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School of Human and Community Development

THE IMPACT OF A PEER-MENTORING PROGRAMME ON ENGLISH READING PROFICIENCY OF SECOND LANGUAGE GRADE 9 LEARNERS

BIBI AYESHA KAROLIA

A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA by coursework and Research Report in the field of Educational Psychology, in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at this or any other university

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Bibi Ayesha Karolia

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ABSTRACT

Since South Africa's democratic government was elected to power in 1994, much attention has been given to restructuring the country's education system. Peer-mentoring is one approach to meet current challenges in education given high teacher:learner ratios, greater diversity in student population and majority of learners being taught in English, their second and even third language. This research examined the impact of a peer-mentoring reading intervention with second language Grade 9 learners. The study utilized a sample of Grade 9 learners (N = 173) from a school in Gauteng. Biographical information was obtained and these learners were pre-tested in Grade 8 and post-tested in Grade 9 2007, using the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT). The entire Grade 9 group received the reading intervention for three months and their results were compared to a comparison group from the previous year who received no intervention. Results of learners' vocabulary, comprehension and academic achievement scores were compared. Although both the comparison and the experimental groups showed an improvement on their vocabulary and comprehension scores, the experimental group's gains were significantly higher. Of the Grade 9 experimental group, 30 learners (mentees) received individual paired reading mentoring and their scores were examined to determine the extent of improvement. The mentees group showed similar significant gains in their vocabulary and comprehension scores, and showed an overall improvement in their academic marks. Challenges faced, limitations and recommendations for future study are discussed.

KEY WORDS

Peer-mentoring, mentor, mentee, reading programme intervention, English second language learners,

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To my family, especially my parents for their love, support and understanding

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved husband and my children for their patience, support, encouragement and sacrifice.

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Literacy problems in the Unites States have reached the point of being considered a major public health problem, with serious educational consequences. Statistics are alarming: one out of every five of the nation's school-age children suffer from reading failures; majority of all poor readers (especially in low-income urban schools) have an early history of spoken-language deficits; and children who are not fluent readers by fourth grade are likely to struggle with reading into adulthood. Poor reading and writing skills have a devastating lifelong impact (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 1997-2005).

In South Africa, language in education has been a contentious political issue. The ideology of the dominant group in the apartheid era disadvantaged other groups by limiting their access to literacy, thus impeding their economic and academic advancement (von Gruenewaldt, 1999). The ruling elite imposed the value of social adaptation to a society in which it held control over all aspects of the life of ordinary people, especially in the education sector (Macdonald & Burroughs, 1991). Prior to the 1994 elections there were approximately 19 different educational departments which were not only regionally but also racially segregated (White, Black, Indian and Coloured races). One of the most important changes was the titular removal of these racially differentiated educational systems, leaving one national department with provincial offices. The per capita allowance for education varied between the departments with the white students at the top of the allowance scale and the black students at the bottom. This meant that on the whole, schools in the black system were under-resourced and teachers were not as well qualified. Many black students now attend former white schools, but it remains true that majority of these black students still attend schools in rural areas which are poorly resourced and staffed with very large class sizes. If these problems are not addressed, this situation has poor prognosis for students' future academic achievement (Goodlad, 1998).

In contrast to children from industrialised English-speaking societies where their pre-school environment prepares them for the education process in their native tongue, for disadvantaged and second language children where the language of teaching and learning is English, the education process comes as an unexpected shock. Consequently, learners not only need to

master English, but also need to achieve proficiency in the reading and writing of English (von Gruenewaldt, 1999). Since 1994 in South Africa much effort has gone into trying to redress the educational inequalities of the apartheid past and to offer all children equal educational opportunities. This has led to the development of a new curriculum and new language-in education policies. In spite of well-meaning changes in terms of policy, little has changed on the ground for African children who still attend schools in the racially segregated townships and rural areas, and who struggle academically (Smyth, 2002). In urban areas such as Soweto and even in many rural areas, parents favour the increased use of English in schools and want their children to start learning it earlier (Macdonald & Burrows, 1991). Even though they are at a linguistic disadvantage, they choose English because it is the discourse of economic and industrial dominance and empowerment (von Gruenewaldt, 1999). A knowledge of English is therefore essential to second language learners in order to develop confidence in their new social settings, especially in school (Brown, 1979).

For a great majority of primary school children in South Africa, English a foreign language, learnt in the classroom lacks any sustaining environment outside the school. For these second language learners, English is seldom spoken at home. To exacerbate matters they have little exposure to English literature, and in addition, academic demands are being made in English which is not their first language (HSRC, 1986). The school however must consider large populations of children who experience high level difficulties, and as the years go by comprehension difficulties become increasingly apparent and increasingly detrimental to effective schooling (Carnoldi & Oakhill, 1996).

According to Saville-Troike (2006), people are generally not aware of the prevalence of multilingualism in the world today, nor the pervasiveness of second language learning, especially in countries where English is the majority language of speaking, teaching and learning. However for majority of South Africans their first language is not English, whilst the academic demands of learning and teaching in schools is mostly in the English language. This implies that the majority of school-going children learn in English which is their second and even third language.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) refers to the study of individuals and groups who are learning a language subsequent to learning their first one as young children, and to the process of learning that language. The additional language is called a second language (L2), even

though it may actually be the third or even fourth to be acquired. Learning a second language for communicative purposes requires knowledge and skills for using it appropriately, as well as knowing aspects of linguistic forms and how they have to be organized. L2 interpretation and production are influenced by contextual factors. The first language (L1) we are born into, and our success or failure in acquiring a particular L2, whether through a formal or informal means, can profoundly influence the entire trajectory of our lives (Saville-Troike, 2006).

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Being literate involves more than acquiring the rudimentary skills of reading and writing. The sense of what literacy is derives from interactions with the family or significant others in the process of socialisation as well as many concomitant factors in the social environment. Literacy is culturally bound and for this reason it is essential for educators to take account of literacy practices in the home and the broader social environment, so that children will have a solid foundation for subsequent academic growth in literacy. Family practices actively channel children's development through the creation of sets of experiences and opportunities, especially when the child observes family members using reading and writing in everyday activities (Machet, 2002).

According to Machet (2002), for South African children who are marginalised, learning and retaining literacy is more difficult for them than children coming from an advantaged, middle-class background. Although variations in basic education levels exist within categories of race, gender and geographical location, race is still the single most powerful variable determining educational levels in South Africa. The high level of illiteracy in South Africa plays an important role in the social context of literacy, because if children grow up in an illiterate environment this affects their exposure to books and literate behaviours. Many parents frequently feel they have nothing to give their children that will be of educational value and as a result do not participate in their children's formal education (Machet, 2002).

Language skills refer to specific, observable, and definable components such as handwriting. Language competence refers to an inner, mental representation of language that is latent rather than overt (Baker, 1996). Language performance is the evidence for language competence. Language ability and language proficiency tend to be used interchangeably and provide an indication of current language levels, and are viewed as the product of formal

learning, informal language acquisition and of individual characteristics such as 'intelligence'. It includes the ability to communicate by means of symbols that include both oral and written communication and involve expression as well reception of ideas (Baker, 1996).

Reading is important in the learning context not only because it affords readers independent access to information in an increasingly information-driven society, but more importantly because it is a powerful learning tool, a means of constructing meaning and acquiring new knowledge. If developing countries aim to produce independent learners, then serious attention will need to be given to improving the reading skills of students and to creating a culture of reading. Reading is not simply an additional tool that students need at tertiary level; it constitutes the very process whereby learning occurs (Pretorius, 2002).

Understanding written language is the outcome of a dynamic and distinctly non-linear (dual) process of continuous and interactive recognition, association and synthesis of visual symbol(s) ↔ sound(s) ↔ word(s) ↔ meaning(s) (Bouwer & Jordaan, 2002). Reading is a cognitive-linguistic activity comprising several component skills. A distinction is commonly made between two main components, viz. decoding and comprehension. Decoding involves those perceptual and parsing aspects of reading activity whereby written signs and symbols are translated into language. When learners start the intermediate phase (Grades 4-6), then the senior phase (Grades 7-9) and after that the FET (Further Education and Training Phase) (Grades 10-12), it is expected that their decoding skills have been mastered. Comprehension refers to the overall understanding process whereby meaning is assigned to the whole text. Although comprehension cannot effectively occur until decoding skills have been mastered, skill in decoding does not necessarily imply skill in comprehension (Pretorius, 2002).

According to Pretorius (2002), many readers may readily decode text but still have difficulty understanding what has just been decoded. In skilled readers, decoding and comprehending skills interact rapidly and simultaneously. Reading is also socially constructed which implies that socio-cultural factors ascribe meaning and value to the act of reading and to the context in which it occurs. Thus reading attitudes and values affect home, school, work and community literacy practices, levels of literacy that are attained, materials and instructional practices for teaching literacy. In South African schools there are no formal assessment procedures or standardised reading tests, for first language African or additional language learners, for determining whether students are reading at their appropriate maturational levels.

Consequently it is difficult to determine officially the extent to which students have reading problems (Pretorius, 2002).

When word recognition is thus delayed, jumbled or blocked, the text can become fragmented and the message can disintegrate unless learners have conscious controls in place to scaffold their understanding. Further barriers to comprehending written text arise when the learner with reading difficulties come from a disadvantaged environment. Educators in mainstream schools feel severely challenged when they need to address the difficulties of all such learners in an inclusive educational setting which grants limited opportunity for individual attention (Bouwer & Jordaan, 2002).

Since, in the past, children were forced to make the transition from their home language to English after four years of schooling, this resulted in stifling of the development of their home languages. More importantly, this sudden transition in the language of learning and teaching affected children's academic performance at school. It would seem that the maintenance and development of learners' home languages is a major factor in successful bilingual programmes (Macdonald, 1990). This is linked to the crucial relationship between language and thought and the role which this plays in the growth of concepts, both everyday and scientific, in cognitive development (Smyth, 2002).

1.2.1 Cummins's Theory

Underlying the education arguments of many bilingual education advocates, was the conviction that a history of oppressive power relations was a significant contributing factor to bilingual students' underachievement. For many years students were punished for any use of their first language (L1) in the school context and were discriminated against in virtually all areas of education. Thus, some degree of genuine recognition or institutionalization of children's language and culture in the schools was a prerequisite to reversing this legacy of coercive power relations.

Proponents of bilingual education argued that first language (L1) instruction in the early grades was necessary to ensure that students understood academic content and experienced a successful start to their schooling. Reading and writing skills acquired initially through L1 provided a foundation upon which strong English language development could be built. The

research literature on bilingual development provides consistent evidence for transfer of academic skills and knowledge across languages (Cummins, 2000).

According to Cummins (2000), research studies since the early 1980s have shown that immigrant students can quickly acquire considerable fluency in the dominant language in society when they are exposed to it in the environment and at school. However, despite this rapid growth in conversational fluency, it generally takes a minimum of about five years for them to catch up to native-speakers in academic aspects of the language (Cummins, 2000).

There are four basic language abilities: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These abilities fit into two dimensions: receptive and productive skills; and oracy and literacy. Each of these language abilities can be more or less developed. At the same time a distinction has been made between surface fluency (where the child is able to speak the second language) and the more complex language skills required to benefit from the education process (Baker, 1996). A further distinction is made between English Second Language (ESL) learners and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) learners. (ESL) learners are taught in the dominant language of instruction rather than in their mother tongue, but may nevertheless possess skills to acquire proficiency in the first language. (LEP) learners may seem fluent in English and may even have passed an admission test in English for further study, but these learners may not know the language well enough to be successful at school (Baker, 1996).

Cummins (2000) and Macdonald (1990) applied the Developmental Interdependence hypothesis, which is one possible explanation for language problems second language learners' experience. They suggest that a child's second language competence is partly dependent on the level of competence already achieved in the first language. Furthermore, the relationship between first and second language literacy skills suggests that effective development of primary language skills can provide a conceptual foundation for long-term growth in English literacy skills (Cummins, 2000). Cummins (1979, 1981) in McKay (1998) argues that once learners have acquired literacy skills in their mother tongue, literacy in a second language is facilitated, since learners transfer these skills across languages.

Hence, Cummins (2000) makes a further distinction between surface knowledge and deeper conceptual-linguistic knowledge. Surface knowledge refers to skills required for ordinary relaxed conversation, not cognitively demanding, and enables one to communicate in

everyday situations. He refers to this as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). Deeper conceptual-linguistic knowledge refers to skills that are needed when reading and/or writing an advanced text which Cummins calls the Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). CALP is necessary for academic success (Cummins, 2000). He further argues that if children do not have the opportunity to fully develop Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) in their first language, they will not develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) skills in their first language (Smyth, 2002). The sometimes- abrupt change to English as a medium of instruction in standard three (Grade 5) retards the development of CALP skills even further, as they can only be developed once they acquire BICS in the second language. Due to limited English proficiency and difficult content, learners are forced to rote learn and CALP skills are never sufficiently developed (Olivier, 1998).

Cummins's (2000) threshold theory suggested that there are three critical levels of language proficiency which influence learning. At the first threshold, children have low levels of competence in both their languages and thus experience learning difficulties. At the second threshold, children have age-appropriate competence in one language and, as long as this is the language they use for learning, they experience no benefit or disadvantage from their bilingualism. At the third level, learners have age-appropriate proficiency in two languages (Smyth, 2002). Furthermore, Cummins (2000) claims that this latter threshold produces a positive cognitive effect, by allowing children to think more divergently. One major educational implication of the threshold hypothesis is that if optimal development of ESL learners' academic and cognitive potential is a goal, then the school programme must aim to promote an additive form of bilingualism where their first language will need to play a strong role cognitively, psychologically and culturally (Cummins and Swain, 1986).

Cummins has been criticized for proposing a deficit model of language and learning and for not being able to define more precisely what constitutes a threshold level of proficiency (Baker, 1994). However Smyth (2002) argues that his model provides a useful theoretical basis for understanding the language and literacy necessary for academic success. It would appear, based on the findings of the Threshold Project (Macdonald, 1990) that first language African children in South Africa are in the first or second threshold level of language proficiency. This project investigated the nature of language and learning difficulties Standard Three (Grade 5) children experienced when they changed from the mother tongue to English

as a medium of instruction. The report on this project dealt with firstly, an overview of the history of language testing done on the project, secondly, an attempt was made to describe the nature of the learning task the child faces with recent trends at the time in bilingual education, thirdly, an analysis was done on the implications of having different language policies and fourthly, areas for future research and development (Macdonald, 1990).

Schlebusch (2002) explored the language dilemmas that Grade 10 Limited English Proficiency (LEP) learners experience. Thirty learners were randomly chosen from five English-medium Black secondary schools in the Free State. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 LEP Grade 10 Economics learners. The researcher wanted to ascertain whether LEP learners experience serious problems with English as the language of learning in the Economics classroom. His findings confirmed Cummins's theory, that it is important that LEP learners learn through their mother tongue for a prolonged period at school, and that the level of English proficiency of LEP learners entering secondary school need to be on a CALP level in their first language before learning through a second language in order for them to understand subject language (Schlebusch, 2002).

