AN EXPLORATION OF STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES USED IN TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED GRADE 10 EFAL CLASSROOMS IN MPUMALANGA, SOUTH AFRICA

by

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I hereby declare that this dissertation is entirely my work and that all sources utilised or quoted in it have been properly cited and acknowledged.

I further certify that I ran the dissertation through an originality checker to ensure that it complies with the standards for originality.

Furthermore, neither the complete nor a portion of the contents of this dissertation have been sent to the University of South Africa or any other university for examination.

_____   _11 August 2023_____

Signature   Date

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the following special people:

First, my lovely wife for always encouraging me and giving me time to focus on my studies.

Second, my beloved mother for believing in me and for all the emotional support. For you, I made all this work possible.

As a final gift to my kids, I hope they will be motivated to aim higher.

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ABSTRACT

Research indicates that a substantial number of students entering higher education institutions lack the foundational academic reading skills, strategies, and approaches necessary for meaningful engagement with texts in their respective fields. This deficiency in reading skills poses a significant challenge to students' academic success. Many studies highlight that the utilisation of effective reading strategies and approaches significantly enhances the reading comprehension of English first additional language (EFAL) learners in high schools. Despite scholarly attention to the significance of reading and the challenges teachers confront in its implementation, a clear void exists in the research concerning the precise reading strategies and approaches utilised by EFAL teachers in the South African high school context.

This study aims to address this gap by investigating the use of reading strategies and approaches by Grade 10 EFAL teachers across six schools in the Bushbuckridge region of Mpumalanga, South Africa. The study seeks to answer the following research questions, (a) What specific reading strategies and approaches do Grade 10 EFAL teachers in the Bushbuckridge region employ during the instruction of reading comprehension? (b) What challenges do Grade 10 EFAL teachers encounter while implementing these strategies and approaches for reading comprehension? (c) How are reading strategies delineated in the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12?

Schema theory (Bartlett, 1932; Nunan, 1999) guides this study, offering analytical insights into the collected findings and enriches the study's findings. Through a qualitative and interpretive case study design, the researcher gathered in-depth descriptions from teachers, learners, and the curriculum assessment policy document (CAPS). To explore teachers' usage of reading strategies and approaches, data were collected through online semi-structured interviews, online focus group discussions, and documentary analysis. This study's thematic analysis reveals disparities in Grade 10 EFAL instruction. Despite the integration of reading strategies, their implementation falls below expectations. This is exemplified by teachers providing summaries due to perceived learner incapacity, contrary to the pedagogical ideal of encouraging independent learning. Furthermore, a marked deficiency in higher-order reading skills among EFAL learners, including skimming and keyword identification, undermines

effective summarisation and English text comprehension. The study also highlights a distinct divergence between proficient and struggling readers. Proficient readers adeptly deploy varied strategies to decode complex textual meanings, whereas struggling readers grapple even with basic word meanings and struggle to employ these strategies effectively, in contrast to schema theory's emphasis on active learner participation in constructing meaning.

This study holds valuable implications for both EFAL teachers and learners. By shedding light on the crucial role of reading strategies and approaches in enhancing the reading capabilities of EFAL learners, it enriches their comprehension of the subject. However, the identified shortfall in the use of strategies by teachers demands a comprehensive assessment of their current teaching approaches in the research context of reading. Additionally, it underscores the urgency of instituting a continuous training program aimed at enhancing teachers' competencies. This emphasis on teacher development is pivotal to empowering EFAL learners, ensuring they are well-prepared for their pursuits in higher education institutions. This study emphasises the need for an immediate reevaluation of EFAL teachers' instructional strategies in the context of reading. This should be coupled with a sustained commitment to ongoing training initiatives, thereby equipping teachers with the tools to effectively elevate the reading proficiencies of EFAL learners.

Keywords: Reading strategies, reading approaches, EFAL, FAL, Reading comprehension, Grade 10 EFAL learners, Prior knowledge, Inference, Schema theory, Case study

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Abbreviation and acronyms	Meaning
ANA	Annual National Assessment
BA	Bachelor of Arts
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
COVID-19	Coronavirus
CTL	Contextual Teaching and Learning
D	Decoding
DPW	Department of Public Works
EFAL	English First Additional Language
ESL	English Second Language
FAL	First Additional Language
HL	Home Language
HOTS	Higher Order Thinking Skills.
LC	Language Comprehension
LER	learner–teacher ratio
L1	L1 First Language
L2	L2 Second Language
NEEDU	National Education Evaluation and Development Unit
NRP	National Reading Panel
NSES	National School Effectiveness Study
ODeL	Open Distance e-Learning
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RC	Reading Comprehension
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SACMEQ	Southern and East African Consortium for Monitoring Educational
SBI	Strategy Based Instructions
SMT	School Management Team
SVR	The Simple View of Reading
Unisa	University of South Africa

CHAPTER 1

USING EFFECTIVE READING STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES TO ENHANCE EFAL LEARNERS' READING COMPREHENSION: AN INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

"The capacity to learn is a gift; the ability to learn is a skill; the willingness to learn is a choice."

– Brian Herbert

1.1 Introduction

The demands of the 21st-century 'knowledge economy' necessitate South African school-going learners to engage with more complex levels of reading. However, this imperative is counteracted by research indicating persistently low literacy levels among South African students across various educational contexts (Simelane, 2017; Nkosi & Farhangpou, 2017; Zano, 2022). Despite these challenges, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding how high school teachers can effectively employ reading strategies and approaches to enhance their learners' reading comprehension skills. This study addresses this gap by investigating the utilisation of reading strategies and approaches by Grade 10 English First Additional Language (EFAL) teachers in the Bushbuckridge region of South Africa. The primary aim is to uncover the methods these teachers employ to bolster the reading comprehension of Grade 10 EFAL learners. Additionally, the study investigates the obstacles faced by both teachers and learners in implementing diverse reading strategies and approaches within the teaching and learning process.

In June 2020, during the midst of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa addressed the nation. He conveyed a critical directive in his State of the Nation Address, emphasising the importance that all children should achieve the ability to comprehend texts by the age of ten. This mandate was aligned with the government's overarching goals for the upcoming decade. The President highlighted the profound significance of early reading as the cornerstone that shapes a child's educational trajectory not only through school but

also throughout higher education and future employment opportunities (President Cyril Ramaphosa, 2019). To grasp the full implication of this proclamation, I found it essential to investigate the literacy landscape of South Africa, especially within the context of school reading. In this chapter, I aim to contextualise my study by discussing comprehensive datasets that include the Annual National Assessment (ANA) data from 2012, 2013, and 2014; insights from the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) spanning the years 2005 to 2010; findings from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Studies (PIRLS) conducted in 2016; and the valuable insights provided by the National Education and Development Unit (NEEDU) in 2012.

Given that my study is centered around reading literacy, it is crucial to briefly outline the persistent struggle of South African learners, particularly in reading proficiency, over the past ten years. Building on this crucial backdrop, I elaborate on the rationale behind my specific choice of research topic. Subsequently, I explore the challenges and intricacies I aim to explore, along with the fundamental questions that have emerged because of my preliminary investigations. Wrapping up the chapter, I outline the structured approach that will guide me in addressing the identified challenges and questions. This roadmap serves as a compass for the subsequent sections of my study, outlining the path forward in my quest to comprehensively understand the multifaceted issues at hand.

1.2   Background to the study

Research has shown that many first-year students entering higher education institutions do not have the necessary basic academic literacy skills nor possess approaches and strategies to engage meaningfully with texts in their disciplines. A major hindrance to students' success is their limited reading strategies (Bharuthram, 2017; Fesi & Mncube, 2021; Mobley & Ramsay-Jordan, 2022; Zano, 2022). It is well-established that South African students consistently perform poorly on literacy assessments. This assertion is supported not only by domestic evaluations like the ANA but also by international assessments such as the SACMEQ studies spanning 1995-1998, 1998-2004, and 2005-2010, as well as the PIRLS of 2016 and the NEEDU report from 2012. These extensive investigations collectively underscore the subpar

reading abilities of South African students, particularly when it comes to reading comprehension.

The significance of these findings is reinforced by various international studies (Adams & Bruce, 1980; Al Roomy, 2022; Cohen, 2014; Hall & Steiner, 2020), in conjunction with the outcomes of PIRLS, SACMEQ, and local Department of Education (DoE) systemic tests such as ANA and NEEDU. All these studies converge to highlight that the reading comprehension skills of South African learners fall below the expected standards of achievement, as highlighted by Howie, Venter, Van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, & Scherman, (2008). Furthermore, regional comparisons within SACMEQ II (2000) and SACMEQ (2005-1998) have consistently shown unsatisfactory scores in South African Grade 6 reading comprehension, revealing minimal progress over a span of seven years (Pretorius & Spaull, 2016). In the SACMEQ Phase III assessment, South Africa's education system ranked 10th out of 14 participating countries in reading proficiency (Pretorius & Spaull, 2016).

In response to these challenges, the DoE has undertaken several curriculum adjustments and reforms since 1994, as part of a broader initiative to enhance education nationwide (Rapetsoa, 2017). The introduction of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) curriculum aimed to offer a more structured and sequenced approach to literacy instruction, with an emphasis on explicit articulation, pacing, time allocation, and educational outcomes. However, despite these efforts, the persistently disappointing literacy performance of South African learners underscores the complexity and depth of the issue.

One of the most pivotal transformations catalysed by South Africa's democratisation in 1994 was the amalgamation of the previously fragmented education systems operating at both the 'national' and 'provincial' tiers (DBE, 2011). This structural change was driven by the aim to achieve a more equitable allocation of resources and, in turn, to ensure uniform access to quality learning opportunities for all South African learners (Graven, M 2014: Rapetsoa, 2017). Democratisation sought to bridge historical disparities. Post-1994, the South African government has actively embarked on a series of initiatives designed to bolster literacy levels across the nation. These multifaceted endeavours encompass a range of literacy and reading programs,

infrastructural enhancements for schools located in previously underserved areas, and comprehensive teacher training initiatives (Coffi, 2017; Zano, 2020). However, despite these concerted efforts, reports continue to emerge highlighting persistently low reading literacy rates among South African school learners. To contextualise the situation, it is crucial to consider the outcomes of South African learners in terms of reading literacy from 2012 to 2014, as presented in Table 1.1. This data provides a tangible snapshot of the prevailing reading proficiency landscape within South African schools during that period.

Table 1.1: South African learners' overall performance for ANA

Year	Grade	Percentage
2012	09	35%
2013	09	33%
2014	09	33%

The data presented in Table 1.1 indicates that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) reported consistent underperformance in reading literacy among Grade 9 First Additional Language (FAL) learners from 2012 to 2014. Specifically, in 2012, Grade 9 EFAL learners achieved a reading literacy score of 35%, which dropped to 33% in both 2013 and 2014. These concerning statistics have prompted a range of interventions at both the national and provincial levels to address the persistently low levels of literacy proficiency.

Recognising the urgency of the situation, the South African DoE elevated reading literacy to a paramount priority within education as early as 2004. Consequently, reading received heightened emphasis and attention in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (DBE, 2011). This strategic move was a direct response to the need for targeted measures to enhance literacy skills across the country. However, as stated by Howie, Venter, E., Van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Du Toit, & Archer, (2006). in the foundation and intermediate schooling phases, the reading outcome is:

> placed together with other expected language outcomes associated with overall language competency" (DoE, 2003). Hence, although government polices about reading do exist, these policies "may not be explicit enough to provide the level of support that teachers require to guide their classroom reading instruction practices (Howie et al., 2006:9).

