blurted out, 'Well, I've got a watch now, and you haven't.' Pleased to see the envious glint in Ali's eyes, I led him to my room, took my watch from the drawer and handed it to him. Then I snatched it back and returned it to its place, feeling extremely self-satisfied. 'That's just a kid's watch,' he said.

6 It was time that rude boy learned a lesson, I thought. As soon as I was sure that Ali had gone, I took the watch out of the drawer again. Clutching it carefully, I sneaked outside without – or so I thought at the time – drawing attention to myself. By now, the house was packed, the noise levels were rising, and my mother and the other women were clattering about in the kitchen. The party was in full swing, and this was a good time for revenge. I found Ali's new sandals among the pile lying outside the door – glad that he had already pointed them out to me so that they were easily recognisable – and hid the watch under them. Trying to look relaxed and innocent, I skipped past Grandfather's chair and, almost as if I were trying to convince myself that the lie I was about to tell was true, I returned to my room. Opening the drawer, I saw that, indeed, the watch was not there. My heart racing, I shot from my room to raise the alarm, this time hoping to be conspicuous. I was pleased at the way things were turning out and silently congratulated myself on my cleverness. 'Mother!' I wept, dashing into the kitchen. 'My watch is missing. The last person to touch it was Ali. He must have stolen it!'

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7 My mother went outside, where Ali, unaware of the accusations I had made, was cheerfully riding my bicycle at great speed, demonstrating his skills to my two brothers, who were clearly impressed. When my mother explained to them that my watch was missing, my brothers rushed to my room to begin the search; I think they were glad to escape from Ali's showing off, and an opportunity to please their mother was no doubt a welcome diversion for them. Meanwhile, my aunt had come from the kitchen and, taking Ali roughly by the arm, led him back to the house. He looked so confused by events that I almost felt sorry for him. But there was no turning back, I told myself, and, after all, Ali deserved to be humiliated.

8 By the time I got back to my room, my brothers had emptied out the contents of my drawers; shirts and trousers made an untidy pile in the centre of the floor. My brothers looked through the cupboard and even shook my school books, in case the watch had slipped inside one of them. My mother arrived on the scene and joined in the search, looking under my bed and my pillow, and further adding to the chaos in the small room. Gradually we became aware of a smell wafting in our direction, not the appetising aromas which had greeted our guests on their arrival, but the unmistakeable smell of burning food. Simultaneously, in the room next door, my baby sister awoke. Troubled by the noise coming from my room, the banging of cupboard doors and things being thrown on the floor, she started to cry, a whimper at first but soon a pathetic wailing sound.

9 What exactly happened next I can't remember – probably remorse and apprehension have combined to blot it from my memory. But what I do remember is this. When I went back to the party, Grandfather quietly called me over to his chair. 'Your mother told me your story, Yusuf. But I wonder if your watch has really been stolen.' He got up slowly from his chair, took my hand and led me outside. Stooping down, he took my watch from under Ali's sandal. We were alone outside; from inside the house, we were aware of loud conversation, the smell of burning, the screaming of the baby, the raised voices of my mother and brothers. My eyes met Grandfather's and I knew that he knew the truth. Without saying a word, he put my watch into the little blue saddlebag of my bicycle.

10 Then he whispered in my ear: 'Now I think you should put a stop to all the trouble you're causing for Ali. Yes, he is quite annoying but, like you, he's only a child.' Running indoors, I told my mother that my watch had been found and that I had forgotten putting it into the saddlebag of my bicycle. Both Ali and his mother glared at me, but this was Grandfather's birthday and enough damage had been done; I knew that nothing more would be said.

11 I realised at the time that Grandfather wanted me to confess my lie but I had neither the courage nor the humility to do so. However, Ali and I were only kids then, and now, fifteen years later, here we were, two young adults, more experienced and, I hope, wiser. 'Yes, it's me,' I repeated. 'And I have something to tell you.' It was impossible not to think of Grandfather. Smiling, I resolved to look in the mirror later for at least the beginnings of lines of experience and wisdom.

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Read the passage in the insert and then answer **all** the questions which follow below.

You are recommended to answer the questions in the order set.

Mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar may be penalised in any part of the Paper.

From paragraph 1:

1 **(a)** Whom did Yusuf meet at the shopping mall? [1]

(b) Yusuf was embarrassed and tried to regain his composure. In what **two** ways can we tell that he was embarrassed? [2]

(c) Yusuf tells us that, in his mind, the events of Grandfather's birthday 'replayed like an old, familiar movie'. What does this show about his memory of that day? [1]

From paragraph 2:

2 **(a)** Give **one** piece of evidence from the paragraph which shows that Grandfather's 'habits never varied'. [1]

(b) Explain **in your own words** what, according to Grandfather, the lines on his face showed. [2]

From paragraph 3:

3 **(a)** Give **two** reasons why the mother had 'beads of perspiration' on her brow as she set the table and prepared the food. Number your answers (i) and (ii). [2]

(b) Which **one** detail of the mother's preparation shows that she was expecting a large number of guests that day? [1]

From paragraph 4:

4 **(a)** Why did the arrival of the guests happen 'suddenly'? [1]

(b) The children were 'bored' when they were told how much taller they had become. Pick out and write down the **single** word which tells us why they were bored. [1]

From paragraph 5:

5 **(a)** Explain **in your own words** why Yusuf decided to tell Ali about his watch. [2]

(b) Explain fully why Yusuf was 'extremely self-satisfied' after he showed Ali his watch. [2]

From paragraph 6:

6 The writer says that the women were 'clattering about' in the kitchen. What effect is created by this expression that would not have been created by the word 'moving'? [1]

From paragraph 7:

7 Ali was cheerful because he did not know that he had been accused of stealing. What other reason does the writer suggest to explain why Ali was cheerful as he rode Yusuf's bicycle at great speed? [1]

From paragraph 9:

8 Grandfather 'knew the truth'. What is the 'truth' that he knew? [1]

From paragraph 11:

9 'And I have something to tell you.' What does Yusuf have to tell Ali? [1]

10 From the whole passage:

Choose **five** of the following words or phrases. For each of them give **one** word or short phrase (of not more than **seven** words) which has the same meaning that the word or phrase has in the passage.

1. enormously (line 4)
2. volunteering (line 12)
3. eager (line 22)
4. perceived (line 27)
5. in full swing (line 39)
6. shot (line 44)
7. chaos (line 60)
8. simultaneously (line 62) [5]

11 Yusuf was angry with Ali and wanted to punish him.

Using your own words as far as possible, write a summary of what Yusuf did in his attempt to punish Ali, the search which followed and how the search ended.

USE ONLY THE MATERIAL FROM LINE 35 TO LINE 74.

Your summary, which must be in continuous writing (not note form), must be no longer than **160** words, including the 10 words given below.

Begin your summary as follows:

Yusuf wanted to teach Ali a lesson and so he… [25]

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