Pretorius (2002) has investigated the relationship between reading ability and academic performance in a South African context, of two studies at undergraduate level (first year mathematics students and medical students). The findings showed clear and consistent differences in reading ability between the different academic groups (mathematics and medical), with reading skills improving the higher the academic group, that is, the better a student's reading ability the better his/her academic achievement. These findings indicated that many additional language (AL) students have serious reading comprehension problems, which means that they had ineffective and limited access to the rich resources provided by print-based materials in the learning context. In the results from both studies, reading ability emerged as a robust indicator of academic performance for both mathematical and medical students. The results from the mathematics group was interesting, since it shows that even in a subject typically associated with logico-deductive skills, reading skills play an important role (Pretorius, 2002).

In addition to the case studies, Pretorius (2002) further explored the relationship between reading ability and academic performance in the South African context more thoroughly. Reading ability does not, of course, guarantee good academic performance since many other

variables come into play, such as motivation, perseverance and dedication to task. However, the results from both studies suggest strongly that lack of reading ability functioned as a barrier to effective academic performance. Reading below a 50% comprehension level seriously jeopardized students' chances of passing. The studies (Pretorius, 2002) also showed that language proficiency per se was not as robust a predictor of academic performance as reading ability. Students in the 'fail' and 'at risk' groups could obtain quite high scores on language proficiency and still be at risk academically. Many additional language (AL) students may acquire high levels of proficiency in English, but it is mainly an oral-based BICS-type of proficiency, and if the AL is also the language of tuition and learning, then such students are unlikely to succeed in the learning context because the cognitive-linguistic proficiency that underpins reading ability is CALP-based, and is acquired on constant exposure to written text (Pretorius, 2002).

According to Pretorius (2002), in a multilingual society such as that of South Africa, the reading problem tends to be masked by the language problem. Because so many of the students study through the medium of a language that is not their primary language, it is generally assumed that poor academic performance stems from poor additional language proficiency. Such a relationship can be a complex one. When students have difficulty reading to learn, it is often argued that their comprehension problems stem from limited English proficiency. This reflects an underlying assumption that language proficiency and reading ability is basically 'the same thing'. If this were so, then all mother-tongue speakers should automatically be good readers in their mother tongue. Furthermore, if language proficiency and reading ability was basically 'the same thing', then improving the language proficiency of students should improve their reading comprehension. Research by (Hacquebord (1994) as cited in Pretorius, 2002), shows that this does not readily happen, and in fact it is attention to reading that improves reading skill, and in the process language proficiency also improves. Furthermore, the study concluded that the relationships between reading ability and language proficiency and between reading ability and academic performance need to be examined more closely. Because language is the medium through which one reads, language proficiency and reading are clearly related. Although intuitively one can posit a relationship between reading and academic performance, one needs to have empirical evidence of such relationship if educational policy is to be influenced in a decisive way (Pretorius, 2002).

1.2.2 International Research on Peer-Mentoring/Tutoring

Paired peer-mentoring involves the pairing of a learner with a higher reading and comprehension ability with a learner who has a lower reading and comprehension ability. According to Goodlad & Hirst (1989), research into the efficacy of 'Paired Reading' began in the mid-1970's with a small number of cases in clinical settings. Paired Reading is a strategy which emphasizes fluency in reading, use of context, and comprehension. The rationale incorporates the following points: the involvement of 'significant others'; the child's selection of reading materials; modelling by the child of a competent reader; the child's control of the feedback of information about the text from the tutor; positive reinforcement of the child's reading; and an increased 'time-on-task' by the well-motivated child. Paired reading has been used primarily with children reading at or below age-level, but who have attained some level of sight reading (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989).

Peer-mentoring (tutoring as it is referred to by some resources) is the system of instruction in which learners help each other and learn by teaching. At its most basic level, peer-mentoring refers to children teaching other children, usually on a one-to-one basis. The process involves same-age peers tutoring each other, or older students 'teaching' younger students, also called cross-age tutoring (Ehly & Larsen, 1980). Goodlad (1998) stated that student tutoring and mentoring involve students from colleges and universities; helping pupils in local schools; on a sustained and systematic basis; under the direction and supervision of teachers. He makes the distinction between the terms 'tutoring' and 'mentoring'. According to him, tutoring focuses on academic learning, usually in classroom between one or more students for a few weeks, whereas mentoring could include both, the academic learning as well as focusing on life skills, often outside the classroom on a one-to-one basis for several months or even years (Goodlad, 1998). In this research thesis the word 'mentor/mentee' will be primarily used, and the words 'tutor/tutee will be used only if cited as such in specific references.

According to Goodlad & Hirst (1989), in this process a professional teacher organizes the activity of the non professionals (tutors) as they administer to the needs of the ultimate beneficiaries of the process (tutees). In addition to improving academic competence, tutoring is reported to transform learning from a private to a social activity, thereby increasing social interaction and making the process of learning and its end product more rewarding. Furthermore peer tutoring can free the teacher from routine tasks making it possible to

concentrate on strategy- planning the curriculum, pacing the learners' progress through it, managing all the educational resources and evaluating the outcome of instruction. (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989)

As discussed in Goodlad & Hirst (1989), between 1984 and 1987 as a direct result of the five-year Kirklees Project in West Yorkshire, which was designed to set up Paired Reading Programmes, 83 junior schools had some involvement in the project; 2759 school children were involved in 185 school-based projects. They were comprised of children of all reading levels, including those with poorer and special needs levels. Tutoring usually occurred for approximately 15 minutes per day for a duration of six weeks. Reported results were encouraging: accelerated gains in reading accuracy and comprehension were found for children of all reading levels, but particularly those with special needs. Winter (1986) (as cited in Goodlad & Hirst, 1989) found on post-tests 10 to 11 year old children were more confident in their reading, generally made fewer errors and self corrected even after the six week intervention. In addition, anecdotal reports of teachers and parents claimed that children became more confident and interested in reading activities after the intervention, and teachers observed a change in classroom atmosphere away from competition and towards co-operation and helpfulness. (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989)

Topping (1990) discussed and reviewed within the context of a large-scale dissemination project, ten projects on peer tutor paired reading, involving how projects were conducted, procedures and outcomes reviewed. Pre and post-test data were reported for all studies, while four studies also had baseline data and two studies had comparison group data. Two studies had follow-up data for short and long-term respectively. Overall the evidence reviewed suggested that peer tutored paired reading accelerated children's reading progress, while peer tutors gain more than tutees. In most projects tutees gained more than double times 'normal' rates in reading accuracy and gained more than four times 'normal' rates in comprehension. In most instances, acceleration of these factors continued even after the intervention. The exception was in the case of Project 3, where at a 12 week follow-up, during which tutoring had ceased, progress decelerated sharply to less than normal rates. This indicated that while post-test results appeared to be reliable, continued acceleration did not occur after peer-tutoring had ended (Topping, 1990).

A study by Coats (2007), from Northcentral University focused on cross-age tutoring and examined effects on reading achievement of tutors and tutees in an after-school programme. It involved the cross-age tutoring of learning-disabled sixth-grade students and non-disabled first and second-grade students in reading recognition, and determined the effects that cross-age tutoring had on reading achievement. Statistical analysis of the data collected in this study implied that both tutors and tutees could increase reading recognition, improve attitudes regarding their own reading abilities, and enjoy the activities and relationships within such an after-school tutor programme (Coats, 2007).

Pyron (2007), from the Louisiana State University focused on the effects of peer tutoring for helping English Second Language (ESL) students achieve academic success. The motivation for carrying out the study was that these ESL students were failing the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test and this limited their future career and academic choices. A tutoring programme for ten ESL/LEP students and seven tutors was designed. Amidst the many problems the study encountered such as large class sizes, scheduling, budget cuts, teacher and administration misunderstanding, and time constraints- only two of the students passed the TAKS test at the end of that year. However the study motivated that peer tutoring can and does work for increasing the language proficiency of ESL learners. Test scores did not necessarily show the students' progress, but progress was evident in their development of social capital and through their linguistic gains (Pyron, 2007).

The UK Projects I to IV (Fitz-Gibbon, 1990), in England were part of five controlled field-experiments which were meant to replicate the Los Angeles (LA) Fractions Projects in the United States (US). UK Projects I to III were considered successful and involved cross-age tutoring where tutors learnt more than equivalent pupils spending the same time on content, and tutees showed significant learning gains. UK Projects III and IV represented clear failures and both were same-age projects rather than cross-age projects (Fitz-Gibbon, 1990).

On comparison of the UK and LA projects, it was noted that in the cross-age projects, the significant gains demonstrable in the four LA classes were only replicated in one of the two UK classes, and even there the advantage to tutors was no longer detectable on a retention test 14 weeks later, whereas in LA the benefits had been apparently retained. Many possible explanations can be considered for the difference between the US and UK results. In particular one suspects that normal classroom instruction, the control group's treatment, was

more effective in the UK. Also, perhaps one must consider the much shorter experimental period in the UK (two weeks) and the fewer resources as compared to that of the US (three weeks) and a classroom with special booths and practical equipment (Fitz-Gibbon, 1990). This situation resonates with the situation in South Africa where schools are under-resourced both financially and materially, as well as experience huge teacher shortages.

Thus, there is considerable evidence to suggest that peer-tutored paired reading has substantial promise, although detailed information is lacking and the outcome data from these projects is expressed in different ways that it is difficult to combine or meta-analyse. There were some doubts about the reliability, validity and comparability of the reading tests used in the above studies, keeping in mind that evaluators accept that it is more difficult to demonstrate positive results on norm-referenced tests than on criterion-referenced measures and subjective measures. Hence educational rather than statistical significance is what was being sought in these studies. Perhaps most crucially, the gathering of further long-term data would be invaluable (Fitz-Gibbon, 1990).

According to Fitz-Gibbon (1990), there are many accounts of successful experiments in peer tutoring, but accounts of failures are understandably more rare. Nevertheless, if we are to understand how peer tutoring creates better learning and other positive benefits, and if research is to guide practice, then it is just as important to study projects which failed as it is to examine projects which have succeeded. Of course, the dichotomy ‘failure or success’ is too crude. The outcomes of tutoring are multi-faceted, and there may be aspects of ‘success’ and aspects of ‘failure’ within a single project. The learning of both tutors and tutees (cognitive outcomes) and their attitudes (affective outcomes) are important to keep in mind when examining such projects (Goodlad & Hirst, 1990)

Currently there is much interest in developing effective ways to intervene early with young children who are at risk of difficulty in learning to read, especially low-socioeconomic status (SES), language minority students from families where English is not their first language (Ehri, Dreyer, Flugman and Gross, 2007). The Reading Rescue tutoring intervention model was investigated with 64 low-socioeconomic status, language-minority first graders with reading difficulties. The main purpose of the study was to obtain evidence regarding the effectiveness of a comprehensive tutoring intervention model, Reading Rescue (RES), when it is applied to teach language-minority struggling readers in first grade. Reviews of the study

indicated that students who received this tutoring made greater gains in reading achievement from below-average to average levels during the first grade, than students (the control group) who did not receive the programme intervention (Ehri et al., 2007).

Limitations of the RES study include the fact that not all students could be assigned randomly to tutored, and control groups and entry-level differences were adjusted in statistical analyses. Paraprofessionals used in the study possessed a college degree, therefore the findings could not be generalized to paraprofessionals who possessed less than a high school diploma. Furthermore only short term effects of the RES tutoring model were tested at the end of the year, but more long term lasting effects in subsequent grades were not focused upon. When comparing the two small group interventions, the two forms of instruction were confounded by other variables as the two phonic programmes were not identical. As a result it was not clear that the instructional delivery unit was the critical factor explaining the difference in students' performance following interventions (Ehri, et.al., 2007).

A study by Sadoski & Willson (2006) in 1997-2003 over a six year period, saw the Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes partnered with Pueblo School District 60 (PSD60). The Lindamood-Bell reading intervention was used, which saw a theoretically based initiative designed to improve Colarado Student Assessment Programme reading scores. A main developmental reading programme as well as an accelerated Reader supplemental programme was used. PSD60 schools and schools statewide were compared to a series of repeated measures analyses of covariance controlling for school size, percentage of minority students enrolled, socioeconomic status, and the amount of time a school was included in intervention. Statistically significant gains favouring the Lindamood-Bell reading intervention were found, where PSD60 schools on average outperformed comparable Colorado schools on tests of reading comprehension, both overall and in analyses of Title 1 schools. With increased intervention over the years, unsatisfactory and partially proficient scores were replaced by proficient and advanced scores (Sadoski & Willson, 2006).

Levine et al., (1987) (as cited in Goodlad, 1998) conducted a cost-effectiveness analysis of four different interventions designed to improve reading and mathematics in primary schools in the USA: computer-assisted learning (CAL), reducing class size, lengthening of a school day, and cross-age peer tutoring. The most cost-effective intervention (peer tutoring) was four times more cost-effective than the least which was reducing class size.

1.2.3 The South African Context

As Pretorius (2002) reported, in 2000 the headlines of the Sunday Times (16 July 2000) proclaimed South African children to be the "dunces of Africa". The article reported on the findings of a comparative study of literacy and numeracy rates of primary school children from 12 countries in Africa, with South African children faring poorly in comparison with their African peers on both literacy and numeracy measures. Every year there is a public outcry over the low matriculation marks and poor pass rates of South African secondary school learners countrywide. Although the reading levels of these matriculants are not stated, their high failure rate suggests problems in 'reading to learn'. Many of these matriculants then apply to study at teaching colleges, technikons and universities, and yet, because of their poor reading and English proficiency levels, they are poorly equipped to cope with the demands of study at tertiary level (Pretorius, 2002).

In a study by Hough & Horne (2001) (as cited in Pretorius, 2002), literacy levels at technikons in Gauteng were examined. A longitudinal study of Grade 12 English second language applicants showed a steady decline in functional literacy levels. The results of a standardised English literacy test given to 766 Grade 12 school-leavers who applied to a teacher training college in 1995 showed that 95% of the applicants were reading at below Grade 8 level, 3% were reading at Grade 8 level, while only 2% were reading above Grade 8 level. Yet these students qualified as teachers in 1998 and the majority are now teaching English and/or a content subject through the medium of English (Pretorius, 2002).

Pretorius (2005) undertook a qualitative study of reading abilities of 1200 first-year psychology students and five case studies were also undertaken. The article reported on the observations that were made of the reading practices, attitudes and problems of the five students over a three-month period. The findings indicated that the students were generally slow and non-strategic readers who struggled to make sense of their textbook. Unless such students are helped to become more skilled and effective readers, they are unlikely to process their study material at a deeper level and become independent learners. In essence, the students lacked strategic knowledge to control their reading outcomes (Pretorius, 2005).

Pretorius (2005) further argued that unsuccessful readers find it difficult to break out their pattern of reading failure "because their behaviour exacerbates their ineffective reading and

leads to greater failure". These students have a legacy of inert learning and there are no quick fixes for reading problems. Individual students also respond differentially to reading instruction, depending on their level of reading, attitudes to reading and their studies, interests and motivation. Second language learners (L2) who have a history of reading failure and who take a long time to read texts may be disinclined to adopt strategies that take up more of their reading time, for which they see no particular value and of whose importance they remain unconvinced. Once they used a strategy and saw it did indeed make a difference, they were more likely to adopt it more readily into their reading practices (Pretorius, 2005).