The implementation of the National Reading Strategy (NRS) by the South African DoE in 2008 aimed to encourage a culture of lifelong readership. Addressing the challenge that many teachers lacked the necessary skills to effectively teach reading, the NRS identified teacher training, developmental programs, and support as crucial components (DoE, 2008). Over the years, the DoE has conducted numerous national assessments of learner achievement and has participated in various international student achievement studies. Unfortunately, the findings consistently indicate worrying levels of poor reading literacy performance among learners. In 2006, South Africa took part in the PIRLS to assess the reading abilities of Grade 4 learners. The study also examined the development of reading proficiency from Grade 4 to Grade 5. South African Grade 4 learners achieved an average score of 253, while Grade 5 learners scored an average of 302. Despite this modest growth, the scores still fell significantly below the international benchmark of 500 points (Howie et al., 2008). A subsequent participation in PIRLS in 2011 highlighted that South African Grade 4 learners continued to underperform compared to their international peers, even on a simplified version of the assessment (Howie, Van Staden, Tshele, Dowse & Zimmerman, 2012).

The Systemic Evaluations Programme, which focused on Grades 3 and 6, was conducted nationally in 2001, 2004, and 2007. While there was a 6% increase in reading proficiency between 2001 and 2007, the Grade 3 results remained troubling in 2007, with an average reading score of 36% (DoE report, 2009). In 2014, a comprehensive national diagnostic report was conducted to provide in-depth insights into learners' knowledge and skills demonstrated in the Annual National Assessment (ANA) tests. The analysis indicated an improvement in fundamental reading literacy skills but highlighted a considerable challenge in responding to questions requiring higher-order cognitive skills. For instance, in Grade 6, scores ranged from 0 to 94%, with the most frequent score being 44%. Similarly, in Grade 9, scores ranged from 0 to 89%, with a modal score of 31% (DBE, 2014). These diagnostic findings are envisioned to inform effective teaching and learning strategies, curriculum implementation, and management support at various levels. The report also equips school management teams (SMTs) with information to identify areas where individual instructors might require specialised assistance in different teaching and learning facilitation strategies.

Numerous scholars (Alexander, 2006; Horne, 2002; Le Cordeur, 2010; Howie et al., 2008; Pretorius & Machete, 2004; Pretorius & Ribbens, 2005) have conducted studies that converge on a common observation: learners are consistently falling short of grade-level reading expectations. A notable illustration comes from Horne (2002), who reveals a distressing reality wherein numerous Grade 12 learners, despite their advanced stage, exhibit reading levels akin to those of Grade 4 learners. While the significance of language proficiency is acknowledged, Baatjies (2003) points out a critical misperception: the presumption that learners have firmly grasped the fundamentals of literacy by the end of Grade 4. Consequently, challenges faced by learners in higher grades are often misattributed to 'language' difficulties rather than recognising them as 'reading' challenges. In opposition to this assumption, Pretorius, and Machete (2004) emphasised almost two decades ago that poor literacy scores cannot be exclusively pinned on the complexities of learning an additional language. Their research highlighted that both teachers and learners grapple with reading and writing, irrespective of whether the medium is African languages or English. This viewpoint finds support in the PIRLS results from 2006 and 2011, revealing that learners who undertook comprehension tests in their native African language performed the poorest (Howie et al., 2008; Howie et al., 2012). These findings challenge the notion that using an African language as a medium of instruction inherently guarantees comprehension; instead, learners might possess spoken proficiency but struggle with reading comprehension in their mother tongue. This intricacy underscores that the neglect of reading instruction, both within and beyond the classroom, can hinder the attainment of high levels of reading proficiency. Matjila and Pretorius (2004) amplify this point, contending that even proficiency in one's native tongue does not necessarily translate to reading capability. Their research further discloses that learners' reading proficiency in both languages is significantly below their developmental stage, with their reading performance akin to Grade 3 to 4 levels. Adding to the complexity, Bharuthram (2012) elucidates that the ramifications of poor literacy at lower primary school levels often cascade into higher education institutions. Many students grappling with academic challenges in tertiary education carry forward the legacy of inadequate literacy from their earlier schooling years. These collective findings underscore the multifaceted nature of the issue, highlighting the need for comprehensive approaches that address reading proficiency not only in lower primary school settings but also extend into high schools and higher education institutions.

According to Pretorius (2002: 44), learners with reading difficulties are subject to "a negative cycle of failed reading outcomes and academic underperformance". Alexander (2006: 2) notes that:

> Language medium policy and practice in and of themselves are a necessary but not sufficient explanation of poor academic performance. Many other factors are part of the causality. Of these, socio-economic status, teaching method, and parental involvement are probably the most important.

While the primary objective of reading instruction is to facilitate learners' comprehension, an array of anecdotal evidence and local studies underscore an imbalance in the allocation of instructional time. Teachers disproportionately emphasise mechanical word skills over encouraging reading for meaning (Murris, 2014; Erasmus, 2022; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016; Verbeek, 2010). However, a substantial body of research, spanning back to Brown and Palinscar (1984), demonstrates that explicit teaching of reading strategies can significantly enhance comprehension abilities. The critical domain of comprehension instruction is not being afforded the requisite attention it demands within South African secondary school classrooms. This discrepancy in instructional focus is highlighted by Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) and Bharuthram (2012), who identify two distinct issues: poor pedagogical knowledge and instructional focus.

A foundational tenet is that both basic decoding skills and comprehension should be concurrently nurtured throughout reading instruction to achieve optimal effectiveness. Despite some teachers dedicating more time to decoding mechanics than to meaning making, the mere presence of focused instruction does not guarantee productive teaching outcomes. The persistently deficient performance observed in various literacy studies among South African learners underscores that teachers might not be effectively nurturing the fundamental reading skills that underpin enhanced comprehension (Pretorius, 2015; Bharuthram, 2012). This notion highlights that even though instructional time is seemingly allocated, it might not be wielded optimally to cultivate core reading skills. The ramifications of this scenario are clearly reflected in subpar reading scores, which attest to the inadequate development of even foundational reading skills. Consequently, learners' abilities to 'read to learn' and subsequently excel academically is compromised. Despite this gap, a significant portion of South African classrooms continues to insufficiently emphasise meaning

and comprehension. Formal instruction in comprehension remains conspicuously absent (Linake, 2021; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016; Zano, 2020; Zimmerman, 2014a).

Several scholars accentuate that teachers' attitudes toward reading and their own instructional practices may contribute to learners' poor literacy levels (Borg, 2003; Erasmus, 2022; Linake, 2021; Owen & Mantlane, 2017; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016; Rule & Land, 2017). Borg (2003: 81) refers to such knowledge as teacher cognition: "what teachers think, know and believe and the relationship of these mental constructs to what teachers do in the language classroom". This notion sheds light on the intricate interplay between teachers' beliefs and the instructional strategies they employ, further influencing the reading proficiency outcomes of their learners. Teachers play a crucial role in developing learners' reading comprehension; however, this requires them to possess strong reading skills themselves. The pedagogic expertise of experienced EFAL (English First Additional Language) language teachers is closely intertwined with their comprehensive understanding of language, texts, and assessment. This connection is underscored by Irvine-Niakaris and Kiely (2015) and Mafarja, Zulnaidi, and Fadzil (2022) in their respective research studies. Consequently, effective reading instruction hinges on teachers' adeptness in both comprehending the intricacies of reading and possessing the ability to impart this knowledge. Additionally, proficient teachers should be well-versed in a diverse range of text types. Notably, previous studies by Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) and Pretorius and Machete (2004) highlighted a scarcity of research investigating instructional practices within classrooms. These studies also emphasised the absence of a comprehensive inquiry into the challenges faced by teachers in teaching reading literacy in the context of South Africa. Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016: 1) contend:

> there are far fewer detailed descriptions of instructional practices and what teachers are doing in their classrooms, and far less evidence exists of in-depth research attempts to understand in what way and why teachers may experience problems with the teaching of reading literacy, particularly reading comprehension.

Makhwathana (2020), Maja and Motseke, (2021), Vundla (2020), and Zimmerman (2014b) argue that despite the abundance of articles detailing South African learners' poor literacy proficiency, there are very few published studies that define and explain the classroom dynamics that influence academic success or failure. This situation seems to imply that current solutions may be founded on understandings of what is

taking place and what is necessary to address the problems encountered by teachers and schools. Furthermore, existing research focuses on teachers' understanding of reading strategies and their impact on motivating learners to engage actively with texts (Nguyen, 2022; Hudson et al., 2021; Torgesen, Porter, et al., 2022). However, these studies often overlook the practical implementation of these strategies and approaches by teachers. Consequently, there are notable gaps in our understanding of how reading strategies and approaches can effectively enhance the reading comprehension of EFAL learners. Notably, many international and local studies (Linake, 2021; McCarthy & McNamara, 2021; Mobley & Ramsay-Jordan, 2022; Rapetsoa, 2017; Vundla, 2020) have investigated various facets of reading, primarily among elementary school learners in English First Additional Language (FAL) contexts. Linake (2021) examined the impact of curriculum changes on the reading comprehension of EFAL Grade 10 learners, while Mobley and Ramsay-Jordan (2022) focused on linguistic challenges resulting from shifts in the language of instruction. Conversely, the NEEDU report concentrated on teachers' proficiency in teaching reading comprehension in the foundation phase, all of which significantly contributes to learners' reading comprehension skills. This underscores a research gap where secondary school learners' reading receives inadequate attention, despite its crucial relevance at this level. This insufficiency emphasises the necessity for research studies on teaching strategies for reading comprehension within the further education and training phase (FET), particularly within the context of Grade 10 EFAL.

This study aims to explore the perceptions and practices of both Grade 10 EFAL teachers and learners regarding the utilisation of reading strategies and approaches during the reading instruction process. The objective is to address any gaps and shortcomings in the application of reading strategies and approaches identified in the literature review. Additionally, this study investigates the challenges encountered by both teachers and learners while engaging in the process of teaching and learning to read. Moreover, research findings underscore the significance of reading strategies and approaches for enhancing learners' reading comprehension, as evidenced by the value attributed to them by EFAL teachers and learners (Brevik, 2019; Omidire, 2022). In contrast, Nurdianingsih (2021) and Amin (2019) note that while teachers do employ reading strategies and approaches, their usage tends to be limited. This could be attributed to the assertion by Madikiza, Cekiso, Tshotsho, and Landa (2018) that

teachers often rely on strategies they are most comfortable with, inadvertently restricting learners from exploring a broader range of strategies. Notably, the selection of a reading strategy or approach often hinges on individual teacher preferences, potentially leading to the use of strategies that do not cater comprehensively to all learners' needs (Zano, 2020). Consequently, this study investigates the application of reading strategies and approaches by Grade 10 EFAL teachers to enhance the reading comprehension of Grade 10 EFAL learners.

