Reading clubs as a literacy intervention tool to develop English vocabulary amongst Grade 3 English second language learners at a school in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape

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DECLARATION

I, **Sibhekinkosi Anna Tshuma,** the undersigned, hereby declare that the contents of this dissertation constitute my own original work, which has not previously been presented to another institution, either in part or as a whole, for the purposes of obtaining a degree. Where use has been made of the work of others, this has duly been acknowledged and referenced.

Signature ………………………………..   Date………………………………..

ABSTRACT

This study is part of a larger research programme[1] that seeks to contribute towards an understanding of South Africa's complex literacy landscape and formulate strategies that may address these particularly in the Foundation Phase. It is a case study of one public primary school in Grahamstown where isiXhosa is used as a medium of instruction until Grade 3, after which the medium of instruction changes to English. This transition is not helped by the little reading that happens in the language at the FP. The learners under study are Grade 3 isiXhosa first language speakers, learning English as a First Additional Language (FAL) with limited exposure to the language.

Through a qualitative participatory action research process, the study investigated the extent to which a reading club in general and a responsive reading programme in particular, might develop learners' English vocabulary at this particular school. The value of reading clubs as a vehicle for second language learning as well as the importance of considering learner needs in the development of the reading programme are key contributions this study makes.

The study draws on social constructivism as a theoretical framework based on the principle that learning is a social activity. Vygotsky (1978) states that language learning (LL) takes place through interactions in meaningful events, rather than through isolated language activities. The process is seen as holistic, that is, each mode of language supports and enhances overall language development. Furthermore, LL develops in relation to the context in which it is used, that is, it develops according to the situation, the topic under discussion and the relationship between participants. Language also develops through active engagement of the learners. The role of a teacher or a more competent other is then seen as that of a facilitator in a learning context in which learners are viewed as equally capable of contributing to their learning through learning from and with each other (Holt and Willard-Holt, 2000). Vygotsky's theory of social interaction has been influential in highlighting the important role of social and cultural contexts in extending children's learning.

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[1] The Cape Consortium Foundation Phase (FP) Research Programme consists of four university institutions, namely University of the Western Cape, Rhodes University, Walter Sisulu University and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. The programme aims at contributing to quality teaching and teacher education practices by designing programmes for FP and producing teacher education support material. The programme also anticipates increasing the number of FP teacher educators and teachers, and to ensure more inclusive learners' epistemology access to literacy, numeracy and life skills in FP classrooms.

The preliminary results of this study point toward the importance of the learning environment, particularly an informal environment in second language development. The results also highlight the need for learners (a) to be provided with opportunities to engage with meaningful and authentic texts, (b) to be allowed to make their own book choices, (c) to participate in large group, small group and individual activities to enable them to engage with a variety texts, and (d) to confront vocabulary in a variety of ways through multiple texts and genres.

"Perhaps the greatest tools we can give learners for succeeding, not only in their education but more generally in life, is a large, rich vocabulary and the skills for using those words" (Pikulski & Templeton, 2004, p.1).

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ACRONYMS

ANA: Annual National Assessments

AR: Action Research

CAPS: Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement

DoE: Department of Education

ELL: English Language Learner

ESL: English Second Language

ESLL: English Second Language Learners

FAL: First Additional Language

FP: Foundation Phase

Gr.:   Grade

L1:   First Language

L2:   Second Language

LL: Language Learning

LOLT: Language of Learning and Teaching

PIRLS: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1   Introduction

This study is part of a larger research programme[2] that seeks to contribute towards understanding South Africa's complex literacy landscape and to formulate strategies that may address these particularly in the Foundation Phase. The learners under study are Grade 3 isiXhosa first language speakers, learning English as a First Additional Language with limited exposure to the language. Through a participatory action research project, the current study investigated the extent to which a reading club could enhance learners' English vocabulary and motivate them to read for enjoyment. Establishing a reading club is considered a potentially helpful intervention that may not only expose learners to books but also use strategies that may explicitly enhance the development and improvement of English vocabulary (Papadopoulos-Duros, 2009).

This chapter provides an overview of the study. To situate it, I begin with a description on the importance of literacy both nationally and internationally as well as a brief discussion on the state of literacy in South Africa. I proceed with a discussion on the context of the study. I thereafter describe the main problem the study addresses. This chapter ends with a description of the goals, main research questions, and an outline of the rest of the thesis.

1.2   National and International Perspectives on Literacy

Most governments in the world, including South Africa, give high priority to the development of literacy among their populations. Literacy is seen as a key factor in any country's social and economic development. During the 2001 International Literacy Day, the Director General of UNESCO said:

> We must never forget that literacy is indeed a cause for celebration: for individuals and their families and for society at large. Humankind has spectacular progress in regard to literacy: there are now close to 4 billion literate people in the world. More over many of today's rapid technology advances are focused on information and communication, which is central to the practice of literacy (www.unesco.org/uis accessed on May 2013, p.23).

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[2] The Cape Consortium Foundation Phase (FP) Research Programme consists of four university institutions, namely University of the Western Cape, Rhodes University, Walter Sisulu University and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. The programme aims at contributing to quality teaching and teacher education practices by designing programmes for FP and producing teacher education support material. The programme also anticipates increasing the number of FP teacher educators and teachers and to ensure more inclusive learners' epistemology access to literacy, numeracy and life skills in FP classrooms.

Winch, Johnston, March, Ljungdahl & Holliday (2006) state that literacy is integral to success in a modern society and that it pervades almost every area of social interaction including education, work, leisure, and communication and is a key component of the information revolution. Thus, competence in literacy is essential if one is to participate fully in a modern society. This means being able to take part in the workforce, engage in democratic processes, decision making, and contribute to society.

Gee (1990) makes the point that schools play a key role in the development of a literate society. He posits that those who have acquired schooled literacy are seen as having the prospects of being adult citizens who are innovative, achievement oriented, productive, and cosmopolitan. They would therefore be equipped to participate in a modern society that requires a literate populace (Gee, 1990).

For this reason, the South African Department of Basic Education (DoBE) regards literacy as a critical foundational skill that is fundamental to all learning (DoBE, 2011). Literacy is not only crucial for young people to succeed at school, but also to participate in a complex society. In addition, learners' transition from one grade to the next at school, to a large extent, depends on a well-developed foundation of literacy and on positive attitudes to learning other skills. Therefore, learners need to have the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and understanding to engage with the literacy demands of the curriculum and to participate effectively in a modern society.

However, literacy is complex and not easy to define. Conventionally, it has been defined as merely the ability to read and write at a standard level of proficiency that is necessary for communication. However, this definition of literacy has also been considered by many scholars as more appropriate for the era of print-only literacy and is now inadequate in view of a large number of literacies that shape part of the modern world (Snyder, 2002). Early definitions of literacy did not account for several contextual meanings, which include technological literacy, mathematical literacy, and visual literacy. Living in a contemporary or modern society has created new literacy needs with definitions of literacy taking on several and varying contextual meanings.

There have been shifts in thinking about literacy and these might be best understood using Guerra's (1998, p. 51) framework where he suggests that the commonly used meanings of literacy can be broadly classified into four different perspectives. First, literacy can be viewed as an entity, which means that it is an object that exists outside social and individual constraint; it is 'something you either have or do not have'. The second perspective views literacy as self; it consists of metaphors that essentially view it as something that an individual possesses and is personally constructed. The third perspective views literacy as an institution, namely that it is something similar to an artefact or currency. The more one possesses it, the more successful one can be. Lastly, literacy is viewed as a social practice, with those who hold this view recognising that there are multiple forms of literacy and that people unify with these multiple literacies as they both create and engage with the world around them.

Barton & Hamilton (1998) concur with the latter view and suggest that literacy is mainly what people do and it is an activity that is located in the space between thought and text. In this view, literacy also includes an understanding of the relationship between the text and context and involves the integral combination of listening, speaking, and critical thinking with reading and writing. These authors also propose that literacy from such a perspective is intrinsically purposeful, flexible, and dynamic and continues to develop through an individual's lifetime. Understanding and giving meaning to the text is essential and word knowledge is necessary to not only decode words, but importantly, to comprehend and derive meaning from the text. Vocabulary and its development are key ingredients in this meaning making process (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Scott, Nagy & Flinspach, 2008).

The above views shaped the approach to literacy adopted in this study, namely that it is a social practice (Street, 1995; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Guerra, 1998). This view recognises that literacy does not only reside in people's heads as a set of skills to be learned, nor does it just reside on paper captured as texts to be analysed. Rather, like all human activity, literacy is essentially social and is located in the interaction between people (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, literacy is embedded in the practices of our daily lives. For example, when people purchase goods or visit the doctor, they engage in social practices in which literacy is embedded.

Teaching children to be literate should, therefore, not be seen merely as providing them with a set of skills to transfer from situation to situation. Rather, it should involve teaching them how

to participate, understand and gain control of the social practices of their society and the literacy practices that are embedded in them (Gee, 1990; Luke & Freebody, 1997; Street, 1995). The establishment of a reading club, as this study proposed, was seen as a platform that would potentially enhance literacy by embedding it in an authentic social practice. When people are involved in a social practice like a reading club, they learn from each other and that there is authentic participation and involvement for real purposes and outcomes.

Although living in a contemporary society has created new literacy needs, the traditional functions of speaking, listening, reading, and writing remain central to being literate. While reading, writing, listening, and speaking are interconnected, researchers have found that reading is the most important competence that a child can develop and that it is important for parents to help their children develop the habit of reading at a young age (PIRLS, 2006).

According to the National Reading Panel (2000), reading plays an important role in self-realisation, helping children learn about themselves and their potential. Reading makes children more knowledgeable, not just about school subjects but about many topics relevant to everyday life and society more generally. Through reading, they encounter new words, phrases, and idioms that will improve vocabulary and language skills, and learning about patterns and connections will increase thinking skills and creativity (Biemiller, 1999). Reading can also be a source of enjoyment. Regardless of the subject matter taught, reading is crucial to success in school, and learners need well-developed vocabulary and good reading comprehension to understand and learn the material being covered in their various classes (Annie, 2010).

But learning to read requires a deep understanding of the mother tongue, because as Cummins & Swain (1986) propose, children need a deep understanding of their mother tongue before learning in an additional language. Lack thereof disadvantages learners in their acquisition of literacy in an additional language. Thus, the most important building block in children's education is the ability to read, write, and speak in their mother tongue (Cummins, 2001). Young second language learners are in a precarious position of having to learn to read concurrently with learning a second language. Many of these learners find this dual task difficult.

Amongst other researchers, Kreuger & Townshend (1997) have stressed that second language beginning readers often find it difficult to understand the initial literacy practices, which include reading lessons and stories. While first language learners attempt to understand the written text, second language learners are still attempting to understand the oral language. This discrepancy between the first and second language learners can quickly lead to what Stanovich (1986) calls the 'Matthew' effect[3] and once vocabulary difference is firmly established in children, they are very difficult to reverse.

Hart & Risley (1995), Biemiller (1999) states that the reasons for the 'Matthew effect' include lack of access to books in homes, schools, and in communities. Having books at home offers more opportunities to read even outside school. Unfortunately, the very children who are most at risk are the ones who typically do not have enough books to read. Often, it is low-income children who do not have ready access to books at home and where library books are available, they are usually too difficult for English second language learners to read by themselves.

1.3   The State of Literacy in South Africa

Like elsewhere in the world, South Africa faces literacy challenges. The South African National Literacy Initiative (SANLI) estimates that there are at least three million people in this country who are illiterate (i.e. unable to read or write). There are millions more (estimates range from five to eight million) who are functionally illiterate[4] (SANLI, 2000). In part, this is due to the high failure and dropout rates in schools, which have far-reaching economic and social consequences. For those learners remaining in school, many struggle to meet its demands. The average learner from chronic poverty is more than two entire grade levels behind his/her peers by the time they leave the Intermediate Phase (Johnston, 2009).

In particular, research reveals that children's literacy and numeracy skills in South Africa lack parity with children of a similar age in other countries globally (Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum, 2005; Nathanson, 2008; NEEDU Report, 2013). Recent research

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[3] Matthew effect is a term taken from the Biblical passage that describes a rich-get-richer and poor-get-poorer phenomenon. Applying this concept to reading, the very children who are reading well and who have good vocabularies will read more, learn more word meanings and hence read even better. Children with inadequate vocabularies who read slowly and without enjoyment read less and as result have slower development of vocabulary knowledge, which inhibits further growth in reading ability (Stanovich, 1986).

[4] Functional illiteracy means being unable to function adequately in the modern world due to poor reading and writing skills.

projects such as PIRLS (2006; 2011), Mothibeli (2005), and NEEDU (2013), focusing on testing reading levels in South Africa, show that learners in this country perform significantly below the expected assessment standards. The National Department of Education also conducted three National Systemic Evaluations in 2001, 2004 and 2007 respectively to establish literacy and numeracy levels in primary schools. These evaluations exposed alarmingly low levels of reading ability across the country[5]. The results indicate that many of the learners were unable to read and respond to texts. While a few exceptional learners manage to achieve excellence despite contextual social difficulties, the majority in the South African education system 'cannot read for meaning in any language and are not numerically competent' (Fleisch, 2008, p. 3). If reading competence is poor, then it is likely that learners' writing competence and reading comprehension levels will equally be poor (National Reading Strategy, 2008, p. 7).

Poor literacy is generally associated with a host of factors in and out of school, some of which include the socio-economic conditions that predispose children to poverty and print-deficient environments (National Reading Strategy, 2008). The National Department of Education also attributes low literacy levels to the lack of functional and well-equipped libraries at school as well as with a lack of support for literacy in the home. Fleisch (2008) extends the reasons for low levels of literacy to the social backgrounds that do not always prepare learners for the literacy demands they confront in school. He contends that many struggle to keep up with expectations of schooling and some struggle academically to keep up with their grade-level peers. Sum, Khatiwada, McLaughlin & Palma (2009) concur that many learners in this country never make it all the way through school, with those from rural and poor environments dropping out at alarming rates compared to their urban and middle class counterparts. Like the National Department of Education, they attribute this phenomenon mainly to lack of exposure to literacy materials both at school and at home.

Low marks for reading and writing in a home language are particularly acute amongst Grade 3 learners in South Africa as evidenced by the evaluations conducted during the last decade on a number of literacy assessments in all nine provinces. These consistently low literacy

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[5] When one compares the 2011 results with those of the Department's systemic evaluations of Grade 6 literacy in 2001, 2004 and 2007, it is clear that learners' performance over the past decade is consistently poor. The Eastern Cape recorded 24% in 2001, 35% in 2004 and 29% in 2007. While the nation's overall recordings were 30%, 36% and 28% respectively.

levels suggest that learners are starting poorly in reading and staying on a poor reading path. In many schools, a large percentage of learners struggle with learning to read and reading failures have exacted a tremendous long-term consequence for children's development of self-confidence and motivation to learn as well as for their latest school performance.

Curriculum policy guidelines such as Curriculum 2005 (C2005) and the subsequent Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) and, to some extent, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), did not make teaching children to read an explicit goal. This is evidenced as far back as a confession by then Minister of Education Kadar Asmal when he stated, 'I was then concerned that the curriculum did not explicitly mention the need for learners to know how to read and write' (cited in Fleisch, 2008, p. 7). The PIRLS (2006) study confirmed that 72% of South African teachers spent less than three hours per week teaching reading than was the case internationally. The PIRLS 2006 international report indicates that on average, internationally; teachers allocate 30% of instructional time to language instruction and 20% to reading instruction (Mullis, Martin, Kennedy & Foy 2007). On average, internationally, Grade 4 learners are taught explicit reading instruction for more than 6 hours a week. The National Reading Strategy (2008) also states that teachers do not know how to teach reading, with many believing that they do not have to teach but facilitate the reading development process.

In an effort to improve the low literacy levels in South African schools, the Deputy General of Education placed an open letter in August 2006 in major newspapers around the country encouraging principals and teachers in primary schools to make reading a priority in their schools. This move was followed in February 2008, by the launch of the Foundations for Learning Programme, a mandatory intervention that puts the teaching of literacy and numeracy at the heart of the first six years of schooling. This is premised on an understanding that the effectiveness of an education system is judged by the literacy and numeracy levels that its learners achieve in the foundational years (Pretorius & Mokhwesana 2009).

Probyn (2006) states that in the Eastern Cape (EC) province, where this study was conducted, isiXhosa is the home language of 83.8% of the population and English speakers comprise only 3.7%. Further, the majority of African learners in township and rural schools (over 80%) have little exposure to English outside the classroom, apart from television and popular music. Probyn (2006, p. 2) notes, "the common sense assumption that African learners use

their home language in their homes and communities and demographics suggest that they have little direct contact with home language English speakers, as these comprise only 9% of the population nationally". This context gave impetus to the study, as I expand upon below.

1.4   The Impact of Socio-Economic Class on Vocabulary Development

Many children in South African schools who are learning English as an additional language are from low socio-income backgrounds (Fleisch, 2008). These children have limited access to reading materials and, as a result, lack the necessary vocabulary for reading. Taylor and Vingevold (1999); Murray (2002); Pretorius & Ribbens (2005) are amongst many researchers who have identified the lack of resources and particularly of reading materials as a serious problem in South African schools. Fleisch (2008) states that the majority of the South African learners come from families with less than 10 books in any language and as a result do not have foundational vocabulary-building experiences of reading at home, neither in their home language nor in English, factors that have consequences for learning an additional language. A national survey[6] found that only 10% of parents bought newspapers and magazines; more than 50% indicated they had access to fewer than ten books and 83% of schools have no libraries (Bot & Shindler, 1997; Strauss, 1999). Juel (1988) states that children who do not learn to read in the first grades of school continue to fall further behind and catching up becomes more difficult with each successive year of failure while Scarborough (2001) stresses that, children who enter with weak language skills are likely to encounter difficulty in learning to read.

Although most children are experienced users of language when they begin school, reading requires more complex and often abstract vocabulary than that used in daily interactions (Konza, 2011). Children who have been exposed to reading and who have had many stories read to them during the early years of schooling will have been exposed to a much broader, richer vocabulary than that contained in everyday interaction and will arrive at school prepared for the language they will encounter as they continue their literacy journey. According to Hart & Risley (1995), the differences in vocabulary among pre-schoolers reflect differences in children's home language backgrounds, not learning deficits. Children without the kind of vocabulary knowledge valued by traditional education settings will begin school

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[6] The Monitoring Learning Achievement survey (Strauss, 1999) tested the literacy, numeracy and life skills proficiency of Grade 4 learners in 400 schools in all nine provinces and collected baseline indicators of the learners' socio-economic backgrounds.

at a disadvantage and that disadvantage will result in poorer long term progress in literacy achievement (NELP, 2000). This also applies to situations where the language used at school is different from the one spoken at home or in the community, as is the case with this research where the learners have to switch from isiXhosa to English after three years in the Foundation Phase.

There is a significant achievement gap between learners of low income and middle-income families (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009) which becomes more evident when the learners are in the fourth grade and increases as they get older. For many learners a critical transition occurs when they begin Grade 4. At this point, they make a shift from learning to read to reading to learn (Chall, 1996). Though some learners' transition to Grade 4 is smooth, others struggle with content area material and, as is the case for many learners in South Africa, with learning through a second language.

It is interesting to note that Chall & Jacobs (2003) and Chall, Jacobs & Baldwin (1990), found that the reading achievement of children in Grades 2 and 3 from low income families was comparable to the achievement of the normative population on all the six subtests of the experimental version of the Diagnostic Assessments of Reading (DAR) that consisted of word recognition, word analysis, oral reading, word meaning, reading comprehension, and spelling. The most significant finding was that between Grades 4 and 7: children from low-income backgrounds who participated in their study had greatest difficulty defining more abstract, academic, literary, and less common words as compared with a normative population on the word-meaning test. By Grade 7, learners were more than two years behind norms and their scores on word recognition and spelling were very low. Oral reading and silent reading comprehension began to decelerate later in Grades 6 and 7 (Chall, Jacobs & Baldwin, 1990). For this reason, teachers are encouraged to understand the importance of the role of vocabulary and to directly support its development at the early years.

In their study on early language development, Hart & Risley (1995) found huge differences that reflected parents' socio-economic status. Astonishing variation was found in the amount of talk that took place between parents and children from different families. At the extremes, children from high socio-economic status had 16 times more language stimulation than children from lower status families. Because of these differences in language experience, the children's language growth was directly influenced. Children from professional parents had a

vocabulary of about 1000 words collectively and those from working class families had about 650 words and those from welfare families had just over 400 words. These differences systematically widened between the onset of speech and three years of age when vocabulary measures were taken.

My research study focused on children from welfare families. They come from disadvantaged communities (see Chapter 4, section 4.4). I approached these learners guided by research such as that by Barnett (2001) which suggests that it is possible for children who are behind in early language development to overcome these limitations. Beck et al. (2002) and Juel et al. (2003) also show that not enough is being done in school programmes to help children who enter school with weak language and vocabulary development to catch up. There is a significant gap in the vocabulary knowledge that some learners bring to the primary grades and that gap widens as learners' progress through the grades. Such a phenomenon is particularly stark amongst learners who have to not only master a new language, but also have to use it to learn new content, such as is the case of the learners participating in this study. Research-based interventions such as the one under discussion seem appropriate as they have potential to not only accelerate learning of different literacy skills, but also learning a second language. Such interventions are particularly necessary in the South African context where many learners not only transition from learning to read to reading to learn but also have to do the latter in a language other than their mother tongue.

1.5 Context of the Study

There are five core components of reading instruction essential to success in reading. These are phonemic awareness, phonics and word study, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000). Of these, vocabulary development is considered by many researchers as key. Learners' word knowledge is linked strongly to academic success because those who have large vocabularies can understand new ideas and concepts more quickly than those with limited vocabularies (Chung & Nation, 2004). Vocabulary knowledge encompasses all the words we must know to access our background knowledge, express our ideas, communicate effectively, and learn about new concepts. Rupley, Logan & Nichols (1999, p. 339) state, "[V]ocabulary is the glue that holds stories, ideas and content together … making comprehension accessible for children." The high correlation in the research literature of word knowledge with reading comprehension indicates that if children do not

adequately and steadily grow their vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension will be compromised (Chall & Jacobs, 2003).

To improve reading in general, vocabulary should be explicitly taught. Biemiller (1999) posits that one cannot assume that children can learn and increase their vocabulary from other sources. However, they can learn two to three new words every day if the words are explained in context and explicitly taught. Flynt & Brozo (2008) also emphasise that vocabulary instruction should be explicit in the school curriculum as an increase in word knowledge is important for learners to achieve academically.

Reading clubs are an important social activity that has potential to promote reading and importantly, support vocabulary development (Whittingham & Huffman, 2009). They provide a relaxed environment that is more like home than school. Learners usually have a choice to either attend or not. Reading clubs are also described as places where people who love stories and books meet regularly to read, tell stories, and talk about what they are reading. In the process, some other fun activities related to stories and books are incorporated. Research has shown that learners have benefited from participation in these types of activities because they are involved in the process and also get to interact more with their peers (Daniels, 1994; 2001). If the teacher can bring children into contact with whatever will touch their imagination, then they would learn more effortlessly. Stories touch the imagination of nearly all children, with most potentially benefiting from listening to them, even non-readers (Reading Rockets, 2011).

The quality of education that the learners receive has become an extremely pressing issue (Johnston, 2011). A good investment can be made in educational interventions that will reach out to all the learners particularly those who are socio-economically disadvantaged and those who live without literate role models. Snow, Burns, & Griffin (1998) emphasise that throughout the early grades, schools should promote independent reading outside school by assigning learners to read at home on a daily basis and encouraging parental involvement, and by working with community groups, including public librarians, who share this goal. The establishment of a reading club, as was the case in this study, is also viewed as an important catalyst in facilitating reading in general and vocabulary development in particular.

In particular, learners in South Africa, where literacy levels are low, need interventions that will help them accelerate their learning in general, and reading development in particular. They also need special attention to achieve grade level standards (Johnston, 2011).

1.6   Problem Statement

South Africa is a multilingual country and it is expected that through school, learners would reach levels of proficiency in at least two languages and that they will be able to communicate in more than one language (Revised National Curriculum Statement, 2000b; CAPS, 2011). Many second language learners in this country also start using their additional language as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in Grade 4. In many cases this is English. The upshot is that learners should have reached a level of competence in English by the end of Grade 3. For these reasons, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS, 2011, p. 3) states that learners' progress in literacy must be accelerated in Grades 2 and 3. The curriculum statement also emphasises that in schools where children will use English (their additional language) as the LoLT, it is important that a substantial amount of time be devoted to learning English in the Foundation Phase (FP).

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS, 2011), First Additional Language Draft, accedes that well-developed reading skills are central to successful learning across the curriculum, as well as full participation in the society and the world of work. Dahl & Freppon (1998) state that the long-term prognosis for children who disengage from literacy instruction in the early grades is not good, and that personal engagement in literacy or lack thereof, can make the critical difference for individuals.

Where the study is located, research published by the Molteno Project reveals that one out of three children in the Eastern Cape at Grade 3 level is literate (www.molteno.co.za: accessed May 2012). The Annual National Assessment (ANA), conducted to assess literacy levels in Grade 3 and 6 in 2011, also indicate poor performance both in the Eastern Cape and nationally[7]. This study responds to the need to accelerate learners' literacy, in particular reading proficiency with special emphasis on developing second language learners' vocabulary.

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[7] According to the findings of the Department of Basic Education (2011), the Eastern Cape recorded mean literacy scores of 39% and 29% for Grade 3 and Grade 6 respectively in the Annual National Assessment, compared to 35% and 28% recorded nationally for the respective grades.

The school where this research was conducted was established in 1962, making it one of the first higher primary schools for black learners to be established in the Eastern Cape. Despite its long history, the school lags in literacy achievement as it is among the poor performing schools in the area. Located in a township, the school serves children coming from poor socio-economic backgrounds[8]. It has one class per grade in the Foundation Phase. IsiXhosa is used as a medium of instruction until Grade 3, after which the medium of instruction changes to English.

During preliminary observations in a Grade 3 class at the selected school prior to the study, I realised that many learners over-rely on phonics to make meaning of texts. They coped poorly with English texts since the LOLT at this stage was still their mother tongue, isiXhosa. The most cause for concern was learners' little exposure to books that they could read for enjoyment while at the same time acquiring other literacy skills. There was a school library, which seemed unused and, for the most part, dysfunctional. This left learners with little or no exposure to meaningful reading material.

What also became clear during the preliminary observations was that learners needed support that would accelerate their reading levels so that they would have a chance to transition from learning to read to reading to learn in Grade 4. Mullis et al. (2007) assert that Grade 4 is an important transition point in children's development as readers, because at this stage most should have learned to read and should be ready to read to learn.

Such observations, together with the insights from the above discussions, show that interventions like the one proposed in this study are needed to improve literacy in the FP. It is for this reason that a reading club was established with a view to improving second language learners' English vocabulary and, at the same time, motivate them to want to read.

1.7   Goal of the Research

In South Africa, there are a number of literacy intervention programmes that have been implemented to promote and enhance literacy both at schools and in communities. These

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[8] Whereas 100% of Grade 1 learners who entered a certain public primary school for girls were ready, only 38% who entered isiXhosa medium primary school were school ready. This clearly shows the challenges that are faced by both teachers and learners in the classrooms in these disadvantaged schools.

include the National Reading Strategy, Drop All and Read Campaign, Foundation Phase Writing Project, 100 story books Project, PRAESA and Shine (Maseko, 2008). Many schools in Grahamstown, where this study is located, use an approach to teach reading supported by the Molteno Project called Bridge to English[9], with the school under study being no exception.

Therefore, the intention of this study was not to reinvent the wheel but, by way of adding impetus and contributing to the collective efforts in developing a reading nation, to use a reading club as a way of facilitating English additional language vocabulary development amongst Grade 3 learners. A secondary goal was to motivate learners to become joyful and engaged readers.

Thus, overall, the goal of the study was to contribute towards the improvement of the English literacy levels amongst Grade 3 isiXhosa learners at a select school in Grahamstown. In particular, the study sought to enhance English reading vocabulary as well as motivate learners to read for pleasure through establishing a reading club within a responsive reading programme.

1.8   Main Research Questions

- How does a reading club as a literacy intervention tool improve learner participation and motivation for Grade 3 English Additional Language learners in a selected school in Grahamstown?
- How does a reading programme within an established reading club improve English vocabulary for Grade 3 English Additional Language learners in a selected school in Grahamstown?

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[9] Bridge to English programme is a comprehensive English Additional Language course that is designed to develop oral and literacy skills, building on the language skills developed in Breakthrough to Literacy. The programme consists of a series of systematic courses addressing the listening, speaking, reading and writing needs of learners from Grades 1-7. It is highly focused on language across the curriculum and as such prepares learners for effective learning in subjects through the medium of English (www.molteno.co.za; accessed May 2012).

1.9   Outline of the Thesis

Including this general introductory chapter and the general conclusion, this thesis is divided into seven chapters. The overview of the issues raised in this chapter will not be repeated here. *Chapter 2* situates the study conceptually and theoretically. The chapter provides the theoretical underpinning of the study and presents an argument for the approaches underlying the learning of a second language and reading.

In Chapter 3 discusses the important concepts of the study.

Chapter 4 includes the study's methodological orientation. I discuss the research design of the study and the methods used during the collection of data as well as ethical considerations. This chapter also highlights the process of data analysis used in the study.

Chapter 5 focuses on the presentation of the actual data that was collected over the seven-week period of research.

Chapter 6 focuses on the analysis and discussion of the data collected. Thereafter re-occurring themes are highlighted and discussed.

Finally, *Chapter 7* provides concluding reflections of the thesis and summarises issues raised in the preceding chapters. Recommendations, as well as ethical aspects of the study and possible options for further research are also discussed in this chapter.

A bibliography and appendices complete the thesis.

CHAPTER 2 PERSPECTIVES ON SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING AND READING AND VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

2.1   Introduction

This chapter mainly presents discussions on different theoretical perspectives of reading with particular emphasis on second language learning and acquisition. I embed this discussion within a brief overview of dominant learning theories into learning a second language. Within reading, I discuss the importance of vocabulary in learning to read and the role of motivation in reading. I also discuss approaches to learning a second language and stages that learners of second language go through when learning a second language. In addition, teaching approaches to developing vocabulary are highlighted and insights into aspects to consider in developing vocabulary for second language learners are also presented in this chapter. I conclude the chapter by providing a summary of important issues raised in the discussion. This chapter shapes the framing of the proposed reading intervention.

2.2   Theories on Reading

I have already established the critical importance of reading within literacy development in the previous chapter. The Commission on Reading (National Academy of Education, 1985, p. 6) states, "Without the ability to read, excellence in high school and beyond is unattainable." The Report on the Review Committee on the Curriculum 2005 (2000, p. VI) proposes that reading serves as a building block upon which all other learning takes place. This report also makes the point that reading failure begins in the early grades, thereby making this level the most appropriate for interventions.

However, research has been inconclusive about the ways in which children learn to read and how this skill should be taught. There are sharp differences amongst theorists about how children should be taught to read and two dominant schools of thought are traceable in the literature.

In brief, the first are theorists and researchers who stress the 'bottom-up' view of reading or the 'outside-in' (Stanovich, 1986). A bottom-up reading model defines reading as a text-driven process that first begins with perception and recognition of letters, then of phonetic elements, then of words, then of word groups and ultimately of sentence meaning and

passage meaning. The reader's role is to process these units accurately and rapidly, building meaning from the smaller to the larger units, that is from the bottom up (Manzo & Manzo, 1990; Dechant, 1991; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). It is assumed that if children master each successive reading sub-skill, they will eventually attain overall reading competency.

However, this assumption has been challenged mostly by psycholinguists and cognitive psychologists who advocate 'top-down models' (Smith, 2004). The top-down or whole language theorists describe reading as a meaning-driven process. This model emphasises what the reader brings to the print, i.e. readers start with prior knowledge, which they actively apply and compare to the material being read. Proponents of this view suggest that reading instruction should de-emphasise sub-skills and focus on pre-reading activities that develop learners' background of information and allocate more time to reading. They generally agree that comprehension is the basis for reading development.

Recent 21st century research, though, suggests that a consensus is emerging (Tracey & Morrow, 2006) amongst theorists that reading is neither top-down nor bottom-up (Dechant, 1991). Beard (1998) suggests that there is evidence that a balanced view or what is described by Manzo & Manzo (1990) as an interactive model, is a logical and valuable one for teaching reading. Winch et al. (2006) agree by stating that a balanced approach is essential in that it places meaning at the core of all reading and recognises the interaction between reading and writing and the importance of context in reading. This view also acknowledges that reading is bringing meaning to the text as well as taking meaning from text. It acknowledges the need for decoding, but not in a decontextualised manner. This view opens ways of teaching children to read and write and to bring to bear phonological, grammatical, and semantic information from a range of sources. It allows teaching to be focused on the contextual and linguistic needs of children.

Although reading might be seen as a singular act, in the process of reading our brains engage in a number of tasks simultaneously. Accordingly, the National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) defines reading as an astonishingly complex cognitive process. The National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000a; 2000b; 2001) and others (Pressley, 2000; National Reading Strategy, 2008) identify five essential components of reading that need to be taught for learners to be able to read. These include phonics, fluency, vocabulary, phonemic awareness and comprehension. As children learn to read, they must develop competencies in all five of these areas in order to

become successful readers. These five components work together to create the reading experience that leads to success in reading (Manzo, Manzo, & Thomas, 2006).

Of these, vocabulary knowledge is perceived to be fundamental because it encompasses all the words we must know to access our background knowledge, express our ideas, communicate effectively, and learn about new concepts. Its importance is recognised whether the language in question is a first, second, or even a foreign language (DeCarrico, 2001). Clark (1993) states that words are the starting point. Vocabulary is also viewed as a major part of language proficiency as it allows learners to use four language skills, which are listening, speaking, reading and writing (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

2.3   The Centrality of Vocabulary in Learning to Read

The importance of vocabulary has been emphasised by Biemiller (1999), NICHD (2000) and Scarborough (2001) who state that the vocabulary repertoire that children possess in the preschool and initial years of schooling is a significant predictor of reading comprehension in the middle, secondary years and broader academic and vocational success. Words provide the labels and the tools whereby increasingly sophisticated concepts can be explored. It is vocabulary that helps build comprehension and it is thus a key component of reading for meaning (Manzo et al. 2006). Rupley, Logan, & Nichols (1999) also state that vocabulary is the glue that holds stories, ideas, and content together, making comprehension accessible for children. Children who lack vocabulary and background knowledge will have difficulty understanding the books they encounter in school, especially as the books they are required to read become more difficult in the intermediate and secondary years of schooling.

The high correlation in the research literature of word knowledge with reading comprehension indicates that if learners do not adequately and steadily grow their vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension will be affected (Chall & Jacobs, 2003). Learners with well-developed vocabularies read more, which improves their reading skill, and they learn more words. On the other hand, learners who lack adequate vocabulary have difficulty getting meaning from what they read, so they read less because they find reading difficult. As a result, they learn fewer words because they are not reading widely enough to encounter and learn new words. Weak decoding skills (phonemic awareness, phonics and word study, and fluency) also contribute to the gap between how much good and poor readers will read and encounter new vocabulary (Chall & Jacobs, 2003). Therefore, different motivation strategies

are required for those children who lack adequate vocabulary so that they can be able to read more and develop their vocabulary.

2.4   The Role of Motivation in Reading

Motivation theorists, Wigfield & Guthrie (1997), propose that individuals' competence and efficacy, beliefs, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and purposes for achievement play a crucial role in their decisions about which activities to do, how long to do them, and how much effort to put into them, language learning and reading being no exception. Motivation of the individual learner is also of vital importance to the success of language learning. Edmunds & Bauserman (2006) make the point that motivation is the key role in learning. They state, "Motivation frequently makes the difference between learning that is temporary and superficial and learning that is permanent and internalized" (Edmunds et al. 2006. p. 414). In regards to reading, Snow et al. (1998) state that lack of motivation is one obstacle that can prevent children from becoming skilled readers. When motivated, learners will engage more in reading (Oldfather & Wigfield, 1996) and will have positive attitudes toward it (Mathewson, 1994).

They are two different types of motivation, namely intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Studies have consistently shown that intrinsic motivation or a genuine interest in the language itself is more effective over the long-term than extrinsic motivation as in learning a language for a reward such as high grades or praise. Ryan & Deci (2000) state that intrinsic motivation occurs when learners are motivated to read because they enjoy reading. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation refers to a process when learners are motivated to read by outside factors like rewards or deadlines. Researchers agree that in order to ensure learners become intrinsically motivated; they need to be assisted to get there. Thus, Hunters (2003) suggests that one begins with extrinsic motivation with a definite plan that enables learners become intrinsically motivated.

According to Guthrie, McGough, Bennett & Rice (1996), engagement is critical as it contributes to motivation. They found engaged readers to be motivated, strategic, knowledgeable, and socially interactive. Similarly, Whittingham & Huffman (2009) found that engaged readers are motivated to comprehend, use knowledge to proactively create new understanding from text, and interact socially in their approach to literacy. Guthrie (2001) believes that social motivation for reading relates to interpersonal relations because children

who discuss books with a community of peers are likely to be motivated readers. He further suggests that if learners' reading interests are weak, their competency grows slowly and their quality as readers diminishes. The nature of reading tasks is also an important consideration in maintaining motivation amongst young children (Pressley, 2006).

Researchers have identified a variety of methods that can increase learners' motivation to read, some of which include reading clubs as was the case in this study. Whittingham & Huffman (2009), for example, conducted research on the effects of reading clubs on the reading attitudes of middle school[10] learners in Arkansas (USA). This age-group was specifically selected because of their lack of interest, competence, and motivation. Sixty middle school learners from two urban schools participated in this study. Learners volunteered to participate in a reading club, which met once a week for a semester. This research was done with the help of interns from a local university majoring in education. Learners were divided into groups and assigned a student intern to serve as the adult participant for each group. The interns were there to model and encourage learners by talking about the book they were reading, with the intention to motivate learners to be eager to read, discuss, and interact. As part of the data gathering, an attitude survey was given to the learners at the beginning and at the end of the semester. The results of this survey showed that the reading club had positive effects on the attitudes of reluctant readers. The learners' attitudes improved along with their desire to read and talk about what they had read.

Choice has been widely acknowledged as a method for enhancing motivation. In a study done by Cordova & Lepper (1996), elementary school children were examined for the effects of contextualisation, personalisation, and provision of choice for enhancing students' intrinsic motivation. Findings from the study indicate that allowing young children to make even a minimal task choice increased learning from the task and enhanced subsequent interest in the activity. Worthy & McKool (1996) also conducted a study on the importance of opportunity, choice, and access on learners who said they hate to read. Findings from this study showed that allowing learners to make choices about their reading material increased the likelihood

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[10] Middle school is a term used in countries with education systems where children receive three levels of schooling and refers to a school which educates them after they have finished their first school and before they commence the last. Middle schools generally cover between the fourth or fifth year of schooling up to the eighth or ninth year, although this may vary. The education delivered by middle schools is usually considered a part of secondary education, but in some education systems may be primary education or a mix of the two.

that they would engage more in reading. In addition, Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) suggest that providing genuine choices to learners increases effort and commitment to reading.

