

ABSTRACT

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

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

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

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