Reading is an intricate task that demands the use of a diverse set of reading strategies. Numerous researchers have studied strategies and approaches for teaching reading, particularly comprehension, across various contexts. This collective body of research unequivocally underscores the pivotal role of imparting reading strategies and approaches in nurturing the reading proficiencies of EFAL learners (Amin, 2019; Ali & Razali, 2019; Nguyen, 2022; Ntsala, 2021). The exposure of learners to a spectrum of reading strategies serves to bolster their reading capabilities by empowering them to effectively decipher written texts. However, employing these strategies effectively is not straightforward for most EFAL learners who grapple with independent text reading and comprehension. Fesi and Mncube (2021) accentuate the significance of equipping EFAL learners with a repertoire of reading strategies and approaches, as this aids in bridging the cognitive gap between learners and the messages embedded within the written content. It is paramount that information is presented in a manner conducive to meaningful comprehension. Moreover, directly instructing EFAL learners in reading strategies enables them to engage in purposeful reading for understanding (Caga & Soya 2019; Mobley & Ramsay-Jordan, 2022; Zano, 2022). Furthermore, the adept application of effective reading strategies empowers EFAL learners to not only decipher written content but also to establish connections between textual ideas and their existing knowledge reservoirs (Brevik, 2019; Madikiza, Cekiso, Tshotsho, & Landa, 2018; Zano, 2020). This skill set simultaneously equips EFAL learners to assess and regulate their own comprehension throughout the reading process. Meniado (2016) asserts that meaningful comprehension entails a firm grasp of one's cognitive processes and outputs, accompanied by vigilant monitoring and control of cognitive activities. Additionally, Flavell (1979) posits that strategies for comprehension monitoring contribute to an enhanced understanding of intellectual processes, aiming to oversee, manage, and direct cognitive operations. In this regard,

comprehension monitoring is an introspective exercise involving conscious reflection on one's intellectual processes (Meniando, 2016). However, Cekiso, Tshotsho, and Landa (2018) highlight a disparity in their study—many teachers exhibited limited familiarity with a range of reading strategies. Consequently, they resorted to utilising only a subset they were comfortable with, inadvertently stifling learners' potential to explore a broader array of strategies. This dynamic accentuates the importance of teachers comprehending the cognitive intricacies underpinning the learning process; if teachers themselves struggle to grasp these cognitive dimensions, learners will inevitably encounter obstacles in developing the ability to self-regulate their learning.

1.3   Overview of South African literature on comprehension

In the past decade, multiple studies have highlighted the concerning levels of literacy (as well as numeracy) among South African school learners. While local research has identified both macro-level factors like overcrowded classrooms, inadequate school resources, deficient school management, and lack of qualified teachers, as well as micro-level factors like classrooms lacking print resources, insufficient time for classroom activities, inadequate lesson preparations, and ineffective teaching practices, the research focus has disproportionately shifted away from exploring reading comprehension strategies within South African classrooms. One notable instance that sheds light on this issue is the diagnostic report on Annual ANA results in 2014, which underscored the challenges South African Grade 6, and 9 learners encounter when reading for meaning. However, despite this insight, the intricate and multifaceted reasons behind this issue, as well as its persistent nature, remain unexplored. To address this gap, this section reviews South African studies conducted over the past decade that examine reading strategies, particularly those related to reading comprehension, and various approaches to enhance it.

The discussion begins by examining studies that have investigated the utilisation of reading strategies. Following that, I shift my focus to studies that have investigated corrective measures aimed at aiding EFAL learners in comprehending texts for meaning. By shedding light on these facets, I aim to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and potential solutions surrounding reading comprehension in the South African context.

Mastering the skill of reading is inherently challenging due to its non-instinctive nature; reading must be systematically taught rather than being an innate ability (Fesi & Mncube, 2021; Omidire, 2022; Zano, 2020). While many learners exhibit proficient decoding skills, the crux of the matter lies in reading for meaning—a skill that is not always well-developed. There exists a conspicuous gap in comprehensive, fine-grained qualitative research that explores reading comprehension from the vantage point of teachers. Specifically, there is a scarcity of research examining the intricate landscape of reading strategies employed by teachers, their applications in encouraging meaningful reading, the mental processes involved in comprehension, and the methodologies employed for imparting these strategies. Notably, studies by Erasmus (2022) and Maja and Motseke (2021) stand out as valuable contributions to addressing this gap within the South African context. Through their work, they shed light on critical aspects of reading comprehension, helping to bridge the knowledge void surrounding effective teaching practices in this domain.

Employing a qualitative framework that involved two intermediate phase teachers, Erasmus (2022) meticulously explored the pedagogical techniques utilised by EFAL teachers in the intermediate phase to cultivate reading comprehension through a spectrum of strategies. The outcomes of this study underscored a critical requirement for ongoing training among South African EFAL intermediate-phase teachers to effectively impart these reading strategies. Furthermore, the study not only revealed the immediate need for further research on the impact of these strategies within the South African EFAL intermediate phase classrooms but also served as a steppingstone to enrich the knowledge base on reading strategies applicable to this phase. The aim is to facilitate the successful implementation of effective reading strategies within these classrooms.

Similarly, Maja and Motseke (2021) employed qualitative methodologies to explore the extent to which the University of South Africa (Unisa) student teachers integrated interactive teaching techniques during their delivery of EFAL lessons within a township school situated in Gauteng Province's Ekurhuleni North region. Employing document analysis, observations, and semi-structured interviews, the study involved student teachers enrolled in their third and fourth years of study toward Bachelor of Education

(B.Ed.) degrees, majoring in English. A thorough analysis of the collected data led to the identification and categorisation of distinct themes. The findings revealed that among the interactive teaching strategies employed by these student teachers such as drawings, charts, and flashcards adequate support and comprehensive training were lacking. This study prompted a crucial recommendation: a call for enhanced support and guidance from Unisa lecturers during the student teachers' practice teaching, bridging the gap in knowledge and fostering the more effective application of interactive instructional strategies in the context of EFAL teaching.

In a separate South African study conducted by Klapwijk (2011; 2015, specific strategies were implemented, utilising a structured Before, During, and After reading framework, which teachers had undergone training in. This training spanned 15 weeks, during which teachers conducted their strategy training while assessing learners' performance before and after the intervention. To gauge the efficacy of the strategy application, a strategy transfer test was also administered. The results illuminated those learners in the intervention group exhibited superior performance in monitoring, summarising, and posing questions (all with medium to high effect sizes), underlining the substantial impact of the training. In a subsequent continuation of her research in 2011, Klapwijk (2015) applied a similar framework to two distinct groups of college student instructors enrolled in a 12-week English course. A pre-course questionnaire was administered to evaluate the participants' perceived usage of reading strategies. However, upon formal instruction, the student teachers recognised a significant disconnect between their initial perceptions and the actual application and comprehension of the techniques—a phenomenon that might also be relevant to the context of this study, which seeks to explore the utilisation of teaching strategies in Grade 10 EFAL classrooms.

Furthermore, van Staden (2011) conducted a pilot study aimed at enhancing the reading proficiency of Grade 4, 5, and 6 learners in the Free State Province through a comprehensive reading intervention program. This program encompassed activities such as vocabulary development, enhancing sight word recognition, decoding, and spelling improvement, leveraging contextual cues during reading, and honing skills in inference-making, questioning, summarisation, and retelling stories in English. The findings indicated that learners in the intervention groups outperformed their

counterparts in control groups across all five measured aspects, with varying but noticeable effect sizes attributed to the different reading skills assessed.

Now, it is crucial to briefly delineate my role within this study. A more extensive exploration of my involvement will follow in Chapter 4. With a decade of teaching experience as a permanently employed teacher at a high school in Bushbuckridge, I have specialised in teaching EFAL to Grade 10 to 12 learners, where I have encountered several challenges in enhancing their reading comprehension. These challenges encompassed issues like learners struggling to proficiently use their First Additional Language (FAL), struggling to comprehend questions, and grappling with expressing themselves in English. Additionally, I serve as an Academic Literacy Facilitator (ACALIT) at a South African university, guiding academic English modules, and still face analogous challenges with my students. Presently, I hold a full-time lecturer position at a certain South African university, yet regrettably, these persistent challenges remain a prominent aspect of my academic experience.

These challenges have been particularly pronounced during my tenure teaching Grade 10 EFAL high school learners and university students in my role as an ACALIT facilitator. Over the years, I have witnessed many learners grappling with the inability to independently read and comprehend English texts. This deficiency not only hindered their learning progress but also curtailed their access to broader educational opportunities. In the context of ACALIT lessons, students consistently struggled to dissect and analyse topics effectively, resulting in incomplete question responses and subsequent module failures due to a lack of comprehensive understanding. The task of comprehension itself is undeniably daunting and often overwhelming, particularly within EFAL learning environments, as noted by Coffi (2017) and Mobley & Ramsay-Jordan (2022). Learners tend to experience a sense of demotivation when they fail to grasp the material they are expected to read (Bharuthram, 2017), inevitably contributing to a deficient reading culture among EFAL learners. This observation piqued my curiosity and instilled within me a desire to understand the phenomena further. It inspired me to explore the strategies employed by Grade 10 EFAL teachers in their endeavours to augment their learners' reading comprehension skills. By unraveling the pedagogical approaches utilised in this context, I aimed to reveal

potential avenues for addressing the prevalent challenges and enhancing the learning experience for EFAL learners.

EFAL teachers commonly grapple with several challenges in their teaching efforts. These hurdles include managing large class sizes, navigating time constraints that limit the incorporation of diverse reading strategies, inadequate teacher training, limited grasp of the CAPS document, and sometimes even attitudes towards EFAL learners themselves (Fesi & Mncube, 2021; Graham et al., 2020; Ntsala et al., 2021). On the other hand, EFAL learners encounter a range of difficulties that encompass independently comprehending English texts, summarising content, identifying key terms, lacking proficiency in vocabulary and grammatical conventions, struggling with inference-making, and grappling with forging connections within the reading material (Madikiza et al., 2020; Zano, 2020). Addressing these multifaceted challenges necessitates a concerted effort from all stakeholders involved. Wilkinson and Son (2011) aptly highlight that when learners are unable to align their existing schemas with a given text, comprehension hurdles may arise. To surmount this, EFAL teachers should purposefully employ a wide array of reading strategies. This approach not only allows EFAL learners to explore a spectrum of strategies but also empowers them to select the strategies that resonate most effectively with their individual learning preferences. By doing so, teachers can help bridge the gap between the challenges learners face and the strategies that are most conducive to their comprehension and learning success.

In the context of South Africa, Rule, and Land (2017) and Vundla (2020) emphasise that Grade 10 EFAL learners are expected to exhibit proficiency in their First Additional Language (FAL), equipping them with the necessary reading and writing competencies to compete globally. Building on this notion, a study conducted in Indonesia by Muhassin, Annisa, and Hidayati (2021) underscores the potency of reading strategies in enhancing EFAL learners' reading proficiency. The researchers advocate for the cultivation of multiple reading strategies within learners to nurture their critical reading capabilities. This endeavour necessitates teachers' adeptness in reading strategies to effectively impart this skill to learners.