As stated in Bouwer & Jordaan (2002) "to South African educators, the tide of educational change, which has been casting up new challenges since 1994, still seems to be rising. Instead of an ebb, to afford opportunity for reflection and consolidation of the knowledge and skills required to meet all the new demands of shifts in class size, the curriculum, the linguistic and cultural composition of the class and the principles directing disciplinary practice in schools, yet another challenge now needs to be faced- that of inclusive education" (Bouwer & Jordaan, 2002: p.198). The White Paper on Special Needs Education 6 launched in July 2001 (Department of Education 2001), heralds a new dispensation for learners in South Africa contending with intrinsic barriers to learning (e.g. disability) as well as barriers attributable to external factors such as having to use a second or additional language as the language of teaching and learning (Bouwer & Jordaan, 2002).

In introducing a policy of inclusive education, the White Paper upholds the internationally endorsed position that it is the responsibility of schools to make adaptations to meet the educational needs of all their learners, instead of expecting the learner to adapt to the standards or style of instruction of the school. Inclusive education is about striving to achieve full participation by all learners in the class, including learners with disabilities and other forms of learning difficulty. Learners with learning difficulty frequently pass unnoticed or unattended in the mainstream classroom, on account of an apparently normal intelligence and successful participation in verbal activities, although their performance in reading and writing is poor (Bouwer & Jordaan, 2002).

Van Rooyen (1990) (as cited in Smyth, 2002) examined the English used in textbooks. She found that children were not sufficiently prepared to deal with the range of language demands made by textbooks. She concluded that that the children were unable to read their English

textbooks let alone use them to gain new knowledge. The children's inability to use English effectively meant that they could not make new concepts on their own and thus they lacked stimulation for further development. Thus in order to make subject matter intelligible to children who use English as their language of learning and teaching without having an adequate grasp of it, teachers continue to set tasks in the classrooms at the most basic level. There is little attempt to develop learners' higher language or mental skills, leaving children with lists of decontextualised words in their classwork books and limited reading and writing skills. What these studies revealed is that the development of language skills is a major issue in learning, and that past educational practices have not enabled learners to adequately develop the language skills they need to learn (Smyth, 2002).

In 1990 the Threshold report "Swimming up the Waterfall: a Study of School-Based Learning experiences" (Macdonald 1991) laid bare the inadequacies of an education system that failed to support the linguistic and conceptual challenges that black primary school children faced when they made the transition from their primary language to English as the language of teaching and learning (Macdonald, 1990). This article intended to convey the nearly impossible demands put upon African children in their pursuit of genuine learning through the medium of English in primary school (Macdonald, 2002). The Threshold Project concluded that learning through a language which was not their own, seriously affected children's ability to succeed academically. It found that the change in the language of learning and teaching resulted in their first language (L1) skills not being developed and their English language skills were insufficiently developed for them to learn successfully when using it as a language of learning and teaching. Macdonald (1990) reported that children's writing skills in English were immature, that they lacked the vocabulary, syntax and ability to link ideas necessary for explanation in content subjects, and that tests of children's English reading comprehension revealed that they were unable to answer simple inference or factual questions (Smyth, 2002).

Ten years later in 2000 the same author, Macdonald (2002) re-examined the situation to determine whether the linguistic and conceptual challenges facing these children are being met under the new educational dispensation. In particular, the new curriculum came under scrutiny in terms of the prominence and support it gave the development of language and literacy skills in the early years of schooling. The author argued that weaknesses in the new curriculum, at both a theoretical and a practical level, have led to the neglect of basic literacy and numeracy development in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases (Macdonald, 2002).

As apartheid structures crumbled in the early 1990's and the new democracy gradually came into being, schools became less segregated, and the then four education departments instituted an interim core curriculum. According to Macdonald (2002), in wanting to move away from the so-called "Bantu Education" what caught educational officials attention was "outcomes-based" education (OBE), used in parts of the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Unfortunately, what failed to capture their attention was the fact that countries in which OBE programmes operate are the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) with very broad tax bases, very favourable teacher-learner ratios, a high degree of professional education of teachers, well-resourced classrooms and critical-thinking teachers. These kinds of conditions probably obtain in only about 10% of the educational sector in South Africa. Any possible change must also cater to a wide range of students who come from backgrounds ranging from severely disadvantaged to highly privileged subsectors and such inequities will continue to exist for some time yet (Macdonald, 2002).

In addition, Macdonald (2002) reviewed Curriculum 2005. According to her, education in South Africa has always been a sensitive area, and one that reflects political aspirations as much as educational needs on the ground. The new curriculum, called "Curriculum 2005" (C2005), came under intense scrutiny in the first three years of its inception (1998-2000). The new curriculum called itself constructivist, as a theory of the creation of knowledge in which individuals construct knowledge for themselves, either individually or collaboratively and is intrinsically open-ended. Since the new curriculum's assessment criteria specifically stated outcomes for each different phase, it was not open-ended and constructivist as it claimed to be. In designing the new curriculum, the processes of early literacy were ignored (Macdonald, 2002).

Furthermore, a great deal of money was expended on training and teachers were happy to know definitions of the new terminology used, but have never been actually trained in the implementation of the new ideas and made their own interpretations of what was expected of them. It was this author C. Macdonald, who in the University of the Witwatersrand Response to the C2005 Review Committee, wrote that the policy developers owed an apology to millions of children, who over the past few years, have failed to learn to read and write. She argued that 'we sit with a cadre of remedial-type children who, until 2002, entered Grade 4 lacking basic literacy skills' (Macdonald, 2002).

Macdonald (2002) recommended that the way forward was firstly to go back and wrestle with informing and teaching Foundation and Intermediate Phase teachers about the nature and functions of literacy, and the special role the main language plays- either as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT), when advanced reading skills should continue to be taught, or when it plays a subsidiary role as a 'subject'. Secondly, it is imperative that children learn to read and write, and learn concepts across the curriculum in the main language, which will support English as LoLT. Note, this viewpoint supports Cummins's theory that a child's second language competence is partly dependent on the level of competence already achieved in the first language. He further argues that if children do not have the opportunity to fully develop Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) in their first language, they will not develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) skills in their first language (Macdonald, 2002).

For South Africa's mainstream language-in-education policy, the Department of Education has proposed a system of "structured bilingual education found in dual-medium (also known as two-way immersion) programmes", with the outcome that two or more languages will be perceived and used as languages of learning for all learners in the country (Vermeulen, 2000 p.262). This policy (used in the USA to maximise English learning) is based on two different programmes for limited English proficient (LEP) students, namely Structured-English-Immersion and Bilingual/dual medium programmes. Whichever route is followed, the underlying principle is to maintain home language(s) while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional language(s). Hence the Department's position that an additive approach to bilingualism is to be seen as the normal orientation of our language-in-education policy. The resultant outcome of subtractive bilingual/multilingual immersion programmes is that the students usually lose their mother tongue or retain it only at a basic non-literate level. This is contrary to the South African aims of additive bilingualism and the development of all eleven official languages. In South Africa, a 50/50 immersion policy is impracticable since it would be highly unlikely that a student could be immersed in two languages at the same time given such a small percentage of English-speaking learners (Vermeulen, 2000).

Research into the Canadian immersion programme (Cummins & Swain, 1986), has shown that learning in a bilingual situation need not in itself be a problem. However, the key issues to successful bilingual learning seem to revolve around home language maintenance, adequate

development of the language used for learning and teaching (LoLT), and the development of language skills needed for successful learning across the curriculum in both home language and LoLT (Smyth, 2002).

The South African government therefore opted for the more 'affordable and effective' mother tongue model. The principle of mother tongue instruction is seen as being in the best interest of the child's cognitive development, as well as contributing to multilingualism and the development of disadvantaged languages. The mother tongue model is based on the principle that the most crucial cognitive development occurs in the mother tongue and proper mastering of basic skills and concepts in the mother tongue is essential before a second language could be gradually introduced as a subject and not as a medium of teaching and learning (Vermeulen, 2000).

This model is based on Cummins's theory that learners' competence in a first language at CALP level is essential in order to become competent in a second language. This model is criticised as being an idealistic model since prolonged periods of time will be required to learn sufficient English to perform at the same cognitive level in academic tasks as native English speakers (Vermeulen, 2000). In addition, amid a general shortage of English-language teachers it will be an even more daunting task to raise all South African subject teachers from a BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) level to a CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) level in an additional South African language. This model once again highlights the fact that a mother tongue model is idealistic and impractical since a considerably longer period of time will be required to learn sufficient English to perform at the same cognitive level in academic tasks than native English speakers (Vermeulen, 2000) – once again making this model less viable.

1.2.4 South African Research on Peer-Mentoring/Tutoring

According to Sorenson & Gregory (1998), student tutoring in South African schools has neither been widely accepted nor developed. Their study considered findings of a grass-roots study on the feasibility and potential of using student tutors in South African schools, as a contribution to the reconstruction and development of the nation's education system. The study was undertaken by invitation of the Academic Development Programme (ADP) of Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa, and hosted by the iKhonco ('Chain') project.

The aim of the study was to assess the possibilities of using students as tutors in schools combining tutoring in the schools with parallel research and evaluation. Five township secondary schools were involved in a period of three months in 1996. Pupils received tutoring help on the university campus outside school hours. The intervention was shown to help address specific needs in townships schools. Tutoring contributed to the development of school resources through effective reduction in class sizes, the academic support of teachers and the development of pupil-centred learning. The study concluded that the success of a future South African tutoring in schools programme is likely to hinge on the awareness and handling of a number of critical issues such as teacher involvement, training and logistics. The fact that tutoring functioned in practice, that it fulfilled specific needs in the schools and that feedback from pupils and teachers was positive, argues for a strong case for the further development of student-tutoring in the South African environment (Sorenson & Gregory, 1998)

Goodlad (1998) explored The University of the Witwatersrand's response to new South African education policy. The two case studies undertaken by the university examined the role of student tutors in the faculties of Science and Arts, to illustrate the possibilities of student tutors' role as a response to the policy goals of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE). The NCHE was established to advise the government on restructuring tertiary education by undertaking a situational analysis, formulating a vision and putting forward policy proposals designed to ensure the development of a well-planned integrated, high quality system (NCHE, 1996:1 as cited in Goodlad, 1998). In both cases in the Arts and Science faculties, it was found that student tutors are an invaluable resource as tutor educators at Wits: both in terms of person power and as reservoir of intellectual knowledge and skills that can be effectively utilized in the goal of national capacity building. The tutors drew attention to the need for developing the skills of under-prepared students in higher education, and while helping others, they themselves gained in intellectual development, received training and skills, which are important in own career goals (Goodlad, 1998).

From the above research and studies done in South Africa it is clearly evident that peer-mentoring in South African schools has not been widely researched, accepted and practised.

1.2.5 Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory could be used to support the understanding of the process of the peer-mentoring programme. According to Vygotsky (1978) social interaction and cooperative dialogues between children and more knowledgeable members of society, are necessary for children to acquire ways of thinking and behaviour. According to him adults and more expert peers help children master culturally meaningful activities (Berk, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). He further offered new visions of teaching and learning- ones that emphasised the importance of social context and collaboration. It is the latter that helps children to reflect on their own thought processes and shift to a higher level of cognitive functioning, and it is these higher cognitive processes that develop out of social interaction, and that language precedes and significantly influences cognition (Williams & Snipper, 1990).

Vygotsky's (1978) description, of how learning occurs gives us a fuller understanding as to why home language maintenance is so important for learning. His theory saw speech as central to cognitive development and learning describing it as a means of mediation. An essential feature of learning is that it creates the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), awakening a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his/her environment and in co-operation with his/her peers. If we accept his proposition that communication becomes internalised and lays the basis for the development of thought, then we must also accept that language is crucial to our thought and understanding processes (Vygotsky, 1978). Fundamental to his views of speech and cognitive development, lay his notion of concept development. Vygotsky maintained that there are two types of concepts- spontaneous concepts which children develop contextually and unconsciously from their everyday life and over which they have little control, and scientific concepts learnt through mediated experience between children and adults or more competent peers. As such Vygotsky saw schooling as playing a vital role in children's cognitive development, preceding and paralleling development (Smyth, 2002).

The vital question arising from Vygotsky's (1986) explanation of the development of logical thought and the school learning situation of children who do not use their home language as their language of learning and teaching, is what effect this has on children. Can they develop scientific concepts considering that they are transmitted to children in the form of verbal

definitions? What happens when scientific concepts are developed in one language and spontaneous concepts are developed in another? Do they merge or is there a disjuncture between the two? Further, if scientific abstract concept formation does not happen, what happens to children's relations of generality and higher mental functions? These questions are of great concern as they have major implications for children learning in situations where conditions are not optimum for the adequate development of either their home language or their language of learning and teaching (Smyth, 2002).

Research involving minority language children struggling academically indicates that home language maintenance seems to be a factor in determining children's ability to gain from learning in a bilingual situation. Vygotsky's (1986) explanation of learning and development provides a theoretical framework for understanding why this is so. If we accept both as being valid, in the South African situation it would thus seem vital that children's home language skills be developed beyond the level of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). In order for this to happen, African home language courses should explicitly aim to teach learners the higher level of language and literacy skills involved in the development of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). In doing this, learners would gain not only central concepts in school subjects but also the systematicity necessary for higher level reasoning, as well as a sound basis for the learning of an additional language (Smyth, 2002).

His concept, 'the zone of proximal development' (ZPD) refers to a range of tasks that the child cannot yet handle alone but can accomplish with the help of adults and more skilled peers. The ZPD is the difference between the child's actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. The ZPD defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation (Vygotsky, 1978). For Vygotsky, it is the mediation of more expert peers or mentors that can spur children's actual development to his/her potential performance, as long as they adjust the help to fit the less mature child's ZPD. Furthermore, Vygotsky's theory states that mental functions that are beyond an individual's current level must be performed in collaboration with other people before they are achieved independently. The results of learning through mediation include learners having heightened awareness of their own mental abilities and more control over their thought processes. Thus this theory differs

from most other social approaches, in considering interaction as an essential force rather than as merely a helpful condition for learning (Saville-Troike, 2006).

Supported exploration through social and cognitive interaction with a more experienced peer in relation to a task of a level of difficulty within the mentee's 'zone of proximal development', remain a theoretical cornerstone of peer assisted learning (Goodlad, 1998). Thus, using the rationale of Vygotsky's mediation of the more expert peer (Vygotsky, 1978), one could predict a positive impact of a peer-mentoring reading programme on second language learners. In addition, although peer collaboration is advocated, the context requires the teacher to facilitate and guide the process to ensure its success (Berk, 2003).

The notion of the ZPD assumes even more significance for understanding students' development when extended to the conceptualization of students' personal development, specifically to the negotiation and construction of identity among English second language (ESL) students. The ZPD represents a useful metaphor for describing the dual process of reciprocal negotiation of identity and collaborative generation of knowledge. Rather than constricting the ZPD so that students' voices are silenced, educators who adopt this type of role definition will attempt to initially constitute the ZPD in such a way that students' voices can be expressed, shared and amplified within the interactional process. Under these conditions the ZPD will then be co-constructed by students and educators as, through their interactions, they script their own identities and that of the society they envisage. (Cummins, 1994).