Graded readers have been widely acknowledged as one of the effective tools to improve learners' motivation to read in the target language especially in second language contexts (Takase, 2007). Learners are able to increase their vocabulary size, improve their reading fluency, quality of writing, and even speaking fluency. Since vocabulary is carefully controlled in graded readers, these readers provide an ideal opportunity for learners to read at a comfortable rate and for incidental learning to happen without any assistance including the support from their teachers, peers, and dictionary (Waring & Nation, 2004).

Maruyana (2011) conducted a study at a private university in Tokyo with 67 first-year students majoring in Social Welfare and Tourism who enrolled in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) reading programme to develop their reading ability. The aim of the study was to find out how motivational factors may positively or negatively influence learners' performance on incidental vocabulary acquisition through the use of reading graded readers. Findings from the study suggest that learners are able to acquire receptive as well as productive vocabulary knowledge through incidental vocabulary learning within a short period of time. Also, the results showed that the more graded readers learners read, the more they were able to acquire not only receptive but also controlled productive and free productive vocabulary knowledge (Maruyana, 2011).

Although the use of rewards continues to be debated, many schools, teachers, and reading organisations use rewards in their reading programmes as a method to motivate learners (Fawson & Fawson, 1994). A study conducted by Marinak (2004) to investigate the effects of reward proximity and choice of reward on the reading motivation of third-grade average readers indicates that carefully selected rewards can support and not undermine reading motivation. Specifically, learners who were given a book (proximal reward) were more motivated to engage in subsequent reading than learners that received a token (less proximal reward).

The above conceptual framework was important to situate the focus of the study namely, vocabulary development and the importance of motivation in learning to read. In Chapter 1, I stated that learners under study were English second language learners. Therefore, it is

necessary to outline theories and perspectives on second language acquisition and learning and their implications for planning reading and, in particular, vocabulary development interventions for second language learners.

2.5   Theoretical Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition and Learning

Learning a second language is a complex process, which involves many variables. There are no prescribed steps that can really direct one on how to learn a second a language without one trying to. In an attempt to learn a second language, formal instruction is not always adequate. Thus few people achieve fluency in a second language solely within the confines of the classroom (Brown, 2000).

Brown (2000) asserts that for one to understand the principles of learning and teaching a second language, one has to first understand the context of the learners; who they are, where they come from, their levels of education, and their socio-economic level. In the case of language teachers, there is need to understand the system and function of the second language and the differences between first and second language acquisition and learning. The most encompassing of all questions proposed by Brown (2000) are the reasons why learners attempt to acquire the second language and its purposes.

In addition, teachers need to understand the subject matter and a practical theory of learning before a theory of instruction can be formed. This means that their understanding of how the learners acquire and learn a second language will determine their philosophy, teaching style, approach, methods, and classroom techniques.

There has been much debate about exactly how language is acquired and learnt, with no consensus on the issue. There are many theories of second-language acquisition, but none are accepted as a complete explanation by all second language acquisition researchers. Following is a review of the four most influential theories that give a comprehensive account on the acquisition of second language, namely Krashen's monitor model, processing model by McLaughlin, the interaction hypothesis by Long, and Vygotsky's socio-cultural perspective. These perspectives shaped the study conceptually and theoretically.

2.5.1 Krashen's Monitor Model

Stephen Krashen is an expert in the field of linguistics, specialising in theories of language acquisition and development. Krashen's (1981; 1982; 1987) widely known and well accepted theory of second language acquisition is based on the premise that language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules and does not require tedious drill. Krashen's theory of second language acquisition consists of five main hypotheses, namely the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. Each of these is discussed briefly below as they have had a large impact in all areas of second language research and teaching since the 1980s.

The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis

Although it still remains controversial, this hypothesis has been highly influential and the most fundamental of all the hypotheses in Krashen's theory. According to him, there are two independent systems of second language performance, the acquired system and the learned system. Krashen (1987) defines *acquisition* as a non-formal, subconscious process of 'picking' up a second language through exposure to it. It is the implicit knowledge of a language. Acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language in natural settings, where emphasis is on the message rather than on the nature and form of the language. The acquirer remains unaware that they are acquiring language and that they are, at any given point in time, in possession of new linguistic knowledge.

On the other hand, language learning is a product of formal instruction in formal environments leading to knowledge about the language. Learning refers to explicit knowledge of rules, which makes one conversant about them. Error correction would enable one to understand the language rule violated. Therefore, learning is a conscious process that results in knowing about the language. The process involves study, attention to form and learning about the linguistic rules of the target language.

The Monitor Hypothesis

The monitor hypothesis explains the relationship between acquisition and learning and defines the influence of the latter on the former. Krashen (1987) states, learning and acquisition are used in very specific ways in second language-learning performance. The monitor hypothesis states that learning has only one function; to monitor or edit and that

learning comes into play only to make changes in the form of utterances after it has been produced by the acquired system.

The hypothesis states that learners produce utterance on the basis of their acquired system (acquisition). The learned system (learning) functions as a monitor to what learners are producing. It serves as a check of the spontaneous speech learners produce. The acquired system initiates utterance and determines fluency and intuitive judgement on correctness. Before the utterance is made, the speaker scans it for errors and makes adjustments accordingly on the basis of the learned system through self-correction.

The Natural Order Hypothesis

The natural order hypothesis posits that the rules of language are acquired in a predictable, natural and necessary order (Krashen, 1987). Some rules tend to come earlier than others. Rules which come first do not necessarily have to be simpler in form than those which come later. Acquirers would follow this predictable order whether classroom teaching has progressed in the same order or not. The natural order hypothesis, therefore, is independent of instruction (Gass & Selinker, 2001).

The Input Hypothesis

The input hypothesis is linked to the natural order hypothesis in that it claims that one moves on the developmental continuum by receiving comprehensible input. This hypothesis claims that humans acquire language in only one way, namely by understanding messages or by receiving what Krashen terms as comprehensible input. He views the input hypothesis as central to his model of second language acquisition in that speaking is a result of acquisition not its cause. Speech cannot be taught directly but is the result of building competence through comprehensible input. Comprehensible input is defined as second language input just beyond the learner's current second language competence, in terms of its syntactic complexity. This, Krashen (1987) represents as i +1 for input plus 1. The input (i) is the current competence and 1 is the most immediate higher stage. The use of context and extra linguistic features such as gestures will enable learners to understand the (+1), which is not part of their current competence.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis

Krashen (1987) states that the affective filter hypothesis captures the relationship between affective variables and the process of second language acquisition by positing that acquirers vary with respect to the strength or level of their filters. Put differently, those whose attitudes are not optimal for second language acquisition will not only tend to seek less input, but will also have a high or strong affective filter. Even if they understand the message, the input will not reach that part of the brain responsible for language acquisition, or the Language Acquisition Device, a term proposed by Chomsky in 1967. Those with attitudes more conducive to second language acquisition will not only seek and obtain more input; they will also have a lower or weaker filter and will be more open to input. Meyer (2008) states that tenseness, anger, anxiety, boredom, low self-concept and other negative attitudinal and emotional dispositions screen out input, making it unavailable for acquisition.

Critiques on Krashen's Model of Second Language Acquisition

Krashen's model of second language acquisition is not without criticism. According to Gregg (1984, p. 94) "... each of Krashen's hypotheses is marked by serious flaws, indefinable or ill-defined terms, unmotivated constructs and lack of empirical content." Simplified, the criticism is that much of what Krashen proposes is unclear and not adequately explained.

First, with regards to the acquisition learning hypothesis, the acquisition-learning distinction is said to be not manifestly clear enough to allow one to determine which of the two processes would be operational in a particular case. Also the acquisition-learning distinction does not have the support of research data. Second, the assertion that learning never graduates into acquisition cannot be empirically tested. Some learners have internalised the grammar of a language to the extent of being fluent in the language. Brown (2000) also criticises this hypothesis by stating that the terms 'acquisition', 'learning', 'conscious' and 'subconscious' are not sufficiently defined and operationalised and so one can hardly discern what is conscious and what is subconscious.

Mangubhai (2006) critiques the monitor hypothesis. First, he states that the view that the learned system is used for comprehension and not production is questionable. Again, the conditions that Krashen creates for the use of the monitor are untenable, particularly in spontaneous speech. Instead of polishing speech, the monitor is presented as actually hindering speech. Also, one cannot tell whether a learner is monitoring using the acquired

system or the learned system which renders the hypothesis not testable. In addition, the role of learnt competence and acquired competence in the formation of utterance is left vague.

Krashen's natural order hypothesis has also been criticised for being based on morpheme studies, which reflect accuracy of production rather than acquisition sequences (Mitchell & Myles, 1998). The cross-sectional morpheme studies on which the hypothesis is based lack linguistic relationship between items and so they reflect accuracy of production but not necessarily acquisition sequences (Mangubhai, 2006).

While input is of vital importance, Krashen's assertion that only input matters in second-language acquisition has been criticised often for being vague and inaccurate as it does not make clear how one determines level i and level i +1 (Mitchell & Myles, 1998). The idea that learners should comprehend an utterance fully if it is to impact on their acquisition does not apply in all cases as sometimes partially understood input influences acquisition. This hypothesis has also been criticised for overemphasising the role of input to the extent of taking it as all that matters when, according to Brown (2000), output is also vital for acquisition. Mangubhai (2006) accedes that output provides opportunities for meaningful language practice and leads learners into hypothesis testing.

Finally, affective filter hypothesis has been criticised by Mitchell & Myles (1998) as being vague and theoretical. An example they give to support this claim is that many self-conscious adolescents suffer from low self-esteem and therefore presumably have 'high' filters, so we cannot claim that they are bad language learners. However, Mitchell &Myles (1998) states that this claim is insufficient as learners need to 'let that input in', as it were. Therefore the role of the affective filter determines how receptive to comprehensible input a learner is going to be. Gass & Selinker (2001) also state that this hypothesis does not make clear how the affective filter decides on the part of language to attend to first. In fact neither the scope nor the process of what and how input is filtered is outlined and well explained.

Such criticisms led to other researchers attempting to explain second language acquisition and learning in different ways, as I show below.

2.5.2   McLaughlin's Processing Model

Unlike Krashen, McLaughlin (1987), the proponent of the processing model, sees language in terms of dynamic processing and communication rather than as static knowledge. His interest is in how people use language rather than in sheer knowledge in the mind.

An example of this model type is the competition model (McLaughlin, 1987). It is related to the behaviourist tradition, which claims that language learning comes from the outside, that is, from input from others and from the interaction and correction, rather than from inside the mind.

The main second language model in this tradition is the information-processing model which argues that learning a second language involves moving from controlled processes, which gradually become automatic over time, through practice (McLaughlin, 1987). To quote McLaughlin (1987), "[T]hus controlled processing can be said to lay down the 'stepping stones' for automatic processing as the learner moves to more difficult levels."

With McLaughlin's model, the teaching implication is emphasis on practice as the key to second language learning. Cook (2001) states that the processing model reminds us that language is behaviour, skill as well as mental knowledge. Some skills are learnt by doing them repeatedly.

2.5.3   Long's Interaction Hypothesis

Researchers have also pointed to interaction in the second language as being important for acquisition. The Interaction Hypothesis (IH) was proposed by Long (1996) as an extension of Krashen's Input Hypothesis discussed above. The general claim of this hypothesis is that engaging in interpersonal oral interaction in which communication problems arise and are negotiated facilitates language acquisition. The modifications to speech arising from interactions help make input more comprehensible, provide feedback to learners, and push learners to modify their speech (Long, 1996). During this process, conditions that foster the internal processes responsible for inter-language development are created. The interaction hypothesis model is concerned with one particular kind of interaction, which has become known as the negotiation of meaning (Ellis, 1999). Communicative interaction as Larsen-Freeman stresses, "gives learners an opportunity to work on negotiating meaning" (2000, p. 127).

However, Ellis (1999) states that the interaction hypothesis model does not address intentional acquisition, which is defined as deliberate attempts on the part of second language learners to study and learn the second language. Instead, it addresses how the aspect of incidental acquisition, which is the acquisition that occurs with or without awareness when learners are primarily concerned with trying to communicate. The general assumption of this model is that the acquisition of linguistic competence is primarily incidental rather than intentional.

2.5.4 Vygotsky's socio-cultural perspective on second language acquisition and learning

The models described so far neglect what Cook (2001) recognises as the most important part of language learning, that is, its social aspect. Cook (2001) posits that there are two versions of this socio-cultural perspective; one is that second language learning usually takes place in a social situation where people interact with each other, whether in a classroom or outside. The second version is that second language learning takes place within a society and has a function within that society.

Vygotsky (1978), the main proponent, states that language learning takes place through interaction in meaningful events, rather than through isolated language activities. The process is seen as holistic, that is, each mode of language supports and enhances overall language development. Furthermore, language learning develops in relation to the context in which it is used, that is, it develops according to the situation, the topic under discussion, and the relationship between the participants. Language also develops through active engagement of those involved in the process.

Vygotsky's theory of social interaction has been influential in highlighting the important role of social and cultural contexts in extending children's learning. Vygotsky (1978) describes development as a social process in which children's understanding or knowledge is created and shared while interacting with others; thus active knowledge construction occurs in the social world. As children become sure of the knowledge, they begin to own it and independently use it. The role of a teacher or a more competent other is then seen as that of a facilitator in a learning context in which learners are viewed as equally capable of contributing to their learning through learning from and with each other (Holt and Willard-Holt, 2000). Vygotsky (1978) asserts, "Learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his

environment and with his peers" (p. 90). He also states that language is first used in the interaction between an adult and a child as a means of communication and shared action (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 163). Thus from such a perspective, the distinction between acquisition and learning is blurred.

2.6   Approaches to Learning a Second Language

As stated by McLaughlin (1997) and Tabors (2008), there are two general ways in which children may learn a second language. A second language may be learnt simultaneously or sequentially in relation to a first language.

- *Simultaneous Second Language Learning*

Simultaneous second language learning applies to children under the age of three who are exposed to two languages at the same time. They can be either exposed to one language at home and another at their early childhood school, or when both parents speak different languages to them at home (Tabors, 2008). Before six months of age, learners exposed to such environments/conditions/contexts learn both languages at similar rates and do not prefer one language over the other. This is because their brains build separate but equally strong language systems for each of the languages they hear. These separate systems allow children to learn more than one language without becoming confused. In fact, the pathways infants develop in their brains for each of the languages they hear are similar to the single pathway developed by children who are only exposed to one language (Halgunseth, 2010). Children begin to notice differences between languages and may begin to prefer the language they hear more of at six months.

- *Sequential Second Language Learning*

Sequential second language learning includes a process in which children become familiar with one language and thereafter are introduced or required to learn a second language. It means learning a second language after a first language is already established. Many times this happens when children who speak a language other than English go to school for the first time. In the context of South Africa, the classic example of sequential learning is when non-English speaking children enter school where English is used as a medium of instruction. Unlike simultaneous language learning, sequential learning of languages can occur at any age

and can be influenced by factors like the child's temperament or motivation (Halgunseth, 2010).

2.7   Stages in Second Language Learning

There is considerable variation in the rate at which people learn second languages as well as in the language level that they ultimately reach. Some learners learn quickly and reach a near-native level of competence, while others may learn slowly and get stuck at relatively early stages of acquisition (Haynes, 2007). Haynes (2007) states that second-language acquisition comprises five stages: pre-production, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency. The length of time an individual spends at a particular stage may vary greatly.

Haynes's (2007) stages of second language acquisition are useful to this discussion since they provide a framework for not only understanding the stages that children go through in learning a second language. They also offer insight into how to plan a responsive reading programme for the reading club. I outline each stage briefly below.

Stage I: Pre-production Stage

In the first period of exposure, second language learners may persist in using their first or native language even if others do not understand them. This is because at this stage, they may have up to 500 words in their receptive vocabulary but they are not yet speaking. When learners realise that their first language is not working, they enter a silent period in which they barely speak and rely heavily on non-verbal means to communicate with others. However, not all learners go through a silent period. Some may start speaking straight away, although their output may consist of imitation rather than creative language use. For learners that do go through a silent period, it may last around three to six months. At this stage, teachers are encouraged to focus on listening comprehension activities and building a receptive vocabulary. In addition, at this stage learners need much repetition of the proposed second language.

Stage II: Early Production

The second stage of acquisition is early production and normally lasts for around six months (Haynes, 2007). During this stage, learners are able to speak in short phrases of one or two words as they have both an active and receptive vocabulary of about 1000 words. They can

also memorise elements of the language, although they may make mistakes when using it. It would be useful for learners at this stage of second language learning to be given opportunities to participate in whole class activities. Vocabulary development could be built by using pictures and symbols that enable learners to make connections. The content material used should be simplified focusing on key vocabulary and concepts.

Stage III: Speech Emergence

The third stage is speech emergence (Haynes, 2007). At this stage, learners will start to speak in the second language although they may often make grammatical errors. They may ask simple questions; speak in small utterances and simple phrases such as "[M]ay I go to bathroom?" At this stage their vocabulary would have increased to about 3000 words, so they may understand easy stories read in class with the support of pictures. They may also be able to do some content work with teacher support. They may also sound out stories phonetically and study flashcards with content area vocabulary.

Stage IV: Intermediate Fluency

Second language learners at this stage may be ready to express their own thoughts and construct their own sentences, as they are likely to possess a vocabulary of about 6000 active words. They may begin to use more complex sentences when speaking and writing and may be more willing to express opinions and share their thoughts. They might also ask questions to clarify what they are learning in class. Such learners will be able to work in grade level activities and content material with some teacher support. At this stage, it is likely that learners would integrate strategies from their first language to learn content in a second language. At this point, many learners may be translating their written work from their first language. Their writing might be peppered with errors as learners attempt to master the complexity of the second language grammar and sentence structure.

Stage V: Advanced Fluency

The final stage is advanced fluency, which is typically reached somewhere between five and ten years of learning the second language. Learners at this stage can function at a level near to native speakers in their ability to perform in content learning area (Haynes, 2007). At the beginning of this stage, however, they might need continued support from teachers especially in content areas that can be difficult and new to them and in writing.

For learners to go through these language learning stages successfully and reach the advanced fluency stage, they need to be assisted by teachers who are informed by well researched reading and vocabulary development practices and theories. While many strategies have been advanced to support language acquisition and learning in general, researchers have also offered insight into ways in which vocabulary development may be supported. I briefly discuss this below since such suggestions had an impact on the reading programme developed in this study.

2.8 Teaching Approaches to Developing Vocabulary

In the analysis of research on vocabulary instruction, the National Reading Panel (2000) supports the explicit teaching of vocabulary but concludes that there is no particular research-based method. Most strategies in the literature have been aimed at first language speakers, but Scott et al. (2008) suggest that many of the strategies may be adjusted to meet the needs of additional language learners.

Different researchers suggest various techniques for vocabulary teaching (Nation, 2009; Scott et al. 2008). These include explicit (direct intentional, planned instruction) and implicit (indirect, incidental, and spontaneous instruction) as children are exposed to new words in a text. Graves (2006; 2008); Pikulski and Templeton (2004), Gambrell, Morrow & Pressley (2007), Nation (2006, 2009) and Konza (2011) make the same argument for a differentiated approach to teaching vocabulary that includes the above. Thus, it makes sense to have a multi-pronged approach in vocabulary programs as they support vocabulary learning through a combination of explicit and implicit approaches (Graves, 2006).

Although many words may be learnt incidentally and vocabularies do become stronger when they are supported with a language-rich environment, research shows that learners benefit from systematic and direct instruction of words. This means teaching specific words explicitly. For example, research by Beck, McKeown & Kucan (2002) and Graves (2006) shows that explicit instruction can lead to learners mastering about 400 words per year in school.

Pre-teaching new words in a text prior to the reading experience has been said to be one of the most effective methods of helping children learn new vocabulary words. The teacher, either alone or with the help of the learners, previews reading materials to determine words

that are unfamiliar. The selected words are defined and their meanings are discussed. This process allows learners to develop an understanding of the word's connotations as well as its denotation. Also, the discussions around the word are important as they inform the teacher on how well the learners understand it. After pre-teaching, learners can begin to read the text (Stahl, 1999).

Another example of explicit instruction is the keyword method. Like pre-teaching, the keyword method happens before learners read a particular text. In this method, unfamiliar words are introduced prior to reading. However, rather than encouraging learners to remember the definition of a new word, Antonacci, Catherine & O'Callaghan (2012) state that learners should be taught a word clue to help them understand the new word. This word clue or keyword might be a part of the definition, an illustrative example or an image that the reader connects to the word to make it easier to remember the meaning when reading it in context. The idea behind the keyword method is to create an easy cognitive link to the word's meaning that the reader can access efficiently during a reading experience (Allen, 1999).

Word mapping strategy or semantic mapping is one of the most powerful approaches to teaching vocabulary explicitly because it engages learners in thinking about word relationships (Graves, 2008). For each of these new vocabulary words, learners, with the support of the teacher create a graphic organiser for the word. At the top, or centre of the organiser is the word. Branching off the word will be three categories: classification (what class or group does the word belong to), qualities (what is the word like) and examples. Using prior knowledge, learners fill in each of these three categories (Graves, 2008). This strategy promotes learners' active exploration of word relationships, thereby leading to a deeper understanding of word meanings by developing their conceptual knowledge related to words. It is also a good method for scaffolding a learner's vocabulary learning and can be best used with learners in Grades 3-12 (Graves & Graves, 1994). Like other explicit instructional methods, the teacher, either alone or with learners, previews reading materials to determine which words are unfamiliar.

There is recognition that one cannot teach learners all of the words they need to learn. Vocabulary instruction, therefore, must also include implicit instruction methods, such as exposing learners to a number of new words and providing them increased reading opportunities. Techniques such as task restructuring and repeated exposure, including having

the learner encounter new words in various contexts, appear to enhance vocabulary development (Walpole and McKenna, 2012). Implicit instruction also includes helping learners develop an appreciation for words and experience enjoyment and satisfaction in their use (Baumann, Kame'enui & Ash, 2003).

Incidental word learning takes place when teachers offer and encourage learners to participate in a variety of rich language experiences that occur throughout the day and across the curriculum. Examples of such experiences that promote rich and powerful vocabularies at all grade levels include (1) interactive read-aloud of outstanding children's literature, (2) dialogic-based instructional activities, (3) independent reading, (4) interactive writing, and (5) creating a print-rich environment where the "walls are dripping with words" (Graves, 2006, pp. 4-8).

Context skills are the strategies that a reader uses for incidental vocabulary learning. Texts are full of clues about the meanings of words. Other words in a sentence or paragraph, captions, illustrations, and titles provide readers with information about the text that they can use to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words. These features are often referred to as context clues because they are contained within the context of the piece of writing rather than outside it (Brummit-Yale, 2008; 2012). Young readers should be taught to find and use context clues for learning new vocabulary. Adult modelling and practice are key for helping young readers develop this important reading skill.

While the above is important in informing one of the approaches of teaching vocabulary, there are aspects unique to second language learners that need consideration. These are briefly discussed below as they too impacted decisions made in developing the reading programme that formed the core of this study.

2.9 Aspects to Consider in Vocabulary Development for Second Language Learners

The number of words that learners need to learn is exceedingly large. On average learners should add 2000 to 3000 new words a year to their reading vocabularies (Beck, McKeown & Kucan (2002). However, reading and vocabulary development programmes cannot assume an essentialist approach to this process because learners come into the programme with different levels of competence and exposure to text. Therefore, any reading or vocabulary development programme ought to pay attention to the following different learner characteristics in order to

be responsive and developmentally appropriate. These include learners with limited or no knowledge of English; who enter school with limited vocabulary knowledge; who do not read outside of school; and those with reading and learning disabilities.

To help these learners overcome these obstacles and reach the desired level of reading and vocabulary, teachers need to engage the best kinds of vocabulary instruction. When deciding which words to teach, it is helpful to think about 'levels' of vocabulary (Pikulski & Templeton, 2004) which is similar to what Beck et al. (2002) refer to as 'tiers'. I summarise these as follows:

Level 1	Tier one consists of the most basic words. These words rarely require direct instruction and typically do not have multiple meanings.
Level 2	Words likely to be learnt only through reading and instruction. They have been referred to as academic vocabulary and as instructional vocabulary.
Level 3	Words that make up the technical vocabulary or jargon of a field. They are words associated with a particular field of study or profession.
Level 4	Words that are interesting but rare and so are difficult to understand. They are studied out of interest, for example, majuscule and xanthodont.

From the above definitions, it should be apparent that learners who are learning English as a second additional language may benefit more with Level 1 vocabulary but may have difficulty making progress with words beyond this level. The major responsibility for teachers is to expand the levels 2 and 3 of their learners. Teachers of content areas have the responsibility of focusing on teaching level 3 words, given their significance in reading to learn, especially in the Intermediate Phase.

When teaching and learning words in the levels discussed above, different activities can be incorporated to aid the development of learners' vocabulary as suggested by Nation (2009). These may include some or all of the following.

Extensive reading	Learners read quietly without having to do any exercises.
Listening to stories	During read aloud, teachers write difficult words that are encountered along the way and they are discussed afterwards.
Learning from word cards	These are called bilingual word cards and they are a useful technique for learning vocabulary quickly.
Quick explanation of difficult words	Teachers quickly explain difficult words either in L1 or even in L2 if they feel the learner has to learn English.
Watching educational shows or videos	Such activities go far in stimulating the development of children's language, which is critical for subsequent development of reading and writing kills.

2.10   Summary

In this chapter, I focused mainly on the most influential theories around second language learning and acquisition. In connection to this research, the above discussion helped me in locating my study theoretically. As stated by Brown (2000), it is important for teachers of second language learners to understand these learning theories so that they can be able to locate their style of teaching. I discussed research which has explored the importance of motivation in learning to read a second language and for vocabulary learning. It has been evidenced that vocabulary development is important when learning to read and write especially in an additional language. This discussion also assisted me with the establishment and implementation of the intervention which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3 INTERVENTION AS A WAY OF RESPONDING TO LEARNER NEEDS

3.1 The Nature of Interventions

While many learners from a variety of circumstances need interventions, Johnson & Karns (2011), state that children in three particular areas undeniably need systematic classroom interventions to help them develop as learners. These are learners raised in poverty without adult role models, English second language learners, and those learners who struggle with phonological processing, memory difficulties and speech or hearing impairments. Interventions, therefore, should consider and cater for different kinds of children with different learning needs.

To address the needs of such learners in the United Kingdom, Johnson & Karns (2011) developed a framework called the Response to Intervention (RTI) model structured in three tiers. Tier 1 consists of effective classroom interventions which are designed to meet the needs of *all* the learners in the classrooms with no differentiation according to specific needs. Interventions in this tier are considered to be of high quality because they reach the greatest number of learners. Interventions in Tier II are designed for those learners who need additional support that goes beyond what might be offered in a Tier I type intervention. It focuses on learners with very specific needs who would benefit from an intense small group intervention. Usually such interventions may mean that learners are withdrawn from classrooms for specific interventions. Finally, for learners who still struggle even when provided additional support in small groups, intensive interventions in Tier III will be beneficial to them (Johnson, et al. 2011). Such interventions are usually individual in nature and, in fact, researchers may argue that learners in the latter tier would be those who may even benefit from being in special needs classrooms. Understanding intervention models such as the one proposed by Johnson was useful in that it gave me perspective on the type of intervention to undertake. Put differently, I realised that the intervention under study targeted all children in the classroom, rather than a guided intervention with only groups of children or individuals.

Johnson et al. (2011) note that Tier 1 is important because it represents the gateway in a system designed to accommodate the diverse learning needs of all learners. Thus, Tier 1 provides the foundation for instruction on which all supplementary interventions are

formulated. It is the most cost effective means of addressing the population of learners as it focuses on all learners in the classroom. In considering the intervention and its target, using Tier I as a framework presupposes that all learners will benefit from the intervention since they have similar needs. In the case of this study, it was targeted at learners from similar low socio-economic backgrounds whose needs included second language learning and acquisition in general and reading and vocabulary development in particular. While there may have been learners in the targeted group who need more specialised interventions, limiting the study to a Tier 1 type intervention made the study manageable. I provide a brief overview of types of literacy interventions, with a view to situating the importance and efficacy of reading clubs as a specific literacy intervention.

3.2   Literacy Interventions

There are a number of literacy intervention programmes that have been implemented to promote and enhance literacy both at schools and in communities nationally and internationally. Irvin, Meltzer & Dukes (2007, p. 76) point out, "interventions provide learners with tools and strategies they need to make great strides in literacy development." Other research also shows that for learners to make significant progress, they need systematic and intensive instruction that is tailored to their current instruction level. Torgesen (2003) concurs with this view by stating that interventions are most effective when providing such instruction on whatever component skills are deficient as there are ample opportunities for guided practice of new skills.

Many learners need targeted support to help them to be effective in school, without which many would find dropping out of school a better option than staying in school (Johnston, 2009) and being at risk of a host of other unfortunate life events (Stone, Silliman, Ehren, & Appel, 2005).

In particular, English second language learners, such as the majority of African language speakers in South Africa, need targeted interventions to overcome the effects of not only learning a new language but also learning in a new (second) language. In this country, school is the only place where many such learners have a chance to hear and participate in English language events such as speaking, reading, and writing. Johnson, et al. (2011), for example, states that these learners need strategies that will help them face the challenges of learning a second language, learning through a second language, as well as develop linguistic strategies

required to succeeding in school. With much learning conveyed through classroom text and stories, difficulty with reading would significantly and negatively impact learning for those who cannot access the language. Rathvon (2008) states that high-need learners, such as those who were the focus of this study, need targeted interventions to avoid the increasing gaps in their learning and achievement. Put differently, if no interventions are provided at an early stage, many of these learners may be destined for special education support for years to come.

In South Africa, recognition concerning the potential power of reading to foster language and literacy has resulted in a rapid spread of programmes that focus on various aspects of literacy development. The following is a brief but critical overview of the programmes underway in South Africa. I do this to not only illustrate the range of programmes but, importantly, to situate the reading club established and implemented in this study.

100 Storybook Project

The 100 Storybook Project is one of the National Department of Education's interventions developed to fulfil a ministerial imperative to provide packs containing 100 storybooks to each Foundation and Intermediate Phase classroom for the purpose of creating classroom libraries. Initially, the project targeted 19 428 primary schools from Quintile 1, 2 and 3 in 14 priority districts nationally between 2005-2009. The assumption was that (a) teachers would use the books, (b) availability of books would automatically motivate learners to want to read, and (c) literacy results would improve. The project did not consider how teachers would respond to the initiative and whether they were able to mediate and motivate learners to read. While no study is available that evaluates the effectiveness of this project, the systemic and annual national assessments reported in Chapter 1 attest to learners not necessarily benefiting from an initiative that does not offer teacher and learner support in the implementation phase.

Drop All and Read

The Drop All and Read campaign, also a National Department of Education intervention, was launched by the then Minister of Education in 2007 in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape. It is a national reading awareness campaign to promote the importance and values of reading in schools and beyond. Schools are encouraged to set time for learners, teachers and the school management to 'drop everything and read'. This time should be indicated in the timetable and should be made fun and not another academic exercise. While all schools in South Africa

were encouraged to participate in the initiative, the campaign targeted 7 000 learners (3 500 Grade R and 3 500 Grade 1) in 14 priority districts, with five primary schools selected in each district. While the initiative has value and potential to support learners reading for pleasure, the extent to which schools participated is unclear. In particular, merely having a time to read, when results show that some learners need targeted interventions that support specific reading competency development, might lead to learners becoming unmotivated because they are unable to access the text.

Mobile Library in Education Project

The Mobile Library in Education Project is a national partnership project between the DOE and South African Primary Education Support Initiative (SAPESI) to deploy 30 mobile buses in all nine provinces of South Africa by 2010. From the evaluation report, it appears that the vehicles played an important role in schools and communities that had no access to public or community library service. However, access to books only is not enough as learners need continuous support from teachers.

Nal'ibali Reading Clubs

The initiating partners for Nal'ibali, the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA) and Avusa Media, teamed up to generate public awareness about the importance of reading and sharing stories with children from an early age. They collaborated with existing literacy organisations, communities and individuals actively promoting and developing reading and writing among children. A key component of the Nal'ibali initiative is mentor workshops on storytelling, reading, and writing. Included too is support for the formation of reading clubs, reading groups and reading circles in communities across the country. On a weekly basis, the organisation also develops and distributes bilingual newspaper supplements with stories, story-related activities, guidance, tips and activities to share with children of all ages nationwide. The Nal'ibali project has made a contribution in trying to foster reading in communities, however the deficit of this programme is that it only promotes reading for enjoyment, neglecting the development of other critical reading components such as vocabulary. Also, the fact that this programme does not focus on a specific target group makes its effectiveness debatable. Their reading clubs consist of children from different schools, age and reading levels; this makes it difficult for those children who need extra support and attention to perform at the same levels with their peers.

The Family Literacy Project

The Family Literacy Project works in partnership with PRAESA as part of the Nal'ibali initiative to run a demonstration reading club site in KwaZulu-Natal. The project has been working in deep rural areas of the southern Drakensberg since 2000, and currently works in 15 villages. Their main aim is to build the early learning and literacy skills of young children through supporting family members to improve their literacy skills and thereby increase intergenerational learning. Their activities include literacy groups for adults, teens, and foundation phase children. They also run a home visiting programme to spread health messages and read to and play with young children. They also provide brick and box libraries to improve access to literacy resources and books in isiZulu and English. Although this programme has a specific target group and also aims at developing children's skills, the only limitation of this programme is that it does not involve teachers who are in a better position to understand learners' needs and strategies that may help learners become readers, therefore access to books is not enough; instruction on how to read is vital.

Project Read

Project Read is an initiative that facilitates the promotion and implementation of literacy projects in Grahamstown. Established in 2011, it currently operates under the auspices of their Comprehensive Literacy Outreach Programme. They have a Volunteer Programme that supports the Foundation Phase children in four sites through utilising the Word Works and the Shine Centre methodologies developed in Cape Town. However, the same critique as that stated in the Family Literacy Project also applies here. Relying on volunteers only, some of whom might not be well informed about reading theories and strategies, is debatable. Some of these volunteers only rely on the initial training provided by the organisation which is inadequate when developing children's literacy skills.

The Shine Centre

This is a programme that delivers literacy support to children in Grades 2 and 3 in schools based in Shine Centres, using trained volunteers and evidenced methodology and resources. The programme assesses FP children at various stages and identifies those in need of literacy support. The hour-long session with each child consists of paired reading, shared reading, free writing and word play using the specially designed Shine literacy games. While the initiative has potential value to improve learners' literacy skills and they also acknowledge that the programme is simple yet highly effective, as a volunteer myself in the project I think

the limitations of this project is the fact that they identify needy learners based on the findings of one baseline test, yet learners who need support must be identified based on their performance through a series of continuous assessments in class. The extent to which teachers are involved is unclear as they solely rely on volunteers. Volunteers have a choice to either attend the sessions or not, leaving involved learners without systematic instruction.

All these initiatives have gone a long way to create awareness and a love for reading amongst learners and, to a large extent, parents. The value of the above notwithstanding, learners who have to transition from learning to read to reading to learn, such as those in this study, need additional support that goes beyond only reading for pleasure. Thus, reading clubs whose main purpose is to foster a love for reading is limited in that such learners also need specific strategies that support skills and competency development that helps them to access text, read to learn and comprehend. A reading club that includes a combination of purposes seems ideal for learners with various linguistic barriers, including second language English learners.

3.3   Reading Clubs as a Literacy Intervention

As defined by the Nal'ibali organisation (www.nalibali.org), a reading club offers a relaxed environment that is more like home than school. It is something that one chooses to do and participation is voluntary. In the case of adult participation, it is also described as a place where people who love stories and books meet regularly to read, tell stories and talk about what they are reading with children of all ages. In the process, some other fun activities related to stories and books are incorporated. For those who cannot read, or those who want to improve their reading, a reading club can also be a place for them to learn to read. Because reading and writing go together, often there is time for club members to write as well. All of these things can happen in any language. In fact, most reading clubs tell and read stories in at least two languages (www.nalibali.org).

The size of the reading club can range from five to up to 50 members. Smaller clubs are usually the ones which are hosted by adults in their homes for five or six children who live with or near them. Some clubs are even started and run by children and teenagers in their homes or at school during break time or after-care. Reading club meetings can be held in large venues like classrooms, school halls, libraries, and/or community centres. It is also not uncommon to have reading clubs hosted in churches, temples or mosques and even as part of an after-school care programme at school.

Pertinent to this discussion, therefore, is that reading clubs can take many forms, can be initiated by various stakeholders interested in enhancing reading for different purposes, and that they may be located in a variety of contexts; not only as a school intervention. As it relates to reading clubs at school, Whittingham & Huffman (2009) state that such interventions may be held inside or outside the classroom, before or after school and sometimes even during lunch. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, a reading club is defined as a voluntary social activity which consists of a group of learners who meet regularly to participate in book sessions and other literacy activities to enhance reading in general and vocabulary development in particular.

Although not much research has been done specifically on the effects of reading clubs on the development of literacy skills amongst second language learners both locally and internationally, much has been written that promotes the use of reading clubs to boost confidence, negative attitude towards reading, and to motivate learners to read amongst first language speakers (Daniels, 1994; 2001). In the context of South Africa as has already been described, reading clubs are beginning to gain popularity through organisations such as Nal'ibali, which has specifically targeted communities rather than schools, and with a main focus on encouraging reading for enjoyment rather than also developing specific competencies, such as vocabulary[11].

As a social activity, reading clubs that emphasise reading as an experience rather than an academic task are said to attract learners more than those perceived to be integrated into the main school day. Usually, reading clubs create a conducive social environment that promotes opportunities to share, gain support from peers and adults, create a sense of belonging, and offer choice of reading materials (Whittingham & Huffman, 2009). Such reading clubs encourage even reluctant members to participate because they view the club as a social event rather than the typical demands of daily classroom events (Mitchell & Harris, 2001; Whittingham & Huffman, 2009). This social environment provides a foundation for reading for enjoyment, which leads ultimately to greater motivation and increased reading. The nature and features of reading clubs make them viable as discursive spaces for reading development in general and vocabulary development in particular.

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[11] This does not necessarily detract from the incidental vocabulary development that takes place in and during such literacy events.

One example is that increased access to books like those provided in the reading clubs may lead to an increase in independent reading (Morrow, 1992). Learners involved in independent reading will have increased vocabulary, improve their test scores and demonstrate endurance in the reading act. Whitehead (2004) states, reading clubs may provide an avenue for meeting the goal of increased literacy achievement.

Dias-Mitchell & Harris (2001) argue that adult participation and exchanges through modelling, oral explanation, and reinforcement may also promote reading success. Zeece (2003) concurs and states that when adults participate in literacy events with children, they offer them opportunities to develop listening comprehension skills and appreciative thinking skills.

Peer interaction is enhanced through participation in reading clubs. Roller & Beed propose, "[G]ood exchanges and discussions help build feelings of competency, acceptance, and motivation that provide an entry point for less able readers to the literate world" (1994, p. 510). Harmon & Wood (2001) agree that reading clubs provide for lively conversation among groups of learners and their peers. Readers are by nature prone to discuss books that appeal to them, which leads to deeper discussion and an expansion of perspectives and opinions (Johnson, Giorgis and Brown, 2003). Through a reading club, learners identify with the idea of books as a part of life and not just what is required by the school, thereby demonstrating the richness and fulfilment that books can bring in their life through shared conversations and discussion (Roller & Beed, 1994; Whittingham & Huffman, 2009).