Nevertheless, the predicament of overcrowded classrooms prevalent in many EFAL contexts, particularly South African schools, presents a substantial impediment to

learners' reading comprehension progression. This hindrance often extends beyond the control of EFAL teachers (Likuru & Mwila, 2022; Ntsala et al., 2021; Owen & Mantlana, 2017). Overcrowding introduces a host of challenges that significantly constrain teachers' efforts, such as the inability to provide explicit instructions and individual support due to constrained classroom space. This issue results in learners facing exhaustion, heightened aggression, defiance, anxiety, restricted privacy, fierce competition for attention, and compromised performance (Ntsala, 2021). This issue is aggravated by the hot weather conditions in most parts of South Africa, creating a further hurdle to learners' concentration in overcrowded classrooms. Furthermore, the ongoing risk of COVID-19 transmission adds a dimension to the problem of overcrowding, endangering the well-being of both teachers and learners. Consequently, learners' morale could plummet, as they miss the personalised attention and free interaction with their teachers that are essential for effective learning. These challenges collectively underscore the critical importance of addressing the issue of overcrowding in EFAL classrooms to create an environment conducive to meaningful learning experiences and enhanced reading comprehension abilities.

Al Roomy (2022) posits that the implementation of effective reading strategies is an active and dynamic process that stimulates the engagement of higher-order thinking skills among EFAL learners. This engagement allows learners to draw from their prior experiences when interacting with a reading text. Moreover, van der Walt (2022) underscores the significance of teaching a diverse range of critical reading strategies to EFAL learners, enabling them to transcend reading difficulties by deciphering not only explicit content but also grasping underlying meanings. This aspect is especially vital within an EFAL context where most learners are not native speakers of the target language. Challenges faced by EFAL learners are multifaceted and encompass limited opportunities for language use beyond the classroom, a dearth of reading materials, and a struggling reading culture, all while the expectation for language proficiency remains high (Brevik, 2019; Likuru & Mwila, 2022; Setyosari, Kuswandi, & Widiati, 2022).

Turning to practical interventions, Banditvilia (2020) reports that EFAL learners in Thailand exhibited a positive shift in attitudes toward reading strategies following

explicit instruction. This instruction led to a preference for strategies like predictions, questioning, skimming, and scanning, which they actively applied during reading. Likewise, Medina et al. (2021) observed changes in teachers' practices after American teachers participated in a reading literacy program focused on reading strategies. Enhancing teachers' grasp of reading strategies proves pivotal in enhancing learners' reading comprehension, as well-informed teachers can effectively guide learners through the reading process and cultivate a conducive learning atmosphere. Emphasising the necessity of a supportive environment, Ali and Razali (2019) and Brevik (2019) underscore that strategic reading and improved comprehension thrive in an environment that encourages interaction between the reader, text, activity, and context. By promoting the use of effective reading strategies and affording EFAL learners ample time to practice, learners can empower themselves to recognise their own strengths in reading comprehension while also confronting their reading challenges. In fact, successful academic performance is inherently tied to critical reading abilities. Wang (2009) asserts that generating main ideas for a comprehensive understanding of text necessitates strong critical reading skills. This emphasises the pivotal role of EFAL teachers in nurturing learners' critical reading capabilities, thereby equipping them for improved academic success. The value of critical reading is well acknowledged as Kosimov (2022: 44) contends:

> Critical reading has several benefits, including a deeper understanding of content, the lengthening of contents maintenance term in the memory and learning how to submit feedback critical of the reasonable ideas. The critical reader reads in order to understand. Critical reader analyses whether he or she gets experience, assumptions, and knowledge from the text. Critical reader examines the text and context, he or she will skim the text in order to know what the topic is and what are the main ideas of the text.

Upon observation, it becomes apparent that a considerable number of EFAL learners, including those who demonstrate reasonable proficiency in reading comprehension, often resort to seeking teacher assistance for various reasons. This dependence can be attributed, in a large part, to a pervasive lack of awareness among EFAL learners about effective reading strategies. This underscores the necessity to provide robust support to all EFAL learners, irrespective of their reading comprehension performance. The explicit instruction of reading strategies proves indispensable to ensuring that all EFAL learners excel; however, the challenge lies in the potentially substantial time investment required to cover a comprehensive array of strategies, which might

encroach upon valuable instructional time. Recognising the long-term benefits, it is crucial for learners to receive sound instruction in their earlier academic years. This early foundation cultivates the essential reading skills that become increasingly critical in higher grades and extend beyond the realm of formal education (Vundla, 2020). Moreover, as advocated by Manu et al. (2021), the ability to effectively read and comprehend diverse texts is pivotal for learners to become empowered members of society, possessing the capabilities required for active civic engagement.

Considering these arguments, this study seeks to reimagine the application of reading strategies with the goal of elevating EFAL learners' reading comprehension. By exploring innovative ways to integrate reading strategies into the learning process, this research endeavours to enhance learners' capacities to comprehend and engage with various texts effectively.

1.4   Contextual focus of the study

Upon entering Grade 10, learners are ideally expected to have attained a sufficient level of proficiency in their FAL for both academic and social success. Regrettably, the practical reality often diverges from this ideal, as a considerable number of EFAL learners still grapple with effectively harnessing their FAL capabilities. This situation presents a twofold challenge in Grades 10–12: providing essential support to struggling learners while concurrently delivering a curriculum that facilitates their attainment of Grade 12 standards. These standards must be met to equip learners with a robust command of their FAL, thereby preparing them for higher education or the demands of the workforce (DBE, 2011). For teachers, it is imperative to offer the requisite guidance to learners, aiding them in comprehending the expectations and tasks they are required to master. As asserted by Zano (2020) and Hattan and Alexander (2020), a transition from surface-level understanding to the utilisation of textual content in conjunction with prior knowledge signifies the achievement of profound comprehension. These studies further posit that effective deployment of reading strategies, vocabulary enrichment, and cultivation of a conducive classroom environment can alleviate reading difficulties and contribute to a heightened overall reading aptitude within various learning contexts.

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document in South Africa defines the learning objectives and the desired knowledge and skills of successful learners upon course completion (DBE, 2011). This framework also outlines the criteria for measuring achievement. EFAL instruction in South Africa is categorised into Home Language (HL) and FAL levels. HL refers to the language first acquired by the learner (native language), while FAL is an additional language learned alongside the HL (DBE, 2011). Notably, South Africa does not universally offer the HL for all enrolled learners but focuses on one or two languages at the HL level. Therefore, the terms HL and FAL pertain to the proficiency level at which the language is taught rather than distinguishing between native or learned languages (DBE, 2011). Both language levels emphasise four essential language skills: reading, listening, writing, and speaking (DBE, 2011). This study's aim is confined to the analysis of EFAL Grade 10 level, specifically homing in on the singular language proficiency of reading. This research narrows its scope to the examination of reading strategies and approaches and their potential to enhance EFAL reading comprehension, as elaborated upon in the preceding sections of this chapter.

Globally, it is well-established that learners often encounter challenges with reading comprehension within EFAL contexts across various academic levels (Omidire, 2022; Ntsala, 2021; Zano, 2022). In the South African context, EFAL learners grapple with acquiring the necessary reading strategies crucial for their future academic and vocational progress (Mboacha, 2015). Notably, Al-Meklafi (2018) underscores that many EFAL learners employ ineffective reading habits, rendering them unable to grasp academic content presented in English. He emphasises that the core issue lies in the persistence of inefficient strategies like finger-pointing or an overly focused search for individual word meanings, which hinders comprehensive text understanding. Given this scenario, my interest turned towards investigating the utilisation of reading strategies by Grade 10 EFAL teachers within the specific context of Bushbuckridge. This choice stems from my familiarity with this setting, having worked within it for over a decade. According to Simelane (2015), many schools in Bushbuckridge contend with inadequate infrastructure, and Masinga (2012) highlights the region's high Grade 12 failure rates. Simelane's (2017) study further underscores the impact of discipline-related issues on learner performance within selected South African schools in Bushbuckridge. The findings illuminate that schools grappling with

poor academic outcomes face challenges such as chronic class disruptions, learner absenteeism, substance abuse, and a lack of effective disciplinary mechanisms post the abolition of corporal punishment.

Another study by Nkosi and Farhangpou (2017) examines factors contributing to poor academic performance in a disadvantaged school in Mpumalanga. Their findings shed light on a multitude of issues: the community's socio-economic struggles, single-parent households, high unemployment rates, limited educational attainment, absence of study materials, and a prevalence of over-aged learners, among other obstacles. Furthermore, the school itself grapples with a dearth of resources and challenges related to teacher absenteeism, inadequate lesson preparation, and suboptimal communication skills. Given the complex interplay of these factors, my curiosity was piqued by the investigation into the reading strategy utilisation among Grade 10 teachers in the Bushbuckridge context, considering the prominent issue of elevated failure rates. This research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play and the potential role of reading strategies in enhancing academic outcomes in such challenging settings.

The next section explores the current state of Grade 10 learners within South African schools, shedding light on the challenges they face. The presence of a significant number of learners in this grade often presents hurdles when it comes to effectively implementing reading strategies to enhance reading comprehension. This challenge is particularly pronounced between Grade 9 and 11 across many South African schools, primarily due to a high incidence of grade repetition (Olifant, Cekiso, & Rautenbach, 2020). As a result, schools find themselves confronted with sizable enrolment figures, and despite overcrowding, learners are often retained due to limited options. It is important to note that schools are constrained from expelling learners due to the sheer volume of enrolment, contributing to the existing challenges (Simelane, 2015).

1.5   Statement of the problem

This study aims to address the instructional aspects of teaching reading comprehension to Grade 10 English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners in

specific schools within the Mpumalanga Province, specifically in the Bushbuckridge area of South Africa. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), a guiding framework for the curriculum in South African schools, provides explicit guidelines for Grade 10 EFAL teachers on how to approach reading, with a particular focus on reading comprehension.

According to the CAPS document, the process of teaching reading involves three distinct phases: pre-reading, reading, and post-reading. The central idea is that by the time learners reach Grade 10, they should possess the ability to comprehend texts independently. This implies that learners should develop the autonomy to navigate their English language learning, a facet often created through active reading as advocated by scholars such as Bharuthram (2017), Erasmus (2022), and Klapwijk (2015). However, a point of concern is whether South African teachers instructing Grade 10 EFAL learners are proficient in employing effective teaching strategies to impart reading comprehension skills. Scholarly discourse reveals that many teachers in South Africa struggle with teaching reading comprehension strategies (Erasmus, 2022; Zimmerman, 2014b; Zano, 2022).

Despite the goals set forth by the CAPS document, the practical landscape indicates a divergence. Grade 10 EFAL teachers encounter challenges when it comes to effectively instructing reading comprehension strategies to their learners (Rapetsoa, 2017; Vundla, 2020). The complexities of teaching reading comprehension strategies remain a notable hurdle for a substantial number of Grade 10 EFAL teachers (Linake, 2021; Madikiza, Cekiso, Tshotsho, & Landa, 2018; Ntsala, 2021). This difficulty appears to stem, in part, from inadequate utilisation of teaching strategies by Grade 10 teachers. This raises a critical question: are Grade 10 teachers effectively implementing the teaching strategies and approaches outlined in the Grade 10-12 EFAL CAPS document? To address this inquiry, empirical research evidence is required.

1.6   Significance and contribution of the study

The primary objective of this study was to explore the perspectives of both EFAL teachers and learners concerning the implementation of reading approaches and

strategies within EFAL classrooms. In Chapter 6, the recommendations section of this study provides practical insights into how reading strategies and approaches can effectively enhance the reading comprehension abilities of Grade 10 EFAL learners. Additionally, the study suggests ways in which the DBE can offer supportive measures to equip EFAL teachers with the essential skills needed to further the rationale for teaching these strategies.