Thus a teacher's most critical function in facilitating children's literacy development is to demonstrate varied uses for reading and writing and to help children use them, such as making use of several instructional strategies to fit the needs and interests of their students (Hudelson, 1994). Enabling students to develop content knowledge and concepts when they are being educated in a language in which they have limited proficiency is not easy. Teachers must perform a variety of tasks and roles to ensure that students acquire the skills and knowledge in the school's curriculum at a level commensurate with those students who are learning it in their native language. To do this teachers must be skilled in negotiating meaning; they must have well-developed skills in monitoring school performance; they must be expert in instructional decision making; they must serve as a role model for the use of

language, cultural behaviours and learning strategies and they need to structure the environment to facilitate language (Met, 1994).

What these strategies such as the peer-mentoring intervention have in common is that they give second language learners the opportunity to experiment with written language for multiple purposes; they establish supportive environments where language use and experimentation is encouraged, and they provide demonstrations of the functionality and power of written language. Creating a literate and collaborative learning environment must be developed to create a sense of responsibility for each other. Second language learners benefit from this activity in several ways: they engage in an authentic communication situation; need to make themselves understood; and have an authentic reason for trying out the new language (Hudelson, 1994).

In light of the above review, we can conclude that if learners are to succeed academically, they need to acquire both BICS and CALP in English simultaneously. Mother tongue instruction through primary school, accompanied by the gradual introduction of English would be ideal for ESL learners in South Africa. However, the implementation of mother tongue instruction in the South African context had serious time constraints and logistical limitations. Therefore, we turn to the option of directly targeting CALP skills through the implementation of a daily peer-mentored, paired reading programme in order to enhance reading skills, decoding skills and comprehension skills of ESL learners.

1.2.6 Peer-Mentoring in South Africa

Von Gruenewaldt (1999) suggested the need to reflect on whether teaching methods in schools empower or marginalise students/learners. “Are we empowering our second language learners through teaching them the linguistic strategies required for academic competence? Or is the English of the classroom, the textbook, and the lecture hall still alien and inaccessible to them?” (von Gruenewaldt, 1999, p. 210). The learning and social behaviour profiles of public school classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse as more children enter school at risk for failure as a result of full inclusion of students with disabilities. This heterogeneity strains the capacity of conventional instructional methods to address all students’ learning needs (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2000). Thus, students fail to meet the intellectual demands of school, fail year after

year in school until they drop out, and become part of the lost generation (Macdonald & Burroughs, 1991).

Since South Africa's democratic government was elected to power in April 1994, much attention has been given to restructuring the country's education system and much effort have gone in trying to redress the educational inequalities to ensure all children in South Africa are offered equal educational opportunities. A paradigm shift to student-centred learning through an outcomes-based curriculum, combining educational and vocational training, has been championed by education experts to ensure the education system meets South Africa's needs as it moves towards the twenty first century (Goodlad, 1998). This has led to the development of a new curriculum and new language-in policies. In spite of the well-meaning changes in terms of policy, little has changed on the ground for first language African children who still attend schools in racially segregated townships and rural areas (Smyth, 2002). In a context of fiscal discipline and the persistence of apartheid's legacy of educational disadvantage, student tutors are ideally placed to assist in realizing national educational goals (Goodlad, 1998).

Many approaches to educating minority or second language learners seem to be based on the assumption that proficiency in English is a prerequisite for academic learning, even though research seems to indicate that it may take as long as seven years for students to acquire a level of academic English proficiency comparable to native English-speaking peers (Met, 1994). Clearly if minority language students are to achieve the goals of education, academic learning cannot be put on hold until students have acquired proficiency in English (Met, 1994). The crucial point is that given the time it takes to learn English, these minority and second language learners need to develop nothing less than native-like proficiency across a broad range of domains in both spoken and written modes, in order to be successful academically. In addition to consolidating familiar concepts and learning new ones, these children need to develop context-dependent language which is closely tied to the individual's here and now or recent past experiences. Then gradually they move towards understanding, using and becoming proficient users of context-reduced language which is more abstract and essential for achieving high levels of academic success (Handscombe,1994).

Effective education of second language children calls for a more integrative approach especially since educating second language children has been kept separate from issues concerning their social integration in mainstream classrooms and the school at large.

Moreover, instruction for second language students has even been kept separate from their "education" outside school- in their families and communities- so the formal education of the children is not integrated with their living and learning outside school. This prevents grade level and second language teachers from integrating their professional competencies and resources in assisting programmes for second language learners (Genesee, 1994).

Regardless of where learners fall on the BICS and CALP continuum, traditional models of teaching and learning in the South African context have proven to be insufficient for the following reasons. For the Structured-English-Immersion and bilingual programmes to be effective, the number of learners in a class is limited to an ideal eight, with an additional bilingual teacher aides (Baker, 1998). In contrast South African teachers experience teacher learner ratios of approximately 1: 40 and government cannot afford ideal ratios, teacher aides, and language assistants. Given stringent requirements for success in these programmes, they are impractical both financially and in implementation in the South African context. Thus the peer-mentoring reading programme could prove to be a more practical and inexpensive source of assistance in increasing reading proficiency of ESL learners, especially since there is not much evidence in South Africa to show that such a programme has been widely used or researched.

Thus, LEP and ESL learners would have someone who cared enough about their academic achievement and who could help them bridge the gaps between mainstream and second language culture. Peer mentors have a tremendous potential for developing informal peer networks that will have additional hidden social and personal benefits (Williams & Snipper, 1990). In addition, it is predicted that the peer-mentoring reading programme should work very effectively if teachers and facilitators are creative designers, continually watching, assessing, learning, rethinking, retooling, and improving their strategies to provide the best possible learning experiences for all of their students (Johnson, 1994). This collaborative work such as peer-mentoring is central to developing both oral proficiency and academic literacy. It also creates opportunities for meaningful interactions between the peer-pair. In this way, the more expert peer takes more risks with English and the ESL learner is given the opportunity through interaction to recognize different functions of language, to be more expressive and to look beyond surface meanings in texts (HSRC, 1996).

Theoretical advantages of peer tutoring is often promoted on the grounds that, for tutors it is 'learning by teaching'. In addition to the tutees benefiting both cognitively and socially, just preparing to be a peer tutor has been proposed to enhance cognitive processing in the tutor- by increasing attention to and motivation for the task, and necessitating review of existing knowledge and skills. Consequently, existing knowledge is transformed by reorganization, involving new associations and a new integration, simplification, clarification and exemplification (Goodlad, 1998).

Pedagogical advantages for the tutee include more active, interactive and participative learning, immediate feedback, swift prompting, lowered anxiety with corresponding higher self disclosure, and greater ownership of the learning process. The pupil:teacher ratio is much reduced and engaged time on task is increased. Opportunities to respond are high, and opportunities to make errors and be corrected are similarly high. In addition to immediate cognitive gains, improved retention, greater meta-cognitive awareness and better application of knowledge and skills to new situations have been claimed (Goodlad, 1998).

According to Goodlad (1998), motivational and attitudinal gains can include greater commitment, self esteem, self confidence and empathy with others. Modelling and attributional feedback are important here- perhaps peer tutoring can go some way towards combating the dependency culture associated with superficial learning. From a social psychological point of view, social isolation might be reduced, aspirations raised, and greater empathy and understanding fostered between the tutor and tutee in a more egalitarian structure and environment. Economic advantages include the high possibility of teaching more students more effectively, freeing teachers time for other more fruitful purposes. Politically, peer tutoring delegates the management of learning to learners in a democratic way, seeks to empower students rather than de-skill them by dependency on imitation of a master culture and might reduce student dissatisfaction and unrest (Goodlad, 1998).

It is critical too that one explores the possible disadvantages of peer tutoring. Initially it does consume organizational time and resources in designing and effecting appropriate peer selection and matching, and it may require some adaptation to curriculum materials. Certainly requirements to train tutors in teaching and learning skills are greater, although it can be argued that peer tutoring merely serves to bring to the surface needs that traditional teaching

tends to overlook. All of these involve increased costs in the short term, with a view to reduced costs in the medium and long term (Goodlad, 1998).

According to Goodlad & Hirst (1990) in recent years, teachers at all levels of the education system have been put under increasing pressure; large classes, reductions in 'non-contact' time and major changes to examination systems have significantly increased their workload. New assessment procedures have placed more demands on their time, not only by increasing the amount of institution-based assessment, but also by putting more emphasis on individualised work schemes and the continuous monitoring of student progress. In many schools which no longer stream pupils, and where mixed-ability grouping or 'broad bands' are the norm, providing individualised instruction to meet the needs of the wide range of abilities within a class is not merely preferable, but essential (Goodlad & Hirst, 1990).

Educators in mainstream schools lack the time and often also the expertise to attend to special reading needs individually, and it is doubtful whether many schools will have any form of pull-out strategy to provide special learning support. Adaptable, non-specialist group procedures are clearly called for to enhance the self development of reading comprehension skills, even of learners with a learning disability in the mainstream classroom (Bouwer & Jordaan, 2002).

In South Africa interventions have focused around policy making, and there is very little evidence to suggest the use of peer-mentoring as a possible intervention programme in South African schools. Therefore, we need to perhaps consider a paradigm shift from policy making to innovative and cost-effective programmes (such as the peer-mentoring programmes) required for reading and language proficiency. Since the above theories such as Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) sociocultural theory and Cummins's theory (1994, 2000), and research findings on peer-tutoring/mentoring above offers new visions for teaching and learning, ones that emphasize the importance of social contact, collaboration and the mediation of more expert peers, it is hoped that the peer-mentoring reading programme in this research study, will significantly improve learners' vocabulary and comprehension skills and hence their schooling and academic achievement. Thus the overall primary aim of the study was to increase ESL learners' vocabulary and comprehension skills and hence their overall reading abilities. The secondary aim of the study was that ESL learners be able to transfer these skills

learnt and/or mastered during the intervention to other learning area content in the curriculum so that their overall academic marks would improve.

1.2.7 Research Aim

This study examined the impact of a peer-mentoring reading programme on the English reading abilities of Grade 9 English second language (ESL) learners.

The following hypotheses were addressed:

Hypothesis 1: The experimental group (all the Grade 9's) that received the reading intervention in 2007 showed an improvement in their vocabulary, comprehension and academic scores compared to the comparison group (Grade 9's from the year 2006) who received no reading intervention.

Hypothesis 2: The experimental group (all the Grade 9's of 2007) showed a significant improvement in their post-test scores compared to their pre-test scores, in vocabulary, comprehension and academic marks after they received the reading period intervention.

Hypothesis 3: Second language (L2) learners showed a greater improvement than first language (L1) learners in their vocabulary, comprehension and academic achievement marks, after receiving the reading intervention period.

Hypothesis 4: English second language (ESL) mentees who received **individual** peer-mentoring showed a significant improvement in their vocabulary, comprehension and academic scores, compared to the comparison group (the rest of the 2007 Grade 9's) who did not receive individual peer-mentoring.

Research Questions

The aim of this research leads to the following research questions:

1. Is there a difference in the vocabulary, comprehension and academic achievement scores between the Grade 9 comparison group of 2006 who did not receive any reading intervention, and the Grade 9 experimental group of 2007 who received the reading intervention?

2. Is there a difference in the pre and post-test scores in vocabulary, comprehension and academic achievement scores, of the experimental group (all Grade 9's of 2007), who received the reading period intervention?

3. Is there a difference in the vocabulary, comprehension and academic achievement scores between first language (L1) and second language (L2) Grade 9 learners who both received the reading period intervention?

4. Do the second language mentees ($N = 30$) who have had individual paired reading mentoring, show a significant improvement in their vocabulary, comprehension and academic scores, compared to the comparison group ($N = 143$) who did not receive individual paired reading mentoring?

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This quantitative, quasi-experimental research is part of a larger longitudinal study which focuses on reading, comprehension, vocabulary and academic achievement of first and second language learners. The study included a pre-test, a reading intervention programme with individual peer-mentoring and a post-test, to ascertain if there was any significant improvement in reading abilities of Grade 9 English second language learners (ESL) over a specified period of time. The instrument used for the pre and post-tests was the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT): Brown Level. The testing was done by the researcher who was assisted by the teachers in handing out and collecting of test materials. Because of the heterogeneous combination and re-shuffling of multiple grade learners from Grades 8 to 11 in one class during the reading period intervention, the mentees were paired with mentors who were either same- age/grade learners or cross-age/grade learners, for example mentor and mentee were both in Grade 9 or the mentor was in Grade 10 and the mentee in Grade 9. This pairing arrangement of mentor and mentee proved to be convenient and more effectual given the school's circumstances on the re-structuring of the reading classes.

The independent variable is the variable influencing the outcome of the other variables. The dependent variable is influenced by (or responds to) the independent variable. The independent variable was manipulated so the experimental group (Grade 9's from year 2007) received intervention while the second group, the comparison group (Grade 9's from the year 2006) received no formal intervention but rather 'normal' classroom teaching/reading experiences. In this study the independent variables were: the general reading intervention that all of the 2007 Grade 9's received; and the individual peer-mentoring that only 30 English second language learners received. The overall dependent variables that were examined were reading proficiency on vocabulary, comprehension and academic achievement (Wegner, 2007). The Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension subtest scores were obtained from the SDRT and the learners' academic average scores were obtained from the school.

Qualitative information was obtained from the Teacher-Learner Questionnaire (see Appendix D) in order to analyze teachers and learners responses to five questions based on their

experiences, benefits and limitations of the intervention and suggestions on how the intervention could be improved and/or adapted for future studies.

2.2 Subjects

Table 1: Summary of Subjects

Category	Experimental Group (2006/7) *N* = 173	Comparison Group (2005/6) *N* = 122
No. of Males	85	56
No. of Females	88	66
First Language (L1) Learners	57	78
Second Language (L2) Learners	116	44

The target group of this research study was essentially the Grade 9's from 2007 (*N* = 173) who were pre-tested in when they were in Grade 8 in October 2006 and post-tested in October 2007 (experimental group who were the subjects in hypotheses 1 to 4). The Grade 9's from 2006 were the subjects who were the comparison group in hypothesis 1. The subjects were from an ex-model 'C' school in Gauteng, South Africa. The group of learners (approximately 230 learners per grade) were taken from a larger school population of about 1100 learners, with approximately equal numbers of first language (L1) and second language (L2) learners. Thus the sample was a purposive sample group. The sample was drawn from the same school of learners, living in the same area and in the same grades. Therefore, it was expected that these learners came from similar backgrounds and that their level of academic performance was appropriate for that grade. The above variables were held constant, and therefore impacted equally on both the groups. Potential mentors' and mentees' scores from the pre-test were compared to their peer group scores and those who scored above the mean of the 60th percentile of the group were the mentors and those who scored below the 40th percentile of the group were the mentees. The confidentiality of all learners was respected and maintained and no learner was discriminated against for non-participation.

In response to hypothesis 1, the experimental group consisted of all Grade 9 learners in 2007 (N = 173) who received the general reading intervention period, while the comparison group consisted of all Grade 9 learners in 2006 (N = 122) who received no reading intervention.

In response to hypothesis 2, all Grade 9 learners (experimental group- N = 173) in 2007 received a general reading intervention period, and their pre and post test scores were compared to ascertain whether there had been a significant improvement in their vocabulary, comprehension and academic achievement scores.

In response to hypothesis 3, respective scores of Grade 9 first language (L1) and Grade 9 second language (L2) learners were compared to ascertain whether there had been a significant improvement, particularly in L2 learners' scores, even though both these groups received the reading intervention period. Note, all of the L1 (N = 49) and L2 (N = 114) learners were part of the larger Grade 9 experimental group of 2007.