Reading clubs also offer choice (a) to participate and (b) in books (Whittingham & Huffman, 2009). Both processes have the potential to empower readers and enhance their self-esteem and confidence. Self-selection can be more motivating if learners know they will have the opportunity to talk with friends about their choices (Strickland, 2004) based on the perspective that reading is inherently a social activity and that social aspects of classrooms have an important impact on learner achievement (Wentzel, 1996). Also, Miller (2009) states that readers without power to make their own choices are not motivated to read. Embracing the learners 'inner reader' starts with learners selecting their own books to read.

The above endorses the value of a reading club as a literacy intervention acknowledged by many researchers concerned in the field of literacy development. The section below provides

a brief overview of studies that have been conducted using reading clubs as a conduit for reading development in general, and vocabulary development and motivation in particular.

3.4   The Efficacy of Reading Clubs

There is a large body of research that emphasises the efficacy of reading clubs as a literacy intervention tool. Reading clubs are said to promote positive attitudes towards reading, motivate learners to want to read, promote reading for enjoyment and can also enhance vocabulary development. The following studies provide evidence of each of these.

With regards to attitude towards reading, a study was conducted in Turn of River Middle school in a town in Arkansas when Gordon (2010), a teacher, established a reading club in her classroom which was run for three years. The classroom reading club was held twice a week. The study was divided into a number of cycles with different activities assigned to learners in each cycle. Learners were expected to read 60-70 pages between each cycle. They were also expected to complete a short written assignment, create notes for discussion, write a one-page reflection paper and discuss the last section of the novel at the end of each cycle. At the end of the three-year term, she noted a change in the attitude and reading skills of her learners.

In another study conducted by Street (2004) on reading clubs, the main focus was to encourage reading for pleasure amongst Grade 7 learners. Initially six schools, all located in areas with high levels of socio-economic deprivation from across the UK were identified and invited to participate in the programme. Three of the reading clubs took place during the school lunch break while two met on two separate days to accommodate the numbers involved and to cater for different class timetables. Another school offered two reading club slots, one at lunch time and one after school.

Data were collected over a year and the basic methodology included an end-of-year questionnaire for children attending the reading club, their parents and reading club organisers. Reading age scores for all the children in Grade 7 were collected at both the start and the end of the year to allow comparison with those attending the reading club. Where possible, schools were visited at the end of the term for observation of the children taking part in the reading club session.

The results show that the clubs were generally more popular with girls than boys, noticeably so in two of the five schools. Many of the children expressed the view that attending the reading club helped them with their reading, especially developing confidence in reading aloud. An analysis of the learners' reading scores indicated that most of the children improved over the year. Some learners were more willing and confident to read aloud while in some, a small improvement in self-esteem was apparent. Some learners also showed an improved use of vocabulary in their imaginative free writing.

Another study, done by Kreuger & Townshend (1997) in their classes in Canada, they designed and instituted a reading club programme to boost reading achievement for 23 Grade 1 second language learners thought to be at risk for failure. What triggered this study was that in their Grade 1 classes, 75-80% of the learners aged between 5 and 6 were second language learners. These learners were coached daily and findings from this study were that at the end of the programme, of the 23 targeted learners, 19 made enough progress to read and write independently and were successful enough to move with their peers to Grade 2.

As evidenced from the discussions in this section, if implemented well, reading clubs have the potential to improve learners' attitudes towards reading and also boost their reading achievement. However, for the aims and objectives of the reading club to be achieved, a structure should be put in place that not only aims to create opportunities for learners to read for pleasure, but also target specific skills and competencies. This means that one should be aware of the needs of the targeted group so as to establish a suitable programme in order to achieve the desired goals.

3.5 Factors to Consider in Establishing Reading Clubs and in Developing a Reading Programme

Reading programmes that are research-based are the most effective because they have been designed for learners to learn, practice, and reinforce reading skills. Two things are pertinent to consider: first, the structure and form the reading club will take and, second, the reading programme. Many of the reading interventions discussed in this chapter have structure but do not have a specific programme. Structuring a reading programme provides the best chance of creating a happy and cohesive reading club that enjoys meeting to discuss books and an environment where new friendships can be made and existing ones strengthened (Healy, 2002).

3.5.1 The Reading Club

A successful reading club ought to be organised in a variety of ways. Healy (2002) states that a reading club designed for the classroom should have structure in place. A number of factors must be considered in deciding on the reading club structure. First, when establishing a reading club it is important to decide on an orientation; whether it is going to be primarily social or for more academic purposes. While all reading clubs may target both goals explicitly or implicitly, foregrounding one gives focus to the reading club. This also gives the reading club an identity. Focus also informs decisions about the nature and type of books to be made available. This means considering the appropriate language, genre, the level of the books, and the accessibility of language used in the books.

It is also important to decide on the target group to be involved in the reading club. This includes making decisions on the number of the club members, age, and sex and literacy skills to be developed. A very small group is easy to work with, however it could fall apart if some members drop out or fail to make it for the meeting. A large group, like the one in this study, is said to be more productive if it is run on a more formal and structured basis in order to be sure that the conversation stays on track and everybody gets a chance to contribute.

Another aspect of a reading club that has to be considered is the format the reading club will take. This means making decisions on the day and time when the reading club members will meet and for how long. It is important to select and agree on the time that will best fit the profile of the group. When working with young learners, the time span and the venue are key considerations in making decisions.

From the outset, it is important to establish ground rules together with reading club members. Ground rules may include how books are chosen, accepted behaviours and the kind of commitment expected.

Assessing the efficacy and influence of a reading club is important. Having a well-articulated evaluation plan requires careful documentation that will inform future decisions on what has been done, what needs to be done, and how learners are responding to the intervention.

Most important, the goal of the reading club will shape the programme adopted. While it is important to have a well-planned programme, flexibility is important. Reading clubs that

privilege specific literacy skills and competencies would need to establish well-articulated activities that meet the overall outcomes. In the case of this study, the reading club aimed at enhancing vocabulary development, with motivation as an additional goal. It is therefore important to outline aspects that comprise a reading programme that will meet the overall goal.

3.5.2   The Reading Programme

In order to support the development of learners' reading skills while at the same time increase vocabulary, as was the goal of this study, Holdaway (1980) and Cunningham & Allington (2003) propose that a balanced (or holistic) approach in designing the programme is ideal. Different authors acknowledge that there is no agreement as to the exact definition of a balanced reading programme (Cassidy & Cassidy, 1999/2000). What is in agreement, however, is that balanced (or holistic) reading programmes are ones that include reading, writing, spelling, phonics, and other skills-based instruction on the one hand and that integrate speaking, listening, writing and reading on the other hand. They also incorporate reading *to* children, reading *with* children, and reading *by* children. Embedded in this notion is the idea that facilitators (or teachers) would pay special attention to assessment that incorporates research-based practices. This study draws on theoretical perspectives that define literacy as a social practice. Therefore, even though its emphasis was on vocabulary development, a holistic approach to developing a responsive reading programme was useful to consider in that vocabulary development was seen not to occur in isolation.

The principles that apply to establishing a reading club ought also to be considered in planning the programme. These include taking account of the various components that comprise a holistic reading programme as well as learner needs, exposure to text, and variety in the provision of texts.

3.6   Summary

Material presented in this chapter informed the decisions I made in designing a reading programme proposed in this study. I was interested in trying to adapt some of the techniques and principles advanced by researchers, and instituting some sort of instructional programme in the proposed intervention so as to develop the learners' reading skills and vocabulary in particular.

I discussed what an educational intervention entails as well as the approaches underpinning interventions for L2 learners. I have highlighted how reading clubs can be used as a literacy intervention tool at the same time serving as a social entity where learners play, interact and encounter meaningful texts at their reading level. I presented studies and bodies of research that have been done both locally and internationally on reading interventions that informed this study. I provided practical methods that can also be adapted by other teachers interested in establishing reading clubs. In Chapter 4, I explain the research design of the study.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH DESIGN

4. 1   Introduction

The second language learning and reading perspectives described in Chapter 2 guided the research methodology and impacted the decisions made around research design in this study. According to Vygotsky (1978), language learning takes place through interactions in meaningful events, rather than through isolated language activities. Researchers on reading (Rosenblatt, 1978; Weaver, 1994) also informed this study as they define reading as a social process, an interactive activity, one in which readers create meaning through transaction, interactions, with the text, their prior knowledge, the context and other readers. For these reasons it was important to look for methodologies that would align with the aforementioned description of reading and learning a second language on the one hand, and central role of the researcher as a key participant on the other hand.

What follows in this chapter is a description of the manner in which this research was undertaken. This chapter outlines the choice of research design, methodology, and methods used to reflect on the establishment of a reading club as well as the reading programme implemented. It begins by describing the research orientation and provides a rationale for its appropriateness. It proceeds with an explanation of the methodology and by outlining its main features, justifies its choice and appropriateness. The chapter includes an explanation of the site and sample of participants, which is followed with a description of the research process. I end this chapter with a discussion on how ethical standards and validity were considered as well as on how limitations in the research were dealt with.

4.2   Research Design

Babbie & Mouton (2001) and Neuman (2006) agree that a research design is a plan, a protocol or a structured framework of how the researcher intends to conduct the research process to solve the research problem or question. The research design therefore describes the nature and the pattern that the research intends to follow and should include aspects such as the research methodology, approach, and methods (Creswell, 1998). The purpose of the research design is to plan and structure a given research project in such a manner that the eventual validity of the research findings is maximised (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Mouton (2001) suggests that it is important for researchers to make a series of decisions along the following four dimensions. First, they must take into account the purpose of the research;

second, the theoretical paradigm informing the research; third, the context within which the research is carried out; and finally, the research techniques employed to collect and analyse data. Research design, therefore, includes the research question, the purpose of the study, the most appropriate context that will support responding to the research question, strategies appropriate for obtaining answers to the question, as well as the philosophical foundation on which it is based (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Creswell and Clark, 2011).

4.3   Research Orientation and Approach

According to Neuman (2006), three main influential paradigms underpin research design: positivism, interpretivism, and the critical approach. In each one of these theories, it is important to determine the ontological, the epistemological, and the methodological bases. Ontology specifies form and nature of reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994); epistemology refers to how the creation of knowledge is theorised; methodology specifies how the researchers go about practically studying whatever they believe can be known (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The present study locates itself within an interpretivist paradigm. This paradigm assumes that phenomena are studied in natural settings. Researchers attempt to make sense of or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Researchers also have the opportunity to form relationships with participants, which gradually leads to the establishment of trust and understanding (Liamputtong, 2007).

Research design can be either qualitative or quantitative in approach. Cohen et al. (2007) define qualitative research as an approach that uses concepts and clarifications so as to attempt to interpret human behaviour in ways that reflect not only the analyst's view, but also the views of the people whose behaviour is being described. Babbie & Mouton (2001) and Burns (2000) state that qualitative research is exploratory and, usually, is conducted under natural settings. The emphasis is on thick and rich descriptions on the participants' experiences and perspectives on a specific issue (Straus & Corbin, 1990; Henning, 2004). Qualitative research relies on verbal descriptions from those experiencing the phenomenon. Mouton (2001) further explains that this means staying close to the subject, reconstructing significant structures, and self-understanding from the perspectives of those experiencing the issue. Thus, qualitative research usually aims for depth rather than quantity of understanding.

Unlike qualitative research, quantitative research is described by Aliaga & Gundersond (2000) as a research approach that seeks to explain phenomena by collecting numerical data

that are analysed using mathematically based methods. Researchers use quantitative methods when they are looking for breadth, want to test a hypothesis or want to study something quantitative.

This is a qualitative study located within the paradigm of praxis, which shares some aspects with the interpretive paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm is characterised by a concern for individual experiences (Cohen, et al. 2007). The aim of the research is to learn from a phenomenon, while also attempting to initiate change. It ultimately seeks to be transformative. Transformative research focuses on generating new ideas and also works to 'transform' and improve situations in the real world. It is situated between knowing and doing and provides the basis for an action research orientation (Rivet, Calabrese Barton, Groome & Suh, 2003). In the case of this study and rather than doing research 'on' teachers and learners, this research was conducted 'with' them (Rodriquez, 2001, Mertler, 2012) so as to build a collaborative partnership focused not only on learning new information but also transforming a current situation (Rivet, et al., 2003).

As part of this study an action research methodology was employed. Action Research (AR) is a cyclical process of reflecting, planning, acting, and observing. It is an ongoing process in which the same steps are continually repeated (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Steps in AR vary from different points of view and as Creswell (1998) asserts, it is a dynamic, flexible process with no blueprint on how to proceed. Sometimes the number of steps in AR may vary depending on different points of view held by researchers.

In addition, action research is a multi-focussed method of research that designs interventions to address a particular concern (Cohen & Manion, 1994). It involves a close examination of the effects of the intervention and reflects on its effectiveness in addressing the problem. If not effective, other possible intervention strategies are considered. It is a process of systematic inquiry, usually cyclical, conducted by those inside a community rather than by outside experts. Its goal is to identify action that will generate some improvement the researcher believes important (Hinchey, 2008).

Action research does not start with any predetermined plan or a hypothesis which needs to be proven. A possible solution to a problem may be explored, data collected and evaluated and possible changes or recommendations made (McNiff, 2002). The researcher, who is both a

participant and observer, works through cycles of intervention, taking note of the issue or problem as it unfolds and actively seeks strategies to improve the situation. Elliott (1991) emphasises that the process of working towards a practical solution to improve a situation is of interest to the researcher and is as important as the product. While the end results are important, they are not of prime concern; rather, making meaningful observations during the development is the main interest (McKernan, 1991).

Even though many researchers offer different ways to develop an action research project, common amongst all are certain features that include identifying the specific problem, followed by a collective postulation of several possible solutions, from which a single plan of action emerges and is implemented. This process is followed by a stage in which the researcher analyses the data, reflecting on the lessons learnt as well as on what did and did not work in the intervention. At this point, the problem is re-assessed and the process begins another cycle. The process of action research is continuous and could go on for an indefinite period of time. However, interventions with a specific lifespan may continue until the problem is adequately addressed and sufficient improvement is made (Susman, 1983; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; McNiff, 2002).

The initiation of an action research project therefore always includes five stages, whereas the rest of the intervention incorporates only four as shown in Figures 1 and 2 below adapted from Susman (1983) and Kemmis & McTaggart (1988) respectively. The former depicts the initial phase that includes five phases whereas the latter depicts the subsequent phases. This is due to the initial phase including the identification stage that is no longer a part of the process in the ensuing stages.

Figure 1: Action Research Cycle
 (Susman, 1983)

Figure 2: Action Research Cycle
 (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988)
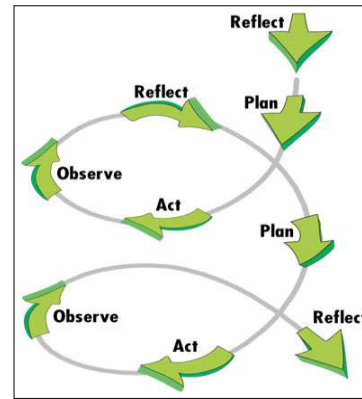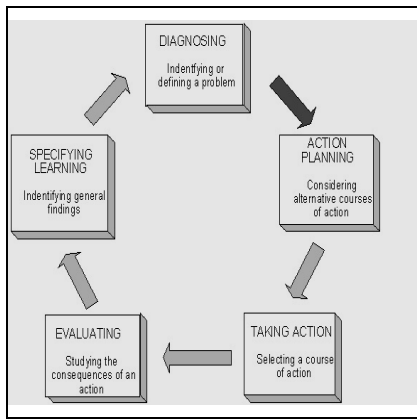
One cycle usually leads to another in which improvements suggested by analysis and reflections on the initial cycle are incorporated. However, in practice, things rarely go perfectly according to plan first time around. Thus, it is perfectly legitimate to follow a somewhat disjointed process if circumstances dictate (Mertler, 2012). Ways to improve one's action plan are discovered through experience and learner feedback. Depending on the nature of a particular research, there may never be a clear end of the study.

A case study approach was deemed most suitable for a study of this nature that sought to work intensely with a class of Grade 3 English second language to improve vocabulary development through participation in a reading club. Yin (2003) describes a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context. It provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than they would when presented with abstract principles and theories (Cohen et al., 2007). Case studies may be used to address descriptive and explanatory research questions. A case study was appropriate for this study because in qualitative interpretive case study research, the researcher is directly involved in the process of data collection and analysis in order to study the case analytically and holistically, using different methods (Creswell, 1998; Myers, 1999).

4.4   Research Site and Sample Description

As indicated in Chapter 1, this study forms part of a larger research programme. Sixty schools from the Eastern Cape were selected for the larger programme and the school under study is one of these. Different criteria were considered in selecting these schools. These

included the quintile[12] in which they fall under, the language used as a medium of instruction, the accessibility of the school from town and the number of Foundation Phase learners in each school. The project targeted non-fee paying schools in Quintiles 1 and 2 in all the districts in the Eastern Cape. These schools also had to be using isiXhosa as their medium of instruction. The schools selected had at least 200 or more Foundation Phase leaners and needed to be accessible.

I selected the school for this study through convenient sampling. Convenient sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where participants are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Because of the intensity of the proposed study, I choose to work with only one school that was accessible and convenient as it is located in close proximity to Grahamstown and fulfilled the criteria identified by the larger study. The school offers curriculum from Grade R up to Grade 9. IsiXhosa is used as a medium of instruction up to Grade 3; thereafter, English is used as a medium of instruction. In each grade level, there is only one class except for Grade R which has 3 classes and Grade 5 with two classes. The small number of learners in each class made the research manageable.

There are 17 teachers including the principal, five of whom are part of the school management team. In addition, there are two staff members who are employed as administrators. The school also has two caretakers.

Most learners in the school, particularly those who participated in this study, belong to families who rely on social grants and seasonal employment from nearby farms. Because of the disadvantaged background of most of the learners at the school, it benefits from the government's nutritional programme. Learners receive a hot meal every day of the week and a fruit once a week. For this reason, the school employs staff to cook and serve meals.

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[12] The quintile system was part of the National Norms and Standards introduced in 1998 to improve equity in education, as lack of money can be a barrier to schooling in South Africa where the majority of children live in poverty. The quintile system allocated all government schools into one of five categories, with quintile 1 schools designating the poorest institutions while quintile 5 denoted the least poor public schools. The quintile to which a school was assigned was based on the rates of income, unemployment and illiteracy within the school's catchment area.

The school has good infrastructure in place although vandalism is rife especially during the school holidays. There is some form of security, which includes a high fence around the school, lockable classrooms and windows that have been welded to avoid break-ins. The school has electricity and tap water. There is a school library as well as a school hall.

As already indicated in Chapter 1, this school lags in literacy as it is one of the poor performing schools in the area. For this reason, it was an ideal site to establish an intervention proposed in this study so as improve learners' literacy skills.

Learner Sample

The school has one Grade 3 class. Thus, all the learners in this class formed part of the research process. The class comprised 20 learners: 12 girls and eight boys. Two key reasons accounted for the sampling, with the first having to do with this group of learners being at a critical juncture where they are shifting from learning to read to reading to learn. The second relates to them transitioning from mother-tongue instruction to learning through the medium of English. Preliminary classroom observations indicated that this group of learners may benefit from an intervention that would accelerate their reading levels so that they would have a chance to transition from learning to read to reading to learn in Grade 4.

Teacher Sample

Two teachers formed part of the research, namely the teacher responsible for the school library and the Grade 3 teacher. It was important to gain insight into the availability and accessibility of books, hence the need to include the former teacher. The latter teacher started teaching the Grade 3 class for the first time during the period when the research was conducted. She was trained to teach at the Senior Phase level and has been teaching this phase for the past 30 years. This teacher is new to teaching the Foundation Phase. The school did not provide her with any support or training to assist her teaching. Therefore, the proposed intervention was going to support her to improve her teaching skills and to understand her learner needs much better.

4.5   Action Research Process and Data Gathering Methods

The research process outlined here focuses on the way the intervention was conducted giving details of the stages followed throughout the intervention. In an action research intervention

such as the one proposed in this study, the research process and the forms of data gathering are complexly intertwined and difficult to separate. For this reason, the research process and the concomitant data gathering strategies are presented alongside each other. Different data strategies were used to make the data more reliable and trustworthy, as it reflected ideas from different sources (Cohen, et al. 2007). Table 1 provides an overview of the data gathering strategies in each phase.

Table 1: An overview of data gathering strategies

Phase	Data Gathering Strategies
Phase 1	Interviews, Assessment tests, Readability calculator, Observations, Inventory, Field notes, Pictures and Videoing
Phase 2- 7	Observations, Field notes, Pictures and Videoing

What follows is a synopsis of the research process as well as the data gathering strategies.

As proposed, the initial phase of any action research intervention follows the process of identifying the problem, developing and implementing a plan of action, reflecting on and evaluating the plan, following thereafter with another cycle of re-planning, action, reflection, and evaluation.

Phase 1: Identifying a Problem

The initial phase of the action research process is the identification of the problem and data collection to get a more detailed diagnosis (See Fig 1 and 2 for an AR cycle). When beginning an intervention, Johnson, et al. (2011) state that it is important to start by establishing a baseline against which you can measure its success later on. This also helps to understand the nature of the problem.

For the purposes of this study, this phase included two parallel components with different aims in mind. I needed to conduct a situation analysis that would facilitate the establishment of a reading club, while at the same time assess learners' reading needs in order to develop a responsive reading programme that would be implemented in the reading club. Thus, the first comprised a situation analysis of the school and classroom libraries to ascertain needs with regards to establishing a reading club. The second component focused on assessing the current reading abilities of the Grade 3 learners. Information gathered from the latter phase

provided insights into the resources needed; the nature and form of the reading programme, and the structure of the reading club.

Component 1: Situation analysis for the establishment of the reading club

There was need to ascertain what reading resources were available at school and classroom, their appropriateness and their accessibility to learners. I discuss each separately below. This took the form of an inventory in both spaces and readability tests.

School and Classroom Resources

This school has a library that I made an assessment of through a visit. I needed access to this facility to ascertain the status of the library, the availability, accessibility, and appropriateness of the books in the school. The library is, however, dysfunctional, leaving learners with little or no exposure to meaningful reading material. Informal interviews with the teacher in charge of the library shed further light on the issue of access. I asked the teacher about the rules and practices on how the library was run. She indicated that she is uninformed on how to operate a library as she is merely in charge of the library keys. This teacher expressed a willingness to have someone assist her to make books more accessible to learners. Currently though, only teachers are in a position to make loans on behalf of learners because, as she intimated, "there is no lending system in place as we do not have a school librarian."

A second step was to identify the suitability of books. I did this by conducting an inventory, which included the number of books, their type and genre.

A process similar to the one identifying availability, accessibility, and appropriateness of the books in the school was followed to assess books at the classroom level. An inventory of the books in the classroom reading corner was done. In addition, I had informal interviews with the class teacher who informed me that learners had access to the library books that she had brought into the class reading corner. These books she selected based on her personal judgement. She chooses books that she thought learners would like and were able to read. The corner also had readers and other short story books provided by the Department of Education. She allowed learners to take books home if they wanted to but indicated that only a few learners had taken books out.

After analysing the availability, state and condition of the library books and classroom reading corner, guided by Stephen Krashen's (2000) emphasis on the idea that it's not how many books are in the library but it is how many readable and interesting books are in the library, the next step was to assess the readability of the available books. This aspect in the situation analysis phase was particularly important given the target group, who were English Second Language Learners.

I used the Text Readability Consensus Calculator (TRCC), which is an online tool used to measure the readability of a text. This program takes a sample of written work and calculates the number of sentences, words, syllables, and characters in that sample. The program takes the output of these numbers and matches them into seven popular readability formulas to calculate the average grade level, reading age and text difficulty of the sample text. This tool has been acknowledged as the most accurate of all formulas (Greenfield, 2004). To ascertain the readability of books, two paragraphs from each book were randomly sampled; the first, middle or end as the readability assessment tool I used limits sample size between 150- 600 words (see Appendix A for sampled texts).

Component 2: Assessing learners to design a responsive reading programme
This second component comprised a learner baseline assessment which included oral and written assessment tests, observations, and learner interviews. First, a number of tests were conducted with the learners to have a clear understanding of their specific literacy strengths and needs. The tests aimed at assessing learners' word recognition, comprehension, and dictation. These were adapted from those developed by the Shine Centre, a South African organisation[13] with literacy development at its core.

The first, an oral component, assessed word recognition and aimed at determining individual reading performance and at the same time establish the average class reading age. In brief, the test comprised 90 words that each learner was asked to read aloud from left to right starting from the first to the 18th line (see Appendix B). These words were graded using

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[13] This is a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) which was founded in 2000. The founder recognised the need for early intervention among young children learning in their second language. The organisation focuses on learners in Grades 2 and 3, specifically honing the basic literacy skills of young children while it is still possible. Children are assessed at the end of each grade and those not reading at the correct reading age are introduced to a multi-sensory intervention twice a week with individual interaction with trained personnel (www.theshinecentre.org.za).

'levels' of vocabulary as suggested by Pikulski & Templeton (2004). Learners were given only one chance to say the word out loud. As this occurred, the researcher or research assistant would mark words read correctly on the mark sheet (see Appendix B). Learners were expected to continue until they made five consecutive errors at which point the test would be terminated as indicated in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Word Recognition Test

the√	up	on√	go	he	2
at√	jump√	you√	box √	fish√	5
one√	cup	van	if√	out	2
said×	**water×**	**bird×**	**wood×**	**running×**	**0**
				Raw Score	**9**

The raw score was thereafter converted to reading ability using the guiding ability sheet (see Appendix C). Using Table 2 as an example, the raw score 9 was converted to reading ability 43, which then converted to a reading age of 6 years 10 months (see Appendix D).

The assessments were conducted with the assistance of a PhD student and an M.Ed student. The assistants were trained beforehand on how to assess the learners. In a class of 21 learners, 18 learners were assessed on the same day and the rest on a subsequent day due to them being absent on the day of assessment.

The second assessment was specifically aimed at assessing learners' ability to read a sentence, comprehend, and answer a simple question based on the text. The third required them to read a simple story and respond to questions (Appendix E).

A dictation test comprised the final assessment. A simple sentence was dictated by the researcher that learners were required to write down. This test assessed learners' vocabulary as well as their writing skills (Appendix E).

The final aspect in Component 2 included interviews with all the Grade 3 learners (see Appendix F). Interviews can take many forms; they can either be structured, semi-structured or open ended. In brief, structured interviews are done in a face-to-face format using a standard set of questions to obtain data. On the other hand, semi-structured interviews are "[M]ore or less open-ended questions [are] brought to the interview situation in the form of

an interview guide" (Flick, 1998, p. 94). From the beginning the focus is on gaining an understanding based on textual information obtained. Finally, with open ended interviews, the researcher starts from a position of wanting to be sensitive to how participants construct their views and perspectives of things. The goal is to allow the participant's structure to dominate with questions emanating from the discussion rather than being pre-planned.

For this study, structured interviews (see Appendix F) were used as they are a formal discussion between the interviewer and a person chosen specifically for this purpose (Cohen, et al. 2007). Liamputtong (2007) further explains that this type of interview usually promotes a face-to-face and one-on-one interaction between a researcher and a respondent. This format was used because it offered me the opportunity to ask each child the same questions.

The purpose of the interviews was to understand the learners' perspectives on the nature and purpose of reading as well as explore their attitudes towards reading in a second language, in this case, English. All participants agreed that I audio-record the interviews, which allowed me to concentrate on the process rather than also attempting to write down responses. This notwithstanding, I also took field notes.

The interviews took place in the participants' classroom and were conducted in the participants' home language (isiXhosa), which learners are more proficient and comfortable in using. This gave participants an opportunity to express themselves without the possibility of being misunderstood and without the danger of them not finding appropriate words in English. The interview process was made easier due to my ability to speak the language.

All interviews were transcribed and translated. To ensure that the proper meaning of the original discussion had been conveyed, I played back the audio recorder to check if I had captured everything said correctly. Transcribed data were shared with my isiXhosa-speaking assistant for member checking purposes. This was done to improve the accuracy, credibility and validity of the data and, ultimately, the study.

In summary, information gathered from Phase 1 usually informs and guides decisions about the next steps in Phase 2. In the case of this study, data from the current phase guided the establishment of the reading club and the development of a responsive reading programme.

Phase 2:   Action Plan

The second phase of the action research process is a collective postulation of several solutions from which a single plan of action will emerge and be implemented. After evaluating and reflecting on the results from the previous phase, a systematic plan of action is developed. In the case of this study, this phase included sourcing appropriate books for the school and classroom, negotiating actual starting times, finding an appropriate venue, as well as developing an initial reading programme that was informed by the learner assessment results. The latter included opportunities for learners to be read to, reading by the learners, reading with the learners and it also included tasks and activities that would enhance vocabulary development.

Phase 3:   Implementation

In Phase 3, the plan of action is executed during the Implementation Phase, which in this case took the form of a number of cycles. For this study, and while each day influenced what would occur in the immediate next session, a cycle is defined as the weeklong activities rather than a presentation of the daily reflections. Findings and reflections from each weeklong cycle informed the planning of the next steps.

The first cycle that comprised five phases, set up the project in that it included Phase 1 described above. The rest of the cycles each comprise four phases that only include a re-planning, implementation, evaluation and reflection each time.

In implementing the reading club, a suitable time for the meetings was negotiated with the class teacher. The classroom was the venue and we agreed that the reading club would be run three times a week for an hour for seven consecutive weeks.

However, when the reading club commenced there were changes to this initial structure. These changes will be described in detail in Chapter 5 according to the manner in which they emerged.

The reading programme was planned and designed using the information drawn from the results of the previous phase. It was also informed by literature in Chapter 2 and 3 which stated that for a reading programme to be meaningful, it had to include reading, writing, speaking and listening as well as components deemed to be important for reading

development such as vocabulary and motivation. Such an approach is deemed to be balanced as shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: A balanced reading programme
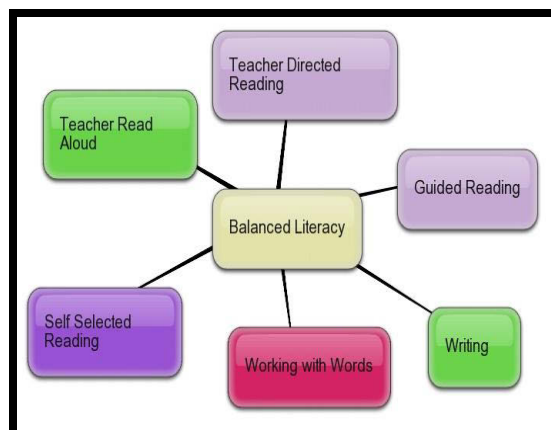
For this reason, the reading programme under study followed a specific format that included reading aloud by the teacher to the whole class as well as opportunities for individual, paired, and shared reading. Writing formed an integral part of the programme. It also involved activities that supported vocabulary development.

An action research project by its very nature necessitates flexibility. This project was no exception. Details on the adaptability of the programme under study are reflected in the results chapter.

Phases 4 and 5:   Evaluation and Reflection

Reflection is on-going in an intervention of this nature with each contact session an opportunity for reflection and improvement. This research involved 21 hour-long sessions whereby data gathered in each formed the basis for reflection, adaptation, and re-planning. Put differently, after each session, problems were re-assessed and adjustments made in preparation for the next session. Attempting to reflect the daily changes made in the 21 sessions was difficult due to the volume of data gathered. It is for this reason that the results in Chapter 5 are presented as weekly cycles rather than a reflection on daily sessions. Each cycle comprised an analysis of three sessions. The results therefore reflect seven cycles of change.

To evaluate the reading club, I relied on observations as the main source of data gathering. This method of data gathering was important as events in real time and on the site were all captured. Richards (2003) defines observation as the technique of obtaining data through direct contact with a person or group of people. Kumar (1999) states that observations are used to collect primary data, while Richards (2003) stresses that observation involves far more than just the mechanical process of zeroing in on observable behaviours. Bless & Higson-Smith (1995) mention two common types of observation, namely simple observation and participant observation.

I used both forms of observation to gather data. During the initial phase, simple observation was used to assess the school and the classroom. In the classroom, I observed a variety of literacy events and interactions between the learners and the teacher and amongst learners themselves. Observations also focused on the general structure of the school, access and the state of the library.

In the implementation phase, I became a participant observer. This is a process that requires the researcher to join the group of people being studied in order to "observe and understand their behaviour, feelings, attitudes and beliefs" (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995, p. 43). In the process, informal interviews are held. In this study, I conducted informal interviews with the class teacher and the teacher in charge of the school library. I recorded field-notes each time.

In addition to data obtained by video-recording each session, I also took field-notes, which are a written record of events or observations made by a researcher often as events occur 'in the field' (Hinchey, 2008, p. 79). Holly et al. (2005) define these as recording incidents that show growth over time. My note-taking was structured in a particular way using a record sheet that reflected time and attendance. This was important as it guided me in pacing the activities done in each session and also assisted me in evaluating the impact of the reading club. Field notes also reflected learner responses to the tasks and activities and any events that shed light on the research process.

To preserve accuracy, I captured the dialogue and events as they occurred. It is not always possible to do so when one is also a participant. For this reason, I used an assistant who captured events through pictures and video-recording. Hinchey (2008) states that the advantage of using video-recording is that they offer additional information on context, body

language and facial expressions. However, she also highlights the major challenge of using this medium, namely the strenuous process of extracting data especially when one has collected more data than needed. Also, video-recording can make participants self-conscious at first. My participants were at first nervous and cautious in everything they did, but they all reported back quickly and forgot they were being recorded.

Although they are less commonly used, I also found including photographs useful. In the case of the study, pictures revealed the state of the classroom, the library, and the school. They were also useful in revealing the number of the learners who attended each session. Pictures also capture still moments such as when learners are quietly reading independently or during shared reading sessions.

4.6   Data Analysis Process

Data analysis is described as a process in which the researcher develops a structure to make meaning of collected data. It is a process of deciding what new information the collected data provide (Hinchey, 2008). During the analysis process, the researcher sifts through the data looking for patterns or themes so as to make evident the researcher's findings. Data processing and analysis involves transcribing interviews, typing up field notes and compiling observation sheets, sorting and arranging the data into different types depending on the sources of information (Creswell, 2003).

For this study, data was collected in every step of the action research cycles and was indexed into specific categories, which Seidel (1998, p. 3) refers to as the sorting component of data analysis; the putting together of the "pieces of a puzzle." Subsequently, the researcher used preliminary research questions and the related literature discussed earlier in Chapters 2 and 3 as guidelines for data analysis. Given that this study followed an action research methodology, the researcher needed to identify criteria and standards for judging the effectiveness of the intervention. For this reason, data were re-organised to generate different themes and categories for each cycle of the action research process. Once the categorisation was complete, the researcher examined the matching evidence with the initial research concern to trace improvements and effectiveness.

Step 1:Preliminary analysis beginning during data collection

According to Hinchey, doing some preliminary analysis during data collection can be useful. She states that "there is no need to wait several weeks before beginning to analyse data collected weekly" (2008, p. 87). The nature of action research necessitates that reflections occur frequently for planning purposes. With this in mind, data were reviewed at the end of each session to inform planning the ensuing session. For the presentation of results in this study, weekly reflections in which session summaries, notes and video recordings were used identified the most striking information and possible emerging patterns.

Step 2: Coding, Categories, and Findings

There are many systems and strategies used for coding. In this study, I assigned a colour for each category and individual bits of data were marked with the appropriate colour (Hinchey, 2008). I created and recorded definitions of each category as well as provided evidence (Hinchey, 2008). After identifying the initial set of categories, I developed themes in order to make meaning and present the data in a coherent manner.

Having sorted the data into meaningful categories, I began to formulate findings. Findings are statements of what the researcher has learned from data analysis and must be based on specific information in the data (Hinchey, 2008). For example to support the finding that a safe learning environment has a role in language learning and vocabulary development, I included pictures and video clips from which the findings were generated (see Appendix G).

Step 3: Making Meaning and Theorizing

Moving from findings to interpretation is said to be the most intriguing phase of the research process. Hinchey (2008) defines theorising as offering interpretations of the findings, explaining what the researcher believes the findings mean. She also highlights that the process of theorising is not to formulate *an* interpretation of the findings and not to provide a single *correct* interpretation. Instead researchers offer interpretations they consider most likely, using their own experiences and perspectives to inform judgement. I used the evidence to make tentative claims and judgements.

Step 4: Peer Debriefing

Lincoln & Guba (1985) state, it is important for researchers to ask others to respond to their first interpretations of data during or after analysis. As indicated in Chapter 1, this research is part of a larger research programme; we regularly held meetings which afforded me a

platform to present my preliminary findings to other scholars, my supervisor, and other experienced peers unfamiliar with the data. Each opportunity provided me with a fresh perspective through the questions posed. I was able to identify weak or missing evidence and other gaps in the work. In the process, I also received valuable confirmation that the analysis and interpretation seemed feasible as well. This process allowed me as a researcher to consider possible gaps and potential misreading in the initial and on-going analysis. I engaged more with my data, made revisions, thus improving the trustworthiness of the study.

4.7 Data Verification and Quality

The concept of validity refers to the plausibility, credibility and trustworthiness of data and whether the data can be defended when challenged (Hinchey, 2008). This is based on factors such as whether the amount and type of data collected on the one hand seem appropriate and, on the other hand, is verifiable. I used triangulation, an important process that researchers use to minimise vagueness in their findings. Triangulation is the process of strengthening the findings obtained from a qualitative inquiry by cross-checking information. Patton (2001) advocates the use of triangulation for verification and reliability of data. This helps in analysing results and judging the quality of the study. Hinchey defines triangulation as "a means of collecting three or more different types of data relevant to the same question in order to increase the likelihood that findings are not idiosyncratic or unreliable" (2008, p. 76). The use of observations, interviews, learner feedback, and video recordings made it possible for me to triangulate and, in so doing, to improve the quality of the results and interpretations.

Member checking is another way to improve the quality of the study. In order to ensure the credibility and reliability of my research in general and to verify the accuracy of responses from participants, I relied on the isiXhosa-speaking assistant for member checking purposes. He read the transcribed data collected from interviews and also reviewed video footage with me. This process allowed the assistant to check for errors and clarify aspects of the language that helped me to avoid misinterpretations and misrepresentations of participant views (Maxwell, 2005; Cohen et al., 2007).

4.8 Ethical Considerations

All research traditions have ethical guidelines to protect research participants. In action research they are two primary ethical concerns which are the participants' privacy or

confidentiality and the researcher's potential abuse of power (Hinchey, 2008). For this particular research, participants were not coerced into contributing data for the study.

Because this study is part of the larger research programme outlined in Chapter 1, initial negotiations with the schools regarding access were done by the project. Thereafter, but before the inception of this research, I also secured formal agreement from the school principal, the relevant class teacher and the participants to provide necessary information and to allow the information gathered to be shared (see Appendix H). Since the participants are all below the age of 18, permission was formally obtained from legal guardians or parents, who were required to sign consent forms (see Appendix I). Typically, permission letters provide an outline of the goal of the study, the methods to be used and how confidentiality will be assured. It includes a clause concerning the voluntary nature of participation and that participants might withdraw at any time during the research. Consent forms summarise such information so that when the appropriate person signs, there is a formal record of the agreement and its terms (Hinchey, 2008).

In terms of access by a wider public audience, I am aware of the additional ethical issues entailed by putting my research in the public domain. It is essential that these issues are carefully addressed. I have a duty to protect all individuals and participants who are mentioned throughout the study. To address confidentiality concerns, participants were guaranteed anonymity by either omitting their names or using pseudonyms. Before the interviews and assessment test, learners were made aware that although their names were written on the questionnaires and their answer sheets, this was for performance tracking purposes only and that their identity would not be revealed in the final writing up where in many instances generic phrases like "Some learners felt that …" or "Some learners did..." were employed.