The significance of this study resonates strongly within EFAL educational contexts. Both EFAL teachers and learners stand to gain from the findings. This study underscores the pivotal role of explicitly teaching reading strategies to EFAL learners, enabling them to become independent readers. Given that the study focuses on EFAL contexts, often fraught with challenges related to the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), its outcomes hold relevance. By imparting comprehensive knowledge of effective reading strategies, this research equips learners with a suite of essential reading comprehension skills. These skills encompass the ability to self-monitor their reading comprehension, as well as the potential for peer-assisted reading intervention.

The literature review encapsulated within Chapter 2 of this study explores a multitude of studies that champion the efficacy of peer assistance strategies in bolstering the reading performance of EFAL learners. Noteworthy studies such as those by Adebola (2020), Mahmoud (2014), and Omidire (2022) have consistently demonstrated the positive impact of peer assistance strategies on the reading capabilities of EFAL learners. This study contributes to this broader body of knowledge by investigating the specific viewpoints of EFAL teachers and learners, thereby providing nuanced insights into the application of reading approaches and strategies in EFAL classrooms.

1.7   Aims and objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to explore reading strategies and approaches used to teach reading comprehension and whether to what extent they are taught to Grade 10 learners in some South African high schools in Mpumalanga Province, specifically in the Bushbuckridge region. The secondary objectives of this study are:

Table 1.2: Secondary research objectives

Secondary researcher objectives	
Objective 1	To identify which reading comprehension strategies Grade 10 EFAL teachers teach their learners to enhance their reading comprehension.
Objective 2	To establish the difficulties, Grade 10 EFAL teachers encounter in teaching the reading comprehension strategies to Grade 10 learners.
Objective 3	To ascertain the extent to which the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12 provide guidelines regarding the teaching of reading comprehension strategies to teachers.

1.8   Research questions

Primary research question:

- What reading strategies and approaches do teachers in the Bushbuckridge region use when teaching reading comprehension to Grade 10 first additional language learners?

To answer the primary research question, the following sub-research questions are posed:

Table 1.3: Research questions to the study

Research question	Research instrument used
What are the reading strategies and approaches used by Grade 10 EFAL teachers in the Bushbuckridge region when teaching reading comprehension?	Semi-structured interviews
What are the challenges experienced by Grade 10 EFAL teachers when implementing strategies and approaches for reading comprehension?	Focus group discussion
Which reading strategies are stipulated in the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12?	Document analysis

1.9   Definition of key concepts

1.9.1 Reading comprehension
Sari (2017) defines reading comprehension as the capacity of an individual to grasp and interpret information contained within a text. Duke (2003) shares this perspective, asserting that reading comprehension involves a process wherein individuals actively

construct meaning by drawing on their prior knowledge, the information present in the text, and their personal view relation to the content. In the context of the current study, reading comprehension is understood as the aptitude of learners to comprehend a written text by establishing connections with their pre-existing background knowledge.

1.9.2 Reading strategies

Strategies encompass a range of learning techniques, study skills, problem-solving methods, or approaches that enhance the efficacy and efficiency of learning (Oxford & Crookall, 1989). Within reading, strategies pertain to the methodologies that readers employ when engaging with a text. This encompasses their approach to the task, the textual cues they focus on, the way they interpret the content, and the actions they take when encountering comprehension difficulties (Block, 1986). Reading strategies are defined as "the mental processes used when learners approach a material purposefully and interpret what they read" (Barnett, 1988: 186). According to Brown (2007:119), reading strategies are "planned methods for regulating and manipulating certain information, modes of operation for reaching a particular objective." However, according to Pani (2014), reading strategies encompass the cognitive processes that readers actively undertake when approaching a text to achieve a successful comprehension of its content. In essence, reading strategies represent conscious and purposeful techniques that readers intentionally employ to enhance their comprehension and retention of the textual material.

1.9.3 Reading approaches

The pedagogy of English encompasses a variety of levels of readiness and diverse perspectives on how this responsibility should be undertaken (Celce-Murcia & Yoo, 2014). The manner in which a teacher perceives this endeavour can be labelled as an 'approach.' In accordance with Richards and Rodgers (1986), an approach entails the fundamental beliefs regarding the nature of language and the mechanisms governing language acquisition. In essence, an approach represents a particular lens through which the process of teaching and learning is viewed.

1.9.4 English First Additional Language

As stated by Kernerman (2015), English as a First Additional Language (EFAL) refers to the language instructed to a learner after their native tongue, which, as a member

of a community, is employed for educational purposes. EFAL represents a language distinct from the learner's mother tongue or HL, serving as a vehicle for social interactions, particularly in politics, economics, and vocational pursuits. Put differently, EFAL constitutes a formalised non-native language employed for communication within a culturally diverse nation (Kernerman, 2015). EFAL entails an instructional approach characterised by the simultaneous use of two or more languages by learners.

1.9.5 EFAL teacher

In line with Venketsamy and Sibanda (2021), EFAL teachers are educators who instruct learners who communicate in a language distinct from English in their households, with English serving as the medium of instruction. This perspective is supported by Vundla (2020), who underscores that EFAL teachers utilise a language that diverges from their learners' native tongue as the primary instructional medium. Consequently, EFAL teachers teach learners using a language that differs from their mother tongue or HL.

1.9.6 EFAL learner

As outlined by Zano (2020), EFAL learners are individuals for whom English serves as a second language, yet they are mandated to learn other subjects through its medium, including subjects like mathematics and life sciences. Like EFAL teachers, these learners utilise a language that differs from their native tongue as the instructional medium. In an EFAL setting, EFAL learners adopt diverse language learning strategies to enhance their English comprehension. Given that each EFAL learner selects distinct language learning approaches, maintaining uniformity in language learning methods poses a challenge (Brevik, 2019).

1.10   Literature review

Research, exemplified by the study conducted in Iran by Mohammad (2019), underscores the pivotal role of explicit instruction in reading strategies and approaches in enhancing EFAL reading comprehension. Mohammad (2019) posits that reading comprehension is not only essential for an individual's survival but also imperative for their success in both professional and academic contexts. Moreover, Mohammad (2019) argues that neglecting the incorporation of effective reading strategies in

teaching could hinder learners' reading progress and potentially discourage their pursuit of literacy. He further contends that reading proficiency stands as a foundational language skill, serving as a cornerstone for the development of other language facets such as listening, speaking, writing, vocabulary, and grammar. The sentiments of Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) resonate with this perspective, asserting that the ability to read is not just a skill unto itself but a gateway to learning.

Given the context in South Africa, where many learners receive instruction in a language different from their mother tongue (Vundla, 2020), it is logical to consider language as a potential barrier to comprehension, particularly when engaging with subjects in a FAL. However, Bharuthram (2012) counters this notion by emphasising that language barriers might be exacerbated by the tendency of many EFAL teachers to attribute learners' struggles in reading comprehension solely to limited language proficiency. This underscores the importance of teaching effective reading strategies, as it can address multifaceted challenges in EFAL reading comprehension beyond language barriers alone. As pointed out by Howie et al. (2008: 3), in South Africa:

> reading problems tend to be masked by language proficiency issues … An associated assumption is that when learners have difficulty with using reading as a tool for learning then their comprehension problems are a product of limited language proficiency.

This is not often the case since spoken and written language requires different abilities. According to Hacquebord (1994), enhancing language competence does not readily develop reading comprehension. Instead, it is focused on reading that enhances reading abilities, which also enhances language competencies (Elley, 1991; Mbise, 1993).

The challenges faced by EFAL learners in reading comprehension are not solely attributed to language difficulties. It is important to explore the pedagogical intricacies that contribute to these challenges to devise effective solutions. The complexities of addressing poor literacy demand a multifaceted approach with various support interventions. Upon reviewing the range of studies conducted both within and outside South Africa, it becomes evident that there are gaps within the existing literature concerning the utilisation of reading strategies and approaches. This study aims to

bridge these gaps and provide a comprehensive exploration of these aspects, as outlined in Chapter 2.

1.11 The theoretical framework

The interpretation of the findings in this study was guided by a theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 3. This framework provided valuable insights into how various reading strategies could be effectively applied in the EFAL context to enhance learners' reading comprehension. Additionally, it played a pivotal role in devising reading interventions aimed at enhancing the reading development of EFAL learners. Bartlett's (1932) schema theory serves as the guiding principle for this study, as elaborated in Chapter 3. This theory elucidates how learners leverage their prior knowledge, known as schemata, to interpret texts and derive meaning. It is important to note that even though many learners use languages other than English at home (Brevik, 2019; Omidire, 2022; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016; Zano, 2020), there is an expectation that English be the LoLT. According to Nunan (1999), learners' prior knowledge shapes mental frameworks that contribute to the comprehension of new information. Effective comprehension hinges on the ability to activate or construct schemata that explain the objects and events depicted in a text (Anderson, 1994).

The significance of background knowledge, or the lack thereof, as assumed by the text is underscored by schema theory, as discussed in Chapter 3. The theory asserts that learning involves repeatedly revisiting a concept until knowledge becomes evident. It underscores the substantial role that background knowledge plays in elevating reading comprehension. Moreover, it highlights teachers' dual responsibility: stimulating existing schemata and helping learners form new ones or integrate discrete pockets of information. Considering the tendency to attribute poor comprehension to language issues (Bharuthram, 2012; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016; Saputri, Rizal & Afriani, 2021; Setyosari, Kuswandi, & Widiati, 2022), the impact of insufficient background knowledge is a focal point in this study. The schema concepts— background knowledge, teacher scaffolding, and schema activation—explicate and underscore the significance of learners' social and cultural background knowledge in enhancing reading comprehension. Through explicit instruction in reading strategies, learners gain the ability to employ the most suitable strategies based on their specific

needs (Erasmus, 2022; Bharuthram, 2017; Zano, 2020). As a result, in Chapter 3, these frameworks are adopted and explored to ensure comprehensive responses to the research questions in this study.

1.12 Research methodology and design

1.12.1 Research approach

Ary, Jacobs, Irvine, & Walker, (2018) and Mohajan (2018) emphasise that the primary purpose of employing qualitative research methods is to gain insights into social phenomena from the participants' perspectives. Neuman (2003) concurs, stating that qualitative research deals with soft data, such as impressions, words, sentences, photos, symbols, etc., rather than numeric data. Such data are then interpreted to construct meaning within specific contexts. It is important to note that other studies utilising human participants as their primary data source often employ quantitative techniques. However, in the context of this study, a qualitative approach was deemed more suitable.

The focal point of this study is to explore the underlying perceptions of Grade 10 EFAL teachers regarding their use of reading strategies and approaches to enhance Grade 10 EFAL learners' reading comprehension in selected schools within the Bushbuckridge region, South Africa. Specifically, this study investigates how Grade 10 EFAL teachers leverage learners' background knowledge as a strategy for teaching reading comprehension. Furthermore, the study explores how teachers employ such knowledge to teach learners the skills of making predictions and connections while engaging with texts.

As highlighted by Ary et al. (2018), qualitative data is collected within real-world contexts, often through face-to-face interactions, with an emphasis on generating theories rather than simply testing them. Consequently, qualitative research aims to capture participants' opinions, perceptions, and emotions. This approach is particularly suitable for the current study, which does not rely on experimentation or rigid measurements. Instead, the study views participants as informants whose input is valued in the form of interviews. By opting for a qualitative methodology, this study aims to reveal the genuine contextual experiences and realities of the participants within their natural settings. This approach provides a deep understanding of teachers'

perceptions and challenges when it comes to implementing effective reading strategies. The insights gained from this study are expected to contribute to the development of targeted training programs designed to enhance the reading landscape within South African schools.