In response to hypothesis 4, of the larger experimental group of all Grade 9 learners in 2007 (N = 173), thirty of the 114 L2 learners were identified as mentees (N = 30), while the rest of the group (N = 143), were the comparison group.

2.3 Materials

Biographical Questionnaire

The biographical questionnaire (see Appendix C) which was completed by the participating learners, contained information such as their age, gender, home language, and language of instruction from Grade 1 through to Grade 7, depending on which school/s they attended. Information from the biographical questionnaire was used to identify learners who are first language (L1) learners and those who are second language (L2) learners. If they did not speak English at home, they were assigned to the L2 group.

The Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT): Brown Level

The Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT): Brown Level is a measure of reading achievement and was administered to Grade 8 and Grade 9 learners who participated in the study. The design of the SDRT: Brown Level is appropriate for Grade 5 to 8 learners and the Blue Level is appropriate for Grade 9 to Grade 12. The Grade 9's were tested on the Brown

Level for the following reasons: no standardized scores were used so the reference to standardized scores were irrelevant; the same test was repeated to get a comparison between their pre and post test scores without using their standardized scores; since their were no learners (even L1 learners) who had fully correct responses, it was decided to repeat the Brown Level even though they were in Grade 9.

This test generally measures the major components of the reading process: decoding, phonetic skills, reading/auditory vocabulary, literal and inferential comprehension and reading rate, and it also provides more detailed information of learners' reading skills. In this study only two subtests were administered, namely: Auditory Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension because they were relevant and appropriate for the focus of this study as a measure of learners' vocabulary and comprehension skills rather than using it as a diagnostic tool. Auditory Vocabulary provided information about learners' language competence without requiring them to read; and Reading Comprehension- in which learners' literal and inferential comprehension, textual, functional and recreational reading were assessed by means of reading short passages followed by questions.

The time required to administer these two subtests was as follows: approximately 30 minutes for the Auditory Vocabulary and 40 minutes for the Reading Comprehension subtest. The SDRT was standardized and is representative of the U.S. school population. Internal consistency and alternate-form reliability are adequate with coefficients generally above 0.7. Correlations between corresponding subtests were above 0.6 (Spreen & Strauss, 1998). An advantage of the test is that it was designed to be useful with individuals who are experiencing reading difficulty and it included such items so even low achievers would experience some success. A further advantage for this study was that the SDRT could be group-administered which meant that not too much time was taken off normal teaching and learning time. The SDRT is often used as a diagnostic tool in reading abilities, and was found to be applicable to South African learners ((Spreen & Strauss, 1998). In this study, the SDRT was used to measure learners' vocabulary and comprehension levels in both the pre and post-tests.

The Questionnaire

The Teacher-Learner Questionnaire (see Appendix D) was a semi-structured open-ended one, which was aimed at receiving feedback from participating learners and their teachers around

their experiences, advantages and disadvantages of the intervention, including questions on suggestions for future such studies and additional comments.

Academic Records

Participating learners' scores were obtained from the school. These scores included marks from nine learning areas and the final promotion mark/academic average was calculated. The academic average marks of learners were used as a reflection of their academic performance.

2.4 Procedure

The school, learners and their parents were given a subject information sheet (see Appendix A) explaining the rationale and nature of the study and intervention. The subject information sheet was aimed at giving the respective participants an overall view of the study and also included ethical considerations of the study. Participating learners completed the Assent form and the Consent form was completed by parents of learners who were under 14 years of age (see Appendix B). These learners were pre-tested when they were in Grade 8 and post-tested approximately a year later when they were in Grade 9, using the SDRT: Brown Level. These learners also completed a Biographical Questionnaire (see Appendix C) which included details about learner's age, grade, gender, home language and language of instruction of the different schools they attended from Grade 1 to Grade 7. The timing of the pre-test (October 2006) was done at that time to avoid disruptions of the forthcoming school examinations and to allow the researcher enough time to obtain and analyze the data, so that first and second language learners could be identified, and potential mentors and mentees could be identified by the time schools re-opened in January 2007, when it was hoped that the paired reading intervention would begin. On the basis of the results of their vocabulary and comprehension scores, subjects were selected to participate in a peer-mentoring intervention during their Grade 9 year in 2007. First language (L1) learners with better reading abilities (mentor) were paired with second language (L2) learners who had performed poorly in the pre-test (mentee).

The way in which learners were arranged and seated allowed for mentees to be paired with their mentors who were either the same-age/grade level or cross-age/grade level. A further consideration was that teachers be allowed to assist in the pairing of same-gender mentor and mentee to ensure compatibility of learners, especially since they knew their learners better

than the researcher did (Genesee, 1994). Teachers who monitored the mentors and mentees were from different learning areas and not only from language learning areas.
The impact of educator variables (teaching style, rapport with learners, personality) was reduced, since the same teachers taught and supervised both the comparison and experimental groups.

After the entire Grade 9 experimental group received the overall reading intervention and the mentees received individual peer-mentoring, post- tests were conducted in October 2007 to ascertain whether there was an improvement in the English reading abilities, vocabulary, comprehension, and academic average marks of Grade 9 ESL learners. Answers were marked using a score sheet and scores were recorded and tallied. Note, results of learners who were pre-tested and left the school during the post-test were not used. Furthermore, the results of newcomer learners to the school who were post-tested but not pre-tested the year before in 2006, were also not used. This was to ensure accuracy of the data in analyses.

2.5 Intervention

The experimental group were paired as mentors and mentees both same-age/grade and cross-age/grade. The paired reading programme undertaken by the mentor and mentee included the following steps:
1. The involvement of '*significant others'/mentor*;
2. The mentee's *selection* of interesting reading materials;
3. *Pre-discussion*, which encourages learners to discuss the topic before reading;
4. *Reading*, mentees read the passage twice; mentors model and intervene where necessary;
5. *Summarising* (verbally or written depending on the nature of the task), where the content read is discussed by both mentor and mentee;
6. *Vocabulary*, learners are encouraged to add a minimum of two new words to their vocabulary list.
7. *Positive reinforcement* of the mentee's reading

The programme was presented to the teachers as well as to the learners who participated. The rationale, principles, value, training, and implementation of the peer mentor- reading programme was explained to the learners by the researcher and teachers. However, teachers were not trained intensively on the peer-mentoring method, supervision and monitoring. The

limitations of the failure to do so will be discussed in the 'limitations' section. Teachers also assisted in the large-scale group administration of the SDRT pre-test and post-test. Although the reading intervention programme was conducted more formally during the 'reading period', there was evidence that the tutoring was more widely embraced and generalized to other classes and learning areas. This 'ripple effect' will be examined further in the discussion.

Learners participating in the intervention were required to make notes and/or keep a diary about their work in pairs, their experiences, problems encountered etc. They were given a brief explanation of the process of note-keeping and were not guided on specifics. The peer-mentoring reading programme was meant to run for six months during 2007, but actually ran for a period of approximately three months, due to teachers' strikes and school holidays. The peer- mentoring intervention started towards the end of April 2007, where ten mentors and mentees were identified by the researcher and the teachers. These groups met every Wednesday afternoon for an hour to do the peer-mentoring which was supervised by two senior English teachers. The teachers experienced problems in attendance of the mentees. There was still regular monitoring and support in all aspects of the intervention. Weekly visits to the school were made during which meetings were held with teachers and participating learners. The intervention was disrupted by the teachers' strikes in May 2007.

This meant from the time of pre-testing in October 2006 until the actual intervention in July 2007, a period of 9 months had lapsed. Scholastic development could have taken place in that time. However, this development would have occurred in both the experimental as well as the comparison groups. From the beginning of the third school term in July 2007 the principal of the school initiated a specific reading period from Monday to Friday (10:25am to 10:55am), during which all learners in the school from Grade 8 to Grade 11 were engaged in some form of reading. Each class of learners comprised of approximately thirty-five to forty cross-grade/multi grade learners ranging from Grade 8 to Grade 11. Each class had a teacher who supervised and monitored the reading period and focused on targeted paired mentors and mentees. This initiative resulted in the reading intervention being twofold. This meant that all Grade 9's (the experimental group) received the general 'reading intervention period', but only 30 of this larger experimental group received the individual paired reading intervention (i.e. the peer-mentoring). It was during this time that the researcher made visits to the school

and liaised with teachers and learners on the process of the reading intervention programme. Successful and challenging issues were discussed during this time.

After the intervention was conducted the researcher gathered qualitative information both from participating teachers and learners, and mentors and mentees, about the process of the intervention from the 'targeted mentor/mentee pair'. The latter were given the opportunity to give feedback about the peer-mentoring reading programme by responding to questions on a semi-structured questionnaire, and were encouraged to share their feelings and experiences during the mentoring programme. The teachers, mentors and mentees did not have to identify themselves by writing their names on the questionnaire and therefore remained anonymous. The responses were analyzed qualitatively in order to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the programme, including any potential revisions for future interventions of this type.

2.6 Ethical considerations

Permission to undertake the study was obtained from the University Ethics Committee, the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) and the principal of the high school. Learners were required to complete a Biographical Questionnaire (see Appendix C) and Consent/Assent forms had to be signed by parents and learners respectively (see Appendix B). These forms were completed by learners and their parents for both the pre and post-tests.

Only the researcher had access to learners' names in order to identify learner's pre and post-test results so that mentors and mentees could be paired. In this regard, confidentiality was guaranteed but not anonymity. Learners' individual test results were not disseminated to the school/teachers, however, a report will be given to the school on the overall findings of the research study. No communication was held with parents and no feedback given to them once testing was done. This was explained to parents and learners in the 'subject information' sheet (see Appendix A). This research did not foresee potential and/or overt harm to the learners and/or their families. Learners and/or parents could withdraw at any time from the programme with no consequences.

CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS

3.1 Data Analysis

The chapter is divided as follows: results of both the quantitative and the qualitative studies. While descriptive statistics condense large volumes of data into summary measures, inferential statistics generalises sample findings to the broader population (Wegner, 2007). Between group results will be presented first (hypothesis 1) followed by within group results (hypotheses 2, 3 and 4). Qualitative analysis of the Teacher-Learner Questionnaire will be discussed in Chapter Four.

To investigate the hypotheses referred to on page 30, data obtained from the SDRT and from the school was analyzed quantitatively, and responses from the questionnaire were analyzed qualitatively. Information obtained from the Biographical Questionnaire (see Appendix C) helped the researcher and the school co-ordinator in identifying first language (L1) and second language (L2) learners, as well as mentors and mentees.

Descriptive statistics allows one to summarise or describe a set of scores without having to actually see the set of scores. Essential information is extracted, organized and summarized. It describes numerical data and summarizes numbers that represent data from a research project (Wegner, 2007). Descriptive statistics were used to summarise and describe the pre and post-tests data between the experimental group who received intervention (i.e. Grade 8's of 2006 and the Grade 9's of 2007) and the comparison group (i.e. Grade 8's of 2005 and Grade 9's of 2006) who did not receive intervention. Learners mean scores were compared in vocabulary, comprehension and academic achievement.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is an inferential statistical technique that tests for any differences in population means. ANOVA was used to compare the mean scores in vocabulary, comprehension and academic achievement, between the experimental group (who received the reading intervention) and comparison group (who received no intervention). It asks the question whether different sample means of a numeric variable come from the same population, or whether at least one sample mean comes from a different population mean. The test statistic used to test this hypothesis is called the F-statistic (Wegner, 2007).

ANOVA was used to compare the means of the experimental group to the control group's scores in vocabulary, comprehension and academic achievement. A matched paired t-test was used to measure differences between the means of learners' pre-test scores (Grade 8's of 2006) and their post-test scores (Grade 9's of 2007).

ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) was done using the Grade 8 pre-test scores as the covariant so that the variance due to individual differences was removed, and so that the variance that was left was actually the difference of the pre and post-test scores. In this way pre-test differences could be controlled so that the post-test differences could be compared. The ANCOVA is an attempt to reduce unexplained variances and increase explained variances. Furthermore an Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) using a matched paired t-test was used to determine whether the Grade 9 group (2007) who had the intervention had in fact improved in their vocabulary, comprehension and academic achievement- and in particular whether the mentees group (30 learners) had significantly improved after receiving individual mentoring, either from same-age/grade level or cross-age/grade level mentors. Statistical significance means that results are not likely to be due to chance factors, but to a real relationship in the population. Results were interpreted at a 95% confidence level, which meant that for a result to be statistically significant the *p* value had to be less than 0.05 (i.e. $p < 0.05$) (Neuman, 1997).

Qualitative analysis was conducted to determine the experiences of teachers, learners, mentors and mentees, of the peer-mentoring reading intervention. The Teacher-Learner questionnaire (see Appendix D) included responses and/or feedback about benefits and limitations of the intervention, as well as suggestions from participants for future such interventions.

The Cronbach Coefficient Alpha is a measure of reliability and deals with an indicator's dependability and consistency (Neuman, 1997). A Cronbach's coefficient alpha was run to measure the inter-item correlations or how well the items in the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT) measures a single construct. If the inter-item correlations are high, then there is evidence that the item measures the same underlying construct. A reliability coefficient of 0.80 is considered as 'acceptable' in most Social Science applications. Results of Cronbach's alpha were 0.77 (Raw)/ 0.82 (Standardized). This suggests that the SDRT has a high level of reliability in a South African context.

3.2 Results (Descriptive and Inferential Statistics)

Between Group Comparisons

Table 2: Pre and Post-Test Results of Experimental and Comparison Groups

Variables		Experimental Group *N* = 173 (2006/2007)		Comparison Group *N*=122 (2005/2006)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Total Vocabulary	Pre	26.67	6.11	29.53	5.05
	Post	29.33	5.40	31.12	4.87
	Difference	**2.66**	-0.71	**1.59**	-0.18
Total Comprehension	Pre	39.04	10.2	41.74	9.38
	Post	42.95	10.98	45.61	8.24
	Difference	**3.91**	0.78	**3.87**	-1.14
Total Academic Average	Pre	55.05	11.23	61.29	8.67
	Post	54.76	10.98	57.82	9.25
	Difference	**-0.29**	-0.25	**-3.47**	0.58

The above table (Table 2) describes the experimental and comparison groups mentioned in *Hypothesis 1* which stated: The experimental group (all the Grade 9's) that received the reading intervention in 2007 showed an improvement in their vocabulary, comprehension and academic scores compared to the comparison group (Grade 9's from the year 2006) who received no reading intervention.

The sample described in Table 1 comprised of 173 Grade 9 learners in the experimental group who were pre-tested in 2006. All of these Grade 9 learners (*N* = 173) which included the 30 mentees, received the reading intervention period during 2007, and were post-tested in October 2007. A different group of learners (*N* = 122) were pre-tested in 2005 when they were in Grade 8 and post- tested in 2006 when they were in Grade 9. This testing was done by another researcher who ran a pilot study on reading interventions. This group was the comparison group who did not receive any formal reading intervention at that time. Results were compared between the experimental and the comparison groups.

An ANOVA was conducted to measure the differences between the post-test scores of both the comparison and the experimental group's test performance on vocabulary, comprehension

and academic scores. This was done to ascertain whether the experimental group's post-test scores (after receiving the reading intervention period) were better than comparison group's post-test scores (2006) who received no reading intervention but rather day-to-day normal classroom activities.