Cohen et al. (2007) observes that anonymity assumes that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity. For example, in Appendix G some pictures were blurred and names of individuals changed. For the letter samples and those pictures that are not blurred, permission was given to use the entirety of the letters and pictures. Without permission, each individual identity would have to be protected. Indeed, the teacher in charge of the Foundation Phase and the learners considered it to be an honour to publish their letters and pictures. The whole research exercise was considered an act of beneficence to the school.

4.9   Limitations of the Study

There are many limitations to small scale research especially one such as this study that applied action research in a particular site, with a limited sample.

Although the popularity of action research has increased and become one of the most advocated and used methodologies, this does not imply that the methodology does not have limitations. Action research does have weaknesses, particularly in relation to the relationship between the researcher and the researched, the scientific rigour of the method, and constraints on implementing change (Karim, 2001). Firstly, the relationship between researchers and the researched might be criticised as being too close. Researchers might not be able to develop an objective detachment from participants and data and, therefore, are likely to compromise their role and potentially introduce bias (Duffy, 1987). However, on the contrary, the very closeness of the researcher and researched might result in more honest and valid data. To address the issue of bias, I shared my findings with other people in the same field of study. Later analysis of what transpired in each session also helped me detach myself from the participants.

Secondly, action researchers require certain diplomatic and communication skills to enable them to take an active, critical and emancipatory stance (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This leads to the action researcher having the capacity to lead participants in a direction of his or her own choosing. To address this, the study was flexible: although I had my initial goals and objectives, I was open to changes and suggestions from the teachers and learners.

Thirdly, as stated by Ellis & Crookes (1998), action research is less structured and more difficult to conduct than other processes as it does not conform with many of the requirements of conventional research. If done properly, action research can be a time-consuming process, which is one disadvantage perceived by critics of the method. Critics like McDonnell (1998) also argue that findings of action research are limited in their applicability to a local situation and cannot be generalised across a wider population. My research intervention took place in a specific context and it cannot therefore be assumed to have the same effects in another context. Therefore, findings of this research cannot be generalised but can be used as a guide for the same type of intervention done in a similar context, or tried by other persons in their own practice, to see if they work.

When we engage in reflective processes that focus on ourselves, issues of validity are important because we cannot be sure of the accuracy of what we see (Feldman, 2003). Whilst field notes were one of the sources of triangulation in this study, as the researcher, I personally collected data. Therefore, there is the possibility that my influence on the interpretation of the situations considered in my reflection process may be biased. So that the judgement of my work is not held to be only my opinion, I enlisted the help of my academic research supervisor and post graduate researchers throughout the enquiry. By making my work available to them for critical scrutiny, they helped to validate the quality of my research (McNiff, 2002). Cohen, et al. (2007) argue that provided the recorded accounts of events in field notes are authentic, there is no reason why they should not be used as scientific tools in explaining people's actions (p. 294).

Finally, representation of the process of action research may confuse rather than enlighten. The ranges of visual diagrams of the action research process are of varying complexity and perhaps not always helpful (Maheshwari, 2012). Again, as a novice action researcher myself, I experienced the difficulty of presenting my results. At times I struggled to interpret and narrate my everyday experiences, to record in my journal, in other words making sense of what was happening to me. I struggled to identify which experience to write about. What makes one experience more significant than another? How do I know I am interpreting my experience correctly? What language must I use and how should I present my work in a manner that is insightful? Mertler (2012) states that this is because of the lack of fit between standard research requirements and the process of conducting action research that leads to the difficulty of writing up results. In trying to address this problem, I devised a strategy of presenting my findings. Data was presented in cycles which represented a week. A week had three sessions that were summarised into a cycle. This made the presentation clear and comprehensible.

4.10   Summary
In this chapter, I described the research orientation, methodological framework and specific methods that I used in the research process. The chapter also included a description of the site and sample, research process, ethical considerations and limitations of the study. In the chapter that follows, I present and discuss the research findings.

CHAPTER 5 DATA PRESENTATION

5.1 Introduction

With the emphasis being on 'I', the action research approach to data gathering put me as the researcher as the central focus of the enquiry. Therefore, my data gathering process emphasised my 'participative' rather than 'spectator' or 'observer' approach. As already stated in the previous chapter, the research process was over a seven-week period, with three contact sessions per week. The total number of sessions was 21. This notwithstanding, to make sense of the data, the findings presented in this chapter have been summarised into weekly cycles only. Thus, what follows is the presentation of seven cycles of action research.

The first cycle includes an analysis of the results from the situation analysis while the rest include implementing and reflecting on the programme that comprised the reading club. Cycle 2 incorporates data from weeks 1 and 2, since the former did not yield sufficient data to warrant reporting it as a complete cycle. I summarise the cycles in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Summary of action research cycles

Cycle	Task	Implementation Period
Cycle 1	Situation Analysis	Completed prior to commencement of the reading club and programme
Cycle 2	Introduction to reading club and reading programme	Weeks 1 and 2
Cycle 3	Implementation of reading programme	Week 3
Cycle 4	Implementation of reading programme	Week 4
Cycle 5	Implementation of reading programme	Week 5
Cycle 6	Implementation of reading programme	Week 6
Cycle 7	Implementation of reading programme	Week 7

Cycle 1 below presents results from the situation analysis.

5.2 Cycle 1: Situation Analysis Results and Action Plan Development

5.2.1 Situation Analysis Results

As indicated in the previous chapter, the initial phase of any action research process includes the identification of the problem. In the case of this study, this cycle included two interrelated components that informed the establishment of the reading club and the development of a responsive reading programme respectively. The first provided insights into the resources needed to establish the reading club as well as information to inform decisions on the nature

and form of the reading club. The second component includes learner assessment results that informed the development of the reading programme.

Component 1: Situation analysis of school and classroom libraries to establish a reading club

School Library Analysis

During the initial visit to the school, I learnt that the school has a library though it was underutilised and, as the teacher in charge stated, dysfunctional. On my first attempt to do a library inventory, the teacher in charge denied me access stating that it was not well-organised. When she finally agreed to allow me access, I too witnessed the disorganisation she described during informal discussions, as Fig. 4 below indicates.

Figure 4: Condition of the library
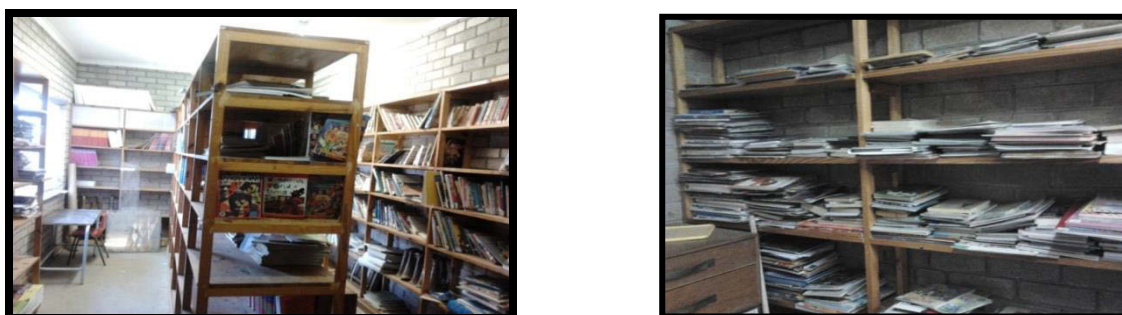
It had no chairs and tables and books were not arranged for easy access. My general observations were that the place was not conducive to learners having free access to books or to them seeking to use this as a place where they could read for pleasure. It was regularly locked and books were not clearly marked. This made it difficult for learners to obtain books without concerted assistance from the teacher in charge. As noted in Fig 4, the books were all piled on top of each other in an unsystematic manner making it difficult for learners to identify the type of books available. The shelves are very high, making it particularly challenging for young learners, like those who participated in the study, to reach books.

Discussions with the teacher in charge revealed that she was uninformed on how to operate a library. She also stated that she is merely in charge of the library keys and not of its operation. She also confirmed that learners did not have access to the library books. Teachers could loan books on behalf of the learners. Reasons for this, as she indicated, had to do with

the school not having a school librarian which also resulted in there not being a coordinated lending system in place.

The Classroom Reading Corner Analysis

I not only assessed the school library, but also needed to gain insight into the type of books and the general reading culture of the Grade 3 learners under study. To do this, I observed what happened in the class as well as assessed the classroom reading corner. Fig. 5 below indicates the state of the classroom reading corner as well as some literacy displays learners were exposed to. The teacher explained the lack of displays in the classroom and expressed concerns about vandalism, particularly over the school holidays when charts were repeatedly vandalised and ripped off walls.

Figure 5: Condition of the classroom reading corner

As Fig 5 above shows, the class reading corner has four chairs with cushions and three small desks. The teacher indicated that this creates an inviting atmosphere for learners to make use of the reading corner. The reading books were all displayed on top of the desks for easy access. There was a variety of reading books including magazines in isiXhosa and English. However, like those in the school library, the books in the reading corner also seemed inappropriate for the level of English I heard children being exposed to during observations.

Having made field-notes on the general state of the library and the classroom reading corner, I proceeded with an analysis of the books available. Many were in a good condition. However, the scope, level, and nature of content seemed inappropriate for Foundation Phase learners. To verify my first impressions, I selected a number of books from the school library and classroom reading corner to ascertain their readability. A Text Readability Consensus

Calculator, already detailed in the previous chapter, was used for this purpose as it has been acknowledged as the most reliable of all formulas (Greenfield, 2004). The results from the text samples extracted from five different books all indicated that the sampled texts were suitable for Grade 3 learners with the average reading age of 8-10 years, as shown in Table 4 below. As I show later on in this chapter, this result showed a discontinuity between the readability of library books and the actual reading age of learners who participated in the intervention.

Table 4: Example of the readability results

Title of book/ story	Grade Level	Reading Level	Readers Age
Brenda has a dragon in her blood (Sample 1)	6	Fairly easy to read	10-11 years (Grades 5 & 6)
Brenda has a dragon in her blood (Sample 2)	4	Easy to read	8-9 years (Grades 4 & 5)
What a Feast	4	Very easy to read	8-9 years (Grades 4 & 5)
Abdul and Fatima	3	Easy to read	8-9 years (Grades 3 &4)
Grade 3 Reader 4; Ozzie finds out	3	Very, very easy to read.	8-9 years (Grades 3 & 4)
Bridge to English Reader; Thumi and the storytelling Festival	2	Very easy to read.	6-8 years (Grades 1 & 2)

After measuring the readability of books, an inventory was done to gain insight on the types (genre) of books available to learners. I completed an inventory of books from the classroom reading corner only. The results indicate that, of the 45 books available, only five could be considered as books read for enjoyment. About 20 were basal readers prescribed by the Department of Education, while the other 20 were donations from the Molteno Literacy[14] Project (Bridge to English) that operated in many schools in Grahamstown where this study was located. There were also two magazines in the reading corner.

While learners had exposure to books, some of the story books contained language that assumed prior knowledge which learners had limited exposure to. For example, words like *virus, dragon,* and descriptions such as … "*they start to fight the little soldiers that live in*

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[14] Bridge to English programme is a comprehensive English Additional Language course that is designed to develop oral and literacy skills, building on the language skills developed in Breakthrough to Literacy. The programme consists of a series of systematic courses addressing the listening, speaking, reading and writing needs of learners from Grades 1-7. It is highly focused on language across the curriculum and as such prepares learners for effective learning in subjects through the medium of English (www.molteno.co.za; accessed September 2012).

everybody's blood and protect us", found in the book titled "Brenda has a dragon in her blood" assumed that learners understood the concepts of dragons and soldiers. Such assumptions were unsustainable for this cohort of learners whom, as I describe later on, seemed to not only have limited exposure to books, but also to a variety of genres. In addition, learners could not identify themselves with some of the story-lines in the available books given the foreign-based context.

Learners were asked in the interviews if they ever made use of the reading corner as, during my observations, this was not the case. Only five learners indicated that they sometimes took time to sit and read by the reading corner but not often. Of these five learners, one said, *"I take my time to read during break time because I don't like playing; these boys hurt us."* Another learner said, *"I read by the corner at times when I finish first to do my class work"* while a third learner said, *"I have completed all the task in my folder/file so I have nothing else to do than read these books."*

The results above pointed to the need to (a) create opportunities for learners to have easy access to books, (b) develop a conducive space for learners to read, and (b) find a variety of appropriate books that learners would not only identify with, but also enjoy reading. Variety meant taking account of different genres learners needed to be exposed to.

Component 2: Assessing learners to design a responsive reading programme
The second component in Cycle 1 included an analysis of the learner assessment results. This was done with the view to establishing the learners' current levels of reading and to determine their capabilities and needs. What follows are the results derived from four tests.

The first, a word recognition test, was administered to 21 of the 22 learners in the Grade 3 class. This test comprised 90 words that were graded in four levels of vocabulary as suggested by Pikulski & Templeton (2004; also see Chapter 2). The criteria in deciding on the levels is summarised in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Word Recognition Test

Row 1-3	Level 1	This level consists of the most basic words. These words rarely require direct instruction and typically do not have multiple meanings.
Row 4-10	Level 2	Words likely to be learnt only through reading and instruction. They have been referred to as academic vocabulary and as instructional vocabulary.
Row 11- 14	Level 3	Words that make up the technical vocabulary or jargon of a field. They are words associated with a particular field of study or profession.
Row 15 -18	Level 4	Words that are interesting but are rare and so are difficult to understand. They are studied out of interest, for example, majuscule and xanthodont.

The results enabled me to determine individual reading performance and at the same time establish the average class reading age. Table 6 below shows the results.

Table 6: Results of the word recognition assessment test

Learners	Words read correctly	Level of correct words	Reading age	Actual age
1	2	Level 1	-6yrs	Not provided
2	6	Level 1	6yrs 7mnths	8yrs 11mnths
3	3	Level 1	6yrs	9yrs 1mnth
4	6	Level 1	6yrs 7mnths	8yrs 8mnths
5	10	Level 1	6yrs 11mnths	9yrs 7mnths
6	9	Level 1	6yrs 10mnths	9yrs 3mnths
7	32	Level 1,2, 3	7yrs 11mnths	9yrs
8	34	Level 1, 2	8yrs	8yrs 3mnths
9	29	Level 1, 2	7yrs 9mnths	8yrs 5mnths
10	0	No attempt	-6yrs	8yrs 6mnths
11	22	Level , 1, 2	7yrs 6mnths	10yrs 3mnths
12	0	No attempt	-6yrs	10yrs
13	0	Failed at level 1	-6yrs	9yrs
14	6	Level 1	6yrs 7mnths	9yrs 11mnths
15	23	Level 1, 2	7yrs 6mnths	8yrs 11mnths
16	11	Level 1	7yrs	9yrs 3mnths
17	33	Level 1, 2	8yrs	9yrs 3mnths
18	14	Level 1, 2	7yrs 2mnths	9yrs 2mnths
19	40	Level 1,2, 3	8yrs 3mnths	8yrs 3mnths
20	29	Level 1, 2	7yrs 9mnths	8yrs 9mnths
21	0	Failed at level 1	-6yrs	8yrs 7mnths
22	0	Failed at level 1	-6yrs	10yrs 5mnths

An analysis of the results above indicates that of the 22 learners in this class, 20 learners are between the ages of eight and 10, and two learners are 10 years and a few months old. The class average is nine years. Regarding reading age, eight learners read at the age of six to seven years, six learners read at the age of seven to eight years, with only two operating consistent to their reading age and six learners read at the age of below six years. Therefore,

the evidence suggests that the class reading average reflects a reading age of six years and six months. These results had implications for not only developing a responsive reading programme but also one appropriate to the needs of this cohort of learners, as I detail later on.

The second assessment tested reading accuracy and was specifically aimed at assessing learners' ability to read a sentence, comprehend and answer a simple question based on the text (Appendix E). This test was undertaken by all 22 learners. The total mark that learners could achieve was seven. Examples 1 and 2 illustrate results by learners who attempted to answer most of the questions and did not get them correct and examples 3 and 4 show learners who managed to answer most of the questions correctly. Learner responses to all questions are presented in Appendix E1.

Example 1

Example 2

D2 – Actual Assessment (2/2)

B   SCORE SHEET - READING ACCURACY AND COMPREHENSION

(Write the learner's response on the line. Circle any incorrectly read words. Read the word for the learner but THEN do not give a mark for reading accuracy)

1. Come and play ball

   What did they want to play with? play oo ✓

2. The dog sat up. bog?

   What animal sat up? bog (mistake b/d)

3. We like to read books at school.

   Where do we like to read books? scaol (school) the correct spelling for the word to the sentence ...

4. The man has lovely flowers growing in his garden.

   What does the man have growing in his garden? flowers ✓

5. Vuyo kicked at the door and broke the glass.

   How did Vuyo break the glass? Ukoblle (Answer ... given in IsiXhosa)

6. Everyone had a good time at Sive's party last Tuesday.

   When was Sive's party? puyi x

7. Get ready quickly and you will manage to catch the eight o'clock train.

   Why did they have to get ready quickly? tan x (train)

   READING SCORE: /7   COMPREHENSION SCORE: 2 /7   TOTAL

Example 3

D2 – Actual Assessment (2/2)

B   SCORE SHEET - READING ACCURACY AND COMPREHENSION

(Write the learner's response on the line. Circle any incorrectly read words. Read the word for the learner but THEN do not give a mark for reading accuracy)

1. Come and play ball

   What did they want to play with? ball ✓

2. The dog sat up.

   What animal sat up? dog ✓

3. We like to read books at school.

   Where do we like to read books? school ✓

4. The man has lovely flowers growing in his garden.

   What does the man have growing in his garden? flowers ✓

5. Vuyo kicked at the door and broke the glass.

   How did Vuyo break the glass? broke ✓

6. Everyone had a good time at Sive's party last Tuesday.

   When was Sive's party? Tuesday ✓

7. Get ready quickly and you will manage to catch the eight o'clock train.

   Why did they have to get ready quickly? train ✓

Example 4

Table 7 provides a summary of the number of learners who attempted each question and the number who answered each question correctly.

Table 7: Reading accuracy and comprehension test results

Statement and Question	No. of learners attempted the question	No. of learners who got the question correct
Come and play ball... What did they want to play with?	19	5
The dog sat up What animal sat up?	19	11
We like to read books at school ... Where do we like to read books?	19	8
The man has lovely flowers growing in his garden. What does the man have growing in his garden?	18	9
Vuyo kicked at the door and broke the glass. How did Vuyo break the glass?	19	4
Everyone had a good time at Sive's party last Tuesday. When was Sive's party?	17	8
Get ready quickly and you will manage to catch the eight o'clock train. Why did they have to get ready quickly?	18	5

An analysis of the results indicates that of the 22 learners in this class, at least 19 learners made an attempt to answer all the questions. However, only a few got most of the attempted

questions correct. Learners were least successful in questions 1, 5 and 7, as out the 19 learners who attempted to answer these, at least four learners got them correctly. Question 3, 4 and 6 were also attempted by at 19 learners but only half of the learners responded to the question correctly. Finally, Question 2 seemed to be easy for most of the learners, with 11 of the 19 who attempted to answer this question obtaining the correct answer. Spelling was not taken into consideration when marking learner responses. As shown in the above examples 1 and 2, some learners resorted to writing responses in their home language.

In the third test, learners were also assessed for their comprehension skills by first reading a short story and answering questions using their own words. This test was also undertaken by all 22 learners. The total mark that learners could achieve was eight. What follows are examples of four learners who fairly represent the majority of the learners. For the full results see Appendix E1.

Example 1

Example 2

Example 3

Example 4

Table 8 indicates a summary of the number of learners who attempted each question and the number who got each question right.

Table 8: Comprehension Test Results

Questions	Learners who attempted to answer	Learners who got the right answer
What was the learner's name in the story?	19	17
Where was the learner going?	18	12
How was the learner travelling to school?	19	0
Is Noni a girl or a boy?	18	11
What did she see at the corner?	18	0
What did she do at the corner?	17	0
When did she cross the streets?	17	0
Why must we look at the lights?	17	0

An analysis of the results indicates that from the 22 learners in this class, at least 19 learners attempted to answer all the questions. However, from the eight questions provided most learners managed to get question one, two and four correct. Questions like number 3, 5, 6 7 and 8, which required learners to expand their answers, were either left blank or answered in their home language as learners could not seem to find the appropriate word in English as example 2 question 5 and example 4 question 1 indicates. Overall, learners struggled with constructing meaningful sentences.

A dictation test made up the final assessment. A simple sentence was dictated by the researcher that learners were required to write down. This test assessed learners' vocabulary

as well as their writing skills (Appendix E). The sentence had eight words and a mark was given for each correct word. Twenty-two learners were assessed. What follows are examples of four learners who fairly represent the majority of the learners. For the full results see Appendix E1.

Example 1	Example 2
Example 3	Example 4

Table 9 is a summary of the number of learners who attempted to write the sentence and the number who got each word correct.

Table 9: Dictation Results

Individual words from dictated sentence	No. of learners who attempted the word	No. of learners with correct spelling
Did	15	5
You	15	10
Eat	15	0
Before	15	0
You	11	8
Came	11	1
To	11	5
School	13	6

All 22 learners in the class completed this test. Fifteen attempted to write the dictated sentence. As the results indicate, the majority of learners struggled with writing the correct spelling. In the examples provided, an influence of their L1 can be noted in the spelling. Of the seven words which made up the dictated sentence, the word *you* seemed to be easy for most of the learners. In its first appearance, 15 learners attempted to write the word and 10 spelt it correctly. In its second appearance, 11 learners attempted to write the word and only 8 spelt it correctly. The words *eat* and *before* seemed to be the most difficult, with 15 learners attempting to write the words and none spelling them correctly. In follow-up interviews with

five learners who did not make an effort to write the sentence, one learner said, *"I just did not know what to write. I could not try, so I left that blank instead of writing wrong answers."* Another said, *"I did not hear anything you said, ma'am"*, this despite having repeated the sentence three times.

The final assessment was the interviews with each learner in the class. These interviews also informed the design of a responsive reading programme. The results from the interviews indicate that not much reading is happening at school, be it reading for enjoyment or reading for educational purposes.

When learners were asked if they knew anyone who could read well in English, four learners referred to a classmate named Musa[15]. Some admitted that they cannot read and do not know how to as they have not been taught by their teacher. The following examples encapsulate the general sentiment by learners,

R: *Do you know anyone who can read in English well?*

L1:   *Musa likes to read and she reads well!*

L19:   *I know how to read because my teacher always tells me that I am a good reader.*

L7:   *I don't know anyone besides my teacher who can read well.*

L21:   *I don't know anyone, and I can't read myself because my teacher hasn't taught me how to.*

L22:   *No one can read in this class, I can't read as well but our teacher told us that you have come to teach us how to read.*

To help me understand the reading culture at home, learners were asked if they knew anyone who could read at home. Ten indicated that they were not aware of such people. Five learners referred to their brothers and sisters as the only people they knew who read. A learner responded, *"At home it's only my big brother who attends school at X who can read"* while another said, *"My sister in Grade 7 at this school is the only one who can read at home."*

A follow-up question was asked to understand if there were people who read to them at home, and if they had read anything at home the day before. Two learners indicated they had read a book in isiXhosa. One learner said *"I read a book called uMvundla lo Fudo (The Hare and the Tortoise)."* Of the interviewed learners, six reported to have not read anything at home, while 10 indicated that they had read something but had forgotten what the books were

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[15] Pseudo name

about. Sixteen learners indicated that they have never been read to but that they try to read on their own. A learner said, *"I stay with my grandmother. She can't read so I try to read by myself"* while another stated, *"I try to read for myself these days because my sister who used to read for me was admitted at the hospital."* Findings from the interviews thus indicated that there is less reading done beyond the school than there is in school.

In response to the availability of books outside of school, six indicated they did not have any books to read at home. Two learners said that they each owned a copy of an isiXhosa story book at home. Three learners had two books while five indicated that they had more than five books to read at home. These included isiXhosa, English and Afrikaans story books.

In an attempt to understand the learner perspectives on reading, I asked learners why people read. Responses indicated that, to most of them, reading basically meant reading words in isolation and applying word-attack skills when dealing with new words. For example, a learner said, *"I read to get all the words correct"* while another said, *"I read to pass at school."* A third learner stated, *"I read so that I can know all the words and pass at school and go to Grade 4."* When asked why people write, responses elicited were similar to those about reading, namely, a functional or instrumentalist approach.

When asked about how they felt about reading and writing in English, they all indicated that they felt happy with learning to read. The following responses reflect a common thread. One learner said, *"I love reading in English because I can read English"* while another said *"I feel happy when we read in English in class".* Yet another learner said, *"I like reading in English and I feel excited when our teacher reads for us in English."* Only one learner indicated that he becomes frustrated if he does not know how to either read or write. Learner enjoyment and eagerness to learn to read in English seemed inconsistent with their reading age and ability to engage with texts as already indicated earlier on. Their motivation to learn to read in English served as an important impetus to establishing the type of reading programme put in place in the reading club. While not the main focus of the reading club, I ended up reviewing the study and incorporating sections on motivation both in the conceptual framework in Chapter 2 as well as in the results and analysis.

I also probed learners on whether they could read in English. Of the 22 learners, six learners indicated in the interviews that they could not read in English but are willing to learn. The assessment results, though, reflect that the majority were unable to read or write in English.

Being able to read the title of the story book helps in predicting what the story might be about. This is an important pre-reading strategy often used that improves comprehension and allows learners to use cues. During the interviews, learners were asked if they had ever read an interesting story. Many found it difficult to recall a title of a book as well as retell aspects of a story they had heard or read. Those who were able shared the content of the story despite having forgotten the title of the book. Poor sequencing of events was also observed during the retell. For example, one learner recalled the story about the 'Ugly Duckling'. Instead of beginning with the reason why the duckling ran away from home, he started narrating from when the duckling discovered his real identity, seeing his own reflection in the water after he met a number of beautiful white swans swimming on a lake. I had to ask him *"What made the duckling go to the lake?"* In response, it is only when the learner said *"the duckling felt abandoned and deserted because he was different"*. Another learner retold a well-known story, 'The Zebra and the Crocodile', in a very simple way by just saying, *"[T]he other animal lived in the water (meaning the crocodile) and the other animal wanted to go and drink water (meaning the Zebra)"*. He had forgotten the names of animals, the sequence and main idea of the story.

Some learners retold stories from their Grade 1 or 2 basal readers and not from a book written specifically for enjoyment. When asked to retell a story they had read recently, many indicated that since then they had not read anything new and interesting and that the only access they had to books were the readers at school. Only one learner indicated that he joined the local library and that he visited it with his friends during the holidays.

In summary, the analysis of the reading assessment test illustrates that the actual average age of the participants is nine years yet the average reading age is six years and six months; much below their actual age. The results also indicate that the majority of learners have limited vocabulary as a result of little or no exposure to English written texts. A reading programme put in place would need to enhance learners' vocabulary by providing them with many and varied opportunities for authentic writing and reading experiences.

The results of the dictation test indicated that I needed to attend to learners developing an understanding of sounds and letters, words in context as well as improve spelling. The implication was that the reading programme needed to focus on broadening learners' vocabulary incorporating various oral and written activities that would also motivate them to read. I was also obligated to develop strategies to monitor written work in ways that also allowed learners to reflect on their writing because, from my observations in class, they simply wrote and did not always receive feedback. In addition, I needed to include opportunities to establish reading and writing conventions since the results showed that some learners often started a word with a capital letter in the middle of a sentence (Clay, 2002).

The interviews helped me determine each learner's understanding of the nature of reading, the purpose of reading, and learner attitudes towards reading in a second language, in this case English. They also showed that learners had little opportunity to read in and out of school. My field notes also confirmed that learners did not have opportunities to read in the school context (September 13, 2013). Those who said they never read the books indicated that they did not know how to read in English and even when they tried, the books were not easy to read. Learners also did not consider reading an enjoyable activity, an outcome that had consequences for the development of reading programme.

The findings from the data gathered in this step allowed me to reflect on areas that needed attention and to develop an appropriate reading programme that would address the main issues hindering effective reading and learning of a second additional language that would cater for all the learners.

5.2.2 Action Plan Development

The second part of any action research process is a collective postulation of several solutions from which a single plan of action will emerge and be implemented (McNiff, 1992). Given the summary above, the following steps were undertaken to establish a reading club and at the same time develop an appropriate reading programme. The plan included sourcing appropriate books for the school and classroom, negotiating actual starting times, establishing an appropriate venue, as well as developing an initial reading programme that was informed by the learner assessment results and interviews. The latter provided learners with opportunities to be read to, to read for themselves and to read with other learners. It also

included tasks and activities that would enhance vocabulary development. This reflection and planning, which I detail below, was the beginning of Cycle 2 of this study's seven cycles.

5. 3   Cycle 2: Executing and Reflecting on Weeks 1 and 2

In this cycle, a suitable intervention was designed and executed based on the findings and reflections in Cycle 1. Following is a description of the establishment of the reading club and the instructional programme put into practice as well as on results from the initial execution of the plan.

5.3.1   Establishing the Reading Club

A meeting was held with the school principal, the Foundation Phase head, as well as with the Grade 3 teacher to solicit their help and support. I negotiated the times and the days in which the reading club sessions would be held. An agreement was reached and the reading club sessions were to be held three times per week (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday) for seven weeks. In an effort not to disturb the normal school activities, the time for the reading club sessions was negotiated with both the class teacher and the parents who were informed through consent forms. The initial agreement was that sessions would be an hour long, from 12pm-1pm and that these would be held in the Grade 3 classroom. However, due to unforeseen events, the time changed. At times the sessions would last for 90mins. We also made little use of the learners' classroom as the teacher was frequently absent from school with the classroom keys. As a result the reading club sessions were either held in the Grade 1 or 2 classrooms or in the school hall.

My next concern was the availability of resources and a research assistant to help with the video recording as well as to assist with the translations into learners' first language if difficulties arose that I was not able to explain. An arrangement was made with Rhodes University library to have unlimited access to the books each time I needed them and to also extend my loan period. Reading materials was also sourced from colleagues. Using the readability results as well as results concerning the scope in genre, I was able to assess such material for its suitability.

Once resources were deemed adequate and the timetable planned, the next step was to write to parents explaining the nature of the instructional programme and requesting permission for

their child to participate. Along with seeking permission, came a request for commitment on their part to ensure that their children would do the daily tasks associated with the programme.

Much time was spent preparing tasks and in setting up the initial sessions. I wanted the learners to be able to work with concrete materials and to have the opportunity to take some work home to practice. Because of the amount of work needed to prepare these materials and because my participants were young learners, a decision was made from the beginning to have some of the materials laminated to ensure that they would be maintained throughout the intervention. Photocopies of original short story books were also made for the learners to take home as, at this age, they are still not careful with handling and looking after their books. Different stories from books and newspapers were selected for this purpose.

As the results in the previous cycle illustrated, the majority of the participating learners had limited exposure to books and, for the most part, were not readers. The test results also indicated that many struggled phonetically as well as with making meaning of text. For this reason and as I detail below, I decided to introduce one new story each week which I read to learners. I also made related materials to assist in vocabulary development as well as enable learners to make meaning of the text.

5.3.2   The Reading Club Programme

The design of the reading programme was guided by the balanced literacy programme approaches discussed in Chapter 2. Clay (1995) argues that building on the learner's strengths will inculcate a sense of control amongst learners. She is of the opinion that children use contextual cues in predicting and working out unknown words; therefore, there is relevance in the use of scaffolding as advocated by Vygotsky (1978).

The reading club sessions followed more or less the same pattern. While this was the practice, the nature and form these took was different during each session. The warm-up activity was directly linked to literacy development. For example, I sometimes reviewed names and letter sounds covered in previous sessions, sang alphabet songs, and even made learners talk about their favourite song and why. The seating arrangement also differed depending on the activities planned for the session as Figure 6 below shows.

Figure 6: Reading club seating arrangement

The warm-up activity was usually followed by a quick review of the previous day's lesson. The day's planned activities lesson followed, which took the major segment of time. Every session also included reading and discussing a book. To conclude each reading club session, learners watched a bilingual video and thereafter were issued with tasks to complete at home.

5.3.3   Session Plan

The first week's three sessions were structured differently to the remaining sessions. As it was the first week of term, time was made for learners to settle down and for normal schooling to resume. The sessions in this week focused mainly on the establishment of the reading club and teaching the conventions of reading. The sessions were also about creating a safe, inviting and conducive learning environment. This included establishing rules with learners, asking them their expectations and clarifying my own expectations as a participant. I also introduced them to the notion of a reading club, explaining differences between what they might encounter in it that might be similar or different to what they encountered in school. I ensured that the process was participative and that learners had the chance to share ideas.

5.3.4   Logistics

As learners stayed longer at school than was the practice, they were provided with refreshments at the end of each session.

5.3.5 Evaluating Cycle 2

Researcher Participation

As a key participant, I understood that it was important to evaluate my participation so as to improve the way I mediated the process. Concerning my practice, I noticed that I used the filler '*neh*' frequently. However, this was done to ascertain if the learners understood what was said and whether they understood the instructions given to them. Although I was aware that the reading club would need to use isiXhosa given the assessment results, I was nevertheless surprised at the extent to which I relied on the language (second session, 10 October). Reasons for the use of isiXhosa also had to do with learners' level of proficiency in English; which I acknowledged needed to scaffold the second language.

Managing Learning and Learners

Regarding managing learners and learning, I noticed that the larger the group, the more complicated it was to manage the classroom. Video recordings made during this week revealed that one learner kept on burping in class, which seemed to irritate his peers (Video Clip 14). The learner seemed restless as after that he wanted to go to the toilet, and his peers stopped him. From my observation it seems there was no need for him to go to the toilet, he merely sought an excuse to go outside. He managed to stay in the classroom till the end of the session.

The atmosphere that was created and the rules that were put in place in the reading club seemed to put learners at ease and made them more eager to openly participate in activities. I noted that learners who were normally reserved in class during the normal school day participated more in the reading club sessions. The informal seating plan that gave them the choice to sit on the mat and work on tasks seemed to encourage participation. They were encouraged to work with whomever they chose. These strategies encouraged participation and interaction amongst the learners as Figure 7 below indicates.

Figure 7: Learners working in pairs
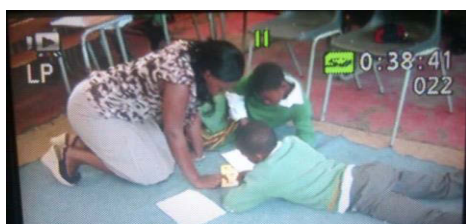
The book reading and discussions also facilitated participation, with learners increasingly volunteering information and responses to questions. An analysis of the video clips shows that, while learners struggled to read, their eagerness to participate was noticeable. I observed from the nature of learners' responses to the books they read, that they developed an understanding of them. They also seemed better able to consider others' perspectives. Even at this initial stage, learners were able to predict what would happen in the ensuing pages because of the nature of questions I posed. The book discussion helped learners practice turn-taking and, from what I observed in the video clips (10:14:40, 10 October; 039:25:14, 16 October), learners adhered to the rules jointly set.

Evaluating the Structure and Activities in the Reading Programme

Table 10 below illustrates the structure of Weeks 1 and 2and the main activities covered in the reading club sessions. An evaluation of each activity will be provided thereafter.

Table 10: Nature of Activities

Time	Activity
5-10mins	Meet and greet followed by warm-up activity (Review of the letters of the alphabet)
10-15mins	Creating a safe learning environment (Making of rules)
10mins	Introduction to the notion of a reading club
10mins	Reading aloud (Week 1: Handa's Surprise; Week 2: The Long Trousers)
10-15mins	Discussion on the book
5mins	Watching of bilingual video stories
5mns	Learner feedback, and rewards (learner attendance, participation, behaviour)

With regard to the alphabet activity done during Week 1 (9-11 October 2013), I realised some learners still skipped some of the letters of the alphabet. In response, I developed a group activity for learners to identify the first letter of their name and write all the English words they know that start with that letter. This was to ascertain their existing word knowledge so as to better inform me on the way forward to design more appropriate activities. As part of vocabulary development, discussions were held around each word. The following are examples of learner responses to the task.

L	S	Y	A
lion	school	yellow	Elephant (I wrote the word on the board and corrected the learner)
legs	sun	yoke	arm
leaves	snake		apple
ladder	swing		ankle
light	stars		
lips	sent		

Learners seemed to enjoy this activity, with one taking it upon herself to go home and write all the words that start with the first letter of her surname, as indicated in Appendix J.

The warm-up activity for week two built on the previous week's activity in that it required learners to identify the sound rather than only the letter with which the word starts. For this reason, I prepared a scrabble game, with the names of the fruits that were drawn from the story of the previous week, namely, *Handa's Surprise*. In pairs, learners were first made to identify the fruit from the picture provided, then to assemble the mystery word. I moved around the pairs, giving clues where I noticed learners struggling. Each pair presented their word to the rest of the class adding which sound the word started with. For example the word *apple* starts with the sound *'ae',* even though the first letter is *'a'.*

In an effort to create a safe learning environment, concrete rules were established. Classroom rules were formulated collectively with the learners. Each learner was given an opportunity to state their expectations and how these could be met. To facilitate participation, learners were allowed to use their LI. The process gave each learner an opportunity to be heard and learners felt at ease to state their expectation. Below is an excerpt from this process.

R: During the reading club session I don't want people to move in and out of classroom disturbing us. Unathi please tell us what you would like to see happening in the book and what you won't tolerate as an individual.

L1: Abantu bangaphumi bengena (People should stop coming in and out).

R: Yes do you all understand what she said?

AL: Yes.

L2: (learner lifting up hand) Bangaphumi badodge baye phaya (People should not go out and dodge the sessions).

L3: (learner lifting up hand) Bangabethani (No beating).

R: Bangabethani, yintoni ukubethana nge English kanene? (Who can tell us what he said in English?)

AL: Beat.

R: Yes, no beating. Siyafuna abantu babe bebethana apha? (Do we want people to beat each other here?)

AL: No.

R: So no beating.

L4: Bangangxoli (People should not make noise).

R: Yintoni ukungxola in English? (In English what does it mean?)

SL: Noise.

R: No making noise, what else? I will bring books and each one of you will have a copy, how do you want people to handle your book?

L6: Bangayihazuli (They must not tear it).

L7: Do not disturb (People should not disturb each other when reading).

The formulated rules were written down on a chart and were to be displayed in the learners' classroom as a daily reminder of what was agreed, as seen in Figure 9 below.

Figure 8: Reminder of the classroom rules

During Week 1, I read aloud the book titled *Handa's Surprise*. Before reading the book, I completed pre-reading activities with the learners. Following is an extract of the book discussions:

R: Look at the picture. What do you see? (Chorus of answers and chaos. I immediately told them that as part of my rules I want people to lift up their hands.)

L1: I see the sun.

R: Okay. What do you see?

L2: I see the apple.

R: Okay. You see an apple. What else?

L3: I see a pine apple.

R: What else do you see?

L4: I see the children.

R: It's a child, ma bebanengi sithi? (And what do we say when they are many?)

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All: Children (s).

R: Nxa eyi one sithi it's a child. What else do you see? What is this? (Pointing at the picture of an ostrich.)

L5: Yinciniba.