1.12.2 Research design

According to McNulty, Zattoni, and Douglas (2013), qualitative research encompasses five fundamental study designs: grounded theory, ethnography, case study, phenomenology, and narrative. As indicated by Yin (2014), case study techniques prove most fitting when exploring 'what' or 'how' questions concerning ongoing events over which the researcher wields minimal influence. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggest that a case study is employed to achieve a comprehensive understanding of a complex subject within its genuine setting. In this context, the selection of a case study research design was deemed appropriate to investigate the use of reading strategies and approaches by Grade 10 EFAL teachers within the context of EFAL. Among the five designs, grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative were not aligned with the study's requisites. Phenomenological design aims to comprehend and describe the universal essence of a phenomenon. Grounded theory suits the investigation of processes, activities, or interactions from participants' perspectives. Ethnography design identifies cultural groups within natural settings, while the narrative approach explores an individual's life history (Yin, 2014). The case study research design incorporates three primary approaches: exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive (McNulty, Zattoni, & Douglas, 2013). This study adopted an exploratory case study, driven by the aspiration to understand how the utilisation of reading strategies can enhance EFAL learning within a genuine context. The other two approaches—descriptive and explanatory—did not meet the study's criteria. The explanatory approach probes different phenomena defined by a lack of extensive preliminary research or well-established hypotheses, potentially restricting the choice of methodology. On the other hand, the descriptive approach primarily assesses a sample for cause-and-effect analysis (Yin, 2014). However, like any other approach, the case study design bears limitations, including a potential leaning towards subjectivity over objectivity. Despite this, I approached data analysis with vigilance and objectivity.

1.12.3 Population

As stated by Asiamah et al. (2017), both qualitative and quantitative research demand specifications regarding the population under study. Baškarada (2014) further emphasises that the concepts of general, target, and accessible populations apply to both research designs. Banerjee and Chaudhury (2010) define the general population as a complete group from which essential data needs to be gathered. Within this population, participants must share at least one trait of interest (Choy, 2014; Creswell, 2003), which qualifies them for inclusion. Creswell (2003) defines the target population as individuals possessing specific attributes of interest and relevance. By narrowing down the target population to those who are accessible during the study, the accessible population is established (Choy, 2014). However, qualitative, and quantitative studies adhere to distinct guiding principles for population specification (Choy, 2014; Creswell, 2003). For instance, qualitative research prioritises a smaller number of participants capable of effectively articulating their knowledge and experiences regarding a particular phenomenon or set of research questions (Baškarada, 2014; Creswell, 2003). Conversely, quantitative studies require a larger number of participants who primarily need not provide in-depth descriptions of the events and phenomena being investigated (Choy, 2014; Creswell, 2003). Qualitative researchers must be mindful of the implications of drawing participants from larger populations, considering factors such as time, cost, and data quality.

The study took place in the Bushbuckridge region of the Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. Site selection was guided by the school's geographical context and accessibility for the researcher. Additionally, Bushbuckridge encompasses a diverse group of learners, spanning various ages, ethnic backgrounds, and languages spoken. Data collection involved six schools in the Bushbuckridge region. The target population included Grade 10 EFAL learners and their corresponding teachers from the participating schools. Among them were eight EFAL teachers and 829 EFAL learners. Specifically, school A had two teachers and 215 learners, school B had one teacher and 141 learners, school C had two teachers and 168 learners, school D had one teacher and 137 learners, school E had one teacher and 81 learners, and school F had one teacher and 87 learners. This population was chosen due to its shared attribute of interest, which was instrumental in addressing the main research question (Creswell, 2003; Choy, 2014). Vundla (2020) and Zano (2020) highlight that English

as a HL is rare in South African schools; instead, most schools offer EFAL. Thus, the schools selected for this study were those offering EFAL at the Grade 10 level, aligning with the investigation of reading strategies and approaches employed by Grade 10 EFAL teachers. Moreover, literature underscores the significance of this grade in developing critical language skills, as learners are expected to utilise English effectively for learning (Bharuthram, 2017; Coffi, 2017; Vundla, 2020), despite the documented challenges in doing so (Bharuthram, 2012; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016).

1.12.4 Sampling

Contrary to quantitative research designs, qualitative research designs are frequently linked to a limited sample of individuals or situations (Allwood, 2012; Theron & Malindi, 2010). Rather than employing a wide representative sample, qualitative researchers aim to use samples of only a few highly qualified individuals (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2014). The researcher adopted the definition by Shaheen and Pradhan (2019) and Harding (2018: 8) who view sampling as a "technique of observing only a subset of the population to make generalisations about the target population". According to Shaheen and Pradhan (2019), the reliability and generalisability of findings in qualitative research heavily rely on the sampling strategy. In this study, a type of probability sampling known as simple random sampling was employed to select participants from the general population who were believed to provide insights into the broader population's findings. Shaheen and Pradhan (2019) view probability sampling as a method that treats all individuals equally, ensuring everyone has an equal chance of being chosen for the study. This approach was chosen because it was assumed that any member of the population could yield the necessary results. Krippendorff (2018) asserts that simple random sampling involves randomly selecting a sample where each element has an equal probability of being chosen. Shaheen and Pradhan (2019) suggest that since simple random sampling treats all elements fairly and equally, it can be considered the best and simplest technique, particularly for research exploring complex issues within large populations, as is often the case in qualitative studies. This approach was adopted because it aimed to understand EFAL teachers' opinions, experiences, actions, and motives, particularly their methods of operation, which are discussed in Chapter 5.

Asiamah, Mensah, and Oteng-Abayie (2017) stress that an accurate description of the accessible population forms the foundation of the sampling process. In this study, non-probability purposeful sampling was employed. Purposeful sampling is rooted in the idea that information-rich samples should be chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Shaheen & Pradhan, 2019; Showkat & Parveen, 2017). Krippendorff (2018) and Shaheen and Pradhan (2019) define purposive sampling as a method where samples are selected with a specific goal in mind, aligning with the research design. This approach allows the researcher to focus on groups and then draw insights from these groups to address the study's objectives. While this method does not aim for broader generalisability, it is chosen for its cost-effectiveness and simplicity compared to other sampling techniques. The researcher exercises discretion in selecting relevant samples that fulfill the research criteria.

For this study, a purposive sampling strategy was chosen, focusing on Grade 10 EFAL learners and their corresponding teachers in six schools. The number of participants in each school varied slightly: School A had eight participants, School B had seven participants, School C had seven participants, School D had six participants, School E had seven participants, and School F had eight participants. One Grade 10 EFAL teacher was selected from each school. The selection aimed to encompass both high-performing and low-performing schools to discern potential differences in teaching strategies. This conscious selection was vital to ensure that the study yielded high-quality and relevant results, aligned with the objectives of this thesis.

1.12.5 Data collection methods

This study employed three data collection instruments: semi-structured interviews for teachers, focus group discussions for learners, and documentary analysis. The interviews with teachers were conducted online via Zoom. The first section of this study explores the findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews with teachers. This section is crucial as it directly addresses the first research question: What are the reading strategies and approaches used by Grade 10 EFAL teachers in the Bushbuckridge region when teaching reading comprehension? Conducting teacher interviews as a starting point allowed me to gain insights that informed subsequent stages, particularly document analysis. This sequential approach ensured that the

recommendations made in the later stages were well-informed by teachers' perspectives.

The second section outlines the focus group discussion schedule designed for learners. This schedule aimed to answer the second research question, which investigates the challenges faced when implementing reading strategies during the instruction of reading to Grade 10 EFAL learners. The design of this schedule was intended to corroborate teachers' responses, given that many questions posed to the learners mirrored those directed to the teachers.

The third section of this study focuses on the CAPS document, specifically examining its content pertaining to the use of reading strategies. This section holds significance as it serves to validate participants' perceptions by aligning them with the information outlined in the CAPS document. This alignment aids in conducting a comprehensive analysis of the collected data, linking it with existing literature and the theoretical framework of the study.

The subsequent sections underscore the central argument that explicit instruction of reading strategies is imperative. These sections also shed light on the challenges faced by both teachers and learners while attempting to incorporate reading strategies during the reading process. The involvement of all six teachers in the study is noteworthy. Similarly, the focus group discussions involving learners were conducted online via Zoom, with the number of participants varying across schools. Nevertheless, all participating schools managed to engage in the focus group discussions. Additionally, documentary analysis was carried out on one document, namely the CAPS document for FAL learners. The comprehensive discussion of these data collection instruments is presented in Chapter 4. Table 1.4 provides an organised overview of the tools employed in conjunction with the relevant research questions, ensuring clarity and coherence in the research design:

Table 1.4: Research questions and research instruments

Research question	Research instrument used
What are the reading strategies and approaches used by Grade 10 EFAL teachers in Bushbuckridge region when teaching reading comprehension?	Semi-structured interviews
What are the challenges experienced by Grade 10 EFAL teachers when implementing strategies and approaches for reading comprehension?	Focus group interviews
Which reading strategies are stipulated in the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12?	Document analysis

1.12.6 Data analysis

Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2022) and Shaheen and Pradhan (2019), is a method that systematically identifies, organises, and provides insights into patterns of meaning (themes) present within a dataset. Patton (2002) emphasises that this approach enables researchers to grasp shared meanings and experiences. Given its accessibility, flexibility, and growing popularity, thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method of choice (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Yin, 2014). For this study, thematic analysis was employed to interpret the collected data. The process involved meticulously examining each interview response to identify emerging themes aligned with the research objectives. I opted for thematic analysis due to its adaptability, allowing for the generation of new insights and concepts drawn directly from the data set, even considering the potential for multiple interpretations (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). Themes were organised using the research questions as a foundational guide. The same analysis procedure was applied to the document analysis schedule. This type of qualitative data analysis demands my complete attention and focus (Whelan et al., 2017). Throughout the data collection and analysis stages, the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 3 served as a guiding force. A comprehensive discussion of the data analysis process and its phases is presented in detail in Chapter 4.

1.13   Delimitations

Braun and Clarke (2022) define delimitations as intentional boundaries set by authors. In this study (refer to Chapter 3), the role of schema theory in enhancing learners' reading comprehension is discussed. The study highlights that utilising prior

knowledge (schemata) to interpret texts and create meaning is a pivotal aspect of reading development. The schema theory, supported by experts in the field, including Bartlett (1932) and Nunan (1999), is presented as a plausible framework for human knowledge processing. While the study introduces the schema theory, it does not, however, validate its application for enhancing learners' reading comprehension in actual reading lessons.

It is important to note that this study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented face-to-face interactions on school premises. As a result, online semi-structured interviews were conducted using Zoom. This approach circumvented the limitations posed by pandemic-related restrictions. The interviews were scheduled after school hours to provide teachers with sufficient time to express their perspectives. Similarly, the focus group discussions were also held after school in each participating school, allowing learners ample time to share their insights. This approach acknowledges the pandemic's challenges while ensuring valuable data collection.

1.14 Limitations

Ross and Bibler Zaidi (2019) highlight that limitations refer to shortcomings in the study design that could impact its outcomes and conclusions. This study centered on exploring EFAL teachers' perceptions of the reading strategies and approaches they employ in teaching reading, as well as learners' perceptions of the strategies they utilise to enhance their reading skills. However, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced various challenges that affected the research process, including time constraints and access to information (van Wyk, 2020).