Comparison of the pre and post-test scores (Table 2) indicated that both the experimental and comparison groups' scores in vocabulary and comprehension had improved. However, the experimental group showed statistically significant greater gains (vocabulary: F (8,54) = 1, p = 0.0037; comprehension: F (5,88) = 1, p = 0.0159). Although both the experimental and comparison group's academic average scores show a decrease in their overall academic performance (-0.29 and -3.47 respectively), the decrease was more apparent in the comparison group who did not receive the intervention. However, the experimental group's improvement on their academic scores were statistically significant with F (6,31) = 1, p = 0.0125. The above results showed that the experimental group who received intervention did not actually "perform better" on their overall scores but they "improved more", since their actual levels of performance were still lower at post test than for the comparison group, who by definition started at higher levels of performance than subjects chosen for the experimental group (see Table 2). An important observation (see Table 1) is that the 2005/6 comparison group, from a total of 122 learners had 78 first language (L1) English learners and 44 second language (L2) English learners – with L1 learners almost double than L2 learners. While the 2006/7 experimental group, from a total of 173 learners had 57 first language (L1) learners and 116 second language learners (L2) - with L2 learners almost double than L1 learners.

Within Group Comparisons

Table 2 was used to respond to *Hypothesis 2* which stated: The experimental group (all the Grade 9's of 2007) showed a significant improvement in their post-test scores compared to their pre-test scores, in vocabulary, comprehension and academic marks after they received the reading period intervention.

The experimental group (N = 173) were learners who were pre-tested in Grade 8 (2006) and post-tested when they were in Grade 9 (2007), by the researcher. This entire group of Grade 9 learners of 2007 received the formal reading intervention period (as did all of the Grade 8's, Grade 10's and Grade 11's), that was initiated by the school principal.

An ANCOVA was conducted on the experimental group's pre-tests ($N = 173$) to remove the variance due to individual differences, so that any difference in pre and post- test results could be attributed to the reading intervention, rather than to individual differences at the outset. A matched paired t-test was used to measure differences between the means of learners pre and post- test scores (i.e. the Grade 9 experimental group $N = 173$) to ascertain whether learners' scores in vocabulary, comprehension and academic average marks did in fact improve, after receiving the reading intervention period at school.

On examination of the pre and post-test scores of the experimental group (Table 2), it was evident that their means in vocabulary and comprehension had increased by scores of 2.66 and 3.91 respectively, and both these results were statistically significant (vocabulary: $t = -8.36$, df = 172, $p < 0.0001$ and comprehension: $t = -7.77$, df = 172, $p < 0.0001$). These results suggested that this group's vocabulary and comprehension scores had improved which was expected, since these Grade 9 learners were a year older and have had another year of instruction and would have therefore has scholastic improvement. However, their academic average scores had decreased by a score of 0.29 and the result was not statistically significant ($t = 0.28$, df = 174, $p = 0.78$), suggesting that their overall academic performance did not improve.

Table 3: Pre and Post-Test Results of First Language (L1) and Second Language (L2)

Variables		L1 Learners *N* = 49		L2 Learners *N*=114	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Total Vocabulary	Pre	29.45	5.73	25.32	6.01
	Post	32.00	4.62	28.16	5.42
	Difference	**2.55**	-1.11	**2.84**	-0.59
Total Comprehension	Pre	43.59	9.06	36.72	10.17
	Post	46.76	9.37	40.93	9.91
	Difference	**3.17**	0.31	**4.21**	-0.26
Total Academic Average	Pre	55.88	12.21	55.03	10.86
	Post	58.85	12.59	53.34	10.05
	Difference	**2.97**	0.38	**-1.69**	-0.81

This study also investigated for *Hypothesis 3* which stated: Second language (L2) learners showed a greater improvement than first language (L1) learners in their vocabulary,

comprehension and academic achievement marks, after receiving the reading intervention period.

The focus in this part of the research was to determine whether there were significant differences within this larger experimental group of Grade 9's (N = 173), between results of first language (L1) and second language learners (L2). This experimental group discussed in Table 2 (N = 173), comprised of 49 first language (L1) learners and 114 second language (L2) learners. Note the total of these learners were 163 instead of 173 Grade 9 learners. This was because ten of these learners had done one of either, the pre or post test: since they were either absent at the pre or post test, or some of them had left the school at post- testing or some of them were newcomers to the school. As a result their scores could not be used.

As mentioned above, an ANCOVA was used for this experimental group using their pre-tests as a covariate to control individual differences, so that a comparison could be made between L1 and L2 learners in order to determine whether the L2 group did actually improve more than the L1 group after the reading intervention period.

On inspection of the pre and post-test scores (Table 3) of first language (L1) and second language learners (L2), it was clear that both groups showed an increase in their vocabulary and comprehension scores. The L2 learners' gains were statistically greater (vocabulary: 2.84 with $p < 0.0001$) and comprehension: 4.21with $p < 0.0001$), than the L1 learners' gains (vocabulary: 2.55; comprehension: 3.17). Although L1 learners showed a greater improvement in their academic average scores (2.97) compared to L2 learners who showed a decrease in their academic average scores (-1.69), the latter's scores yielded statistically significant results with $p = 0.0030$, indicating that L2 learners had significantly improved academically.

Table 4: Pre and Post-Test Results of Mentees' Scores

Variables		Experimental Group Mentees *N* = 30	
		Mean	SD
Total Vocabulary	Pre	18.87	4.09
	Post	22.77	3.35
	Difference	**3.90**	-0.74
Total Comprehension	Pre	25.33	7.14
	Post	31.77	6.67
	Difference	**6.44**	-0.47
Total Academic Average	Pre	55.30	9.76
	Post	46.97	6.94
	Difference	**-8.33**	-2.82

Hypothesis 4 was investigated: English second language (ESL) mentees who received **individual** peer-mentoring showed a significant improvement in their vocabulary, comprehension and academic scores, compared to the comparison group (the rest of the 2007 Grade 9's) who did not receive individual peer-mentoring.

Of the Grade 9 experimental group ($N = 173$), thirty (L2) learners who were identified as mentees ($N = 30$) in (Table 4), received individual peer-mentoring from mentors who were same-grade and/or cross-grade learners and whose vocabulary and reading comprehension skills in English, were better than those of the mentees. The reason for cross-grade mentors were discussed on p.32. The mentees' pre and post-test scores were considered to determine whether there was a significant improvement in their vocabulary, comprehension and academic averages respectively, after having individual peer-mentoring from their more able peers.

A matched paired t-test was used to compare mentees' pre and post-test scores, in order to determine the extent of improvement in their vocabulary, comprehension and academic averages, and to investigate whether the **individual** peer-mentoring reading intervention by the mentors were in fact effective at all in improving L2 learners scores.

When comparing the pre and post-test scores of the mentees group, it was evident that their post-test scores in vocabulary and comprehension had significantly increased by 3.9 and 6.44 respectively (Table 3). Post test results for vocabulary: $t = 37.23$, df = 29, $p < 0.0001$ and

comprehension: $t = 26.07$, df = 29, $p < 0.0001$, were both statistically significant. Although mentees' scores in academic averages showed a decrease (-8.33), statistical analysis yielded a statistically significant difference in favour of improved academic performance, indicating that the mentees had significantly improved in their academic achievement scores: $t = 37.05$, df = 29, $p < 0.0001$. Note, the mentees showed marked gains in their vocabulary and comprehension scores compared to the L1 and L2 groups indicated in (Table 2) and to the rest of the experimental group who received the reading intervention period only ($N = 143$ from a total of $N = 173$) in (Table 1).

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings of this research study in relation to the aims and rationale that motivated the study. This research study evaluated the efficacy of a peer-mentoring reading intervention on the vocabulary and comprehension skills of Grade 9 English second language (ESL) learners, and examined the impact on learners' overall academic achievement marks, which were obtained from the school. Participating learners were pre and post-tested using the SDRT Brown Level subtests, namely, Auditory Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension. In addition, both teachers and participating learners completed a questionnaire on the reading intervention process.

4.1 Research Findings

Hypothesis 1: The experimental group (all the Grade 9's) that received the reading intervention in 2007 showed an improvement in their vocabulary, comprehension and academic scores compared to the comparison group (Grade 9's from the year 2006) who received no reading intervention.

On examination of the pre-test scores of both the comparison group (Grade 8's-2005) and the experimental group (Grade 8's-2006), it was clear that the control group started off on a more proficient level in English compared to the Grade 8 experimental group of 2006 (Table 2). There could be several explanations for this. Firstly, an important observation made at the time and confirmed by the school showed, that the comparison group in 2005/6 ($N = 122$) consisted of not as many second language learners at the time compared to first language learners (L1 = 78; L2 = 44), while the experimental group in 2006/7 ($N = 173$) were comprised of almost double L2 learners than L1 learners (L1 = 57; L2 = 116). This

information was obtained from the learners' biographical questionnaires at the time. Over the years, with the transition of learners into an inclusive education system in South Africa, more and more second language learners are encouraged to be part of mainstream education whose teaching and learning language policy is English. As a result, their difficulties in speaking and understanding English often go unnoticed (Goodlad 1998). Thus these learners enter high school with poor reading and comprehension abilities and do not therefore possess the basic skills required to be successful academically.

Furthermore on comparison of the two groups' post-test scores, both of them showed an improvement in their vocabulary and comprehension scores (Table 2). However, the gains in the experimental group are greater than that of the comparison group (vocabulary: F (8,54) = 1, p = 0.0037; comprehension:, F (5,88) = 1, p = 0.0159). The overall gains are expected since both the groups are a year older, more mature and have had another year of scholastic instruction. Both the group's academic means demonstrated a decrease in academic performance, more so the comparison group whose decrease was larger than that of the experimental group. However, statistically the experimental group's academic results were statistically significant F (6,31) = 1, p = 0.0125), suggesting an overall improvement in their academic performance.

Within group comparisons

Hypothesis 2: The experimental group (all the Grade 9's of 2007) showed a significant improvement in their post-test scores in vocabulary, comprehension and academic marks, after they received the reading intervention, compared to their pre-test scores.

Allen (1976) critically reviews variables affecting the outcomes of tutoring. These variables include personal characteristics of tutor and tutee, sex pairings, race and socioeconomic status, tutor-tutee age differentials, temporal support, number of tutees per tutor, training of tutors and interaction during tutoring. The ANCOVA assesses how much of the effect in the dependent variable is due to covariates with some other factor other than the independent variable. In this study the covariant was the Grade 8 pre-test scores, thus eliminating differences due to individual differences, so that any variance may be due to the intervention.

The Grade 9 experimental group (Table 2) who received the reading intervention showed a significant increase in their vocabulary and comprehension scores with *p* values of 0.0037 and 0.0159 respectively. This indicated that the reading intervention period resulted in an improvement of learners' vocabulary and comprehension skills. However, their academic average means indicated a decrease in academic performance (-0.29) where $p = 0.7802$. This suggested that their academic average marks decreased and were not statistically significant, contrary to part of hypothesis 2 that expected learners' academic average marks to improve.

There could be several explanations for the decrease in academic performance. One of the reasons could be attributed to the increase in level of difficulty in school in the respective learning areas, change in content of learning material and also the demands placed upon Grade 9 learners to adhere to stringent academic requirements such as the portfolio requirements and the year-end district level's Continuous Task Assessments (CTA's). The poor academic performance could be explained by the fact that learners' reading skills have not been transferred to other learning areas of the school curriculum. Williams & Snipper (1990) define transfers as building on what students already know in their native language to teach new skills in the second language. According to them, transfer is a continuous process of making connections between the native and the second language, while students are involved in language-development activities. According to them, students may receive instruction in reading in the native language until they are literate. However, this alone will not prepare them for a curriculum taught in English. If their English skills are neglected, and no connection is made between native and second-language skills, successful transfer will not be possible (Williams & Snipper, 1990).

Pretorius (2002) investigated the relationship between reading ability and academic performance in a South African context. Her findings clearly showed that poor reading skills result in poor academic achievement and vice versa. Her findings also indicated that even in subjects like Mathematics associated with logico-deductive skills, reading skills play an important role. She stressed that reading ability does not of course guarantee good academic performance, since many other variables such as motivation, perseverance and dedication to a task come into play. However, she suggested that the lack of reading ability skills function as a barrier to effective academic performance. Furthermore, the decrease in academic performance could be explained by the fact that these learners may demonstrate an oral-based BICS-type of proficiency in English which is the language of learning and teaching (LoLT).

Since the cognitive-linguistic proficiency that underpins reading ability is CALP-based, they are unlikely to succeed in the learning context (Pretorius, 2002).

Furthermore, based on the findings of the Threshold Project, Macdonald (2002) makes a strong statement that first language African children in South Africa are either in the first threshold of language proficiency (children who have low levels of competence in both languages- their mother-tongue and LoLt), or in the second threshold of language proficiency (children have appropriate competence in one of the languages). In this study, learners' improvement in vocabulary and comprehension skills could be explained by their ability to better 'grapple' with the concepts, grammar and understanding of the English language. In addition, their improvement could also be attributed to maturational effects such as age, maturity and motivational levels which are expected over time. The variation for learners learning a second language can also be explained by Cummins's theory. Learners' poor performance academically suggested that perhaps learners have not mastered their BICS and CALP in their first language, and as a result fail to transfer these skills that should have been mastered in their mother-tongue, to their ability to learn a second language successfully. Cummins (2000) argues that if children do not have the opportunity to fully develop Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) in their first language, they will not develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) skills in their first language (Smyth, 2002). On the other hand, they may be quite capable of higher-order cognitive skills in their mother tongue, but when required to transfer these higher-order thinking skills into English, they lack the necessary CALP (Baker, 1996 & Cummins, 2000). The sometimes- abrupt change to English as a medium of instruction in standard three (Grade 5) retards the development of CALP skills even further, as they can only be developed once they acquire BICS in the second language (Smyth, 2002).

L1 and L2 Groups

Hypothesis 3: Second language (L2) learners showed a greater improvement than first language (L1) learners in their vocabulary, comprehension and academic achievement marks, after receiving the reading intervention period.

Considering the results between first ($N = 49$) and second language ($N = 114$) learners from this experimental group (Table 3), these two groups resemble similar findings such as the

ones above where both the groups had improved on their vocabulary and comprehension scores, but the L2 learners showing greater significant improvement ($p < 0.0001$ in both vocabulary and comprehension). Both the L1 and L2 learners show a decrease in their academic average scores, but the L1 group showing a greater decrease, once again suggesting that the L2 group could have possibly benefited more from the reading intervention than the L1 group. Overall these findings do accept the null hypothesis 3, that L2 learners would show a greater improvement than L1 learners.

Many studies discussed in Ehly & Larsen (1980), Goodlad (1998), and Goodlad & Hirst (1989, 1990), agree that learners do show gains in reading abilities, comprehension and reading rates once they have been exposed to some form of reading intervention. Unlike other industrialized countries where similar studies have been conducted with minority language learners, in South Africa it is the majority of learners who are expected to learn and be instructed in English, which is not their mother-tongue. Saville-Troike (2006) states that L2 learners approach or may achieve "near-native or native-like" competence in second language acquisition (SLA)- which means there is little or no perceptible differences between their language of performance and that of their mother-tongue. She further discusses why some learners are more successful than others in SLA. Some of her reasons stated briefly are, macrosocial factors such as social context, quantity and quality of L2 input and interaction in social experience, relationship between L1 and L2 and the transfer of skills, age, learners' aptitude, motivation and quality of formal instruction. Even though the ANCOVA was conducted remove individual differences of these learners, it is important to interpret findings with caution and to consider such complex variables in SLA (Saville-Troike, 2006).