L1: Hayi, in English (No, say it in English).

R: It's an ostrich. And what else do you see, what is this?

L6: Butterfly.

R: Wow! Yes, it's a butterfly and what is this? The yellow....

L: (d)rass.

A: It's the yellow (d)rass (grass).

R: Right, by looking at the picture ucinga ukuba kuzoqhubeka ntoni kweli bali, what is going to happen, take a guess. You two keep quiet (meaning the two learners who had been attending the sessions for the past two days). Just take a guess usixelele ukuba kuzo qhubeka ntoni (You can take a guess and tell us what you think is going to happen).

L8: The child will take the fruits to her home.

R: Okay, okay limvile ubatheni? (Did you hear what she said?)

L9: Athi yi surprise (And she will say it's a surprise).

R: Okay uzazihambisa kwabo athi yi surprise (Okay you think she will take the fruit to her home and say it's a surprise?) Okay, good girl and good boy. Let's read and find out what is going to happen.

During the reading process, I made it a point that learners were also involved. I asked a different type of questions that required learners to respond to different cognitive demands. Following is an example of a discussion during the reading aloud activity.

R: How many fruits did she put?
All: Seven.
R: And what is her friend's name?
L1: (she quickly answered because she is hearing the story for the 3rd time) Aka... Akeyo.
       Later
R: What is happening on this page?
LI: Monkey take banana.
R: Gooood, the monkey took the banana from the basket, and u Handa uyayibona lonto? (Did Handa see all this?)
All: No.

As the story unfolded, I asked them the following questions.

R: What has happened to the orange?
L5: The zebra take the orange.
R: What has happened to the mango?
L2: The elephant takes the mangoe on the basket.
R: Is Handa seeing all this?
All: No.
R: What is she doing?
L3: Walking.
L9: The giraffe takes the pineapple on the basket.
R: How many fruit are in the basket now?
All: No fruit.
R: Yes, there is nothing in the basket now, zero!

As a rounding up activity, learners watched a video (see Appendix K). Informed by literature and to make this activity enjoyable and relaxing, learners were made to watch the video and no follow-up questions were asked by the researcher. Instead, learners were overheard

commenting about the video on how naughty the monkeys were. Learners enjoyed the video stories as they sat quietly and watched as evidenced in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Learners watching a video

In sum, the intervention of a reading club structure seemed appropriate, although I felt that an hour was not sufficient as the learners were left wanting more. I could not go beyond the time since, first, it had been agreed with the school and parents and, second, learners had to walk long distances to their homes with siblings who would have to wait for the participants.

5.3.6   Challenges faced in Cycle 2 of the intervention

There were a number of challenges faced during the initial stages of the intervention. First, absenteeism and irregular attendance in the first two weeks of the intervention made planning a challenge (see attendance register in Appendix L). It had an impact on the structure of each session as well as on continuity in terms of the activities. Put differently, each time attendance was poor, planned activities needed revision to take account of those who had not been in the previous session. The upshot was that the first few sessions included repetition, while I attempted to balance this with ensuring that the regular attendees did not become bored.

Second, the Grade 3 class teacher had committed to working alongside me in the intervention. However, she was regularly absent from school. The consequence was that I called on another willing teacher for assistance who then also wanted to include her learners in the intervention; something I was unable to do as part of the current intervention.

Third, I needed a more permanent venue if I was to succeed in creating a sustainable print-rich environment that supports reading in general and vocabulary development in particular. The venue was a challenge in that the Grade 3 classroom identified as the designated venue

was always locked. I was unable to display charts prepared permanently and had to resort to a session by session display.

Not having a more permanent venue also had implications for the nature of participation beyond group or paired work. I could not be intrusive, yet needed chalkboard space. However, the chalkboard usually included a teacher's previous work which I was told could not be erased (see Appendix G, picture 6a).

Finally, not having a fixed venue and the teacher's absenteeism also affected the pacing of the sessions. Much time was spent in trying to secure a venue for each session and time was also spent on settling learners in an unfamiliar learning environment each time. This resulted in many disturbances happening during our sessions as learners moved in and out of the classroom to get their belongings.

Having discussed and reflected on what worked and what did not work in the intervention and in the programme, I had to re-plan in preparation for the following cycle. As much of the leg-work was done, which was the establishment of the reading club and designing of an appropriate reading programme, the remaining five weeks of the intervention used Kemis & McTaggart (1988) model of progressive problem solving through action research (see Chapter 4, Fig 1). This makes the presentation clear and gives the reader a systematic insight into what data was gathered and how it was gathered, and how the weekly lessons developed informed by the previous week's findings.

5.4 Cycle 3

As indicated in Section 5.3.3, the first two week's sessions were structured differently to the remaining sessions. The first six sessions mainly focused on establishing the reading club. For these and for the remaining weeks, I made it a point to keep the schedule constant, while changing the tasks and activities. My field notes (16 October) suggest that learners did well with the predictable schedule. Each session included reading aloud to and by learners, working with words, watching of video stories, as well as individual or group tasks. Table 11 below indicates the basic structure of each week and the main activities covered in the reading club sessions.

Table 11: Lesson Components

Time	Component
5mins	Meet and greet and welcome between research and learners and amongst peers. An attendance register is marked.
10mins	Word play (aimed at vocabulary development)
10-15mins	Mini lesson: How to choose books for independent reading
10-15mins	Independent reading Introducing the use of reading logs
10mins	Reading aloud : Zanzibar Road
5-10mins	Discussion after reading a book
10mins	Video

5.4.1 Planning Cycle 3

Sustaining the Reading Club

The structure of the three reading sessions in this week was designed based on what the learners had been taught during the previous two weeks. As part of the previous sessions, learners were taught and made aware of the conventions of reading. To build on this, the learners were to be taught how to select appropriate books. I planned a trip to the school library. Arrangements were then made with the teacher in charge so that learners could practice choosing their own books. I also allowed learners to select books from those on loan from the university library. In this regard, every learner had a chance to view and choose the books for the weekly discussion as well as for silent reading.

To address the venue challenges encountered during Weeks 1 and 2, arrangements were made to use the school hall for the reading club. The hall is spacious with many chairs, a chalkboard and space to display charts and learners' work. Having a fixed venue greatly improved the stability of the reading club, thus enabling me to focus on the reading programme.

Learner Participation and Book Choice

This cycle's lessons were introduced in ways that encouraged participation. Regarding book choice, learners had different reasons for their choices. Some were based on books that siblings had read. For example one learner said that he chose books, *"[B]ecause my brother has it at home"* while another intimated that he liked the book because they *"once read it in class."*

Through discussions, I realised that some learners did not know what criteria to use to make book choice decisions. I subsequently planned time in Session 7 to address this issue.

Learners were advised to pay attention to the title, the author of the book, the front and the back cover of the book, as well as the pictures. They were also taught to consider the font of their story book and the number of the pages in the book. After this input, learners were asked to reflect on their choices and make decisions on whether they still wanted to continue reading the book they had chosen or whether they wanted to make a different choice of book. Following is an excerpt concerning book choice by learners. One said, *"I want to read another because it has a few pages, just eight, ma'am! ... My pages are only seven."* Another recognised that she would not be able to read the book because of its level of difficulty. She said, *"I can't read this one"* (clip 054:32, 23 October).

During this process, I noted that one learner struggled with reading and sat quietly with a book that I knew was not at his level. I proposed to this learner that he choose a book that contained bold print, many pictures, few pages and words.

5.4.2 Tasks in Cycle 3
Independent Reading
During the second session in this cycle (24 October), independent reading was introduced so that learners could further practice choosing their own books. Unlike in the previous session, learners competed for the same books. I also noted that they took more time in selecting books, practising the strategies that they were taught on how to choose a book (clip 057:25:13, 24 October).

Learners with reading difficulties and those who had chosen books not at their level were assisted and guided on making better choices. Suggestions were made for them to either choose an easier or less challenging book, depending on the learner's reading ability. Once levels were matched with reading age, all learners seemed engrossed in independent reading. Those not at the stage of reading independently sat quietly looking through the pictures (clip 057:30: 13, 24 October and Appendix G, picture 16).

After teaching learners to choose their own books for reading, the second session in this cycle was used to teach learners to monitor their own reading. They were each given a reading log hand-out and advised to enter anything they read either at home or at school (see Appendix M). This aspect of the programme was important as it served both as a tool for intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Learners seemed fully engrossed in the task as I noticed how they

immediately wanted to fill in their reading logs. See Appendix M1 for examples of learners' reading logs.

Reading Aloud and Vocabulary Development

A new book titled *Zanzibar Road* was introduced during this week. This book was deemed appropriate for the leaners as they could identify themselves with the story line. The story is set in a township location and this made discussions around the book interesting as learners were familiar with a setting such as that described in the book.

As a strategy to develop learners' vocabulary, flash cards were prepared with words that I thought would hinder comprehension of the book read for the week. Before reading aloud, discussions were held around the words. I provided brief explanation of the English words using their L1, so that they could understand them. Learners were asked to provide an equivalent isiXhosa word for each English word which was later written at the back of each flash card. This activity was done with all the learners (see Appendix G, Picture 16).

Watching a Video

As was the norm in the reading club and to conclude each session, learners watched a short story (see Appendix K). The learners seemed to enjoy the story as they all looked engrossed, all watching quietly. Brief discussions were held around each five-minute long video story. Learners were asked to highlight the main points. They were asked questions about each character as well as what they liked or disliked in the story and the reasons why. To support vocabulary development the video stories were narrated in isiXhosa with English subtitles provided.

5.4.3   Reflections on Cycle 3

For this week, the data were collected mainly from the video clips, informal conversations with learners, personal observations, and the attendance register. The following findings emerged that shaped decisions in planning Cycle 4.

Attendance in the Reading Club

Absenteeism gradually decreased as indicated by the attendance register (See Appendix L). I concluded that if learners were not enjoying the reading club sessions, the daily attendance would not been as consistent and as good as evidenced. Three learners who attended all the sessions were asked about their views on the reading club. They confirmed that they enjoyed participating in the reading club and would not like to miss any sessions. One learner said, *"I like the reading club, which is the reason why I don't miss school"* while another learner said, *"I like attending the reading club and wish it was done every day."* The reading club seemed to serve the purpose of motivating learners to also attend school more regularly.

Teacher and Learner Participation

Unlike in the previous weeks, the class teacher attended all three sessions in this week. Her presence was an advantage in that she assisted with classroom management, controlled the noise happening outside the venue, and also provided learners with clues and translation each time a question was asked. However, I noted that her presence intimidated some learners as they were not as free as I had noticed during the previous sessions. She moved around the classroom carrying a stick and shouted at the learners when they failed to give a correct answer. The environment she created seemed counter-productive to the one already established in the first cycle of the reading club. I had worked hard to establish an informal learning space where learners felt free to make mistakes, learn with and from each other, as well as talk when necessary; unlike expectations during the formal school day. This was a sensitive issue to manage. I had a brief meeting with her where we agreed that she would attend occasionally and that she would make the classroom accessible even when she was absent from school. Her response to this was, *"If that's what you want it's fine by me. I will go and sit in the staffroom when your sessions begin and wait for you to call me when you need me. And about the keys… learner X knows where I stay, he can come every day to pick and drop them at my house."*

The teacher showed interest in the reading club by using her normal teaching time to prepare for the reading club sessions. She taught her learners a welcoming song which they sang specifically for me in English. In the songs they mentioned how they admired me, my clothes and they even included my assistant's name in the song (clip 057:01-02, 23 &24 October). I found this important for vocabulary development as the learners sang and demonstrated what was meant by the song using gestures and facial expression. This made every learner

understand what they were singing about. The teacher seemed to gain better insight into the value of an informal space that is fun, yet at the same time promotes vocabulary learning.

Unlike in the previous weeks where time was spent on securing a venue and settling down, the teacher's presence made Cycle 3 run smoothly. We had access to the learners' classroom and each time we arrived at the school, we found learners already sitting and waiting for the reading club to commence (clip 059:1-3, 22 October).

However, I was uncomfortable with the way in which the teacher grouped the learners (24 October 2012). She made those who could read sit separate to those who could not read. She had also placed the more competent readers in the front of the class and the less competent at the rear of the class. In seeing this, I rearranged the seating plan to accommodate a mixed group arrangement (clip 057:16). I did this to avoid the conventional set up of traditional classrooms. I was also informed by literature that reading clubs are meant to be a social space, not a replica of the traditional classroom and that many learners learn well in this unconventional environment.

Group work was also encouraged; as I noted during my initial classroom observations, the teacher did not make use of it. Learners worked independently in many of the tasks that were done in class. To emphasise the concept of group work, I introduced a quiz game where learners were put in two groups. I prepared flash cards of words that we had encountered and discussed in the previous weeks. Group A would show Group B a card, and Group B would work collaboratively and choose one member of the group to read the word and also say it in their L1. If a group was chaotic, they forfeited a point (clip 057:25:16, 24 October 2012). I found this activity beneficial as all the learners were respected and given a chance to be heard.

Learner Progress
Learner progress also became apparent as learners began to engage in the writing and reading processes in their normal classroom as pointed out by their teacher. In an informal discussion she said, "[*W]hat I have noted now is that each time I ask for a volunteer to read in class, it's no longer leaner X and Y lifting up their hands, everyone wants to read and write on the chalkboard.*"

Learner confidence also seemed to improve. The teacher brought to my attention that she was surprised at how one of the learners that she regarded as being '*dom*' (stupid) who had been consistent in participating in the reading club, was said to have improved in the way he participated in class. She said, *"[T]he reading club is probably more valuable than what I've been doing with him all year. You really know what you are doing."*

I noticed that even though a number of learners choose their own books, the number who participated was small. Although they were able to advice and guide each other on their book choices based on their knowledge of each other's strengths and weaknesses, some still struggled to choose their own books. As a result, I delayed the planned trip to the school library. Overall, about eight learners out of the 20 that were present on this day grasped the concept that included scrutiny of the front and the back cover of the book, doing a picture walk and also attempting to read the book before settling for it. I noted though, that a number of learners still needed guidance on this activity.

In teaching learners how to choose books, I introduced the word author to them and the importance of knowing the author of each book they read. I noticed that learners struggled with the *"th"* sound. Some pronounced the word as '*order*', while others said '*otta*'. For about three minutes learners attempted to say the word correctly until their teacher advised them to '*bite their tongue*' which she said in isiXhosa *"Luma ulwini"*. I dedicated time in the next session to teach learners phonetic sounds (see Picture 6b Appendix G).

Independent reading that was introduced during the second session of the third week was not successful. Through watching the video at the end of the session, I noted that some learners asked each other as well as the research assistant about the words that they did not know (clip 058:4, 24 October 2012). Some learners were not reading but browsed through the pictures. When it was time to give feedback on what they read, only one learner managed to share the story that she had read. This was indication that at this stage, learners could not read independently. I had to find ways to support learners to begin to engage meaningfully with text.

The teacher's presence at school made the week productive. The issue of the venue was solved temporarily as we had access to the Grade 3 classroom. Initially this week I had planned that the reading club would be held in the school hall. However, I learnt that the hall

was not secure as it did not lock and that there were no door handles and keys. This meant that if we held our sessions in the hall, I was not going to be able to leave any chats displayed on the walls.

I selected five learners randomly to reflect on the week pointing out what they liked including the activities that were meaningful or meaningless to them. Taking turns, the first learner said *"I liked the activity of choosing books"* while the second learner said *"I liked watching the DVD"*. The third and fourth learner shared the same sentiments about the book read aloud. They both liked it, and finally one learner simple said, *"I liked you."* It seems, therefore, that the facilitator and how she treated learners was integrally linked to learners' motivation and participation. Also to show that learners were motivated, they attempted to read for me and tried to use English each time they spoke to me. At times I had to remind them *"I also want to learn to speak in isiXhosa, please let's also use isiXhosa"* and they would giggle at the comment.

Vocabulary was developed in many ways during this week. Informed by literature, reading aloud to children on its own has much influence on vocabulary development. The activities that accompany reading aloud also improve vocabulary. As mentioned I prepared flash cards of 'new' words and discussions were held before reading. This made the story easy to comprehend. The quiz game was also part of vocabulary development. Learners read and discussed words that they had accumulated in the past week. In some instances, they were asked to make simple sentences using the word to see if they really understood the word.

Finally the teacher acknowledged the way the sessions were structured and that I *'knew'* what I was doing. She noticed learner enthusiasm as an indication of the success of the reading club. She also pointed out that learners were more eager to '*show off*' their English skills and attempted to speak unsolicited.

5.5   Cycle 4

As planning of each subsequent cycle was informed by the findings and observations of the previous cycle, for this cycle, the next three sessions were structured as shown in Table 12 below.

Table 12: Lesson Components

Time	Components
10mins	Meet, greet and welcome. An attendance register is marked.
5mins	A warm up activity done as well as an "ice breaker"
10-15mins	Word play an vocabulary development
15-20mins	Sequencing pictures and re-telling the story. Writing the story and drawing a picture
15- 20mins	A visit to the library
10mins	Read aloud
5mins	Discussion about the book
5minutes	Watching of the video

5.5.1 Planning Cycle 4

As a variation to the basic lesson plan described in Cycle 3, picture sequencing was substituted as a way to support independent reading after the realisation that most learners could not read in English and thus struggled with the notion. Many were able to interpret pictures. As a result, I developed picture sequences tasks that would enhance interpretation, develop learners' vocabulary as well as take away the anxiety of trying to read unfamiliar words. Pictures stories in their simplest form are a useful tool for developing children's expressive language and implicitly, support vocabulary development (see Appendix N).

To build learners vocabulary in a relaxed manner, a warm up activity was done as an 'ice breaker'. Icebreakers are structured activities that are designed to relax learners, introduce them to each other, and energise them in what is normally an unduly formal atmosphere or situation. Icebreakers are not normally related to the subject matter. However, in this case, the ice breaker was related to the subject matter; namely vocabulary development. Ice breakers often help to break up the cliques and invite people to form random groupings in a non-threatening and fun way. During this week, learners were taught an English game called 'Bank/ River' which was new to them. First discussions were held around the two words.

> R: What is a bank (yintoni ibank
> L1: Kulapho okuhlala khona imali (it's a place where money is kept)
> L2: kulapho esithatha khona imali (it's a place where we take money)
> R: Yes both of you are correct, but there is another meaning of the word bank, who can tell me?

I asked them the meanings of the word. They also gave an equivalent isiXhosa word for each i.e. bank *(enyeleni)* and river *(emlanjeni)* (clip 054:00-04, 29 October). Learners were then given instructions on how to play the game.

Thereafter, I selected high frequency words that fall within Level 1 and 2 as discussed in Chapter 2. These words usually assist learners to read simple text. I chose this band of words

because I noted in the previous session that some learners were unable to read such words. I elaborate on the actual tasks in the section below.

During this week, arrangements to visit the school library were confirmed. In preparation of this visit, the teacher organised a few learners to clean and tidy the library. The books were still packed in an unsystematic order like it was during my initially visit. Although the books were piled on top of each other and made accessible to the learners, I could not help with arranging the books in a systematic order as I am also not well informed on the systems used in the library. However, to make sure learners were exposed to how a library works, I described to them the state of an ideal library. I encouraged them to visit their local library which is functional and see how library works. The aim of this visit was for learners to put into practice what they had been taught in the previous week, which is choosing books for reading. This was also to afford other learners an opportunity to visit the library for the first time and take out books home.

Reading aloud remained as an important activity on the programme. Difficult words were extracted from the book and flash cards were made in preparation for vocabulary learning during pre-reading.

Since a lot of activities were lined up for this week, the activity of video watching was cancelled as we ran out of time.

5.5.2 Tasks in Cycle 4

Word Play for Vocabulary Development

For the first word task planned for this week, three charts were prepared for the lesson and in each; a word was written that learners would be familiar with. Learners were put into three mixed groups. Each group was instructed to write all the English words that they associated with the word on the chart. This activity encouraged collaborative work as well as peer learning (clip 001:03:35, 31 October 2012) and (Appendix G, Picture 7a). Figure 11 below shows the responses by two groups of the three.

Figure 10: Group presentations

As a motivation strategy, the second word activity was with the high frequency words (Levels 1 and 2) which were introduced during the session in the form of a game. The rules of the game were that I would flash a card with each word and learners would take turns to read. The learner who read the word card correctly, kept the card. The learner with the most cards at the end of the game was the winner. This game became competitive in that everyone in class participated and attempted to read the flash cards. This game became a challenge to those who did not get the word correct as evidenced when a learner said, *"Ma'am may I borrow your flash cards to read at home and prepare for the next activity"* and another said, *"[N]ext time I will be alert, I knew most of the words but it took me time to recognise them."*

Library Visit

The arrangements made with the teacher in charge to visit the library were successful. Learners had an opportunity to not only visit the school library but also practise what they were taught about making book choices. Learners became very excited once in the library, browsing all the books they could get their hands on. Learners were finally given an opportunity to choose and take home books they liked (Appendix G, Picture11).

Reading Aloud

Reflecting on my practice through video analysis of the previous recorded sessions in Cycle 3, I noted that not enough pre-reading activities were done before reading aloud. Learners were not involved in the discussion around the book and I did not build on the learners' existing knowledge and experiences so that they could better engage and make meaning of the story. In an effort to improve my practice before introducing the story of the week (*The*

bride who had nothing) learners were asked to talk about their knowledge of weddings. The class discussed the proceedings before and during the wedding, the type of food and the type of music played and songs sung. As part of this process, learners were asked to sing a song that they usually sing at weddings. Learners eagerly participated in this activity as they sang and danced (clip 65: 9, 29 October).

During this discussion words like *bride, wedding, necklace* and *beads* came up, all of which they were going to encounter again when reading aloud. Flash cards of words that I thought would hinder comprehension were also prepared and discussed before reading (intended vocabulary learning). As a strategy of vocabulary learning, learners were first asked to read the words in English then translate them to isiXhosa. This activity prepared learners for the actual reading of the story book. These words were *chief, daughter, husband, clay, beads, baskets, stayed, journey* (Appendix G, Picture 14).

Sequencing Activity

As evidenced from the previous session, learners could not read independently. Consequently, to replace independent reading, picture sequencing was introduced during this week. Learners were put in pairs and each pair was given three picture cards. Learners were instructed to arrange a series of picture cards into the logical order to create a story from beginning to end. Thereafter learners wrote short sentences describing what was happening in each picture card (see Appendix N). At the end they managed to come up with a simple story based on their interpretations of all the pictures. I collected their work sheets for a later analysis as we had ran out of time for each group to report back to the whole class. This was to be done in one of the sessions for next week (Appendix G, Picture 8).

5.5.3   Reflections on Cycle 4

Learner Participation and Taking Ownership of their Learning

Through observation I noted that learners began to take ownership of their learning. During the word game activity done on 30 October 2012, each group compiled their own chart but we could not find space on the walls to display them. However, by the end of the week all the three charts were displayed on the wall. Each group took it upon themselves in their spare time to find space on the walls to stick up their own work. This, plus the fact that each group was pleased to show me where they had stuck their charts, indicated that they were proud of their charts (Appendix G, Picture 7).

For another activity that was also aimed at developing learners' vocabulary, a chart was made with the word 'Alphabet' written out. Learners were encouraged to think of English words that they could generate using the letters in that word. Although at first learners found the task challenging, with some writing words like *apple, ale, abe* and some learners writing isiXhosa words like *alala, bhala*, one learner wrote /*bhat*/ meaning /*but*/ (clip 006:15:33,29 October). At the end of the activity learners managed to generate the following words: *ape, bat, bet, tap, let, the, pat, be, help, table, and eat)*. I was very impressed with some words that the learners generated *(ape, table, help*) as this was an indication learners do possess a bit of English vocabulary and that they had understood the rules of the game and had to think hard (clip 006:09:44,29 October; and See Appendix G, picture 7). Each word that was written down was explained and translated into their home language as this is part of vocabulary learning strategy.

During this activity I noted that learners were attentive and participated well. An example was when a learner wanted to write the word /*tap*/ and other learners quickly told him "*usebhaliwe" (it's already written)* (clip 006:26:33, 29 October). It was also interesting to note learners correcting each other. For example, when a learner wrote the word /*pig*/ on the chalkboard and other learners corrected him by pointing out that the letter /*g*/ is not there in the word /*alphabet*/. Another learner wanted to write /*gate*/ and was also told "*akekho u /g/ lapha"* (*There is no /g/ here)* (clip 006:26:44)

> **R:** *Uright? (Is she correct?)*
> **All:** *No.*
> **R:** *Why?*
> **L1:** *U /i/ akekho no /g/ (There is no /g/ here) (clip 006:24:00)*
> **R:** *Uright u /apple/? (Is apple correct?)*
> **All:** *No.*
> **R:** *Why?*
> **L2:** *o /p/ ababubini (There are no two Ps there (clip 006:24:29)*
> **R:** *Let's speak in English, u bini yintoni (what is -bini-in English?) Is that word correct?*
> **L3:** *No.*
> **R:** *Why?*
> **L4:** *2 /ps/ (clip 006:24:35) the learner attempted to write another word /pop/ but he was told "akekho omnye u /p/" (There is no another P there)*

At the end of the activity learners were assigned to go home and make more words different from the ones done as a class. They were given the choice to either continue creating more words from the word /*alphabet*/ or to think of other words. To make this word formation game more fun, for some learners a suggestion was made that they could use their own names to come up with different English words. An example was with the learner called *Sivenathi*

who seemed to have enjoyed the initial game, with his name he managed to generate words like *sit, van, at, the, eat, it, net, ten, tin, visit, vet, in, neat, this, is, set, seat, tea.*

The Impact of School Management on the Reading Club Sessions

The teacher's absence from school affected the pacing of the sessions. A typical example was on 1 November 2012 when the session lasted 1 hour 45 minutes although the sessions were designed to be one hour long. This was because learners were delayed in preparing and setting up for the reading club session. On arrival at the school they were still sweeping and the desks were not well arranged. Once settled down there were disruptions as the learners had to have their meal for the day. The session was interrupted as we had to stop all the activities until all the learners finished eating before we resumed with teaching and learning. This process took long as some learners moved in and out asking for cutlery from friends in other classes; the time taken in eating was 20 minutes.

Participation in the Reading Club

As evidenced by the video clips learners were so excited to visit the school library for the first time and, to some, the idea of being inside the administration building for the first time as well was an additional benefit. During the initial interviews many learners indicated they had never been to the school library, with only one indicating that he had been into the school library once when he assisted a teacher with carrying books (clip 013:01:28, 29 October). Few learners indicated they had been to the local library with friends to read or to do their homework (clip 013:01:10, 29 October) on a few occasions.

As a sign that the trip to the library made an impact to other teachers and learners at the school as well, I was approached by other teachers asking why I only focused on Grade 3 learners as they also wanted their learners to be part of the reading club experiences as they were missing out. One teacher said, *"Anna, why do you leave out our Grade 1s? We also want them to be part of this; they can benefit a lot from this."*

A Grade 1 learner decided to take part in the reading club session to the extent of leaving her classroom and abandoning her classroom activities once the reading club session began. I allowed her to participate not aware of this situation. Her class teacher followed her in one of the sessions and was shocked to see that she participates as equally as the Grade 3s during the reading club session yet in her class she was a quiet girl (clip 019:2:08, 31 October) The

teacher exclaimed, *"Heh! One wouldn't tell that X is in Grade 1 when she is here. She is the opposite of what she is in the classroom."*

Use of the Target Language

Through observation, I noted that, during the fourth week, learners began to attempt to use English voluntarily. They could hold conversations amongst themselves and seemed more confident with responding in English. For example, after the reading aloud activity, learners were asked to retell the story. Following is an extract that depicts learners responding in fuller sentences:

Learner 1

> **R:** *We see the bride and the baby sleeping and what are the strong men doing?*
> **SL:** *Take the basket and clay pot.*
> **R:** *Good, so they stole the blankets on the first night (clip 013:21:32 29 October)*

Learner 2

> **R:** *Here we see the two strong men doing what?*
> **L1:** *Running (clip 013: 25:29 29 October)*
> **L2:** *The bride is sleeping and the baby, two strong men steal a blanket and running away.*
> **R:** *Good, while the bride and the baby were sleeping, the two strong men stole a blanket and they ran away (clip 013:26:48 29 October)*

Another incident in which the learner demonstrated the use of English was at the library. A learner showed interest in a book written in Afrikaans. We had a brief discussion around his book interest (clip 013:07:19 *29 October*)

> **R:** *You can't read Afrikaans my dear, can you read Afrikaans?*
> **L***: I'm trying to read it.*
> **R***: You are trying?*
> **L***: Yes.*
> **R***: Did you learn Afrikaans at school?*
> **L***: No, but I'm trying.*
> **R***: See ... (Showing the learner some words in the book) it's difficult!*

As a norm at the end of each reading club session, learners who had attended the reading club session were provided with refreshments. The refreshment was either a fruit or snacks and usually there were a few extras for those learners who had not attended. I capitalised on those extras and used them as an incentive which is one of the strategies for motivation. Following

is an interesting extract why learners felt they deserved to be given the extra refreshment pack (clip 065:1:26 29 October)

> **R:** *Who do we give the extras today? Uzungixelele why kufuneka ndikunikeze (give me a reason why I should give you.)*
>
> **L1:** *I'm coming to school tomorrow.*
>
> **L2:** *Ngithethile (I spoke in class).*
>
> **L3:** *Ndibaxelele ngestory sebride (I told them the story about the bride).*
>
> **L4:** *Yes ma'am, because I didn't jump on desk.*

Learner Motivation and Reading Club Attendance

Finally, the last thing that stood out for me during the fourth week into the intervention was learner attendance. The weather had been unpleasant; it was cold and raining heavily but, to my surprise, only two learners were absent from school. The principal and class teacher described how, when it rained, the overall attendance of learners and teachers at the school is poor. Although the teacher was absent from school, learners were present. Despite the teacher being absent, learners organised themselves in preparation for the reading club session.

Learners' love for the reading club seemed to increase as the weeks went by. Learner interest manifested in the manner in which I was greeted, their enthusiasm in wanting to participate and in their attempt to use English even when the grammar was incorrect.

Learner Progress

Learner progress was noticeable in a number of ways. First, they seemed to have incorporated what they had learnt about choosing books into their daily practices. For example, while assisting three learners at the library with choosing books, I noted that at least eight were able to choose books on their own. Some even assisted peers. They seemed measured in their approach to the choice of book, putting into practice what they had learnt about the title, front and back covers, cues such as pictures, as well as reviewing the text. They could now read the title of the book, do a picture walk before settling for the book. However, I was not surprised when most learners said they could not find any interesting books from the library and were not taking any books out. Only seven of 18 learners took out books from the library. This validated the initial findings from *Cycle 1* where I noted that most of the books that are in the library are not at the learners' reading level. Learners preferred to take out books from those brought specifically for the reading club.

On reflection, learners still struggled with retelling stories even though a few had made an effort. This observation informed decisions in the next cycle that I detail later on.

Learner Reflections

In concluding the week's sessions, learners were asked to reflect on the week, which included the following (clip 013:30:48 31 October):

> **L:** *I enjoy reading.*
> **R:** *Good, you enjoyed reading, which book did you enjoy reading? (uthande ukufunda iphi incwadi?)*
> **L:** *Zanzibar road.*
> **L2:** *Ndithande ukufunda incwadi, I like it read books Long trousers, Zanzibar Road and Look at me.*
> **L3:** *I enjoyed the Zanzibar Road and this one and The three little pigs.*
> **L4:** *I enjoy the laptop.*
> **R:** *Good girl, you enjoyed watching stories from the laptop.*

Learner evaluations and feedback on each session helped me in planning the next cycle. I made it a point that the activity they indicated they liked most would form part of the structure of the ensuing sessions. The tasks that were not done well or what learners failed to understand was to be repeated with improved learning strategies.

Finally, l learnt that during reading club sessions it is important to keep learners updated on what is happening around them, be it locally in their communities or nationwide. During this week learners were made aware of the Children's Day (*Imini Yabantwana*), which was on Saturday 3 November. In celebration of this day, learners sang children's songs and danced. Discussions were held around its meaning and made them feel special and appreciated as children.

5.6   Cycle 5

Only two sessions were held during this cycle due to all Foundation Phase learners attending sporting activities at the local stadium. The sessions for this week were designed to enhance vocabulary learning and improve learners' writing skills. This was informed by the learners' performance in the picture sequencing activity which was done in the previous week.

Table 13: Lesson Components

Time	Components
10mins	Talking: During this time learners and the researcher meet and greet and welcome each other. An attendance register is marked.
5mins	A warm-up activity done as well as an "ice breaker" (Mary had a little lamb).
10-15mins	Word play (choose the odd one out).
15-20mins	Mini lesson on writing.
15-20mins	Talking about the pictures, Sequencing pictures and re-telling the story, Writing the story and drawing a picture.
10mins	Read aloud.
5mins	Discussion about the book.
Cancelled	Watching of the video.

5.6.1 Planning Cycle 5

After doing an analysis of the learners' written work I came to a conclusion that much practice was needed to improve their writing skills while at the same time develop vocabulary. To improve learners' vocabulary, a nursery rhyme was introduced as another strategy for vocabulary learning. Another activity that was introduced was the word game, which was also designed to develop learners' vocabulary.

Another way to improve learners' vocabulary was that, during this week, I planned on reducing the use isiXhosa during the sessions. Also noted during the previous reading club session and during informal conversations, learners demonstrated enjoying learning and speaking in English.

Finally, reading aloud was also planned for this week's session. These periods included discussions on the main themes in the book. Learners were also given opportunities to report back on the books they had taken out from the library.

5.6.2 Tasks in Cycle 5

Ice Breaker (translation game)

Informed by literature such as Nation (2009) that vocabulary can be learned directly or incidentally, I introduced a ring game which aimed at developing learners' vocabulary as an ice breaker. In a circle/ring, the first learner would say an English word and the following one would say it in isiXhosa. A learner who could not say a word either in English or isiXhosa was sent out of the game. I found this type of game helpful in that learners would remember words encountered in the previous sessions and it was a sign that they had accumulated a few

words. An example of this game one learner would say *Journey* then the next one would say *uhambo.*

Free Writing Tasks

Informed by the analysis of the learner's worksheets on the picture sequencing activity that was done in one of the previous sessions, I noted that attention was needed for improving learners' writing. Learners were first taught the conventions of writing that would help them to construct a basic sentence (clip 028:00, 5 November). This process included teaching them punctuation, capitalisation, and other conventions. This was due to my observations that learners started sentences with a small letter and did not use any punctuation.

Sequencing

I found that shared writing, where learners discussed and agreed on what to write was the perfect time to model the use of print conventions, which learners can then put into practice during their independent writing time. Therefore, I used the same activity for the writing task in picture sequencing. Learners were also taught the importance of reading their written work before submitting, to encourage self-correction.

Vocabulary Development

In preparation for the nursery rhyme activity, copies of the rhyme were printed for each learner and the rhyme was downloaded to the laptop to assist learners in the class discussion. A discussion was first held around the title of the song, which involved translating the title to learners' home language. I had to reinforce pronunciation and enunciation (clip 027:03:52 5 November).

The focus for this week was to only discuss and teach learners the first stanza of the rhyme. Therefore, words that would hinder understanding of the rhyme were extracted from the song and discussed (clip 027:17:35, 5 November; Appendix G, Picture 13).

In addition, I developed a word game, '*choose the odd one out'*. In preparation*,* I developed a chart with six groups of words. Learners were instructed to choose the word that did not match or fit as indicated in Table 14 below.

Table 14: Choose the odd one out activity

List of words
1. Bus, Train, Car, Aeroplane
2. Brother, Mother, Friend, Daughter
3. Summer, Winter, Spring, March
4. Orange, Guava, Pineapple, Monkey
5. Sunday, July, Monday, Tuesday

Reading Aloud

Reading aloud took the same form as in previous weeks. I also noted that using Big Books during shared reading and read aloud facilitates discussion of print conventions since the text is visible to all. I found it easy to pause and quickly discuss a punctuation mark or other text convention without disrupting the flow of the reading.

Video

During this session, learners did not get an opportunity to watch the video as we ran out of time to complete this task.

5.6.3   Reflection on Cycle 5

Learner Participation and Taking Ownership of their Learning

During the translation game which was a warm-up activity, I noted an improvement in the words that were being mentioned during the game. Learners began to use words that they had learnt in previous sessions and also began to imitate special language derived from books. It was interesting to see learners regarded by the teacher as 'dom' (stupid) challenging other learners with words like *admired, sewed* and *hammered;* words learnt from the previous session. Learners took charge of the game and, without my assistance, were able to play the game as the following excerpt shows (clip 022: 02: 57 5 November).

> **L1:** *Girl*
>
> **L2:** *(silent)*
>
> **L3:** *Yintoni i girl nge siXhosa*
>
> **Silence**
>
> **AL:** *Phuma, you are out*
>
> **Later**
>
> **L4:** *hen*
>
> **L5:** *ingalo (thinking she said hand)*
>
> **L6:** *phuma, yinkukhu*
>
> **L4:** *But she said hand*
>
> **AL:** *no, out, she said hen*

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L7: *cave (directing to L9)*

L8: *(not directed to her) wuuuu wayesxelele umaam Sivenathi (The teacher told us Sivenathi, don't tell me you have forgotten?)*

L9: *I have forgotten*

The word activity that was planned was introduced after the translation game. Learners were first asked to define what was meant by 'choose the odd one out' and what they thought the activity required them to do in isiXhosa. Their attempts were as follows (clip: 022: 12: 52, 5 November):

R: *Choose the odd one out*

L: *Khetha into ozoyiorder*

L: *Khetha into eyi one ozayi order ngaphandle*

After explaining what was required of them, learners were asked to read the words displayed on the chart. In the process words were also translated into their first language. Table 15 below shows learners' responses to the task.

Table 15: Learners' responses to the task

Sentences	Learners' Responses
1. Bus, Train, Car, Aeroplane (With this one it was interesting how they read out the word aeroplane (oroplane). With this set of words it was also interesting to see how far the learners can think (clip 022:15:08).	**L**: *The odd one is train* **R:** *Why?* **L:** *Because u /i/ akekho lapha (meaning it's the only word from the list with /i/.)*
2. Brother, Mother, Friend, Daughter	**R:** *Which one do you think is the odd one out?* **L:** *Friend* **R:** *Good boy and girls, Why usithi friend (Why are you saying it 'sfriend?)* **L1:** *ichommie azifuneki kwi family (friends are not allowed in the family)* **L2:** *ichomie asiyo family (a friend is not part of the family) (clip 022:18:08).*
3. Summer, Winter, Spring, March	**R**: *Which one is the odd one out here?* **Al:** *March.* **R**: *Your hand up!* **L:** *March.* **R:** *Why?* **L1:** *Ayifuneki kunto ze................ (It's not allowed in the things of.....)* **L2:** *Season!* **R:** *Good girl.*
4. Orange, Guava, Pineapple, Monkey	**R:** *Which is the odd one out?* **L:** *is a monkey.* **R:** *Why are we saying it's a monkey?* **L:** *is not a fruit.* **R:** *Good, what is a monkey?* **Ls:** *is an animal.*
5. Sunday, July, Monday, Tuesday	**L:** *July* **R:** *Good. I want someone to tell me why July?* **L1**: *Is not a month.* **L2**: *Week.* **R:** *What is July?* **L:** *Month.* **R:** *Here we have days of the week.*

Writing

The picture sequencing activity was done in pairs. As planned, learners were to first arrange a series of picture cards into a logical order to create the story from beginning to end. Thereafter, they wrote a sentence in English below each picture describing what was happening in the picture. I found this activity to be of value to learners as some pictures encountered in the process exposed them to activities they have never done before. Learners also learnt new words in the process of formulating their own sentences. They asked for my assistance in translating their interpretations of the picture from their first language to English Some learners also asked for assistance from the research assistant (clip 022:36:28, 5 November).