Originally, the plan was to conduct face-to-face semi-structured interviews with teachers and in-person focus group discussions with learners, allowing for relevant follow-up questions. However, due to the COVID-19 lockdown measures and the need for social distancing, this approach had to be adjusted. The study's timeline was impacted by the lockdown laws and mandatory social distancing, which prevented physical visits and close interactions with participants throughout 2020 and 2021.

To adapt to the circumstances, online interviews were chosen as the most feasible data collection method during the lockdown. Interview schedules were shared via email with participants. Nonetheless, the shift to online interviews introduced its own set of challenges. Some teachers and learners faced issues such as poor internet connections, load shedding, and technical problems from network providers. These challenges led to the rescheduling of interviews or, in some cases, interview cancellations. Consequently, the study's timeline had to be extended by a few days to accommodate these unforeseen complications.

1.15 Ethical considerations

According to Kyngäs, Kääriäinen, & Elo, (2020), ethical considerations in research are aimed at enhancing a study's quality while prioritising the protection of participants. They emphasise that while informed consent has traditionally been the primary ethical aspect, additional components have been integrated to ensure participant well-being, including providing participants with background information about the study, details about the study's implications, and the necessary information for their involvement. Following ethical guidelines not only enhances research accuracy and safeguards participants, but also promotes collaborative values like responsibility, trust, justice, and mutual respect, particularly important in qualitative research involving individual participation (Uiseb, 2017).

Prior to commencing data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee at the university (See Appendix I). To ensure participants' anonymity and safeguard the privacy of schools, pseudonyms were used for the schools, teachers, and learners. The participants were informed that their identities would remain confidential. Comprehensive consent forms were distributed to participants, emphasising the ethical considerations of the study. Permission was secured from the Mpumalanga DBE (Appendix F), school principals, teachers, and learners' parents for data collection (Appendix I). For participants aged between 14 and 16, parental consent was obtained in accordance with ethical standards (Creswell, 2014). The confidentiality and exclusive use of data for this research were assured to all participants. Consequently, the study diligently adhered to ethical guidelines to prevent harm, uphold privacy, and maintain participants' dignity (Rahman, 2020). To preserve

participants' privacy, video recordings were conducted with participants' cameras turned off, and their names and locations were coded (Gray et al., 2020). The recruitment process included emailing potential participants with information about the study's purpose and objectives. Those who willingly expressed interest were provided with detailed information about the topic and were requested to voluntarily participate. Signing consent forms confirmed their willingness to partake, and participants retained the autonomy to withdraw at any stage of the study.

Throughout the research process, I ensured that confidentiality, privacy, and participants' well-being were upheld. The use of pseudonyms, voluntary participation, the ability to withdraw, and privacy preservation were all integral aspects. These ethical considerations collectively contribute to the study's integrity, respect for participants' rights, and the reliability of the findings.

1.16   Outline of chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction and background to the study

This chapter establishes the foundational elements for the study, encompassing its context, problem statement, significance, objectives, research questions, key definitions, literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, research approach, design, population under investigation, sampling, data collection methods, analysis, delimitation, limitation, ethical considerations, and chapter outline. The overarching purpose of this chapter is to introduce the focal problem of the research. As is common in research, this study seeks to investigate a particular issue and propose recommendations aimed at addressing the issue at hand.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 explores the perspectives, viewpoints, and arguments presented by scholars on a global scale. The primary objective of this chapter is to provide readers with an in-depth exploration of existing scholarly work, facilitating their comprehension of essential aspects within the field. A comprehensive review of literature from both South Africa and other countries was conducted, particularly focusing on issues pertaining to the utilisation of reading strategies and approaches. By examining research beyond national boundaries, I sought to gain insights into challenges akin to

South Africa's context, such as large learner enrolments impacting on reading proficiency. This exploration of diverse studies' findings enabled me to derive recommendations specific to this research. A combination of recent and historical research was scrutinised to gather precedent perspectives concerning the application of reading strategies and approaches, both within the EFAL context and in broader educational contexts.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the theoretical underpinning that forms the basis of this study – the utilisation of prior knowledge to enhance learners' reading comprehension. Although the selection of the theoretical framework was not immediate, a comprehensive review of analogous research led me to embrace schema theory as the most suitable foundation for this study. Schema theory aligns well with the central focus of this research, as it emphasises the significance of learners' existing knowledge as a pivotal tool for enhancing reading development.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

Chapter 4 includes a comprehensive exploration of the research paradigm, encompassing the research approach and study type. This chapter meticulously outlines the research methodology, which encompasses the research design, research approach, data collection methods, research instruments, limitations, delimitations, and ethical considerations. In alignment with the study's objective of deeply investigating the perceptions and viewpoints of Grade 10 EFAL teachers and learners regarding the application of reading strategies and approaches in EFAL classrooms, a qualitative approach was adopted as the research paradigm. The selection of a case study methodology was driven by the study's focus on a singular group – Grade 10 EFAL teachers and learners.

Chapter 5: Data analysis, discussions, and findings

Chapter 5 is dedicated to the meticulous analysis and interpretation of the research data. Within this chapter, an in-depth examination of the results is conducted, offering valuable insights. The chapter initiates by methodically presenting and dissecting the

insights garnered from the semi-structured interviews with the teachers, as well as the focus group discussions with the learners. Furthermore, the chapter encompasses the interpretation of the CAPS document. Considering COVID-19 regulations mandating social distancing, data from both teachers and learners were efficiently collected through email correspondence. Within the discussion section, the emerging themes extracted from the raw data are comprehensively outlined and examined.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

In Chapter 6, a comprehensive synthesis of the findings takes place, accompanied by practical recommendations, conclusive insights, and the identification of potential avenues for further exploration. This chapter encapsulates the overarching essence of the study, serving as a culmination of its unfolding narrative. It concludes the trajectory of the study's progression and endeavours. Furthermore, within this chapter, valuable recommendations and pertinent strategies are offered for the specific group's consideration. These insights are aimed at assisting EFAL learners in their pursuit of augmenting their reading comprehension abilities.

CHAPTER 2

STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES, CHALLENGES, AND INTERVENTIONS

"Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going."
–Jim Ryun

2.1   Introduction

Chapter 1 explored the contextual underpinnings of this study, elucidating the impetus that drives the exploration of approaches and strategies employed in teaching reading comprehension to EFAL learners. This research is spurred by a confluence of factors, including my own teaching experience in secondary education, aimed at preparing learners for tertiary studies, and a recent engagement in instructing academic writing to ODeL students. Moreover, Chapter 1 underscores the paramount importance of effective teaching strategies in enhancing learners' reading comprehension abilities. It substantiates the exigency for comprehensive research in this area, seeking to shed light on the intricate dynamics at play. The primary objective of this study is to scrutinise teachers' perspectives regarding strategy instruction, particularly their utilisation of teaching strategies amid the constraints of the lockdown period. An underlying aspiration is to stimulate critical introspection among EFAL teachers and learners, catalysing a thorough evaluation of their practices and an informed consideration of the way forward. This process of reflection is envisaged not merely as an exercise in rectification but also as an endeavour to harness the innate strengths of teachers, amplifying their adeptness in deploying efficacious teaching strategies for enhancing reading comprehension. Aligned with the study's three research questions, Chapter 1 assumes a tripartite exploration. It traverses the existing literature pertaining to methodologies for instructing reading comprehension, explores the spectrum of approaches embraced by teachers in employing reading comprehension strategies, and probes the contextual nuances that influence the adoption of these strategies. Moreover, the chapter grapples with the challenges intertwined with strategy instruction, investigating the multifaceted issue of socioeconomic factors.

Concomitantly, the chapter acknowledges prevailing gaps in the implementation of approaches and strategies for enhancing reading comprehension. The last section of the chapter is dedicated to proposing pragmatic measures to bridge these gaps and steer the trajectory of effective pedagogy.

2.2 The phenomenon of approaches and strategies for reading comprehension

Previous research has shown a notable gap in understanding both teaching methods for reading comprehension and student approaches. Insufficient attention has been given to South African learners' low levels of literacy and numeracy, particularly within underperforming schools. While there is existing research on this topic (Erasmus, 2022; Rule & Land, 2017; Stott & Beelders, 2019; Spaull & Pretorius, 2019), there remains a paucity of comprehensive insights into instructional strategies within classrooms. There is a distinct absence of extensive research efforts aimed at unraveling the challenges teachers encounter in cultivating effective reading skills (Young, 2020). Addressing this research gap necessitates an analysis of teaching reading comprehension and engaging in interviews with teachers to illuminate their teaching contexts, self-perceptions as readers, and strategies employed to enhance reading within their classrooms.

In the context of this study, a reading strategy is construed as a multifaceted process involving the interplay between the reader and the text, employing a range of skills (Ulker, 2017). Notably, the selection of a particular reading approach hinges on the interplay between the learner and the teacher, with the suitability of different strategies for different learners (Zano, 2020). Approaches, as defined by Nurdianingsih (2021), denote a deliberate series of actions aimed at achieving specific educational objectives within a given context. In the context of this study, a reading strategy is inherently an approach, designed to attain educational goals through the teaching and learning process. The term 'reading strategy' here implies intentional actions employed by readers to comprehend text. Moreover, any teacher's usage of reading strategies in the selected schools is considered an approach to teaching reading comprehension.

The focus of this study centers on how Grade 10 EFAL teachers employ strategies for teaching reading comprehension. This aspect is pivotal in illuminating the breadth of this research.

2.3 The importance of approaches and strategies for reading in EFAL classrooms

Within this section, a comprehensive review of studies concerning the significance of reading strategies and approaches for reading comprehension in EFAL is presented. This review encompasses works from international, African, and South African scholars. Subsequently, my perspective is articulated through the exploration of the subsequent sub-themes: 'Approaches and strategies for enhancing learners' reading comprehension' and 'Effective strategies for teaching reading comprehension.'

2.3.1 Approaches and strategies for enhancing learners' reading comprehension

Reading presents a formidable challenge due to the diverse array of strategies it demands (Caddy, 2015). Vital to enhancing EFAL learners' reading skills is the instruction of reading strategies (Amin, 2019; Ali & Razali, 2019; Haerazi, Priyati & Vikasari, 2019). Introducing learners to a repertoire of these strategies empowers them to engage effectively with written texts, encouraging comprehension. The significance of employing a contextual teaching and learning approach in augmenting reading comprehension is underscored by Haerazi, Prayati, and Vikasara (2019). Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) teachers employ active-learning strategies, allowing learners to connect their existing knowledge with new information, thereby constructing a deeper understanding (Haerazi et al., 2019). This process involves interpreting the material through both prior knowledge and textual information, culminating in comprehension.

In EFAL learning contexts, Amin (2019) emphasises reading comprehension's pivotal role across educational levels. Teachers' reading approaches hold a substantial influence in honing these skills. As Yurko and Prontsenko (2020) argue, learners' information processing capabilities profoundly impact their interpretive abilities. Given that many EFAL learners are not HL native English speakers, effective reading

approaches are crucial for both teachers and learners in language acquisition. Active usage of diverse reading strategies encourages learner interaction with text authors during the reading process (Ali & Razali, 2019). Predicting, summarising, using prior knowledge, analysis, and inference are effective strategies that can bolster EFAL classrooms, amplifying reading comprehension. Integrating such strategies equips learners with the skills to decode written text, thus enhancing their comprehension. Consequently, encouraging Grade 10 EFAL learners to employ multiple strategies could notably boost their comprehension.