Mentees Group

Hypothesis 4: English second language (ESL) mentees who received individual peer-mentoring showed a significant improvement in their vocabulary, comprehension and academic scores, compared to the comparison group (the rest of the 2007 Grade 9's) who did not receive individual peer-mentoring.

On investigation of the mentees' group scores ($N = 30$) who received individual peer-mentoring, they too show remarkable gains in their vocabulary and comprehension scores (Table 4). These mentees were mentored by more able learners who were either same grade

and/or cross-grade learners. Mentees showed remarkable significant gains in their vocabulary and comprehension scores: vocabulary: $t = 37.23$, df = 29, $p < 0.0001$ and comprehension: $t = 26.07$, df = 29, $p < 0.0001$).

The overall primary aim of the study was to increase ESL learners' vocabulary and comprehension skills and hence their overall reading abilities. The secondary aim of the study was that ESL learners be able to transfer these skills learnt and/or mastered during the intervention to other learning area content in the curriculum so that their overall academic marks would improve. Although the mentees show a decrease in academic average scores suggesting their academic average marks at school was lower, however when analyzing the difference statistically, the findings do support the original hypothesis 4, that these mentees do in fact show improvement not only in their vocabulary and comprehension abilities, but more importantly the mentees showed a very significant improvement in their academic averages ($p < 0.0001$). This level of significance is statistically more significant compared to the academic averages of: the experimental group in the hypothesis 1 ($p = 0.0125$); the experimental group's pre and post-test scores in hypothesis 2, which was not statistically significant ($p = 0.7802$); and the L1 and L2 groups, where the L2's showed a statistically significant improvement in their academic marks ($p = 0.0030$).

The above findings conclude that all the experimental groups who had the reading intervention showed significant gains in their vocabulary and comprehension skills. In addition, most of these experimental groups also showed significant gains in their overall academic progress, except in the case of the within-group analysis of the Grade 9's (2006 & 2007) pre and post-test comparisons. Possible explanations for the poor academic performance were discussed above. In this study as was hypothesized, the mentees group showed a marked increase in their gains in vocabulary and comprehension scores, as well as a very statistically significant improvement in the mentees' academic scores. Thus the null hypothesis 4 was accepted, indicating that the paired peer-mentoring reading intervention on ESL learners was highly effective.

Pretorius (2002) states that as reading skills improve, that is, the better a student's reading ability the better his/her academic achievement. The findings in this study support related theories and studies that peer-mentoring does in fact improve English second language learners' reading abilities. The findings are furthermore supported by Vygotsky's notion of

the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which assumes even more significance for understanding students' development, and remains a theoretical cornerstone of peer-assisted learning among ESL students (Goodlad, 1998). For Vygotsky, it is the mediation of more expert peers or mentors, such as in this study, that can spur children's actual development to his/her potential performance, as long as they adjust the help to fit the less mature child's ZPD (Cummins, 1994).

Williams & Snipper (1990) states that Vygotsky (1978) offers new visions for teaching and learning- ones that emphasized the importance of social contact and collaboration, such as peer-mentoring. According to this view, it is the latter that helps children to reflect on their own thought processes (through feedback and discussion in the actual reading programme) and shift to a higher level of cognitive functioning (Willaims & Snipper, 1990). This view is also held by Cummins (2000) and by Smyth (2002) that these higher-order scientific, abstract concepts that are learnt through mediated experience such as peer-mentoring, play a vital role in children's cognitive development and hence their schooling and academic achievement.

4.2 Qualitative Feedback of Questionnaire

Four teachers, seven mentors and five mentees completed the teacher-learner questionnaire (see Appendix D) with the aim of giving feedback to the researcher on their experiences of the peer-mentoring intervention. In addition, the aim was to allow the participating stakeholders the opportunity to share the benefits and limitations of the intervention, to give recommendations for future such interventions, and for the researcher to evaluate the programme so that constructive changes can be made for future interventions.

Teacher responses

Teachers found the programme beneficial to learners who were actively involved in the reading. They found that learners learnt from each other, were more confident reading out aloud in class and behaved even better. They reported that learners enjoyed the reading programme to the extent that they would be reading in, for example a mathematics class once they had finished their class-work. Learners themselves generalized the reading into their other classes and times. This result seemed positive as reading was not only confined to the reading period itself, but that learners were starting to inculcate a culture of reading into their lives. The reading intervention created an extra awareness of the importance of reading and

motivated weaker learners to improve their reading. Teachers also welcomed the more frequent use of the dictionary and reported improvement in second language learners' reading abilities in terms of pace and fluency.

Some teachers found that in order to carry out the paired reading effectively, the mentors and mentees had to be taken outside in quieter environment, when noise levels were heightened in the classroom. They also found that initially weaker learners seemed very anxious about being paired and reading out aloud, and some learners often "forgot" their readers at home. Overall teachers were excited at the idea of the reading period continuing at school.

Met (1994) discusses the important role teachers play in such a study. If the purpose of schooling is to educate students, then all teachers must contribute to students' achievement of curriculum objectives. Teachers may no longer be able to afford the luxury of a language curriculum separate from the demands of the larger school curriculum. Teachers have a significant leadership role to play in initiating collaborative planning activities, and assisting the understanding of how theories of second language acquisition can inform lesson planning. In addition, teachers must perform a variety of tasks and roles to ensure that students acquire the skills and knowledge in the school's curriculum at a level commensurate with those students who are learning it in their native language. They must serve as a role model for the use of language, cultural behaviours and learning strategies and they need to structure the environment to facilitate language (Met, 1994).

Teachers need to see cultural and linguistic diversity not as a liability but as a resource and that variation does not mean cultural and linguistic deficit and does not imply social or intellectual inferiority. They need to recognize that students will choose unique routes to reach their destinations, and they will need to delight in creative solutions (Handscombe, 1994).

Mentors' Responses

Mentors found the reading period positive and helpful, not only for their mentees but also for themselves. They enjoyed being in a class that consisted of cross/multi-grade learners from Grade 8 through to Grade 11. Mentors reported that at first they were 'irritated, bored and found it a hassle' to help weaker learners, but they were encouraged when they realized that not only were their mentees benefiting, but they too looked forward to increasing their

existing knowledge. Some of them felt they read more than they normally would and their vocabulary expanded. They reported more confident public speaking, greater fluency and more accurate spelling. Several mentors found it difficult when the mentee chose a book that was not interesting to them (mentors) and rather offered to choose the book with the mentee. Others found it difficult for the mentee to grasp the concept of paired reading and as a result struggled to concentrate on the mentoring. There was a suggestion that the reading period be extended to an hour rather. Mentors felt that the school library needed to update the collection by introducing more 'interesting and learner friendly books'. One mentor advised that mentees should be mentored by a 'mature learner in a higher grade' rather than a same grade mentor, if mentoring was to be successful.

Allen (1976) states that the significance of same-age contacts is thought to derive from the more optimal balance of positive and negative feedback that occurs when children interact with age mates. Nevertheless deliberately designed cross-age interaction may facilitate socialization for children who have encountered certain kinds of developmental difficulties, and provides mutual benefits (Allen, 1976). According to Ehly and Larsen (1980) although literature on cross age tutoring are more frequently mentioned than same-age tutoring, both are able to produce learning gains for both tutors and tutees. However they do acknowledge that there is some disagreement among researchers on the extent to which these gains will transfer to the regular classroom, given that process factors during peer tutoring activities remains a generally under-explored area of educational research (Ehly & Larsen, 1980).

Mentees' Responses

Mentees experienced the reading intervention as positive since they saw it as helpful. In general, mentees were hopeful about the reading period continuing but would like to read more 'fun and interesting books'. A few of them admitted to being 'nervous and scared' about making mistakes in case they were laughed at. However, all of them noticed that they were able to pronounce words better, learnt new words and meanings of words, were grateful being corrected by their mentors, and were able to read and speak in front of the class more confidently.

Collaborative and pair-work (peer-mentoring) is central to developing both oral proficiency and academic literacy. It creates opportunity for meaningful actions between the pair in which the more expert learner takes more risks with English and the mentee is given the opportunity

to recognize the different actions of language and to be more expressive (HSRC, 1996). Second language learners benefit from peer-mentoring in several ways. They engage in an authentic communication situation and feel the need to make themselves understood. This provides an authentic reason for trying out the new language. They get a demonstration of standard written English, and in addition to learning and understanding the language, they begin to see that one of the functions of the language is to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships, and more importantly the mentoring process helps them to experience some academic success (Hudelson, 1994).

This mediation of expert peers such as peer-mentoring can spur children's development and potential. Furthermore, Vygotsky's theory (1978) states that mental functions that are beyond an individual's current level must be performed in collaboration with other people before they are achieved independently. The results of learning through mediation include learners' having heightened awareness of their own mental abilities and more control over their thought processes. Thus this theory differs from most other social approaches in considering interaction as an essential force rather than as merely a helpful condition for learning (Saville-Troike, 2006).

4.3 Limitations of the Study

The intervention was meant to start at the beginning of the second term and its duration was scheduled for at least six months. Most researchers hold the implicit view that the longer the mentoring programme, the more positive the effects will be. This assumption requires empirical support, since additional research studies in Allen (1976) suggest that both tutor and tutee will become bored and tutoring may have negative effects. Due to the Grade 9's being grouped by levels of abilities (for example Grade 9a and Grade 9b were very weak ability learners and Grade 9c and 9d were academically well functioning learners), it was difficult to pair willing learners. In May 2007, an after-school reading programme was put into place for forty five minutes twice a week, where same grade and cross-grade mentors and mentees were paired, and mentoring was monitored by a teacher. However, it became difficult to sustain this initiative since sometimes either mentors and/or mentees would not arrive at the after-school reading programme, despite being reminded by their teachers. Two weeks into the programme, as the intervention appeared to be working better, teachers went on strike and the intervention was suspended temporarily.

Later in the third term, learners were re-shuffled to learners of different abilities being placed in each class making it easier for paired reading to be more effective. By this time the principal of the school had embarked on a literacy campaign which resulted in all learners from Grade 8 to Grade 11 involved in a compulsory reading period from Monday to Friday, half an hour each day. This made the paired reading easier to manage.
As mentioned in Goodlad and Hirst (1990), this study too experienced complexities during the intervention which involved teacher attitude, learner co-operation level, correlations, supervision, and time allocations. The outcome of this intervention depended crucially on the attitudes of teachers as they were the ones who assisted in the implementation of the reading programme. Although there is no systematic evidence regarding teachers' effects on the outcomes of the intervention, it was apparent that teachers felt the reading intervention was an added responsibility amidst the pressure of administrative duties and teaching in already overcrowded classrooms. As a result, the monitoring of the paired readers by teachers was not taken as seriously (Goodlad & Hirst, 1990).

In terms of learner co-operation, some learners were more interested in the programme than others. Given their different levels of motivation and reading abilities, and even resistance to the intervention, it was difficult to motivate the rationale and benefits of such an intervention. Although attempts were made with the help of teachers to pair learners who would be compatible with each other, learners who were paired with their same grade peers were 'more playful', and learners who were paired cross-grade were initially 'anxious and scared', although later they shared the benefits of being paired with an older mentor. Studies such as the UK Project showed that in projects where learners who were paired cross-grade level, showed higher success rates in gains than those learners who were paired with same-grade mentors (Goodlad and Hirst, 1990).

As mentioned above, most of the supervision of this reading intervention was done by the teachers and the researcher went in once or twice a week to monitor the intervention. Although the outcome of this study was successful in improving reading skills of ESL learners, an important limitation of the study concerned the extent to which there was a lack of psychoeducation to the paired readers around the peer-mentoring, and the processes involved was not adequately communicated or taught to learners and teachers who specifically participated in the paired-mentoring programme. A It would have been more

beneficial for the researcher to model the peer-mentoring techniques a few times with the participants, rather than communicating it to them verbally, using pen and paper and merely using the teachers as a tool for implementation. On evaluation after the intervention and collection of data, the researcher felt that the mentors and teachers needed to be intensively trained on the intervention of this programme: its process such as types of note-keeping, monitoring and supervision. Perhaps in this way the intervention could have been implemented with a more serious focus, and both teachers and learners would have taken greater ownership of the programme rather than feeling it was an imposition. Furthermore, a lot more qualitative data could have been obtained for further analysis.

According to Goodlad & Hirst (1990), in addition to tutors showing gains from the tutoring process, studies show that tutors who were trained in specific methods of tutoring, perform more of the recommended behaviours such as praising, eliciting correct responses, than a comparison group of untrained tutors. The concern however is whether tutee improvement was due to tutor training techniques or simply to being tutored. Teachers mentioned that it was difficult to supervise the paired readers and control the rest of the class they were assigned to. Furthermore, some of the participants felt the half hour reading intervention was not adequate to address their needs. These differences in outcomes could be attributed to differences in implementation procedures and/or to contextual effects such as teacher attitudes. Only further experimentation will elucidate the effects of mentoring (Goodlad and Hirst, 1990).

It is also important to note that only the effects of the entire intervention were assessed, and the individual effects of its components such as specific materials used in mentoring, and teacher/mentor training were not specifically assessed (Sadoski & Willson, 2006). Thus problems of research methodology in the area of tutoring deserve special consideration. Allen (1976) stressed that although the difficulties of insisting on a control group in an ongoing school programme are real, the practical value of having control groups is obvious. As was the case in this study, sustaining a particular control group was difficult when there was constant reshuffling of the target learners, especially since the study required purposive sampling for pairing English first and second language learners. However, without them one cannot state with certainty that results were not due to some influence in the school other than the mentoring programme. In order to make a definitive and objective conclusion, a control group is indispensable (Allen, 1976).

There is of course a cost element involved in developing a peer tutoring scheme in terms of initial planning and subsequent implementation of a programme. However once these schemes are on their way the time-commitment necessary to organise follow-on programmes is significantly reduced, and teachers are freed from routine tasks within the classroom and can devote themselves to higher-level skills of teaching such as directing instruction, facilitating and evaluating learning. Unfortunately, extra funding has not been provided to reduce the learner:teacher ratio to a level at which pupils can receive the one-to-one instruction they need (Goodlad & Hirst, 1990).

4.4 Implications and Recommendations for Future Studies

The value of 'Ubuntu' (loosely translated as 'humanity') plays a powerful role in the tutoring relationships in South Africa, as it does with all human interactions in many African cultures. First, in the freer learning atmosphere that is created with tutoring, learners will naturally form into groups in preference to working individually. Secondly, learners often see the tutors as providing a one-way flow of help, from the tutor to themselves. Within the concept of Ubuntu, it is important that the interaction is mutually beneficial. Thirdly, tutors who come from the same background as the tutees may help embed an understanding for scientific thinking in the pupils without crossing cultural values (Goodlad, 1998).

One caveat for second language learners is the special need to be sensitive to their understanding of instruction and response to it, that is, to give special consideration to the sense that learners are making and to work hard to make sure that comprehension is there. Another caveat is to be sensitive to individual differences in rates of second language acquisition and to be reasonable in our expectations of learners' responses to instruction. A third caveat is to have faith that second language learners will learn, and therefore, to have high expectations for what can be accomplished. Second language learners have the same potential as native speakers, and they deserve the same high quality literacy opportunities (Hudelson, 1994).