From observations, I felt that learners still needed to be given more opportunities and repeated exposure to the words that they had learnt so far so that these could become part of their everyday language. While evaluating the picture sequencing worksheet, I gathered that learners struggled with spelling English words. I noted that at times their first language influenced the way they spelt and pronounced some words (Appendix N). I noted that the picture sequencing activity familiarised learners with constructing a basic sentence although they lacked creativity and imagination with writing their own story sentences. This was an indication that this activity should be repeated in the ensuing session.

Learner Attendance

Learner attendance in school improved and remained consistent despite the teacher's absenteeism (Appendix L, Week 5). The teacher's absenteeism exacerbated the issue of maintaining stability with regard to a venue. Lack of stability meant that I did not always have access to a chalkboard and that I could not display charts on the wall and leave them as reference for other sessions.

Learner Progress

It is interesting to note how learners gradually began taking ownership of their learning. An interesting highlight was that during a session in the previous week (Thursday, 1 November) learners were given work to do at home. Learners were tasked to continue with the activity of making up words from a selected long word, as in the activity we did in class where the word *'Alphabet'* was used. One learner demonstrated his creativity by using the title of a book he had read to come up with his list of words. The title of the book was *Zanzibar Road* (see

Appendix K). However, five learners expressed that the task was a challenge to them and they decided to use the same word used in the previous session.

I felt this activity of making up words was also a good strategy of learning the vocabulary and owning it as repeated exposure to new words improves vocabulary. It was also interesting to learn that some parents got involved in this task. One learner was excited to show me from her word list a word that was written with her mother's assistance. She narrated, *"All these words I wrote by self only this one my mum helped me."*

Retelling Stories

Learners were asked to report back on the books that they had either borrowed from the school library during our library visit or taken out from the reading club. Learners had difficulties with retelling stories and those who attempted to do so struggled to summarise. What I noticed was that learners were able to retell the story using their home language. They also retold the story page by page. Some indicated that they did not get time read at home. This prompted me to also give attention to this issue in the next coming sessions by introducing the '*Somebody-Wanted-But-So'* strategy (MacOn, Bewell & Vogt, 1991), which is used during or after reading to help learners understand literary elements such as conflicts and resolutions and it is also a great technique of summarising. Table 16 below illustrates the way to use prompts to support learners.

Table 16: Retelling strategy

Somebody	Wanted	But	So
The big bad wolf	Pigs for dinner	They hid in the brick	He went hungry

5.7   Cycle 6

In recognition of the fact that there were only six sessions left before the end of the intervention, I felt it was important to revisit the transcriptions of the previous sessions and analyse them carefully to enable planning for the sessions for this week. During analysis I looked for issues and areas that needed more attention and issues that I had not yet followed up. I was guided by McNiff's (2002) view that action researchers must be careful of not losing focus from what they had initially planned to do as many other issues arise during the research process. The session and activities were structured as shown in Table 17 below.

Table 17: Lesson Components

Time	Components
10mins	Talking: During this time learners and the researcher meet and greet and welcome each other. An attendance register is marked. A warm-up activity is done as well as an "ice breaker".
10-15mins	Word play (word list)
15-20mins	Mini lesson on phonics
15-20mins	Talking about the pictures, Sequencing pictures and re-telling the story, writing the story and drawing a picture.
10mins	Read aloud
5mins	Discussion about the book
5mins	Watching of the video

5.7.1 Planning

Informed by the findings from the previous week where I noted that many learners still struggled with certain letter sounds, a phonemic list was introduced this week. During our discussions on the Big Book, certain words were discussed. I noted that learners struggled with sounds like 'st', 'dr', 'th', 'gr', 'ng', and 'th' and planned to assist learners in knowing the sounds through developing a phonetic game.

A word list that included Level 1 and 2 words was also re-introduced. This decision was informed by the previous findings where I established that learners could not read independently. Many learners struggled with reading the simple high frequency words as they kept on consulting with the research assistant and their peers. Their inability to read the simple high frequency words is also evident in findings from the reading assessment test.

Reading aloud was also planned. Reading aloud also helped with the introduction of the '*Somebody-Wanted-But-So*' strategy which is a good strategy for teaching learners how to summarise and retell a story as, noted previously, learners struggled with comprehension and sequencing the events. I continued to encourage the use of English where necessary during the sessions as most learners are enjoyed learning and speaking in English.

5.7.2 Tasks in Cycle 6

Phonics List

As planned, a phonetic list was introduced as an educational word game. For the first session a chart was prepared with only two phonemic sounds. In the following session, a chart was prepared with two more sounds (clip 036: 0: 12 12 November). During this activity learners were instructed to think of any English words that started with each of the sounds displayed on the two charts respectively. Learners took turns to write words on the chart. I made the mistake of imagining that learners could identify the sound and write a word. The result was that some learners found the activity confusing (clip 01:16:07, 12 November) (Appendix G, Picture 6).

Word List as a Vocabulary Developing Activity

To make the reading club sessions interesting and less like a typical classroom, a word list was introduced. Learners read the word cards as sight words. This was done in a form of a game as learners took turns in reading the sight words and each learner kept the card they had read correctly. At the end of the game, the learner with the most cards became the winner. In the process, difficult words encountered were explained and sentences were made using the word so that learners understood the meaning of the word in context. To make the word game more meaningful, words accumulated from previous sessions were also included as repeated exposure to words is encouraged for vocabulary development (Nation, 2006).

Picture Sequencing

The picture sequencing activity done in the previous cycle proved a success and was thus repeated. Since learners understood the conventions of writing and were able to construct simple sentences, I made the activity more challenging this week. Unlike the previous session where each group worked with the three picture cards, during this week I expanded the activity to a five-card picture sequencing activity. This was a way of giving learners more writing opportunities, while at the same time increasing their vocabulary and developing creativity in writing simple stories guided by pictures.

Reading Aloud

In introducing the retelling strategy *'Somebody-Wanted-But-So'*, a simple story was read aloud. The selection of story was based on my knowledge of learners' interest (*Zebra and the Crocodile*) as well as on the fact that they had already read the isiXhosa version.

5.7.3 Reflection on Cycle 6

Learner Attendance

The attendance register was used as one of the instruments to evaluate the success of the intervention. Even though the teacher continued to be absent from school, this did not deter learners from attending school and the reading club in particular. Absenteeism declined significantly from the first to the sixth week (Appendix L, week 6).

Learner Engagement in Activities

During Week 5, learners had been taught only the first stanza of the nursery rhyme. Consequently, I was surprised when one of the learners excitedly informed me that she could now sing all three stanzas of the rhyme. She was confident to say that she took her time to learn the rhyme although a friend at school assisted her with the other difficult stanzas. As a means of acknowledging her effort and a strategy to motivate others, the learner was asked to sing in front of the whole class, which she did confidently. Although she got stuck along the way, she was not shy to call up her friend for assistance and together they sang the rhyme very well (clip 040: 0: 02: 49 12 November).

Again, at the end of the session, another learner came to submit her two homework sheets that she also did during her spare time at home. The first activity submitted was due a week ago and she apologised for not submitting it. The second activity that she submitted was her own work that she did at home where she compiled her own word list using the sounds '*th*' and '*dr*' learnt in the previous session (Appendix O).

As learners became familiar with what was expected of them in the picture sequencing activity, I introduced a five-picture sequencing activity which I thought would be challenging. Learners worked collaboratively during this activity. All were eager for their interpretations of the picture to be captured. During the process, I noticed a pair that was working with picture cards arguing as they had different views on how to arrange the pictures and how to retell the story (Appendix G, Picture 8). At the end, I intervened and gave each one of them a chance to interpret the story in their own way, proposing that there is no single correct way of making meaning of the pictures. I assured them that each of their interpretations were comprehensible.

Learners' work sheets showed an improvement in their writing as they could all write a basic sentence. Even though they still struggled with spellings of some simple words, they all managed to interpret their picture cards creatively. Each pair was able to write five sentences, with some going further.

Learner Participation and Taking Ownership of their Learning

Learners continued to take charge and control their learning with little of my assistance during some activities that they were familiar with. They were able to guide, argue and correct each other in instances where an incorrect response was given. They would also reprimand wrong behaviour and instil order during the reading club sessions. An example was when we began the session by revising words that were compiled during the previous session with the sound '*th*' and '*dr*'. Here learners took control of the activity as they assisted those that were still struggling with the sounds. Some also explained how to complete the task to those who had been absent when this activity was done. Table 18 below shows learners assisting each other during the activity and taking ownership of their learning.

Table 18: Learners taking ownership of their learning

Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
L: *Dat* (trying to read *that*) Ls: Nooo, it's *that* (emphasising the /th/ sound and also telling him to 'luma ulwimi' (bite your tongue) (clip (040:0:11:45) L: drink Ls: No it's /*thrink*/ (Learners rather debated on which category the word falls under (clip 040:0:18:58) *R:* Which word do you want to write? *L: Drinder* R: *Grinder* is *grrrrrrrrrrrr* and here we are looking for words that start with *dr* not *gr* (clip 040: 0:21:03)	R: So, can we think of words that we can write that starts with /*crrrrr*/ and /*grrrrrr*/. For my example l will write /*cry*/, what's that? Ls: Some say (*criiii*) Cry R: What is to cry? Ls: ukukhala / ukulila R: Good (then I wrote the word group on the board) L1: *Droup* Ls: Noooo it's *grrrroup* I then demonstrated to him the different sounds he has produced in reading the word /*drrrr*/ and /*grrrrr*/ (clip 040:0:25:01)	L: Ma'am what about a /*crouser*/ R: it's a *trrrrrrrrr trouser* L: yho! I thought it was *crrrr* (clip 040:0:27:47) L1: (to her peers) No making noise, stop making noise (clip 040:027:52) L2: (to me, at the end of the session) Thank you very much for coming .(clip 040:1:07:24) **N.B** It is interesting to note that learners are also beginning to use the daily phrases I use with them in class.

Retelling of a story in English

Informed by the findings from the previous sessions, that learners had difficulties in retelling and summarising stories after independent reading or reading aloud, I continued using the strategy '*Somebody-Wanted-But-So*' (clip 036:053:26, 13 November). Thereafter, a short story from the *Little Hands* book collection was read aloud (see Appendix K of stories read each week). Learners showed an improvement in their attempts to retell the story. An improvement was noticeable in the way they sequenced the events and in the way they could

identify the main characters in the story. Rather than using their first language, learners also attempted to retell the story in English as shown in Table 19 below.

Table 19: Learner retelling a story *(Clip 036: 0:58:10)*

Example 1: Learner retelling a story with my guidance	***Example 2: Learner retelling a story independently***
R: *This story is about somebody who is that somebody; lift up your hand if you know who this story is about.* **L:** *Zebra and Crocodile.* **R:** *Good, this story is about Zebra and Crocodile, right. What did Zebra want to do?* **L1**: *The zebra kick the crocodile.* **R:** *Good, the zebra kicked the crocodile. Why did the zebra kick the crocodile?* **L2:** *The crocodile says aha! I'm going to eat you.* **R:** *Good the crocodile said ha-ha! I'm going to eat you and the zebra..... (actions)* **Ls:** *Kicked.*	**L1:** *Zebra and Crocodile. Zebra and Crocodile friends.* **R:**Yes, *Zebra and the crocodile were friends uhm- (interrupted by a learner misbehaving)* **L:** *(continuing) Crocodile stay in the cave and Crocodile eats the zebra and the zebra stay in the sweet grass. Crocodile say aaah eat you Zebra and Zebra say okay eat me. Zebra kick the crocodile.* **R:** *The zebra kicked the crocodile, good boy.* **L:** *(continues) phew! crocodile eat me.* **R:** *Yes, the zebra ran away and said phew! The crocodile almost ate me.* **L2:** *Crocodile and Zebra. Crocodile I'm hungry, I'm very, very hungry. Crocodile say eat Zebra.*
R: *And what else did the zebra do?* **L3**: *The zebra "phew" I no eat me.* **R:** *Good the zebra ran away and said "Phew" at least the Crocodile did not eat me.*	**L3:** *The crocodile say ha-ha-ha-hah I'm going to eat you.*

Learner Progress

As evidenced in the previous discussion, learners began to make significant progress in different areas; be it educational or social. Socially, they were able to assist each other during the reading club session and also instil discipline. They were also able to organise themselves before our arrival (researcher and assistant) even when their teacher was absent. They took initiative in finding a venue so that by the time I arrived, a venue was secure and the club could proceed as planned. Educationally, learners showed that they were in control of their learning as they guided, corrected each other, and participated more fully during the reading club activities.

Introducing the retelling strategy '*Somebody-Wanted-But-So'* was helpful in assisting the learners to be able to retell and summarise a story. An improvement was noted in the way they sequenced the events when retelling and also in their ability to identify the main characters and main ideas in the story. This informed me that I should continue reinforcing this technique in the upcoming session.

While most learners seemed to have grasped the phonics, I felt that learners still needed more practice, and exposure to other sounds that were not covered during previous sessions. The

teacher suggested that she was going to take over from where I would leave the reading club. In trying to understand why most learners struggled with sounds like *str, scr, gr, dr*, I learnt that their first language and the community in which they come from had an influence in the way they articulated and pronounced words. An example was when learners articulated words like *cream* as *trim*, *cry* as *try* and *grow* as *draw*, it took me time to understand what the learners wanted to say.

Learners also enjoyed the sight word activity. This activity also reinforced the phonics list activity which was done earlier as learners encountered words like *the, this, them, that, then*. However, the challenge with this activity was that it became chaotic as learners were all sitting on the edge of their seats wanting to be the first to identify and read the sight words so that at the end they became winners.

Finally, a brief conversation was held with the Foundation Phase head teacher to try and understand if she was aware of the teacher's repeated absence and the impact it had on the learners and the running of the reading club. She indicated that the teacher had family problems and that it was difficult for them as a school to find a relief teacher for her.

5.8   Cycle 7

The aim of the broader intervention was to develop English vocabulary of the participants. Equipped with the necessary vocabulary, learners would be able to read widely and also read independently, skills that would contribute to creating lifelong readers. As this was the last week of the seven-week intervention, the main objective for this cycle was to give learners an opportunity to read aloud to each other as well as assess whether their vocabulary had indeed improved. The aim was to also let learners be in control of their own reading. Thus, learners were given opportunities to read to each other in two of the three sessions in this cycle. The first two sessions for this week were structure as illustrated in Table 20 below.

Table 20: Lesson Components

Time	Components
10mins	Talking: During this time learners and the researcher meet and greet and welcome each other. An attendance register is marked. A warm-up activity is done as well as an "ice breaker".
10-15mins	Word play (quiz)
15-20mins	Guest reader
15-20mins	Talking about the pictures, sequencing pictures and re-telling the story, writing the story and drawing a picture
10mins	Shared reading + read aloud (by learners)
5mins	Discussion about the book
5mins	Watching of the video

The last day of the reading club sessions was designed differently from the rest of the sessions in that it marked the end of the intervention. The session was designed to celebrate the successes of the intervention and the progress made by learners since its inception. Learners were given time to prepare presentations in the form of a song, storytelling or drama.

5.8.1 Planning

In planning the session, I had to bear in mind that this was the final cycle of this action research project. I had to evaluate all the activities that were done in the previous sessions and identify gaps and areas that needed attention.

I came to the realisation that while I had included some phonics activities, these were insufficient to meet learner needs. I had also not given them sufficient opportunities for paired reading and reading aloud. More such activities were thus incorporated in the present cycle.

I also made arrangements with a colleague, who is a good reader and story teller to attend our sessions. Informed by literature, I found that story telling was also a good way of developing learners' vocabulary but I had not included this in the past sessions. Inviting a story teller also afforded learners an opportunity to be read to by an English first language speaker. For some, it was their first experience to engage with a first language speaker.

5.8.2 Tasks in Cycle 7

Vocabulary Development

A quiz was introduced as part of vocabulary learning. Learners were divided into two groups according to their abilities. Each had eight learners. Of the eight, four were ones I considered better readers. Flash cards of all the words collected from the previous sessions were combined. Learners were asked to read the flash card and translate it into their L1. Learners were asked to make up sentences using some of the words.

It was interesting to see the learners taking ownership of the game. They would either agree or disagree with each other when they felt the answer that was given was incorrect or not what they wanted. I only intervened in cases when both groups were not sure of the meaning of the word. I provided them with clues on how to read the word and in some cases I made sentences for better understanding of the word. For example, in clip (047 0:10:15) both groups could read the word *baskets* but when they translated it to their L1 they gave a translation for the word *bucket*. I had to write both words on the board, to show them how these two words were spelt and what each meant. Following is an excerpt of the quiz activity (clip 047:0:14:24, 19 November).

> Group B: Chief
>
> R: What is it in IsiXhosa?
>
> Group B: Inkosi
>
> R: And who wants to make up a sentence using the word *chief*?
>
> Group B L1: Sivenathi is chief
>
> R: shhhh lets listen to Anam
>
> L2: Sivenathi is a chief
>
> R: Good, Sivenathi is a chief

Below is yet another example of learners taking ownership of their learning. In this clip (047: 0:15:19), learners argue and challenge each other on the given answers. I had to step in when I realised that both teams would not reach an agreement.

> Group A: Hid
>
> R: Are they correct?
>
> Group B: No, No
>
> Group A: Yeeeeees
>
> Group B: Okay ngesixhosa? (In isiXhosa)
>
> R: (giving them a clue)… The two strong man **hid** the baskets in the bush, Hid? She took a book and **hid** it the bag?
>
> L4: Ukuthatha, ukufaka, ukufihla
>
> R: Good, yikufihla

Later (clip (learners taking ownership of their learning). In the following clip (047:0:17:50), again learners continued to disagree with each other in an educative way. However, I had to step in with a solution that I thought was fair to both groups.

Group A: (showing them their flash card)

Group B: (chaos) all trying to read the word /*married*/ until one learner said /*Married*/

R: Good, that's *married*.

Group A: No you first said *mahrried* and some said *worried*.

Group B: (chaos) No we said *married*.

R: Okay, if you want a point make a sentence using this word.

Group B L1: The bride is married

R: Good, the bride is married, to whom? Remember I said.........

L1: (continues) to the husband…

R: oooookay, the bride is married to the husband.

As I noted that learners were getting tired of just reading the flash cards in isolation, I made the game more challenging by asking the teams to read the word first and then make a sentence using the particular word. Following are different extracts showing learners' responses.

Later (clip 047:0:21:42)

Group A: *daughter*

Sentence: The daughter is planting a tree.

R: Group B say a sentence, I might give you a point.

Group B L1: The daughter is peeling a banana.

Later (clip 047:0:26:42)

Group B: *beads*

R: Can you make sentences using that word.

Group B L1; The two strong man take yoh! (Self-correction) cut the beads.

Later (047:0:29:36)

R: Everyone has been saying a sentence about the bride who stayed and stayed, who wants to make a different sentence? Read the word first.

Ls: *Stay*

R: Where do you stay?

L1: I stay at the desk.

L2: Yho uhlala edeskin.

L3: I stay in Extension 9.

R: Good girl. What's that word?

Group B: *peel* (L: The daughter peel the banana)

Later (clip: O47:0:34:59)

R: *Hammered*

AL: ukuqonqelela

R: And who can make a sentence?

L1: The man is hammered.

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L2: The Juju hammered a house for mama Jumbo.

R: Good boy, but we say Juju hammered a house for mama Jumbo.

Upon reflection and in watching the video clips, I could see the happiness in the learners each time they got a word correct. However, to encourage good behaviour, I found using rewards in the form of points as appropriate. At the end of the game points were taken out from a group that kept on making noise and misbehaving during the game. Two learners in that group were disappointed to the extent of crying (clip 047:0:36:1)

Reading Aloud by Learners

As planned, affording learners an opportunity to read aloud was the main focus of this week. Learners volunteered and took turns to read a simple story. Learners were given an opportunity to read aloud for each other in class and in pairs. I moved around observing the reading strategies they employed in the process. I also assisted those who had difficulties with reading.

Using a Guest Reader

During this week a guest reader was also invited for storytelling. This activity afforded learners an opportunity to hear and share stories with an English first language speaker. This also gave them an opportunity to interact with the story teller which, for some, was a first-time experience as they are all English second language learners and staying in a township; it is likely, therefore, that they have never had such an opportunity.

Paired Reading

During this activity, learners read aloud to each other in pairs. I paired more fluent readers with less fluent readers. Additionally, learners who read at the same level were paired to reread a text that they had already read for continued understanding and fluency work (see Appendix G Picture18).

Picture Sequencing

During this week, learners continued to work with the pictures from last week. As learners had understood the conventions of writing and were able to construct simple sentences, they continued to practice with the five-card picture sequencing activity. In the previous session each group worked with three picture cards. This was a way of giving them more writing

opportunities for them to be writers and to also develop their creativity in writing simple stories guided by pictures.

To conclude the session, learners continued to watch the series of video stories.

5.8.3   Reflection on Cycle 7

Motivating Learners

Informed by literature discussed in Chapter 2 and 3, that when one uses rewards that make learners feel self-assured and internally pleased with their work, it leads to a productive classroom, I introduced the use of certificates as motivation. Different certificates were designed and learners were awarded according to their achievement and contribution to the reading club. In line with the idea that reading clubs are not places where learners shared reading and writing activities only, but they are also places where other social norms can be cultivated, learners were also rewarded and acknowledged for good behaviour and daily attendance at the sessions. I learnt that it is important to reward a learner for attitude and effort rather than intelligence and results as this leads to learners who are de- motivated to participate in the classroom. At the end, each learner went away with a certificate; this was a good strategy of motivating learners to continue working hard so as to achieve and improve in other disciplines as well (See Appendix G, Picture 21).

Learner Attendance

Learner attendance at school and the reading club sessions in particular was consistent despite the teacher's absence with the classroom keys (See Appendix L, week 7). Learners attended all the sessions during this week as they were looking forward to the interesting activities lined up for them. This included them reading aloud, the guest reader and also the closing session where they presented their performances. Other learners from the school were also invited to attend the last session of the intervention as they had been asking to be part of the reading club in the last weeks. They turned out in large numbers as they were eager to be part of the reading club family (Appendix G, Picture 21).

Learner Participation

At the beginning of some sessions an activity was conducted as an ice breaker. This week, in all the three sessions, learners preferred to sing the rhyme *Mary had a little lamb*. Nine learners had mastered the first three stanzas of the song and one learner took it further and

attempted to sing the fourth stanza. When asked who had taught them the other stanzas, she responded *"I learnt the song by myself; I have been practicing the song during my spare time."* What was interesting again is that most of the learners could recite the song; only three learners relied on the printed scripts for the lyrics. They sang the song confidently because they were aware of its meaning as it was discussed the first time I introduced it to them.

During story telling learners participated well as the story teller involved them during the pre-story telling activities and also during and after storytelling. After storytelling, learners were asked to retell the story and also act out a scene from the story to see if they understood the plot of the story. All this was done very well as they were also able to retell the story using their own words (clip 7: 30:02:10; 21 November).

When given a chance to read aloud and during shared reading, most of the learners volunteered to read. However, not everyone was given an opportunity to read aloud as I had to consider time. Thereafter discussion was held about the book.

On the last day during their individual and group presentation, some learners sang a song, some danced and some acted out a story. Their presentations showed that much effort and time had been invested in them. As a result, their presentations were well organised and well thought out (clip 7: 30:02:10; 22 November). I was impressed by two learners who decided to read their own chosen story for the class. They read a story from their English activity folder titled *Houses in South Africa*. They read it well and when asked later about their choice of the story, one of them responded, *"We chose this story because that's what we could find to read in our activity folders."* She continued, *"Some of our readers with interesting stories were locked in the classroom and at home we have nothing interesting to read."*

Learning Environment

I noted that a reading club offers an informal learning environment which is non-threatening to the learners. This kind of environment made learners feel secure and free to participate in the classroom tasks without fear of being ridiculed. This is evidenced by how they presented their performances in front of the class. Some learners were not embarrassed to dance, sing and read even though they were not good. It was interesting to note that learners organised themselves in preparation for their presentations. Learners who presented in pairs and groups used their spare time for rehearsal and since their class teacher was not always at school they

also took that opportunity to prepare their presentation while waiting for the reading club sessions to begin.

Observed indicators for learner vocabulary development

- *Importance of free writing*

During this week I came to a conclusion that free writing in reading clubs plays an important role in improving learners' writing skills. Once learners are given opportunities of writing for enjoyment, they write well and produce well-thought scripts. This was evidenced in the picture sequencing activity. At first learners could not construct meaningful sentences as they lacked the skill and the creativity. However, looking at the sentences written this week, I was able to notice an improvement (See Appendix P).

At the end of the intervention learners were given opportunities to write letters to the researcher. They each wrote what they felt and thought, and also made suggestions about the reading club. I have included these here not only to show the learners' appreciation, but also to show the different levels of literacy. From the letters one can see that learners have improved their writing skills. From some of letters, one can read and make meaning of what the learner is communicating. These letters also helped me to evaluate the success of the intervention. Interestingly, learners were not given guidelines to adhere to when writing the letters, but most of the learners wrote their letters in English and they demonstrated an improved command of the language (See Appendix P).

- *Learner Confidence to Speak and Retell Stories in English*

During this week shared reading was encouraged, learners were paired according to their capabilities, i.e. a learner who could read was paired with a struggling reader. After reading, learners reported back to the whole class what they had read about. Following is an excerpt of a learner retelling her story in English (clip 005: 0:34: 48).

> **R**: *Who else wants to tell us what they read about? Remember I tried to tell you in English so who can tell us in English?*
> **L**: *We read the book "What are you doing".*
> **R**: *Yes, the title of the book is "What are you doing". In isiXhosa what does "what are you doing" mean?*
> **Ls**: *Wenza ntoni?*
> **R**: *Good, ithi wenza wentoni, umh, who is the book about?*
> **L**: *is, is, is, is a boy.*

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R: Is a boy, umh, and what is the boy doing?

L: The boy went to the mum and says what are you doing mum? (Researcher interrupts, umh) mum says I read letters for visitors (umh) and go to the grandfather and says what are you doing grandpa? Grandpa says I am reading the papers, and go to the big brother, big brother says what are you doing? says I read the books, and is go to the granny and says what are you doing? granny says I read for, for the papers, and go to aunty says what are you doing says I read the letters is go to the big sister and says what are you doing? says the big sister I, I. . .

R: What is the big sister doing?

L: Says I read, I read, and is cook the family breakfast, says the boy is not in the bed and the boy is not in the bedroom, and the boy is not in the bathroom, the boy is not in the car, the boy is not in the garage, the boy is not in the couch, the boy is in the, in the

R: And where was the boy? Where did they find the boy? Where was he hiding?

L: The boy is read a story.

R: The boy was writing a story and where was the boy sitting?

L: In the bed.

L2: Outside the bed.

R: Under the bed, the boy was sitting under the bed. And what was the boy's name because I see here there is a name, what's his name?

Ls: Lele.

R: Yes the boy is called Lele, thank you, let's clap hands for her.

As evidenced by the above except, the learner was confident to read and share her story with others. This can be also attributed to the non-threatening environment that is provided by the reading club. The above excerpt also shows an improvement in the way the learner was retelling their story guided by the strategy '*Somebody-Wanted-But-So'* that they were taught in week six. The lengths of the sentences spoken have increased compared to the previous weeks, the learner is confident to use English.

- *Motivation to Read*

Learners showed that they were motivated to read as they demonstrated an interest in books and reading. They began to use interesting phrases from the books that they read. An example was when I heard them on one occasion chasing away other learners who were not part of the reading club. They referred them as the ugly ducklings saying, *"Go away you are ugly"* (clip 005:0:00:51). They learnt this phrase from the story book titled *The Ugly Duckling.*

Another characteristic that showed that learners were motivated to read is that during story telling learners enjoyed listening to and discussing the books. Again, motivation to read is evidenced when learners requested that they be read to when they were told that for this week they will be reading to each other. During shared reading most learners preferred to read

stories that they had read previously or stories that were read to them. As indicated in this study, re-reading the same story has proven to be a quality of learners who are motivated to read.

- *Learner Progress and Preparedness*

Reflecting on this week, I came to a conclusion that the reading club had made an impact on the learners in many respects. Learners have shown improvement in their speaking, writing and relating well with each other. Learners have learnt to take ownership of their learning as evidenced by how they all organised themselves in preparation for their last sessions presentations. Again they took it upon themselves to learn the nursery rhyme on their own and they did it well. Although the teacher had not been attending school for the past weeks nor this week as well, the learners' attendance at the reading club session was amazing. On my arrival at the school I would find them waiting at the gate since they would be playing outside since morning having no one to attend to them as their classroom was locked.

In evaluating myself and the programme, I can say that the programme made an impact on the learners. Firstly, seeing that other learners at the school also wanted to be part of the reading club is an indication that they had seen and heard a lot about the good things that were being done at the sessions thus they also wanted to be members of the reading club. The video clips, and the thank you letters written by learners, also gave a reflection of the impact of the reading club and the impact that I have made on these learners as individuals (See Appendix P).

5.9   Summary

This chapter presented the preliminary findings of the research. The qualitative data was presented in the form of a narrative report. Selected transcripts of the learners' written work, pictures and interviews were used to provide corroboratory evidence. Although I had hoped to achieve much more during the course of the seven-week long intervention, the learners' enthusiasm and motivation was in itself a mark of success of the intervention. While I encountered challenges during the implementation phase and throughout the intervention as discussed in this chapter, these challenges contributed to my professional development.

Chapter 6 will present main themes that emerged throughout the seven action research cycles discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 6 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

6.1   Introduction

The purpose of this study was to establish a reading club and design a responsive reading programme to enhance English vocabulary development amongst Grade 3 English second language learners in a selected school in the Grahamstown District. In doing so, the study drew on different theorists. The establishment of the reading club was guided by Vygotsky's (1978) view that language learning (LL) takes place through interaction in meaningful events, rather than through isolated language activities. In designing the reading programme, the study drew on work by Manzo & Manzo (1990), Dechant (1991), Beard (1998), Tracey & Morrow (2006) and Winch et al. (2006) on appropriate strategies to teach reading, with particular emphasis on vocabulary development. I adopted a holistic approach to reading literacy, reading and vocabulary development. In other words, even though the emphasis was on establishing a reading club and specifically vocabulary development, reading, speaking, writing and listening were viewed as interwoven and thus inseparable. It was also important to acknowledge and work with the view that vocabulary development cannot be supported outside a real context in which learners are exposed to authentic texts and where they read and write for real purposes. Vygotsky's (1978) view that language also develops through active engagement provided the orientation to all the activities in the reading club.

This chapter provides an outline of the key themes that emerged from the research findings presented in Chapter 5. McNiff (2002) states that an action researcher, after data gathering, needs to identify criteria and standards against which one and others can judge the effectiveness of the work. This can take the form of themes. Themes and issues drawn from the data are interrogated using the generic questions that guided the research as well as those posited in the methodology chapter.

6.2   Implications in Establishing a Reading Club and Developing a Responsive Reading Programme

The analysis is presented in four broad themes that emerged from the data. These include the importance of the learning environment; motivation as an important aspect to reading; strategies for vocabulary development; and the impact of school management on learning. Although I acknowledge their interconnectedness, these will be each discussed separately.

6.2.1 Learning Environment and Reading Development

The environment in which children learn to read plays an important role in the reading development process. It should be stimulating and challenging yet supportive, so that children do not feel intimidated or overwhelmed by the reading or writing task (Guthrie, 2001). Initially, the learning environment where this study was undertaken did not offer a conducive learning environment. What follows is an analysis of the strategies adopted in this study to create a more conducive learning environment.

Creating a Space Where Children Want to Learn

When learners are provided with opportunities to read in social spaces described by Vygotsky (1978), language learning takes place through interaction in meaningful events, rather than through isolated language activities; they develop cognitively. Vygotsky's theory requires the teacher and learners to play untraditional roles as they collaborate with each other. As a result, learning becomes a reciprocal experience for learners and the teacher. The physical classroom, based on this theory, would provide spaces for peer instruction, collaboration, and small group instruction. Thus the classroom potentially becomes a community of learning or a social learning space.

Theoretical perspectives offered by Vygotsky (1978) were applied in the current study. I also drew from studies by Kreuger & Townshend (1997), Street (2004), and Gordon (2010) on reading clubs. Reading clubs established in these studies provided a relaxed, non-threatening environment that was more like home than school; an environment that supports learning and development of many literacy skills. Research has shown that learners have benefited from participation in such learning spaces because they become involved in the process and also get to interact and learn with and from peers (Daniels, 1994; 2001). The results in this study confirm that creating such a space indeed supports literacy development in general and reading development in particular. Learners' regular attendance at school and in the reading club despite the teacher's absence and, at times, the harsh weather conditions corroborates this finding.

The finding also positions reading clubs as an important social activity that has potential to promote reading and the development of vocabulary. This study shows that such discursive spaces encourage even reluctant members to participate because they view the club as a social event rather than the typical demands of daily classroom events (Mitchell & Harris,

2001; Whittingham & Huffman, 2009). As evidenced from the findings of my study, even those learners that the class teacher regarded as 'dom' (stupid) participated and showed an eagerness during the reading club sessions. This social environment had the added value of motivating learners to want to read for enjoyment. They seemed unafraid to make mistakes and did not view the space as a place where they would be ridiculed. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that learners supported each other, learning with and from each other.

Establishing Classroom Norms and Routine as a way to establish Reading Norms

Establishing specific routines and introducing classroom norms is said to be another activity that can enhance learning. A routine can be established to manage materials, time, instruction, and learner behaviour helps increase instructional time and learner involvement in appropriate learning activities (Polloway & Patton, 1993). Reid (2007) states that it is a good idea to have classroom rules and habits clearly displayed on the walls so that learners can refer to them periodically. It is ideal, he continues, to develop these rules and habits in conjunction with the children. Findings from this study show that once a routine was established and norms introduced, the pacing of the reading club sessions improved, with learners taking ownership of their own behaviour and that of others. There was also minimal disruption during sessions when learners knew the expectations. Importantly, learners seemed to adhere better to norms that they had set together with the researcher.

Similarly with results found by Reid (2007), this study also found that learners acquired security from routine. Routine in this study did not translate to employing the same learning strategies. Rather, it included consistency in the nature and form of the reading programme. Change in tasks served to stimulate learner participation. Findings of this study are thus consistent with those by researchers who conducted similar studies (Street, 2004; Reid, 2007). Consistency and routine had an impact on the attendance. Reid (2007) suggests that while it is a good idea to have a settled and reasonable predictable classroom environment, it is advisable to sometimes bring in changes. Together with activities learners engaged with in the programme, the changes I made encouraged attendance as the learners became curious to know what surprise I had in store for them in each session.

In this study, routine also played a major role in classroom organisation and in my thinking and planning for instruction. Routine is a mechanism that I used to establish and regulate instructional activities and to simplify the planning process. Routines also served to increase

the predictability and to reduce the complexity of the teaching and learning environment. Such findings are not limited to my study only. In another study conducted by Street (2004) on the use of reading clubs to encourage reading for pleasure amongst Grade 7 learners, he found similar conclusions, namely that when used properly, routines increase teacher flexibility and effectiveness by freeing the teacher's time and energy from many planning and implementation decisions.

Taking Ownership and Developing Voice

Learner voice is regarded as central to the learning experience. It requires learners to be active and responsible participants in their own learning. The sense of ownership is highlighted by Jacobs (2001), who recognised in her own classroom that English second language learners became avid readers after a year of reading books of their own choosing and discussing these books with their peers and teachers.

Similarly in this study, learner ownership was developed by allowing learners to choose their books. They were asked to report on the books they read and different forms of discussions were held about what they read or what was read to them. Findings of this study point to the importance of the environment in which learning takes place to develop that 'voice'. Learners were encouraged to respect each other's views, ideas, emotions, and interests. They listened to each other and individual opinions were respected. Learners were encouraged to offer their own ideas and responses to questions. Where there were differences of opinion, I encouraged learners to see other's points of view. Learners worked collaboratively in pairs, groups and often also as a class. Feedback was a critical component in this engagement; both from the researcher as well as peers. Learners were allowed to experiment, explore, and participate in all the activities offered without fear of being ridiculed. Miller (2009) concurs with this by stating that allowing learners to be mobile in class and giving them freedom to explore helps them to develop cognitively

Teacher Behaviour and Learner Engagement

Pressley (2006) states, teacher behaviour plays an important role for language learning. The results in this study support this claim. The class teacher in this study instilled fear in her learners that resulted in a classroom atmosphere that was not conducive for language learning. I therefore made it a priority that my teaching style was motivating. As the facilitator I made sure that I was not a threat to the learners. I created opportunities for

cooperative learning, participated in one-on-one interaction with learners and ensured that I was always accessible to learners. I also connected with the learners personally and they felt secure and open around me.

I made the classroom exciting by inviting guest readers, having trips to the library and introducing games in each session, all of which impacted the learner attendance at school and at the reading club. They began to attend school regularly as they were motivated to be part of the reading club sessions.

I made sure that I was gentle and caring in my dealings with the learners. During the first days of the intervention I did not introduce any discussion with participants about their need to read. I never spoke to them about the fact that most of them could not read or struggled with reading. If these shortcomings were acknowledged then they could have become uninspiring for the participants. I wanted these young learners to know that I see each one of them as a potential reader. Miller (2009) states, all children are potential readers; with varying levels of readiness and interest. This approach to the reading club ensured that learners made an attempt without fear of ridicule. In the process, I encouraged autonomy. The findings point to growth in learner confidence and increased participation.

Unconventional Learning Styles and participation in a Reading Club
The research findings reveal that some learners and particularly those who find conventional learning challenging, often learn best in informal learning environments. The reading club offered an environment which accommodated each learner's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, those learners who were regarded as reserved in the normal classroom participated and contributed well during the sessions which also surprised the class teacher.

Such findings are similar to the results of the a study conducted by Michael (2009) which found that learners with unconventional learning styles (active, sensing, visual and global) were able to achieve higher grades than learners with conventional learning styles (reflective, intuitive, verbal and sequential). An active learning style appeared to be the main driver of the unconventional learners, allowing them to gain educational success.

As evidenced in my study, an unconventional learning environment is non-threatening and inviting. It is also one that includes different opportunities to succeed. The use of picture

sequencing activities and repeating stories but varying tasks were some examples employed in this study. The seating arrangement offered in the reading club was also different from the conventional classroom arrangements. Learners were free to choose where they sat and with whom they paired. Similarly, Reid (2007) confirms that, often, children who prefer an informal learning environment prefer sitting on the floor or on a bean bag, which was the case with some learners in the current study.

The findings also suggest that informal learning environments promote the development of a broad range of skills and interest. Learners developed intellectually as the learning environment stimulated enquiry. As evidenced in Chapter 5, learners attempted to read, write and speak in English. Learners were also not restricted to a specific space, but were allowed to make choices about where to sit. Miller (2010) states that learners must be allowed to talk with each other and to move occasionally from their seats to participate in appropriate tasks as this can help them develop cognitively. Flexibility in the seating arrangement encouraged participation and choice.