Crucial to such studies is the evaluation process and its effect on research decisions on the structure of a tutorial programme. Ehly and Larsen (1980) refer to a finding reported by teachers in their study that the regularity and consistency of meetings by the tutorial pair over

the term is more important than length or the number of tutoring sessions. The monitoring process will provide an abundance of information of on the performance of tutors and their partners. They also stress the importance of giving not only positive feedback to tutees but to tutors as well for their contribution. In future studies of this nature, the researcher could have had more frequent meetings with the mentors, mentees and the teachers in order to continuously monitor the intervention.

Sadoski and Willson (2006) investigated a study in 1997 (Lindamood-Bell theoretically based reading intervention). Practical implications suggest more dramatic results for Grades 3 and 4 than Grade 5. Firstly, large gains become increasingly difficult to produce as the grade level increases. Relating this reason to the current research study, such reading interventions could be implemented and generalized in lower and/or primary grades so learners can internalize such teaching and learning methods from a young age, especially since younger/primary school children show marked significant gains than older/secondary school children. This view is also held by Saville-Troike (2006) who finds age to be one of the important factors in second language acquisition (SLA). According to her, younger children have an advantage in brain plasticity, in not being so analytical, having fewer inhibitions and weaker group identity and having more years to learn before proficiency is judged (Saville-Troike, 2006). Secondly, some of the learners who reached Grade 5 that year, may have already been exposed to the intervention for a year or two. The Lindamood-Bell intervention continued to be effective in Grade 5. The explanation was that the effects of comprehensive school reform tend to be smaller in the first four years of implementation but increase substantially after the fifth year (Sadoski & Willson, 2006).

Given the general reading intervention at the school used in this study, in particular the peer-mentoring reading programme which is still in its infancy stages of implementation and development, one would expect that the combination of: the school's initiative of a compulsory reading period; the internalisation of the principles of peer mentoring; and school's educational aims and objectives of collaborative teaching and learning, would lead to a prognosis of the efficacy of such reading intervention models are excellent.

Perhaps in the future a more structured questionnaire could be used in the teacher/mentor/mentee feedback on the intervention. For example specific questions could have been asked to mentees on how the mentoring helped them in the following areas such as school achievement and homework, motivation to study, self confidence, social adjustment

and general enrichment. The mentor could have been specifically asked about whether he/she encountered problems around scheduling sessions, planning activities, dealing with problems from the mentee, receiving suitable guidance and support. The use of such qualitative feedback is most valuable to the evaluation and re-structuring of such interventions so future studies are even more effective and successful (Goodlad, 1998).

Goodlad & Hirst (1989) stressed that it is particularly hard to control all these variables such as socioeconomic background, age and gender differences which might affect the outcome of the tutoring experiment. The following are important considerations for future interventions. For example, one might expect the effectiveness of a peer-mentoring scheme to depend among other things: the duration of the scheme; the frequency of the peer-mentoring sessions; the length of time spent by mentors and mentees in each lesson; the difference in age and educational experience of both mentor and mentee; the amount of training the mentor receives in mentoring techniques; differences in sex, socio-economic class, ethnic background etc. Such factors singly or in combination make it extremely difficult to compile any definitive list of crucial variables affecting the outcome of peer tutoring (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989). Although the research design was chosen to minimise the impact of extraneous variables (such as learning styles, socio-economic status etc) on the outcomes, McKay (1998) and Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) stress the importance of other contextual factors that influence the development of ESL: school and quality of schooling; home situation, literacy background and socioeconomic status.

Most research has concentrated on seeking to validate the effects of peer-mentoring on mentors and mentees. However it is becoming increasingly important to explore the cost-effectiveness of such activities as discussed earlier by (Goodlad & Hirst, 1990). Given this situation, some strategy is needed which permits individualised instruction to be provided at minimal cost. Peer-mentoring is said to relieve stress for teachers, to benefit both the mentors and mentees cognitively and affectively (Goodlad & Hirst, 1990) and could be seen as an effective way to improving reading abilities of English second language learners (ESL).

According to Cummins (2000), educating ESL learners is the responsibility of the entire school. Teachers must be prepared and trained to teach all children in the classroom, given the many diverse and complex issues South African children face, especially coming from a historically and politically disadvantaged legacy. Therefore school policies should be

developed in every school to address the needs of *all* students, particularly those who require support in English academic language learning. Furthermore, district and current assessment programmes are likely to give a very misleading impression of both the students' academic potential and of the effectiveness of instruction, of ESL students who are still in the process of catching up academically in English. Thus we should be looking at interventions that will sustain bilingual students' long-term academic progress rather than expecting a short-term 'quick-fix' solution to students' academic underachievement in English (Cummins, 2000). The quality of tutoring from a peer tutor may be a good deal inferior to that from a professional teacher, and the need for monitoring and quality control cannot be overstated. However, once project co-ordinators and/or teachers experiment with peer mentoring for consolidation and practice there is no doubt that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages (Goodlad, 1998).

4.5 Conclusion

In South Africa there is a wide gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children in terms of their literacy environment. The gap is reinforced and exacerbated by the social context of literacy. Literacy, especially reading and writing is the foundation of all schooling and future academic success. Children who do not master literacy skills and understand the significance of literacy will be permanently disadvantaged in their future lives. Literacy will play an even more important role, in success as South Africa moves into the Information Age (Machet, 2002).

If educational systems in developing countries aim to produce independent learners, then serious attention will need to be given to improving the reading skills of students and to creating a culture of reading. The longer we ignore the reading problem, the more the intellectual potential of current and future generations of students go untapped (Pretorius, 2002).

According to Pretorius (2002), whatever the causes, the effects are the same: students with reading problems get caught in a negative cycle of failed reading outcomes and academic underperformance. Schools that do emphasize reading skills beyond the early grades are the exception rather than the rule, even in the more privileged schools. It is also not clear how much attention reading is being given in the new curriculum. When the change to English as a

medium of instruction occurs, many black pupils have barely mastered reading comprehension skills in their primary language. As a result they have some decoding skills but a few comprehension reading skills to transfer to English. They then proceed through a disadvantaged educational system which did not and still, to a large extent, does not promote reading skills and does not provide adequate textbooks to the schools (Pretorius, 2002). Furthermore, the education system was and still is characterised by a strong reliance on oral modes of information transmission and on rote learning. This suggests that poor reading skills are being recycled within the learning context- trainee teachers do little reading and score poorly on inferential skills, and when they enter the teaching force they perpetuate these poor skills. Increased language proficiency may lead to increased BICS, not CALP. It is through reading that students acquire CALP, and are enculturated into a world of higher learning and improve their writing. Reading constitutes the very process whereby learning occurs and it lies at the roots of academic performance: if one wishes to improve academic performance at all levels of schooling, then one needs to improve reading ability (Pretorius, 2002).

Learners' ability to participate meaningfully in school learning activities is intimately linked to their proficiency in the language of learning at school. In South Africa, an increasing number of learners are taught through the medium of English. English second language (ESL) and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) learners who enter classes where English is the language of learning, encounter serious problems in coping with their academic work. These learners have acquired informal, colloquial language or Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), but lack the command of English to comprehend various concepts, principles, and techniques required to pass the different learning areas. Thus, they lack Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) since they are unable to convey their thoughts and express themselves (Schlebusch, 2002).

Smyth (2002) stated that if all children in South Africa are to face an equal task at school, they should all be using their home language for learning. It is argued that all home language programmes need to actively engage with the teaching of the cognitive academic language skills necessary for learning across the curriculum. However, it is also acknowledged that realistically, language-in policies in the schools are unlikely to change due to the understandable suspicion with which many first language (L1) African parents view L1 instruction. If one accepts that most L1 African children will continue to use English as their language of learning and teaching, it is vital that their L1 language courses should shoulder a

large part of the burden of cognitive academic language proficiency development. In this way they will be more able to link higher-order abstract language skills taught at school in their home language. At the same time, learners are also provided with the opportunity to develop the more advanced literacy skills demanded across the curriculum in their home language. Once both concepts and language skills are soundly established, it is possible for learners to access them in English, making the burden of learning through the English language easier (Smyth, 2002).

Teachers in South African schools are already overburdened with large numbers of learners in their classrooms in addition to the already disadvantaged settings in which resources and finance are such huge problems (von Gruenewaldt, 1999). This study pre-empts teachers' possible resistance and ambivalence to the programme for the following reasons: fear factor-no appropriate/suitable workshops relevant to reading challenges experienced at school; apathy from management to demonstrate any positive measure of willingness to address the problem; and no coherent and structured programme in place from the GDE. Consent, confidence, shared concern, and empathy are perhaps the emotional boosters for a successful implementation of the programme. Teachers' perceived threats with the implementation of the reading intervention must be allayed, and translated into tangible forms of co-operative management between researcher and teacher (von Gruenewaldt, 1999). The implication is that once teachers experience improvement and success in their learners' reading abilities, comprehension, and vocabulary, they will be more willing and supportive of such an intervention.

In light of the above promising results, we can conclude that if learners are to succeed academically, they need to acquire both BICS and CALP in English simultaneously. Mother tongue instruction through primary school, accompanied by the gradual introduction of English would be ideal for ESL learners in South Africa. However, the implementation of mother tongue instruction in the South African context has serious time constraints and logistical limitations. Therefore, we turn to the option of directly targeting CALP skills through the implementation of a daily peer-mentored, paired reading programme in order to enhance reading skills, decoding skills and comprehension skills of ESL learners. The key task is thus to build student tutoring and mentoring into the basic structures of academic institutions so that systems acquire a greater degree of stability.

While evidence concerning peer tutoring in schools cannot be automatically generalized into higher and further education, there is considerable food for thought in these findings (Goodlad, 1998). In the South African context, involvement of student tutors is not only demonstrably beneficial to student tutors and tutees, but it can additionally be viewed as an appropriate response to two other needs of South African education in general and higher education in particular- finding resources within the system given fiscal constraints and the system's need to enhance its human resource development in order to produce professionals with globally equivalent skills to strengthen the country's enterprises, services and infrastructure (Goodlad, 1998)

Since it is evident from our discussions that current education programmes have not resulted in the improvement of the academic standards of majority of South African learners, we need to look towards innovative interventions such as the peer-mentoring programmes. This research study has shown peer-mentoring as a viable option in practice. Furthermore, this study showed significant success of peer-mentoring: on the reading proficiency of ESL Grade 9 learners; that it fulfilled specific needs in the school; and that feedback from learners and teachers was positive- argues for a strong case for the further development of peer-mentoring in the South African environment (Sorenson & Gregory, 1998). Given its success, this study could be extended and generalized to many diverse schools, obviously tailored to meet the needs of the school contexts. Therefore we can conclude that peer-mentoring in South African schools could prove to be practical, cost-effective, and more importantly, extremely successful in improving reading abilities of English second language (ESL) learners and hence their overall academic performance.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: RESEARCHER SUBJECT INFORMATION

Information Sheet

UNIVERSITY
OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

School of Human and Community Development
Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel: (011) 717-4500 Fax: (011) 717-4559

Dear Parent,

My name is _____, and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters Degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. My research focuses on the English reading abilities of first and second language learners who are being educated in English. We live in a country with twelve official languages but the majority of learners choose to receive their Secondary School education in English, even though this is not their home language. The impact of learning in a language that is not your home language in not well understood in the South African context, and many learners may be at risk of underachievement due to poorly developed language abilities. Part of this research explores the level of reading abilities, particularly vocabulary and comprehension, of both first and second language learners, and its impact on their academic performance. This research will lay the foundations for developing a peer mentoring intervention that aims to develop the reading abilities of less capable learners. The Principal, Governing Body and the Gauteng Department of Education have given permission for this research to be conducted at Willowmoore High School. We would like to invite your child to participate in this study.

Participation in this research will entail that your child completes a standard reading test, the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, which will be administered during school time by the teachers at Willowmoore High School. The test will be completed during the guidance lessons and the results will be collected from the guidance teacher by the researcher. In addition to the reading test your child will be asked to complete a short biographical questionnaire giving details of their English language experiences at home and during their Primary School education. Participation is voluntary, and no learner will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. Although your child will complete their name on the questionnaire to allow collation of this information with his/her academic marks, all responses will be kept confidential, and no information that could identify your child will be included in the research report. The results of individual learners' performance on the reading test will not be available to the learners or to the school. If your child is selected to participate in the intervention programme, you will be informed, and asked to complete a different consent form, at a later date.

If you choose to allow your child to participate in the study please complete the attached consent form and return it to the Class teacher at school. If you have any further queries about this research, please contact my supervisor, Dr Yvonne Broom at 011 717 4516 or via e-mail at broomy@umthombo.wits.ac.za.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute both to a larger body of knowledge on the level of English reading abilities of learners in South African schools. This will inform, and help us to develop, appropriate educational practices in our schools.

Kind Regards

APPENDIX B: CONSENT AND ASSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

School of Human and Community Development
Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel: (011) 717-4500 Fax: (011) 717-4559

Consent Form

I, the parent/ guardian of _____ consent to my son/daughter taking part in the reading research to be conducted at Willowmoore High School under the supervision of Dr Yvonne Broom from the University of the Witwatersrand.

I consent to the results of the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, a biographical questionnaire and academic marks being used for the purposes of this study.

I understand that:

- Participation in this research is voluntary.
- My son/daughter may withdraw from the study at any time.
- No information that may identify my son/daughter will be included in the research report, and all responses will remain confidential.

Name of Parent/ Guardian (Please print) _____

Signed _____ Date _____

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

School of Human and Community Development
Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel: (011) 717-4500 Fax: (011) 717-4559

Assent Form

I _____ agree to take part in the reading research to be conducted at Willowmoore High School under the supervision of Dr Yvonne Broom from the University of the Witwatersrand.

I agree that my results from the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, biographical questionnaire and academic marks may be used for the purposes of this study.

I understand that:

- Participation in this study is voluntary.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and all responses will remain confidential.

Name of Learner (Please print) _____

Signed _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C: BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONAIRE

NAME: _____

AGE: _____

GENDER: _____

HOME LANGUAGE/S: _____

PLEASE FILL IN THE NECESSARY INFORMATION IN THE TABLE PROVIDED.

GRADE	SCHOOL	LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION
Grade One		
Grade Two		
Grade Three		
Grade Four		
Grade Five		
Grade Six		
Grade Seven		

Do you speak in English to? (Please tick the appropriate box)

	Sometimes	Often	Never
Your Family			
Your Friends			

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. Your help is much appreciated.

APPENDIX D: TEACHER-LEARNER FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

HIGH SCHOOL

TEACHER-LEARNER QUESTIONNAIRE:
Based on the Reading Period/Intervention done by Masters' Students from the University of the Witwatersrand

*Please note, you **do not** have to write your names.

*Please state whether you are a teacher or learner by placing a tick ( ) next to the category:

Teacher _____ Learner (tutor/tutee) _____

1. What were your experiences and feelings around the reading period?

2. Were there any benefits/advantages of the reading period? If so, please explain or give reasons.

3. Were there any disadvantages, limitations and difficulties of the reading period? Please explain.

4. Do you have any suggestions on how you or your school could improve and encourage the idea of the reading programme?

5. Additional comments

Thank you for your time!