Learners also developed aesthetics as they were provided with music and wall displays that were visually appealing. The use of videos that brought stories to life provided learners with yet another catalyst to enhance vocabulary. Within this informal environment, learners also had opportunities for discussions, group and paired work. They also developed emotionally as each learner's learning preferences was supported and learners respected and acknowledged each other's intellectual differences. Thus, the results suggest that reading clubs go beyond their initial goal as was the case in the study. Learners developed other skills and competencies as well.

6.3   Motivation as an Important Aspect of Reading

One of the stumbling blocks that can prevent children from becoming skilled readers is lack of motivation (Snow et al., 1998). Reading is an effortful activity that children often choose to do or not to do. Therefore, it also requires motivation (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). To become lifelong literacy learners, children must be motivated to engage in literacy activities. It is not sufficient to only possess the cognitive skills necessary for reading. The motivational consequences of reading attitudes are that children with more positive attitudes are more motivated to read. Engaged readers are motivated to read for different purposes, utilise

knowledge gained from previous experience to generate new understandings, and participate in meaningful social interactions around reading.

Through establishing a reading club, I have been convinced that the central and most important goal of reading instruction is to foster the love of reading. My interest in the role of motivation in literacy development is grounded in the belief that teachers play a critical role in helping children develop into readers who read for both pleasure and information. Motivation plays a critical role in learning, it often makes the difference between learning that is superficial and shallow and learning that is deep and internalised (Gambrell, 1996). To achieve the desired goals of the intervention I made use of the two different types of motivation, which are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The effects of these will be discussed below. Intrinsic motivation is when learners are motivated to read because they enjoy reading. On the other hand extrinsic motivation is when learners are motivated by outside factors like reward or deadlines (Ryan & Deci, 2000). An additional goal of this research was to have learners who are intrinsically motivated to read. But to achieve this, learners need to be assisted to get there. Thus Hunters (2003) suggests that we have to start with extrinsic motivation and outline a path that lets learners see that they can generate some intrinsic motivation on their own.

Extrinsic motivation is basically an incentive programme: if you do this, you get this, or if you do this you get to see this. Like Hunters (2003), extrinsic motivation has its place and it does work. During the reading club session, I used the *"if you do this, you get this"* approach for different reasons. I used this approach to instil discipline, encourage participation in the sessions and to also support the often challenging use of English language. I observed that learners were cautious about the way they behaved and participated in each session. They were also eager to do what was being asked so as to be rewarded. At this point the learners were following instructions so as to please me and in turn get rewarded. That made the club competitive in a manner that encouraged participation. However, the longer this type of motivation inspired the learners, I observed that it inculcated a reading culture that manifested itself as a good potential for intrinsic motivation. I devised different strategies of keeping learners motivated and these will be discussed in detail below.

Allowing Learners to Read Aloud as a Means for Developing Reading Motivation

During the reading club sessions I read out loud daily. I occasionally invited students to read aloud self-selected text or a portion of a text. I noticed that allowing learners to read aloud gave them an opportunity to be in the limelight. It also makes reading competitive in that many learners wanted a chance to also read for their peers. Allowing learners to participate in the read aloud exercise requires more planning and collaborative efforts and time for planning. They will prepare in order to make an impression or avoid embarrassment.

This proved to be motivating to learners as evidenced by the findings from this study. Learners took it upon themselves to rehearse their read aloud for several days before reading aloud to the class. They chose their own text to read and used every opportunity they could get during the school hours to rehearse as they could not do it after school because they stay in different township locations.

Reading Logs as a Motivating Strategy

Hunters (2003) suggest that, at some point, it is more effective to help students shift toward intrinsic motivation. Reading logs are a strategy that can aid this shift. Reading logs are designed to encourage reading by assigning daily reading homework for a minimum number of minutes. This strategy also helps teachers to be able to assess growth in voluntary reading by looking at students' reading logs.

Pak (2010) examined the effect of mandatory reading logs on Grade 2 and 3 learners' motivation to read. The results from her study suggest that resorting to methods like a mandatory reading assignment such as reading logs are ineffective ways of fostering a love for reading and may lead to a decrease in a learner's motivation to read. However, studies like Gambrel & Marinak (2009) recommend the use of reading logs as one way that can encourage learners see their reading progress. Such findings are also applicable to this study; once learners were introduced to the concept of reading logs, they all embraced it and were eager to start filling it up with the required information. Learners were motivated to read and enjoyed logging their reading and seeing what they had been reading. The activity became competitive and, at the end of the study, reading logs were used to measure learner progress and learners were rewarded accordingly.

Learner Choice and Motivation

Throughout the research, I found that giving students the freedom of choice on what they read was (and still is) the key source in gaining reading motivation. Data shows that students have increased their desire to read and eagerness to participate in reading activities over the course of the seven-week intervention. Guthrie (2001) states that if learners are given an option to read the text they choose they will be more engaged in their reading. I was very surprised by their eagerness to try something new and embrace the opportunity to share their texts with peers. As Gambrell (1996) notes, learners need to share their enthusiasm about books with each other. Self-selection can be more motivating if students know they will have the opportunity to talk with friends about their choices (Strickland, 2004) based on the perspective that reading is inherently a social activity (Guthrie et al., 1996) and that social aspects of classrooms have an important impact on student achievement (Wentzel, 1996).

Preliminary findings showed that learners lacked experiences that show them the importance of books and reading. They have never been given chances to discover other worlds that are contained in books. Through observation, I noted that the learners in many classes at the school were reading choices that were dictated by their teacher. A common practice is where the entire class is reading the same book, the same page and at the same time. What happens to the learner who does not like the story? As a result some/most learners do not like to read and they never learn how to choose books for themselves. Therefore their self-identity as readers is not shaped at the early years as they are not given the chance to find out what they like to read.

In a study conducted by Miller (2010) in her classroom, she suggests that teachers must do away with whole class novel units like she did and allow learners to choose their own. The results of her study show that when she held book discussions with her learners, they revealed that having the choice of what to read and when to read was the most important factor to them. Generally, findings show that time spent reading and the freedom to choose their own books lead many learners to discover a love of books and reading.

Similarly with this study, when learners were first afforded an opportunity to choose books they wanted to read, they clamoured for recommendation, asking me whether the book they had chosen was 'okay' for them. They grabbed books and gave book recommendations to each other and for a moment the classroom looked like a market place as learners were

excited calling out book titles. Amazingly, *Sipho,* an unenthusiastic reader, also got caught up in the wave of excitement. This proves that providing learners with the opportunity to choose their own books to read empowers and encourages them. It strengthens their self-confidence, rewards their interest and promotes a positive attitude towards reading by valuing the reader and giving him or her some level of control.

Findings show that embracing the learner's 'inner reader' starts with learners selecting their own books to read. This has been seen as a low-cost effective way of increasing learners' interest in what they read. Pressley (2006) states that providing a learner with so much choice is one of the main motivation of the whole language teachers. Thus, Miller (2009) states that readers without power to make their own choices are not motivated to read.

6.4   Strategies for Second Language Learning and Vocabulary Development

The Effect of Code Switching in Vocabulary Development
Code switching has been regarded by many as a teaching or learning technique. However, the benefits of code switching have been debatable when teaching additional language learners, particularly in multi-lingual schools in South Africa (Faleni & Kgomoeswana, 1993; Peires, 1994). The new language policy views code switching in a positive light if it is used constructively as a scaffolding tool in content subjects but cautions against its use in a language class (Murray, 2002). Fleisch (2008) argues that there is the possibility that code switching does not provide the learners with the necessary language for formal assessments. He also warns that using code switching to translate every word can double the time it takes to teach a lesson. Although the Dinaledi project lecture notes (ISEA, 2007) suggest that there may be times when code-switching could be useful, it also warns that "it reduces the learners' opportunities to listen to and speak English" (p. 11).

Code switching is a communicative resource which enables the teachers and learners to accomplish a considerable number and range of social and educational objectives. Code switching is used to negotiate and renegotiate meaning. Adendorff (1996) agrees that code switching has a positive role to play in the classroom, but feels that it should be used effectively and strategically in a language lesson since it does not promote language learning and use.

The findings of the study are consistent with Peires (1994) who maintains that code switching is widely used and can help learning. As a researcher I also made use of code switching for different reasons:

1. *To encourage participation*: There are learners who spoke less in the normal classroom set up. Therefore I had to encourage them to speak and feel free to share their views and stories with others. When retelling the stories or answering questions, some learners made an attempt to speak in English but when they got stuck they automatically switched over to their mother tongue. I did not stop them from doing so as I was also interested in their participation. By adopting this approach, the participants were able to establish context more easily than they would if they had to keep to the target language.

2. *For efficient classroom management:* During the first sessions of the intervention, classroom rules were formulated to create a conducive learning environment, I had to reinforce the rules that were formulated every now and then using their mother tongue. Resorting to their mother tongue was to ensure that disciplinary messages were effectively communicated and well-received.

3. *Concluding remarks:* In concluding the reading club sessions, learners were acknowledged for their attendance and participation and were encouraged to attend regularly. The message was conveyed in both in English and isiXhosa as a way of acknowledging their language as well.

4. *To make myself understood:* I resorted to code switching when I felt my input would be more comprehensible and it would help keep the pace of the lesson. I found that I had to constantly explain myself in different ways, rephrasing what I was saying, which also slowed the pace of the lesson. The learners would often take a long time to respond as they thought how to express themselves in English or found the courage to do so.

Although Falani and Kgomoeswana (1993) argue that code switching is for the teacher's sake rather than the learners', I found that an added benefit of speaking isiXhosa was that the learners seem to enjoy my attempt of explaining using their first language and their engagement during the sessions changed from confusion to participation. As their English improved, I tried to use less and less isiXhosa. As these learners hear so little English, I think listening to a whole lesson in English must be very difficult.

Translation

Ellis (1985) states that translation as a way of making input comprehensible has been neglected because of prevailing negative attitudes toward the traditional grammar-translation

method. In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), translation has also been criticised as 'incommunicative', boring, and pointless difficult and irrelevant. However, several people have tried to explain the positive aspects of translation as a teaching method. Duff (1989) and Sheen (1993) emphasise that translation can contribute to enhancing the accuracy and of learners' understanding. Cordero (1984) argues that translation is a very important tool for 'semantacising' language and considers translation as a learning device or a convenient means of verifying comprehension and accuracy.

To apply the input hypothesis (Krashen, 1985) (also see Chapter 2 of the study) in classroom teaching, Izumi (1995) states that we need the efficiency and comprehensiveness of translation to help make input comprehensible. There are a number of procedures that can be done with the concept of translation especially for communicative teaching classrooms. Simultaneous input can be provided, where language and meaning are given simultaneously. One possible exercise of this type that was introduced in the reading club sessions was the use of short story movies (Obari, 1995; Takahashi, 1995). Learners read the first language subtitles while watching the stories and listening to the second language.

I found this advantageous in that the picture and the story gave meaningful contexts, completing what subtitles gave, and it was also an impressive and fun-filled activity for the learners. The findings show that listening to the target language while looking at the written translation is effective as a preparatory procedure which can later be followed by activities intended to make the input part of the learners' permanent knowledge. However, through observation, I noted that this application has a limitation in that the mix of three sets of information (pictures, second language speech and the subtitles) may be overwhelming for some learners.

The quiz structure was another activity used for simultaneous input during the reading club sessions. In the process, translation was used not as a means of getting input but one of strengthening input. Izumi (1995) states that the quiz structure engages students in some activity and keeps teachers in the position of leading and guiding, in the case of translation. During the reading club sessions a quiz-like task was set between the second language and the first language translation. Learners were given the equivalent translation to semanticise the word, they did not have to think or guess as translation was the answer. Different means were used to give meaning of the target language to the learners directly.

Another method that can be used in the classroom is the delayed input (Izumi, 1995) where language is given after meaning. An example is where learners read the translation and understand what is going to be said before they approach the target language text. During the reading club sessions, learners first watched the movies with first language subtitles, and then later without the first language subtitles and at times either with or without second language subtitles. During the read-aloud sessions, translations were provided for key words that were difficult to explain in English. Flash cards with new words that the learners were going to encounter during the read-aloud period were prepared. Collaboratively with the learners definitions and meanings of these words were discussed giving equivalent L1 words. The findings show that this process does not only boost the learners' self-esteem but it also helps them to remember the English vocabulary.

6.5   Activities that Nurture Reading and Vocabulary Development

There are a variety of tasks in the literature that can be used to nurture reading and develop learners' vocabulary. In designing a responsive reading programme for this study I relied on a similar variety of tasks. Some of these tasks required learners to work in pairs, groups, individually as well as a whole class. Each task was unique, with different implications for vocabulary development and nurturing reading. I included read-aloud, word play, picture sequencing, use of graded readers and free reading and writing.

The length or duration of an instructional sequence was dependent on several factors. For example when reading aloud, I had to look into the positioning of the sequence within the read-aloud, the strategies employed and the level of word knowledge desired. The instructional sequence that occurred before, during and after reading aloud tended to be more extensive. Following is a detailed discussion on reading aloud and other activities that I relied on to develop learner vocabulary.

Reading Aloud

Newton, Padak, & Rasinski (2008) assert that reading aloud is widely accepted as a means of developing vocabulary particularly in young children. The International Reading Association & National Association for the Education of Young Children (1998) recommends reading storybooks aloud to children as a vehicle for building oral language and early literacy skills.

During read-aloud, the teacher chooses texts, identifies words for instruction and selects the appropriate strategies to facilitate word learning (Kindle, 2009). My practice was consistent with the descriptions of read-aloud in the literature. I selected appropriate texts, words for instruction and strategies for instruction. Learners were engaged in the discussions before, during, and after reading the texts. In the process, interactions and incidental word learning occurs as the teacher stops to elaborate on particular words to provide an explanation, demonstration, or example. Similarly, theories of child development suggest that the socialisation of a read-aloud allows teachers and learners to collaboratively construct meaning from text.

The findings show that the books chosen for read-aloud sessions were typically engaging, increasing both children's motivation and attention. Thus, interesting story books were repeated under the premise that word learning is enhanced through repeated readings of text, which provide opportunities to revise and refine word meanings (Carey, 1978). Stemming from a belief that young children require more support to learn words during read-aloud than adults (Kindle, 2009), my pattern of instruction reflected a preference for adult mediation over incidental learning, as I always prepared flash cards with new words to be discussed before reading a book.

The findings also show that the more the learners were exposed to reading aloud, the more they became motivated to do the same. As evidenced in the discussion in Chapter 5, learners could attempt to speak, read and write in English. During class discussions and storytelling, the learners tried to use the vocabulary they had acquired while reading aloud. They also used other phrases they heard during reading outside the classroom, they began to own the vocabulary they had learnt.

However, findings from a study conducted by Kindle (2009) describing current practices of four teachers as they sought to develop vocabulary reading aloud in their classes warns of effective use of time through pacing of instruction. In her study she found that too much time was spent on one word in the read–aloud and, as a result, insufficient time was not given to later words. Such findings are similar to the results of my study: at times, time was spent in explaining a few words and as a result some activities planned for the session were not done.

Use of Graded and Interesting Texts to Read

Since I was looking for ways to play to learners' interest and the social aspect of reading, I began to look for strategies to motivate the learners. In an effort to stimulate learners to participate in the reading club sessions and to enjoy reading, learners were provided with a lot of levelled books to re-read at any time; electronic texts in the form of video stories that stimulate ideas for meaningful interaction; as well as word games that served as stimuli for activating learners' creative thinking and vocabulary development. Findings from this study indicate that, at the end of the study, many learners had a desire to read English books and also attempt to speak in English. Such findings are similar to the results of a study by Kitao, Yamamoto, Kitao & Shimatani (1990) which found that it is important to increase the number of books and the variety of topics available so that all learners can find books that are in familiar fields of interest.

High interest increases student engagement and learning from text. This insight has prompted many authors and material developers to attempt to create academic materials that "grab" students' interest (Pressley, 2006, p. 389). Anderson, Mason and Shirey (1984) carried out research on the role of interest in children's reading of text. In their findings, children remembered interesting sentences far more than uninteresting sentences. Similarly, in the findings of this study, learners remembered a sentence from the book *The Ugly Duckling* because it grabbed their interest. Thus interest can also directly affect both attention and learning.

Appropriately Challenging Texts and Tasks

Pressley (2006) suggests that tasks that are a little bit beyond the learners' current competence level are motivating. During the intervention that forms the focus of this study, independent reading was introduced as a challenging task as most learners were not in a position of reading independently. Free writing was also introduced through the use of picture sequencing cards. As evidenced in the findings, when learners were interested in these activities, their writing and reading improved. They also worked hard and felt good about the outcome.

Free Reading and Writing

Krashen (2000) reveals that no single literacy activity has a more positive effect on student comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, spelling, writing ability and overall academic

achievement than free voluntary reading. From the research findings it is evidenced that free voluntary reading liberates underground readers, those readers that feel restricted by the teacher's choices and want to read more. These readers are free to choose and read any reading material of their choice. Giving them opportunities to write without necessarily paying attention to their spelling motivated them to write more. At the end of the intervention programme learners could speak, write and express themselves much better than at the beginning of the programme, as was shown by the preliminary findings.

6.6   The Impact of School Management on Learning

Chisholm, Hoadley, waKivulu, Brookes, Prinsloo, Kgobe, et al., (2005) describe the disruptions and loss of teaching time in South African schools, more so in rural/semi-rural than in urban contexts. They observe a constant flow of teachers and learners in and out of classes and time wasted between lessons. Mbelani (2007) lists several examples of disruptions which affect learning. These include lessons not starting on time for various reasons; learners being called out of class for non-academic activities; and lack of resources (e.g. paper, glue, scissors and dictionaries).

During the interventions of this study I noted that the bell marking the beginning or end of school activities was unpredictable. At times, break time was very long and some learners came late into the sessions as they were not aware that the reading club had started. Absenteeism was the main challenge which affected the reading club session because often work had to be repeated for those who had missed a lesson, especially during the first two weeks. Learners did not always have the necessary stationery requirements which, in the reading club session, simply meant pencils. Time was also spent waiting to borrow an eraser or ruler. To avoid these disruptions, I brought my own stationery to class and the movements minimised.

The class teacher was always absent from school and as result we did not have a fixed venue for the reading club. I was not able to use the chalkboard in the classes that we were accommodated in as it was often covered with the work of other teachers which I did not feel I could erase and on some occasions I was told not to erase. Fortunately I had access to printing facilities, so I was able to use worksheets to a large extent which the learners seemed to enjoy. I also made charts and flash cards to help learners with the new concepts that I could not write on the chalkboard.

6.7 Lessons from Understanding the Concept of a Reading Club and Things to Consider when Planning a Reading Programme

The lessons that I have learnt from this study have helped me to understand the benefits and values of designing interventions and reading programmes for ESL. Arising out of this discussion, when teaching and designing interventions for ESL, it is of importance to recognise the following as suggested by the Oral Language Development Continuum (1997, p.3):

➢ The diversity and richness of experience and expertise that children bring to school.

➢ Cultural values and practices that may be different from those of the teacher.

➢ Children need to have freedom to use their own language and to code switch when necessary.

➢ The context and purpose of each activity needs to make sense to the learner.

➢ Learning needs to be supported through talk and collaborative peer interaction.

➢ The child may need a range of scaffolds to support learning, and that the degree of support needed will vary over time, context and degree of content complexity.

➢ Children will need support so that they do not feel pressured.

➢ Supportive attitudes of peers may need to be actively fostered (while establishing the reading club, particularly the rules, I included that there must be no laughing at each other when a learner attempted to read or answer a question).

➢ It may be difficult to access children's real achievements and that the active involvement of parents will make a great deal of difference as will on-going monitoring.

6.8 Summary

In this chapter I have presented the key themes that emerged from the research findings presented in Chapter 5. I also presented lessons that I have learnt from this study have helped me to understand the benefits and values of designing interventions and reading programmes for ESL. Interestingly, during the intervention, I noted that learners have a strong background of their L1. During the vocabulary learning we relied more on translation and code switching. All good education starts with what children know. Children learn from the known to the unknown. Using mother tongue makes children learn to read and write more easy. Once they

can do so, it becomes easy for them to impart these vital skills to another language. It is also possible for children to learn to read and write in two languages at the same time. It will be of importance to acknowledge that knowledge, by building on the skills they have.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1   Introduction

This study set out to establish a reading club and design and implement a responsive reading programme. The main aim was to improve English vocabulary for Grade 3 English Second Language Learners so as to prepare them for the transition to Grade 4 were the medium of instruction changes to English. The study was done with a group of Grade 3 learners at a public primary school in the Grahamstown District. The study was informed by Vygotsky's sustained argument that all learning is essentially social in nature.

In this last chapter I will provide a summary of the findings from the study and also provide recommendations for future research. The chapter also reflects on the theoretical and methodological approaches used in this study and examines whether or not they served to answer the research question.

- The following question guided the study: How does a reading club as a literacy intervention tool improve learner participation and motivation for Grade 3 English Additional Language learners in a selected school in Grahamstown?

- How does a reading programme within an established reading club improve English vocabulary for Grade 3 English Additional Language learners in a selected school in Grahamstown?

7.2   Summary of the Study

This study was motivated by the low literacy rates in South Africa and more specifically in the Eastern Cape, where this research is situated, with a focus on Grade 3 English second language learners.

Within an Action Research methodology, this study addressed the use of a responsive reading programme within an established reading club to develop learners' English vocabulary. The reading club was held for 21 days and the sessions were held three days per week for seven weeks. Depending on the activities that were done on a particular day, the sessions were one hour to 1 hour 30 minutes long. The reading club offered an informal environment where learners played games, sang songs, read different kind of stories and in the process learned

the second language. Learners had the opportunity to visit the school library and were allowed to take out books.

Also within a reading club, a responsive reading programme was designed and implemented. The reading programme was drawn from the different reading programmes that were adopted and adapted to suit the learners' needs. The activities within the reading programme included reading aloud, independent reading, shared reading and word study. Some other educational activities were included in this programme, such as field trips (a visit to the library), inviting a guest for storytelling, and the use of ICT for video illustrated stories. This study illustrates how children can learn if they are offered an environment that is like a reading club, an environment that is less intimidating and allows them to be mobile. This study also illustrates that learners need to be given more opportunities to engage with meaningful texts for them to improve their vocabulary and be lifelong readers.

The claims that this research puts forward are tentative due to the research scope and sample size.

7.3   Summary of Findings

While acknowledging that they are not conclusive, in this section I summarise key findings.

One of the most important key findings from this research is the role of motivation when teaching learners how to read. The findings point to learners who improved their reading and writing skills because of being motivated. The attendance at school also improved regardless of their teacher's absenteeism and the classroom being locked. A particularly striking feature in the results was that learners were neither determined nor limited by the host of constraining circumstances they faced. Rather, they came to school regardless of the cold and rainy weather on some days. The results show that learners need to be motivated both extrinsically and intrinsically for them to take ownership of their learning and be active participants. Once learners are motivated there is no doubt that this motivation will lead to their overall academic progress (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Secondly, this study found that learners learn well in an informal environment. The study shows that learners were interested about the reading club set up which afforded them more space for mobility. Learners were allowed to move around the classroom, sit with whomever

they wanted to, and group work was encouraged (unlike the conventional rows in their classroom).

Lack of access to a variety of reading material on the learners' level was one of the findings I recorded during the study's situational analysis stage. The school has a library which fully is resourced however dysfunctional. The books in the library are not at the learners' reading levels. As a result, learners have nothing interesting they can read thus they struggle with reading. However, the reading club offered these learners an opportunity to engage with meaningful texts and book discussions. They had opportunities of being read to, and choosing their own books for reading, all with the aim of developing their English vocabulary.

Finally, the research findings show that there are different activities and strategies that can be used to equip or teach learners the necessary vocabulary. These can be intentional or accidental, as discussed in Chapter 2. When teaching vocabulary intentionally, I prepared flash cards of words I felt would hinder comprehension when reading aloud. We discussed these words, translating them into their L1. Thus, vocabulary was learnt intentionally as it was encountered during book discussions and reading aloud. These proved to be a success as learners improved their vocabulary, evidenced by their written and spoken work. Educational games were also included to reinforce these vocabulary learning strategies. At the end of the intervention, learners owned this vocabulary as it became part of the vocabulary they used.

7.4   Recommendations

The current low literacy rates in South Africa can be improved if researched interventions are introduced early in the Foundation Phase when learners are still young and have not yet developed negative attitudes to their reading and learning (Eccles et al., 1998; Wigfield et al., 1998).

In light of the discussed findings and arguments, three major trends have emerged for recommendation. These are: creating a safe learning environment that acknowledges the learners' strengths and weaknesses; allowing learners the freedom of choice; and the importance of creating a community of readers who are motivated to read. The following is an outline of these recommendations:

Learners come into our classrooms with different reading experiences and many of them are not positive. According to research, Intermediate Phase learners have an image of themselves as readers or not readers (Miller, 2009). From learner interviews conducted in the course of this study, I discerned that learners who do not read see reading as a talent they do not possess rather than as an attainable skill. From my observation, this is because as researchers and teachers we tend to label learners according to their success on standardised reading tests and their motivation. For example, a learners who have not met minimum standards for the test performance are called 'struggling readers'. Those learners who do not read books outside of school (some because they do not have any books to read) or those who require substantial guarding to pick a book are often regarded as 'reluctant readers'. Terms such as these do not give learners hope that one day they would be readers. Among the 20 learners participating in this study, I saw readers with individual reading references and abilities.

As (Miller, 2009) posits, we need to put forward more encouraging terms than the negative popular terminology. She recognises three trends of readers, namely developing readers, dormant readers and underground readers (p. 24). According to Miller, developing readers, usually referred to as the struggling readers, are those learners who do not read regularly and become weaker with each subsequent year. They may lag behind their peers on their reading development continuum, but they are still on the same path. What is needed is opportunities and support for where they are in their development and the chance and opportunities to feel success as readers instead of experiencing reading failure. They also need to read more. As observed in this study, with the right intervention and strong support they could catch up.

On the other hand, dormant readers (reluctant readers), are those learners who read in order to pass their classes or do well on state tests, but who never embrace reading as a worthwhile pursuit outside of school. I noticed such learners during observation when the teacher was preparing them for the ANAs: they knew all the activities and tasks in their activity books but they would drop everything after the tests were done. To them reading is work not pleasure. Without support for their reading interest and role models who inspire them to read, these learners will never discover that reading is enjoyable. Dormant readers have a reader inside themselves, and they need the right conditions in order to let that reader loose. These are the same conditions that developing readers need, that is, more time spent on reading, the freedom to make their own reading choices and a classroom environment that values independent reading.

Finally, there are underground readers. These are gifted readers, and they view reading they are asked to do in school as completely disconnected from the reading they prefer to do on their own. Underground readers want to be given opportunities and not for the teacher to dictate what they can or cannot read (see Chapter 5). Some characteristics of the underground readers are those bright and shining stars of the reading classroom. These are the ones regarded by other learners as readers, as in the responses for the interview discussed in Chapter 5. These learners act as reinforcement for the teachers that some of their instruction must be working. They read constantly. As a recommendation emerging from this study, learners must believe that they can read and that reading is worth learning how to do well. Teachers have to build a community that embraces every learner and provides acceptance and encouragement no matter where learners are on the reading curve.

As one of my recommendations, folders filled with extension activities and extra practice sheets of exercises designed to occupy learners who finished class assignments, should be replaced by independent reading as I realised that learners were not given enough time to read on their own. One of the disadvantages I noted with these activity folders is that learners who could read had memorised all the activities in the folder and some even know them off by heart. This is because they are not given opportunities to read widely and beyond their level.

My final recommendation would be on the importance for teachers to create environments that foster reading. Countless reading researchers put an emphasis on setting up a dedicated place for learners to read. I have noticed these reading corners in many schools as it is a pre-requisite by the Department of Education. As seen in Chapter 5 (Appendix G, Picture 2) these reading corners have cushions and rugs, and the books are deliberately and artfully placed to create a reading sanctuary. In many classes reading is meant to serve two purposes: firstly, to send the message to the learners that reading is important by setting aside a prominent place for it in the classroom and, secondly, to provide students with comfortable conditions in which to read by not confining them to institutionally mandated seating at desks (Miller, 2009, p. 65).

In light of this, I encourage the reading club design as it makes reading less institutional and more inviting to the learners. As seen from the findings, a classroom atmosphere that promotes reading does not come from the furniture and its placement. A classroom must be a

reading haven, a place where learners can read in comfort and where reading does not require a dedicated area to take centre stage every single day. Teachers must encourage their learners to read anywhere they feel like reading; learners must be made aware that any place can be the right place for reading.

7.5   Suggestions for Further Research

Studies could be undertaken to:

- Explore other strategies that can be suitable to develop vocabulary for English second language learners in the Foundation Phase.
- Develop reading programmes designed for second language learners in a similar context with the learners in this study and also evaluate these programmes.
- Involve a larger sample which could include more diversity within the group of participants.
- Integrate reading interventions into the school curriculum.

7.6   Future Considerations

A distinguishing characteristic of action research, as Bell (1999) points out, is "that the task is not finished when the project ends" (p.8). The refined general plan now is to continue to review, evaluate and improve practice. As indicated in Chapter 1, this research is part of a bigger research programme. As a result of this research project, there are moves afoot to keep supporting the learners. These plans include the following:

- Establishing more reading clubs with the help of other trained personnel and volunteers. The programme is planning on starting more reading clubs of this nature with different age groups at different schools in the Eastern Cape if funds permit.

- I have presented my research findings to the teachers in a public space and many were interested in learning more about starting their own reading clubs. I will offer workshops to the teachers on how to start their own reading clubs in their classrooms and at their schools so that they can be in a position to design, implement and sustain their own reading clubs without my close engagement.

- Finally, if we are restricted by funds, I will alert learners of other literacy and education programmes that are happening in their communities. For instance, in the community where this study was done, there are other reading clubs that are sprouting which are supported by different individuals and organisations. I would advise them to attend in the meantime. Although these reading clubs are unique and special in their own way, they all have the same goal, which is to create joyful readers, readers who can read for enjoyment. Fullan (1991) endorses this practice when he states that the 'most powerful combination for learning is the family and school complementing each other' (p. 248).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SAMPLES OF READABILITY TEST EXTRACTS

(a) The results of the readability index calculator: Sampled text

Brenda has a dragon in her blood. (p23, 24)

HIV dragons which wake up are dangerous. They start to fight the little soldiers that live in everybody's blood and protect us. In the beginning the soldiers are strong and they win easily. But the longer they fight, the more tired the good, little soldiers become. Then they can't fight so well and slowly, slowly, the dragon starts to beat the soldiers. That was what it was like with Mommy Mary, Brenda's own mother. She died. The HIV dragon won the battle and Brenda was very, very sad. Brenda was already living with Uncle Pete and Auntie Hannah and Elizah and Molly and Laura when Mommy Mary died. They all went to bury Mommy Mary together. And together they placed a stone and planted flowers on her grave. Pretty, white flowers.

Pg 31, 33

Yet there are people who are afraid of Brenda's little dragon. They say "it's better not to play with Brenda". Or, "You shouldn't sit next to Brenda". Or, "You'd better not drink out of the same glass as Brenda or take a lick of sugar of sugar from the same bowl as her." In fact, they would rather stay as far away from Brenda as possible. Not because of Brenda ... but because of the HIV dragon. And, did you know that this makes Brenda very, very, sad. Almost sadder than when Mommy Mary died. If no-one wants to play with you, if no-one wants to sit next to you at school, if no-one wants to take a pinch of sugar from the bowl with you ... it makes you sad, very sad.

Brenda has a dragon in her blood. But not only Brenda. There are children in our country who have a dragon in their blood. Dark children, fair children, yellow children, big children, small children and tiny, little babies. All these children are very ordinary children who need ordinary friends to play with. To share a glass, to sleep in the same little bed and to take a pinch of sugar from the bowl together.

Bridge to English Reader: Abdul and Fatima (p10)

The little camel is lost in the desert. She cannot see her mother or the other big camels. The little camel feels scared. She has never been alone before. She starts to walk over the sand. She walks and walks. The wind stops blowing and the sun is very, very hot.

The little camel is thirsty and hungry. She has eaten no food and drunk no water for three days. The hump on her back is full of fat. It helps her to stay strong. But now she is very tired. She cannot walk anymore.

Fatima looks at her mother. She says, "Poor little camel must not die. Somebody must help her find her mother. Somebody must help her find her way home".

Thumi and the storytelling festival (pg 36, 37)

I have a dream. One day I will tell stories on TV. That is my dream! I have told nobody about my special dream. I'm afraid they might laugh at me. So I keep my dream a secret. But I think about it every day. And I talk to myself about it, "Thumi Mboya, you are special. And don't you forget it! One day your dream will come true. You will tell your stories on TV."

When bad things happen, when people laugh at me or hurt me, then it is easy to forget about my dream. Then I feel sad and sorry for myself. But Grandmother says I must not let that happen. She says I must sing my song instead. It's a song she heard on the radio. I know all the words. It goes like this:

Hard times are in my face. Things are going wrong. But I can find my special place. And sing my special song.

Via Africa English First Additional Language (Grade 3 Reader 2) What a Feast! (pg 1, 2, 3)

Why are these children at school at six o'clock in the morning? They do not even look sleepy. Their teacher is there to welcome them. I wonder what they are doing. I can hear sounds from the school hall. The children are pitting plates on the table. They will put glasses, cups and mugs on the tables. They will bring spoons, knives and folks. There are colourful banners and flowers. Lovely smells hang in the air. All the Grade 3 classes have planned for this day. They have made their favourite traditional food. They have invited all the teachers and their parents. The guests arrive. "Look how they decorated the hall," says Miss Jacobs. "Mmm ... what's that delicious smell?" asks Mr Ntuli.

Via Africa English First Additional Language (Grade 3 Reader 4) Ozzie finds out (p.28)

Now who builds a nest that ostriches can use? What about secretary birds? They have huge wings just like us. And Sarah Secretary Bird is my friend. Let me go and ask the huge-winged bird. Sara, can I try your nest? Just let me give it one quick test. We want a home that's new and bright and maybe yours would be just right!

Oh no, Ozzie! Look what you've done! Now you've ruined my nest! It wasn't build for big birds like you! Push off! Go and find a bird with huge wings and long legs that runs long the ground like you. Maybe their nest will be alright for you. A bird with huge wings and long legs that runs along the ground? There is only one bird like that! Really Trishy, look at this nest! For ostriches is the best. And look how happy you are, dear, you and your chicks are cosy here!

(b) The results

Title of the Book	Grade Level	Reading level	Readers Age
Brenda has a dragon in her blood (Example 1)	6	Fairly easy to read	10- 11years (US 5th and 6th Graders)
Brenda has a dragon in her blood (Example 2)	4	Easy to read	8- 9years (4th and 5th Graders)
What a Feast	4	Very easy to read	8-9years (4th and 5th Graders)
Abdul and Fatima	3	Easy to read	8-9 years (3rd and 4th Graders)
Grade 3 Reader 4; Ozzie finds out	3	Very, very easy to read.	8- 9 years old (3rd and 4th Graders)
Bridge to English Reader ; Thumi and the storytelling Festival	2	Very easy to read.	6-8 years (1st and 2nd Graders)

APPENDIX B: ASSESSMENT TESTS

D2 – Word Reading Instructions (1/3)

Ask learner to read the words horizontally across from the top line beginning - the up on .....

Read line by line marking errors on mark sheet.

Continue until learner has made 5 consecutive errors. ie 5 errors, one after another ..NOT 5 errors on the whole page

eg   the √   up √   on √   go √   he √   5

at √   jump x you √   box √   fish x 3

one x cup √   van √   if x out x 2

said x water x bird x wood x running   0

10 = Raw Score

Convert RAW SCORE to ABILITY -   Raw Score 10 = Ability 45

Convert ABILITY to READING AGE -   Ability 45 = Reading Age 6 years 11 months

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Word Reading – Actual Assessment

READING AGE_____

NAME		DOB		GRADE	
SCHOOL		EVALUATOR		DATE	

the	up	on	go	he	
at	jump	you	box	fish	
one	cup	van	if	out	
said	water	bird	wood	running	
window	ship	clock	men	dig	
ring	gate	money	thin	light	
coat	brick	oil	heel	paper	
carpet	skin	knock	switch	sport	
building	writing	glove	army	harvest	
travel	climb	ladies	calf	leather	
believe	idea	chain	lawn	collect	
invite	enemy	favour	drab	guest	
territory	behaviour	massive	error	beard	
groceries	encounter	statue	ceiling	transparent	
universal	experience	dough	tentacle	obscure	
character	exert	diameter	curiosity	environment	
mosquito	nomadic	velocity	lethal	divulge	
chaos	emphasise	jeopardy	aborigine	criterion	
				RAW SCORE	

APPENDIX C: RAW SCORE TO ABILITY SCORE

Word Reading Instructions (2/3) - RAW SCORE to ABILITY SCORE

RAW SCORE		ABILITY				
1		10		45		104
2		18		46		105
3		24		47		107
4		28		48		108
5		32		49		110
6		35		50		112
7		38		51		113
8		40		52		115
9		43		53		116
10		45		54		118
11		47		55		120
12		59		56		121
13		52		57		123
14		54		58		125
15		56		59		127
16		58		60		128
17		59		61		130
18		61		62		132
19		63		63		134
20		65		64		136
21		67		65		137
22		69		66		139
23		70		67		141
24		72		68		143
25		74		69		145
26		75		70		147
27		77		71		149
28		79		72		151
29		80		73		153
30		82		74		155
31		83		75		157
32		85		76		160
33		86		77		162
34		88		78		165
35		89		79		167
36		91		80		170
37		92		81		173
38		94		82		176
39		95		83		180
40		97		84		184
41		98		85		188
42		99		86		193
43		101		87		199
44		102		88		200
				89		218

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APPENDIX D: ABILITY TO AGE EQUIVALENT

Word Reading Instructions (3/3) – ABILITY to AGE EQUIVALENT

READING AGE	ABILITY
6	24
6.1	25
6.2	26
6.3	28
6.4	30
6.5	32
6.6	34
6.7	36
6.8	38
6.9	40
6.10	42
6.11	45
7	48
7.1	51
7.2	55
7.3	59
7.4	63
7.5	66
7.6	70
7.7	73
7.8	76
7.9	80
7.10	83
7.11	86
8	89
8.1	91
8.2	94
8.3	97
8.4	100
8.5	104
8.6	108
8.7	112
8.8	115
8.9	118
8.10	120
8.11	122
9	124
9.1	127
9.2	129
9.3	131
9.4	133
9.5	135
9.6	137
9.7	138

READING AGE	ABILITY
9.8	140
9.9	141
9.10	142
9.11	142
10	144
10.1	146
10.2	147
10.3	148
10.4	149
10.5	150
10.6	152
10.7	153
10.8	154
10.9	156
10.10	157
10.11	158
11	160
11.1	161
11.2	162
11.3	163
11.4	164
11.5	164
11.6	165
11.7	166
11.8	166
11.9	167
11.10	167
11.11	168
12	168
12.1	169
12.2	169
12.3	170
12.4	170
12.5	171
12.6	172
12.7	173
12.8	174
12.9	175
12.10	176
12.11	177
13	178
13.1	178
13.2	179
13.3	180

RA	Ability
13.4	181
13.5	182
13.6	183
13.7	183

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APPENDIX D1: EXAMPLE OF THE ASSESSMENT TEST

Word Reading – Actual Assessment

READING AGE ___7. 11___ (9 yrs)

NAME	ANAM	DOB	03|08|28	GRADE	3
SCHOOL	MAKANA	EVALUATOR		DATE 21|08|12	

the ✓	up ✓	on ✓	go ✓	he ✓	4
at ✓	jump ✓	you ✓	box ✓	fish ✓	5
one on	cup ✓	van ✓	if ✓	out at	3
said ✓	water wait	bird bite	wood ✓	running ruffing	2
window	ship ✓	clock clop	men ✓	dig ✓	4
ring ✓	gate ✓	money Monday	thin then	light ✓	3
coat cut	brick gruck	oil ✓	heel ✓	paper ✓	3
carpet capet	skin ✓	knock can knon	switch sweet	sport ✓	2
building building	writing ✓	glove ✓	army Phony	harvest	2
travel ✓	climb ✗	ladies ✓	calf ✓	leather leader	3
believe ✓	idea aidel	chain chne	lawn	collect collet	1
invite invit ✗	enemy	favour	drab	guest	
territory	behaviour	massive	error	beard	
groceries	encounter	statue	ceiling	transparent	
universal	experience	dough	tentacle	obscure	
character	exert	diameter	curiosity	environment	
mosquito	nomadic	velocity	lethal	divulge	
chaos	emphasise	jeopardy	aborigine	criterion	
				RAW SCORE	32

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Word Reading – Actual Assessment

READING AGE_____ 6.7 (8yrs 8mnths)

| NAME | Siphesihle | DOB | 03 | 10 | 30 | GRADE | 3 |
| SCHOOL | MAKANA | EVALUATOR | | | | DATE | 21·08·12 |

the	up _u-p_	on	go	he _ne_	3
at _a e i –ht/_	jump _ju-mp_ _sajesi_	you _yo-u_	box _bo(xh)_	fish	1
one _o-ne_	cup _xup_	van	if	out _o-u-t_	2
said _sed_	water _wa_	bird _bid_	wood _woa o-d_	running _no my_	0
window	ship	clock	men	dig	
ring	gate	money	thin	light	
coat	brick	oil	heel	paper	
carpet	skin	knock	switch	sport	
building	writing	glove	army	harvest	
travel	climb	ladies	calf	leather	
believe	idea	chain	lawn	collect	
invite	enemy	favour	drab	guest	
territory	behaviour	massive	error	beard	
groceries	encounter	statue	ceiling	transparent	
universal	experience	dough	tentacle	obscure	
character	exert	diameter	curiosity	environment	
mosquito	nomadic	velocity	lethal	divulge	
chaos	emphasise	jeopardy	aborigine	criterion	
				RAW SCORE	6

APPENDIX E: READING ACCURACY AND COMPREHENSION TEST AND DICTATION

D2 – Learner Prompt Card (3/3)

C   **SIMPLE STORY COMPREHENSION**

Noni was on her way to school.

She walked to the corner.

She saw a red light.

Then she saw the green light.

Then she went on to school.

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D2 – Actual Assessment (2/2)

B   SCORE SHEET - **READING ACCURACY AND COMPREHENSION**

(Write the learner's response on the line. Circle any incorrectly read words. Read the word for the learner but THEN do not give a mark for reading accuracy)

1. Come and play ball..

What did they want to play with? ....

2. The dog sat up. ....

What animal sat up? ....

3. We like to read books at school..

Where do we like to read books? ....

4. The man has lovely flowers growing in his garden...

What does the man have growing in his garden? ....

5. Vuyo kicked at the door and broke the glass..

How did Vuyo break the glass? ....

6. Everyone had a good time at Sive's party last Tuesday...

When was Sive's party? ....

7. Get ready quickly and you will manage to catch the eight o'clock train.................

Why did they have to get ready quickly? ....

READING SCORE: /7   COMPREHENSION SCORE: /7   **TOTAL**

/14

C   **SIMPLE STORY COMPREHENSION** (Only score comprehension not reading ability)

1) What was the learner's name in the story?   2) Where was the learner going?

3) How was Noni travelling to school?   4) Is Noni a girl or a boy?   Incorrect word list

5) What did she see at the corner?   6) What did she do at the corner?   _____

7) When did she cross the street?   8) Why must we look at the lights?   **SCORE:**   /8

D   **WRITING A SENTENCE**

Dictate the sentence from the Instruction sheet. The child writes on the line below.
SCORE: /8

FOLD OVER

....

APPENDIX E1: EXAMPLES OF THE READING ACCURACY AND COMPREHENSION AND DICTATION

D2 – Actual Assessment (2/2)

B SCORE SHEET - READING ACCURACY AND COMPREHENSION

(Write the learner's response on the line. Circle any incorrectly read words. Read the word for the learner but THEN do not give a mark for reading accuracy)

1. Come and play ball...
What did they want to play with? *play* na ✓

2. The dog sat up. *bog*...
What animal sat up? *bog* (mistakes b /d)

3. We like to read books at school..
Where do we like to read books? *scapl* (school) the correct spelling for the word to the sentence above.

4. The man has lovely flowers growing in his garden...
What does the man have growing in his garden? *flowers* ✓

5. Vuyo kicked at the door and broke the glass..
How did Vuyo break the glass? *Ukoblle* (Answer aise given in Isixhosa)

6. Everyone had a good time at Sive's party last Tuesday.......................................
When was Sive's party? *Puyi* ✗

7. Get ready quickly and you will manage to catch the eight o'clock train...............
Why did they have to get ready quickly? *tah* ✗ (train)

READING SCORE: /7   COMPREHENSION SCORE: 2 /7   TOTAL /14

C SIMPLE STORY COMPREHENSION (Only score comprehension not reading ability)

1) What was the learner's name in the story?   2) Where was the learner going?
nohi ✓   *Skuool* ✓ (spelling)

3) How was Noni travelling to school?   4) Is Noni a girl or a boy?   Incorrect word list
Legs ✗ (walking)   *girl* ✓

5) What did she see at the corner?   6) What did she do at the corner?
Iuhaza (xhosa for green)   *see tile nobos* (one can get the sense though the spelling are wrong)

7) When did she cross the street?   8) Why must we look at the lights?   SCORE: 3 /8
Poor sentence construction. *nobos gheen*   *Kic* ✗

D WRITING A SENTENCE

Dictate the sentence from the Instruction sheet. The child writes on the line below.
SCORE: /8

FOLD OVER *didi you it befoua Youco yo c*

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B SCORE SHEET - READING ACCURACY AND COMPREHENSION

(Write the learner's response on the line. Circle any incorrectly read words. Read the word for the learner but THEN do not give a mark for reading accuracy)

1. Come and play ball...

What did they want to play with? _ball_ ✓ ....

2. The dog sat up. ....

What animal sat up? dog .... ✓ ....

3. We like to read books at school...

Where do we like to read books? school ✓ ....

4. The man has lovely flowers growing in his garden...

What does the man have growing in his garden? flowers ✓ ....

5. Vuyo kicked at the door and broke the glass..

How did Vuyo break the glass? broke ⅹ ....

6. Everyone had a good time at Sive's party last Tuesday.....................................

When was Sive's party? Tuesday ✓ ....

7. Get ready quickly and you will manage to catch the eight o'clock train..................

Why did they have to get ready quickly? train ✓ ....

READING SCORE: /7 COMPREHENSION SCORE: 6 /7 **TOTAL**

/14

C SIMPLE STORY COMPREHENSION (Only score comprehension not reading ability)

1) What was the learner's name in the story?
NoNi ✓

2) Where was the learner going?
school ✓

3) How was Noni travelling to school?
work ⍺

4) Is Noni a girl or a boy?
girl ✓

Incorrect word list

_____

5) What did she see at the corner?
red

6) What did she do at the corner?
green ⍺

_____

_____

7) When did she cross the street?
gree ⍺

8) Why must we look at the lights?
~~to~~ look ✓

SCORE: 3 /8

D WRITING A SENTENCE

Dictate the sentence from the Instruction sheet. The child writes on the line below.
SCORE: /8

FOLD OVER

did you it be for you kem to school

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APPENDIX F: LEARNER INTERVIEWS

Interviews about Reading (Grade 3 ESL)

Name_____

Date_____

A. Emphasis: General reading (Value of Reading)

1. Did you read anything at home yesterday? _____What?
    _____

2. Who do you know that likes reading? _____

3. Do you have someone who reads to you?   _____Yes   _____No
    Who do you like to read to you? _____

4. What kinds of stories do you like? _____

5. Tell me the name of your favourite story_____

6. Do you have any books at home? _____ Yes   _____ No
    How many books do you think you have? _____

7. Do you have any books at school (in your desk/ storage area/locker/book bag) today that you
    are reading?_____ Tell me about them _____
    _____

8. Do you have any books right now that you'd like to read? _____ Tell me about
    them._____

9. How did you find about these books? _____

10. Do you think you are a good reader? _____ Yes _____ No
    Why and why not?_____

11. When you are reading and come across a word you don't know what do you do? _____
    _____

12. Why do we read_____

13. I think reading is_____
    ☐ A boring way to spent time
    ☐ An Ok way to spent time
    ☐ An interesting way to spend time
    ☐ A great way to spend time

14. Reading is _____
    ☐ Very easy for me
    ☐ Kind of easy for me
    ☐ Kind of hard for me
    ☐ Very hard for me

15. When someone gives me a book for a present, I feel_____.
    ☐ Very happy
    ☐Sort of happy

☐Sort of unhappy

☐Unhappy

B. Self-concept as a reader

16. Are you able to learn in two languages (IsiXhosa and English)?_____

_____

17. Are you able to read in IsiXhosa?_____

_____

18. Are you able read to in English?_____

19. How do you feel about reading in English? _____

_____

20. How do you feel about writing in English?

_____

_____

21. How confident are you to speak English? _____

_____

22. How confident are you to speak in IsiXhosa?

_____

_____

23. What do you do when you don't understand what you are reading about? _____

_____

24. What do you want to be when you grow up? _____

APPENDIX G: PICTURE LIBRARY

Picture	A	B
Picture 1: School library		
Picture 2: Classroom reading corner		
Picture 3: Seating Arrangement		
Picture 4; Reminder of the rules		

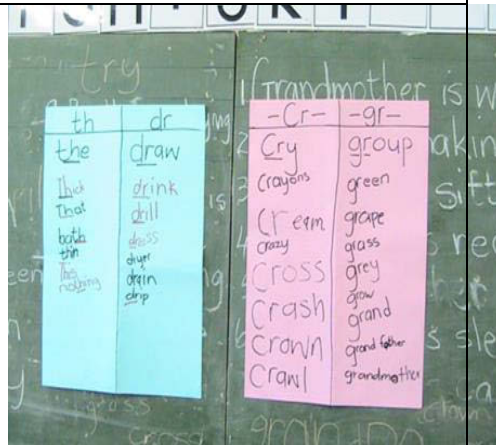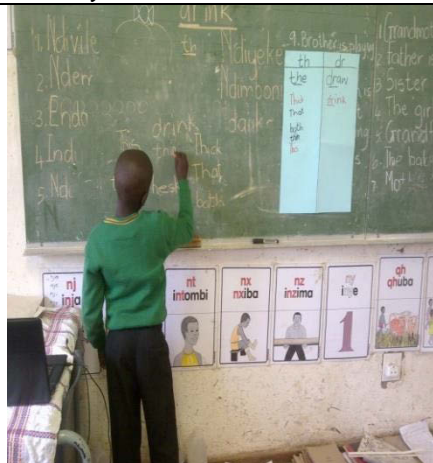|		
Picture 5: Attendance	*2 learners attended school on this day*	*Attendance improved as the sessions progressed*
Picture 6: Phonics activity		
Picture 7: Examples of word games		
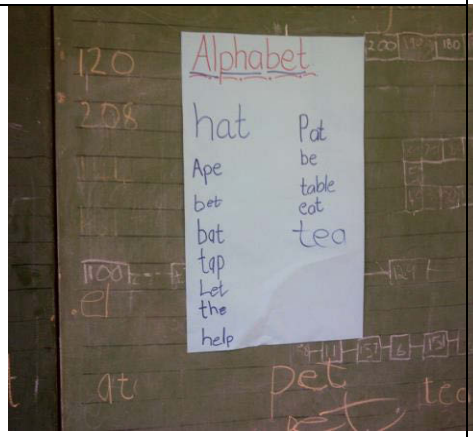
Picture 8: Sequencing activity		
Picture 9: Guest Reader		
Picture 10: Watching of the video stories		

Picture 11: *Learners at the* *school library*		
Picture 12: *Group work*		
Picture 13: *Learner* *feedback*		
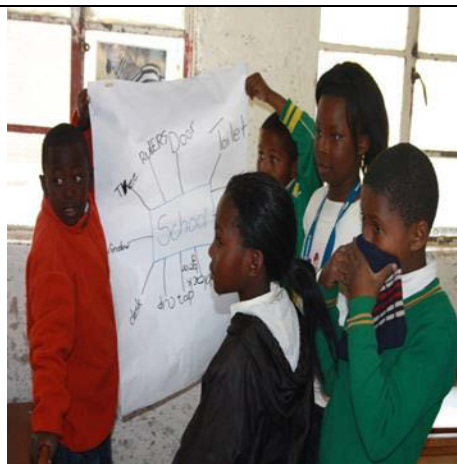
Picture 14: Pre reading activity	Explicit vocabulary learning	Picture walk
Picture 15: Choosing books		
Picture 16: Independent reading		
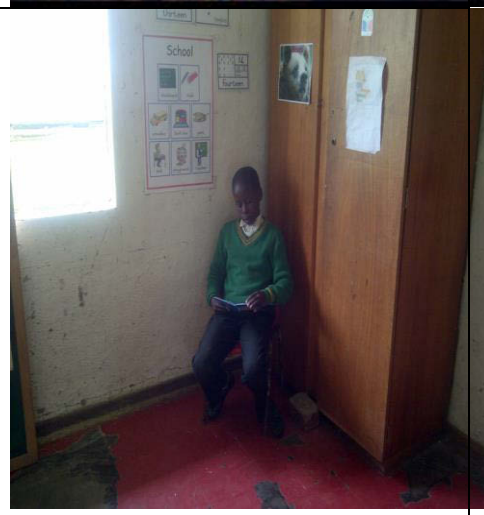
Picture 17: *Learners read* *aloud*		
Picture 18: *Shared reading*		
Picture 19: *Guided reading&* *Writing*		

Picture 20: Learners doing their presentations		
Picture 21: Last session (use of rewards)		

APPENDIX H: LETTER TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P O Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140
Tel: +27 (0)46 603 8383/4
Fax: +27 (0)46 622 8028
Email: education@ru.ac.za

DATE: 02 August 2012

To whom it may concern,

Dear Sir / Madam

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

CANDIDATE: SIBHEKINKOSI ANNA TSHUMA

STUDENT NUMBER: 12T1820

This letter is to confirm that Sibhekinkosi Anna Tshuma is a registered student in the Education Faculty at Rhodes University. She has been registered for a Master's in Education.

Anna is a masters student in a large research programme funded by the European Union in conjunction with the Department of Higher Education and Training. Its overall goal is to examine the nexus between quality teaching and quality education programmes, and by so doing, improve the quality of teacher education programmes on the one hand, and teaching practices on the other hand. The overall research programme has obtained ethical clearance from Rhodes University as well as from the Provincial Department of Education.

Anna will be required to conduct research for her thesis. This letter serves to request permission for her to conduct research in your school for this purpose.

Her proposal was approved by the Education Higher Degrees Committee on 24 May 2012. The proposal complied with the ethical clearance requirements of the Faculty of Education.

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Yours Sincerely

Prof J. Baxen

Chair: Higher Degrees Committee

Deputy Dean: Research

Faculty of Education

APPENDIX I: LETTER TO PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

DATE 30 July 2012

To whom it may concern,

Dear Sir / Madam

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

CANDIDATE: SIBHEKINKOSI ANNA ISHUMA
STUDENT NUMBER: 12T1820

Dear Parent/ Guardian

This letter is to confirm that Sibhekinkosi Anna Ishuma is a registered student in the Education Faculty at Rhodes University. She has been registered for a Master's in Education.

Anna is a master's student in a large research programme funded by the European Union in conjunction with the Department of Higher Education and Training. Its overall goal is to examine the nexus between quality teaching and quality education programmes, and by so doing, improve the quality of teacher education programmes on the one hand, and teaching practices on the other hand. The overall research programme has obtained ethical clearance from Rhodes University as well as from the Provincial Department of Education.

Anna will be doing her research at Mokana Primary School with a l Grade 3's at the school with the help of their teacher. She will be starting an English reading club so as to improve the learners reading and comprehension skills.

Learners are expected to attend the reading club twice a week for an hour for 12 consecutive weeks in the school premises. The reading club activities will be done after school. She, therefore, seeks permission to have your child to take part in this reading club as part of the research activity.
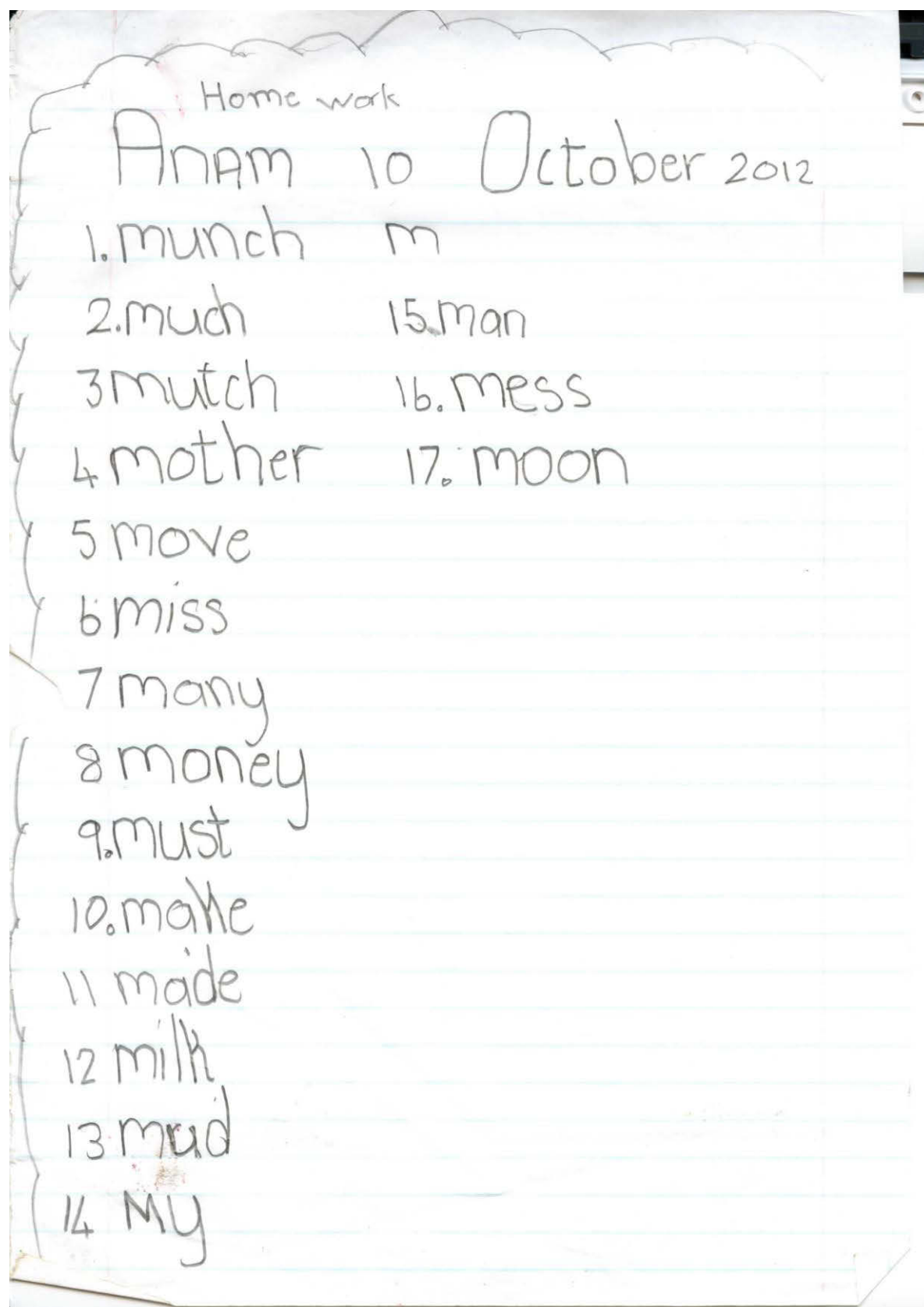
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P O Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140
Tel: +27 (0)46 603 8383/4
Fax: +27 (0)46 622 8028
Email: education@ru.ac.za

Your cooperation will be well appreciated.

Yours Faithful

S. A. Tshuma

APPENDIX J: LEARNER HOME WORK

Home work

Anam 10 October 2012

1. munch   m

2. much   15. man

3 mutch   16. mess

4 mother   17. moon

5 move

6 miss

7 many

8 money

9. must

10. make

11 made

12 milk

13 mud

14 My

APPENDIX K: BOOKS READ AND VIDEOS WATCHED

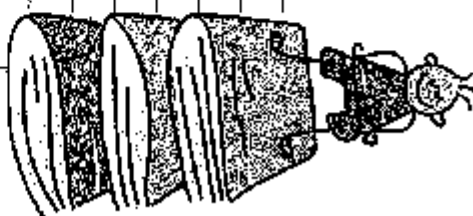| Week	Books read	Videos Watched
1	Handa's Surprise	• Eight silly monkeys (Iinkawu ezisiBhozo ezisileyo) • I can go to school (Ndingaya esikolweni) • Coral reef (Ikorale yaselwandle)
2	The Long Trousers	• Eight silly monkeys (Iinkawu ezisiBhozo ezisileyo) • I can go to school (Ndingaya esikolweni) • Coral reef (Ikorale yaselwandle)
3	Zanzibar Road	• Ten wishing stars (Iinkwenkwezi ezilitshumi zemiNqweno) • Who stole the cookie from the cookie jar (Ngubani obe ibhiskiti kwi jokhwe yeebhistiki) • I see a monster (Ndibona igongqongqo)
4	Zanzibar Road, chapter 3 Where is little Chicco?	• Hungry bunny (Umvundlana olambileyo) • I know an old lady who swallowed a fly (Kukho ixhegwazana elidala endilaziyo elaginya impukane) • Jungle tumble (Iintshukumo zasendle)
5	The bride who had nothing	• Eency weency spider (USigcawu) • When I grow up (Xa ndimdala) • The moon followed me home (Inyanga indilandele ukuya ekhaya)
6	Zebra and the crocodile The Hare and the Tortoise	• Ten wishing stars (Iinkwenkwezi ezilitshumi zemiNqweno) • Who stole the cookie from the cookie jar (Ngubani obe ibhiskiti kwi jokhwe yeebhistiki) • I see a monster (Ndibona igongqongqo)
7	The magic rocks The ugly duckling.	• Hungry bunny (Umvundlana olambileyo) • I know an old lady who swallowed a fly (Kukho ixhegwazana elidala endilaziyo elaginya impukane) • Jungle tumble (Iintshukumo zasendle)

APPENDIX L: CLASS ATTENDANCE REGISTER

Weeks	Daily attendance of 20 learners			
	Tuesday	*Wednesday*	*Thursday*	
Week 1	2	9	17	
Week 2	4	10	5	Raining
Week 3	15	17	20	
Week 4	18	18	18	Raining
Week 5	Sports day	18	17	
Week 6	16	20	20	18
Week 7	18	14	18	

NB: Total attendance marked in red, indicate attendance during cold and rainy days.

APPENDIX M: READING LOGS

Books I've Read

Name _____

Book	Author	Date Finished	Rating

www.ActivityVillage.co.uk - Keeping Kids Busy
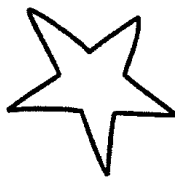
Books I've Read

Name Limnanch
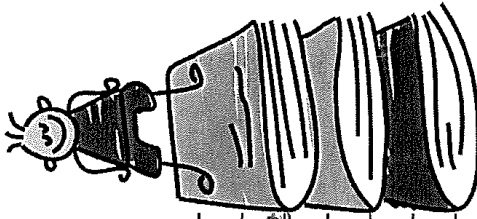
Book	Author	Date Finished	Rating
Zanzibar Road	Niki Daly	24	enToy ment
Rosie 9 S	By Pat Hutchins	24	Boring
funny fish	Bry Chta	24	entoyme
the long Trousers	shoyle Bester	24	enJoy
A cake for Rabbit	Avelh Davidson	25	enJoy
Bridge to English	Phillida kingwll	26	enjoyment
Six little beetles	little Handas J	30	enJoyment
Zebra and crocodile	little Handas	30	enJoy ment
first Additional Language	Term	20	enJoy ment
basic education	throw	26	enJoy
uwim Iwenkos	koto	28	enJoy
Crocodile and zebra	little Handas	14	enJoy
Magic Road	term	15	enJoy
Kalu duckleng	throw	20	enJoy
Read about Names	Phillida kinwan	20	enJoy
Write about your home	Learning	20	enJoy
choose a word from ba	Learning	20	enJoy
This is a picture	koto	20	Boring

APPENDIX N: SEQUENCE ACTIVITY

Limnandi and SiSipho

The son is in the spred.

The Son is cut the bread.

The son is eat the bread.

Son   Son   Son

Son

Son

Siphokazi and Anam ~~Anam~~ and Siphokazi

1. The men is took ~~the sha~~ the sh

2. and war the shat and is finish

Shirt   Wear

shirt   Wear

shirt   Wear

C

C

Sinazo end yamAkela.

STORy.

1. baby is wrayting. ~~ep~~ eleta.
2. baby is invlop.
3. e'baby is post ~~books, blocks~~
   ~~bhotts~~ box

___

~~1.Sot~~ ~~1.Girl~~ 1.girl is Writing
~~Letter~~

~~2.go~~ ~~2.girl~~

1. Letter   Letter   Letter.
2. ~~E~~ Envelope Envelope   Envelope.
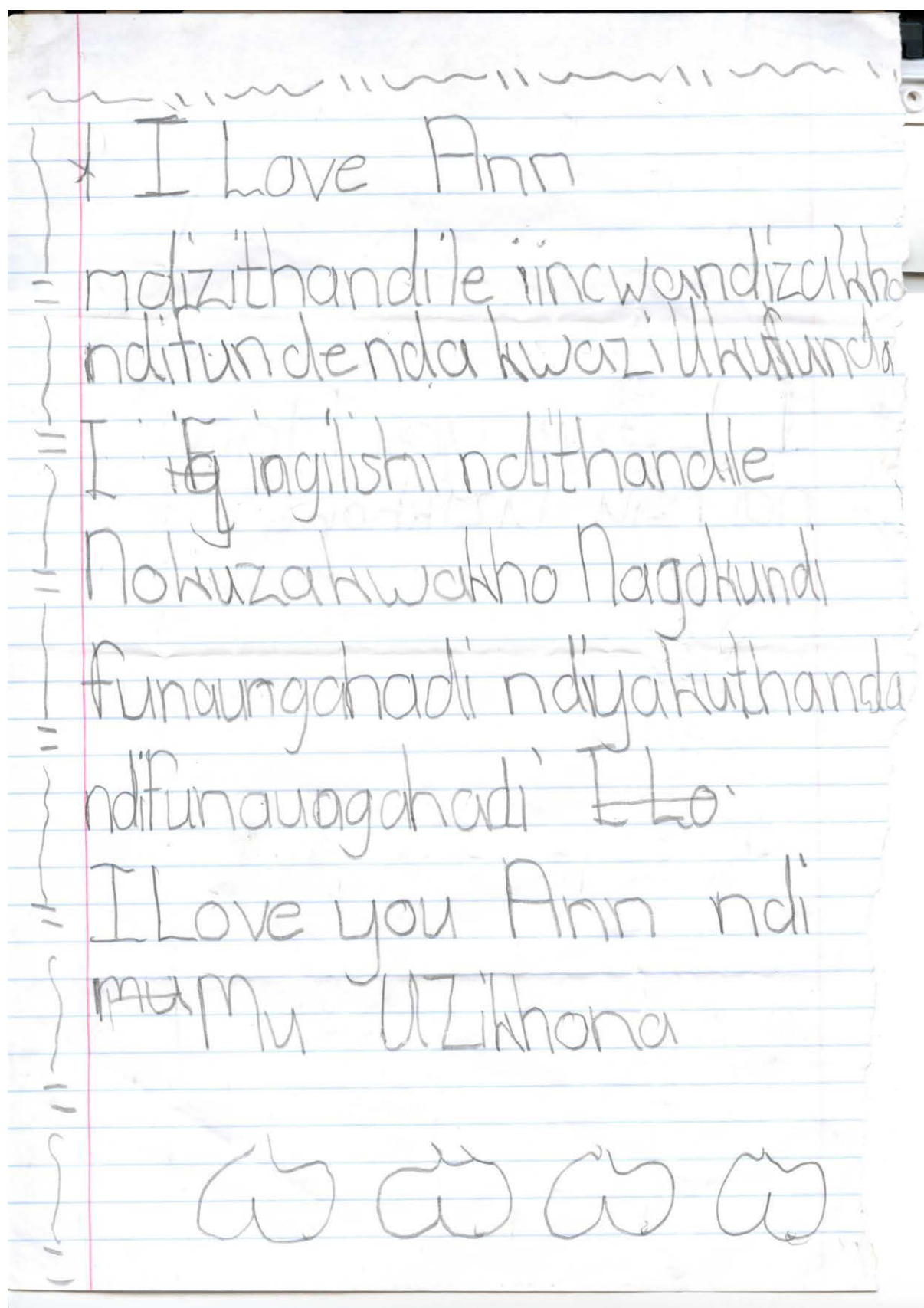3. ~~tt~~ Writing Writing.   Writing
4. Write   Write   Write

Siphokazi November 2012

hat	th	dr
ape	thick	drink
bet	then	drain
bat	then	drash
tap	thed	drim
et	thet	drak
the	thes	drink
help	thek	drait
be	thep	drade
table	d	dr
cat	dash	
tea	frat	drade
	frade	grat
	frown	grant
	from	
	frow	grink
	frim	

210

dred   They   These
           draw

Th   dr

1. This
2. the
3. they
4. that
4. hese
5. here
6. hrows
7. heir
8. hen
9. hank
10. hin

1. dress dress
2. drink
3. dry
4. draw
5. dragor
6. drang

APPENDIX P: LETTERS FROM THE LEARNERS

I Love Ann
ndizithandile iincwadizakho
nditundenda kwazi Uhufunda
I Eng ingilishi ndithandile
Nokuzahwakho Nagokundi
funaungdhadi ndiyakuthanda
ndifunauogahadi ELo
I Love you Ann ndi
mumu UZikhona
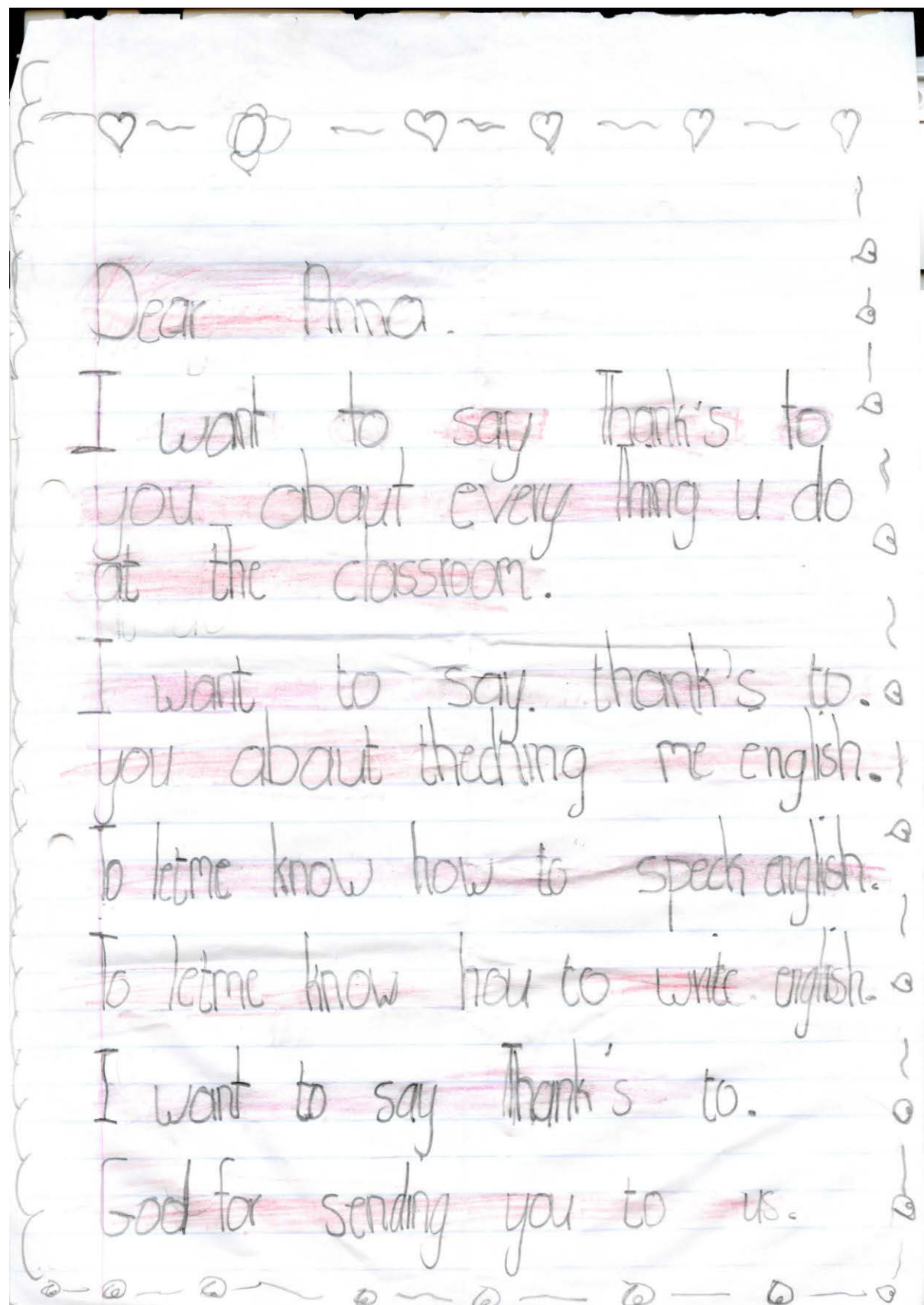
Dear Anna.

I want to say Thank's to you about every thing u do at the classroom.

I want to say thank's to you about theching me english. To letme know how to spech english.

To letme know hou to write english.

I want to say Thank's to. God for sending you to us.

Hello anna

I enjoy your books

and your computur

and you smart

and I Love your dress

and I Loveyou Anna

bye bye Anna

We Love you and your

storys

Thank you Anïa you are
a star to me, you teach me
how to read a book and
Write my name and papers
I love you Anïa
You are a Star
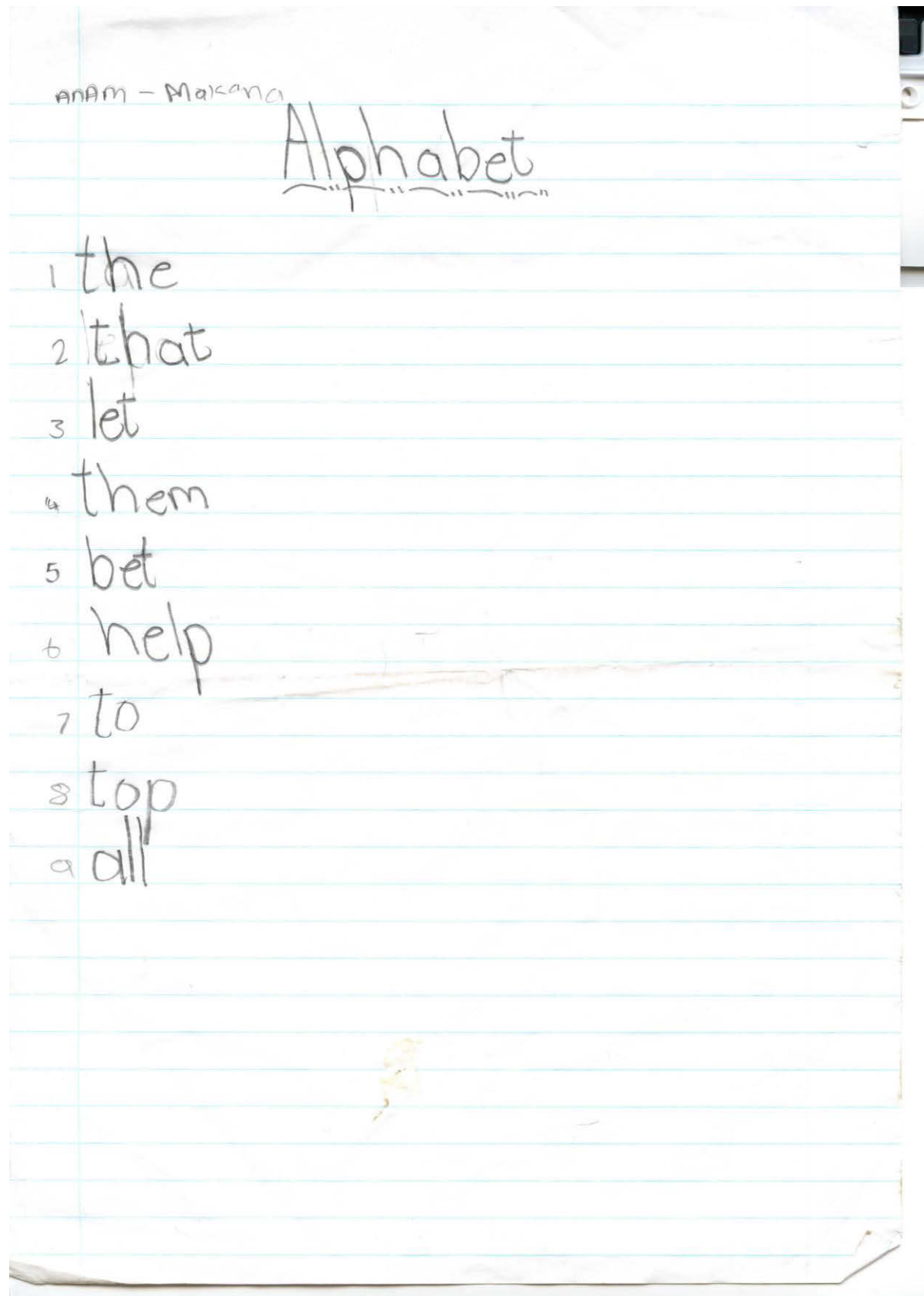For all the things you
Make to me I love
You Anna
YouareRocking
Anna!!Anna//Anna

APPENDIX Q: WORD GAME ACTIVITY

AnAm — Maksana

Alphabet

1 the

2 that

3 let

4 them

5 bet

6 help

7 to

8 top

9 all

Sinovuyo   6 November 2012
                Alphabet.

1. Activ   13. Tebul
2. Look   14. The
3. Appel   15. About
4. Plastig   16. touch
5. Happy   17. powar
6. Flap   18. laugh
7. bat   19. bat
8. Below   20. Life
9. Bring
10. Elephat
11. Example
12. Egg

yamikela 13 November

alphabet

1. bet
2. hall
3. tap
4. pail
5. bath
6. that
7. tep
8. hat
9. tah
10. hep
11. beh
12. hap

13. help