Khatee (2018) underscores the role of cultural familiarity in encouraging reading comprehension. Familiar literary texts engage learners, leveraging their background knowledge to enhance comprehension. EFAL learners require exposure to texts aligned with their prior knowledge to effectively grasp the target language (Zhang, 2009). Owen and Mantlana (2017) stress teachers' pivotal role in helping learners navigate reading challenges. Effective strategies not only facilitate text comprehension but also promote peer discussions. Echoing this, Rule, and Land (2017) caution against ineffective strategies that impede reading proficiency, emphasising the need for EFALteachers to adopt methods that encourage interaction with written content.

Banditvilia's study (2020) at Kasetart University demonstrates how explicit instruction in reading strategies created positive attitudes and improved reading understanding among learners. Similarly, a study by Medina et al. (2021) reveals that providing teachers with professional development in explicit reading comprehension strategies led to improved teaching practices and learner behaviour. This indicates that proper training can reshape EFAL teachers' attitudes toward the use of reading strategies.

2.3.2 Effective strategies for teaching reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is an intricate process that hinges on both interactivity and strategy utilisation (Nurie, 2017). Effective comprehension requires emerging readers to engage with precision and receive explicit guidance on employing reading comprehension strategies (Nasab & Ghafournia, 2016). Proficiency in reading EFAL is indispensable at the high school level, especially as many Dutch schools employ English materials. This can pose challenges for EFAL learners who may possess limited English experience (Brevik, 2019). Given that strategies from a first language

do not seamlessly translate to EFAL, offering teachers EFAL reading programs with explicit strategy instruction can prove advantageous, given that EFAL requires a nurtured learning process (Brevik, 2019).

A common thread throughout literature is the emphasis on the pivotal role of reading strategies in facilitating deep comprehension (Brevik, 2019; Nurie, 2017; Yurko & Prontseko, 2020). However, the extent to which strategies are integrated into daily classroom practices remains unclear (Pearson & Cervetti, 2020). Teachers often tailor their teaching strategies based on learners' needs, rather than introducing novel ones (Brevik, 2019). Scholars unanimously highlight the importance of cultivating a supportive classroom environment that encourages strategic reading. Given the complexity of reading comprehension - a dynamic interplay between reader, text, activity, and context - this supportive atmosphere is crucial (Ali & Razali, 2019; Brevik, 2019; Nurie, 2017; Zano, 2020). Equipping teachers with diverse reading strategies is pivotal for understanding learners' growth as strategic readers and the seamless integration of strategy instruction within broader reading comprehension pedagogy. Lailliyah, Wediyantoro, and Yusticia (2019) accentuate the interactive nature of text comprehension, bridging the readers' prior knowledge with textual content. This underscores the need for learners to possess substantial linguistic capital to grasp the text's intricacies. EFAL learners might initially struggle to comprehend English texts, requiring the supplementation of diverse reading strategies to bridge the gap between their background knowledge and the text (Kyler, 2020; Nurie, 2017; Zano, 2020).

Ali and Razali (2019) categorise strategies for teaching EFAL learners into cognitive and meta-cognitive categories. Meta-cognitive strategies entail conscious awareness of cognitive processes (Flavell, 1979), while cognitive strategies encompass learning tasks such as vocabulary retention and keyword identification (Kyle, 2020). The interplay between meta-cognitive and cognitive strategies is pivotal, emphasising their intertwining nature (Azizi, Nemati & Estahbanati, 2017). Meta-cognitive strategies involve self-regulation and monitoring of cognitive processes (Meniando, 2016). Cognitive strategies, on the other hand, encompass varied methods for understanding content, including memory strategies (underlining, highlighting, visualisation) and retrieval strategies (previewing, using prior knowledge, context cues) (Kyler, 2020). These strategies, such as questioning, summarising, and predicting, align with

reciprocal teaching interactive strategies (Sematin & Manian, 2015). In South African schools, these strategies, including analysing, elaborating, transferring, inferencing, and summarising, are crucial for comprehension (Mazurki, Alim & Wekke, 2018).

Schema theory posits that comprehension hinges on the interaction between reader and text, incorporating learners' background knowledge (Brevik, 2019; Rule & Land, 2017). Despite studies indicating teachers employ strategies, few consistently use advanced strategies like inferencing and summarising (Ali & Razali, 2019; Nurie, 2017; Rule & Land, 2017; Tarchi, 2015). Higher-order skills like inference-making and prior knowledge play pivotal roles in reading comprehension development. To bridge this gap, this study explores the use of reading strategies, learners' prior knowledge, prediction-making, and inference-making by Grade 10 EFAL teachers in their classrooms.

2.3.2.1 Activating prior knowledge

Extensive research consistently underscores the potent impact of activating prior knowledge on bolstering learning outcomes (Ali & Razali, 2019; Brevik, 2019; Kostons & Van der Werf, 2015; Tarchi, 2015). A significant finding in contemporary educational research accentuates the paramount significance of prior knowledge in text-based learning (Hattan & Alexander, 2020). The act of activating learners' pre-existing knowledge serves as a foundational scaffold, adeptly connecting their existing understanding with latest information.

Chaka (2015) elucidates prior knowledge as an individual's comprehensive comprehension predating a specific learning task, organised within schemata—both procedural and declarative, partly tacit, and partly explicit—constantly evolving. In the scope of this study, prior knowledge encompasses a diverse reservoir of learners' worldly, textual, and personal knowledge. This encompassing collection includes insights gleaned from formal education, intentional knowledge construction, textual analysis, and everyday encounters.

Hattan and Alexander (2020) underscore that during the act of reading, fresh information seamlessly assimilates into the learners' pre-existing framework of

knowledge, intricately shaping their subsequent grasp of the material. To facilitate a seamless connection between Grade 10 learners and their reading material, EFAL teachers hold the pivotal role of skillfully guiding learners in the strategic application of prior knowledge.

While for some learners, invoking prior knowledge during text processing might seem intuitive (Tarchi, 2015), it is important to note that prior knowledge does not naturally reside within the confines of working memory. Learners must actively extract it from the repository of long-term memory into their working memory (Kostons & Van der Werf, 2015). Nonetheless, the process of activating background knowledge might necessitate deliberate effort and time, especially when personal ties to the text are delicate. In situations where comprehension of complex texts is at stake, the scaffolding provided by teachers becomes pivotal.

2.3.2.2 Making predictions

The idea of utilising 'prediction' to improve reading comprehension has been explored in many ways (An, 2011; Goodman, 1988a; Jufri, 2018). According to Goodman (1988: 16), prediction is crucial since "the brain is constantly anticipating and forecasting as it searches for meaning and significance in sensory inputs". According to Jufri (2018), teaching prediction-making to learners allows them to anticipate text content based on their prior knowledge. This highlights that, akin to activating prior knowledge, prediction-making is not an automatic skill for learners and necessitates guided mastery by teachers, particularly pertinent in the context of Grade 10 EFAL learners who often are not native speakers of the LoLT.

Frequent instruction revolves around teaching learners to create and substantiate predictions to enhance reading comprehension (Jufri, 2018; Halladay & Neumann, 2012). Learners learn to collate pre-reading information, compare it with post-reading information, and amalgamate the two to arrive at conclusions. Prediction-making enriches reading comprehension by engaging learners actively with the text. Learners' predictions stem from topic familiarity, personal background, and genre understanding (McCarthy & McNamara, 2021). For instance, during a reading comprehension exercise, a teacher might prompt learners with questions like 'What's the passage

about?' and "Why do you think so?' This process continues with queries like 'Does this passage align with your predictions?' This iterative approach of developing, assessing, and adjusting predictions facilitates deeper, more engaged text interaction (Buck & Torgesen, 2018).

Prediction-making promotes motivation and independent thinking as learners choose the aspects of the text to explore (Reynolds & Goodwin, 2016). A crucial aspect of this technique is that it establishes a reader-centric reading goal, shifting from teacher-centered or text-centered approaches (Hittleman, 1978; Walberg & Shanahan, 1983). Consequently, learners must apply their relevant prior knowledge to predict text content, which mandates explicit instruction and modeling by the teacher. The effectiveness of prediction-making and information absorption hinges on the knowledge and experience learners bring to their reading (Hittleman, 1978).

2.3.2.3 Making inference

Alahmadi and Foltz (2020) emphasise that learners' abilities to make inferences involve conscious efforts to extract meaning from a text. Inference making, as described by Hall, Vaughn, Barnes et al. (2020), is a cognitive process through which a reader integrates knowledge from both within and across a text to construct new understanding. Successful inference-making requires the amalgamation of the aforementioned information and skills.

Among cognitive processes, inference making stands out as one of the most crucial for effective comprehension (Swanepoel, 2016; Nassab, 2002). This skill empowers learners to engage in calculated guessing, employing contextual cues alongside their world knowledge and background information (Madikiza, et al., 2018; Rapetsoa & Singh, 2017; Vundla, 2020; Swanepoel, 2016; Zano, 2020). Inference-making encourages independence by compelling learners to decipher unfamiliar word meanings using textual context instead of external references.

For Grade 10 EFAL learners to read with comprehension, they must not only memorise textual details but also master the skill of making inferences to unearth implicit meanings. Kintsch and Van Dijk (1978) delineate three levels of text

representation. First, surface-level representation involves decoding word definitions and syntactic comprehension. Second, text representation entails grasping explicit information from the text. Lastly, situation model invokes recollection of topic-specific knowledge, which when combined with text information, creates a comprehensive understanding of the scenario. Successful comprehension necessitates mastery of all these levels of textual representation.

2.4 Approaches and strategies for reading used in the South African context

Olifant, Cekiso, and Rautenbach (2020) emphasise that a considerable number of EFAL learners in South African secondary schools struggle to apply critical reading skills essential for enhancing their reading abilities. This challenge, rooted in teachers limited theoretical grasp of reading comprehension instruction (Zimmerman, 1998), is compounded by South African teachers lacking a firm foundation in reading strategies (Zano, 2020). Consequently, some teachers fail to effectively integrate reading strategies into their teaching, hindering learners' development of essential reading skills. Madikiza et al. (2020) discovered that certain South African EFAL teachers lacked comprehension of specific reading strategies, resulting in a narrow scope of strategies being taught, and limiting learners' exposure to diverse approaches. Additionally, some teachers adhere to conventional strategies that fall short of aiding learners' comprehension of reading material. Zano (2020) confirms that while learners employ multiple strategies to enhance FAL comprehension, the choice of strategy hinges on the learner's familiarity with or understanding of a particular method. Given the variation in language learning approaches among EFAL learners, achieving consistent strategy usage is challenging. This underscores the imperative for language practitioners to equip EFAL teachers with effective tools to advance learners' reading comprehension skills.

Van Staden and Bosker (2014) underline that teaching reading strategies to EFAL learners significantly predicts reading comprehension success, asserting that these strategies must be integrated into the teaching process. A study by Cekiso (2012) supports this notion, demonstrating that learners who received explicit instruction in reading strategies outperformed those who did not. Addressing poor reading

comprehension among EFAL learners is a pressing concern, necessitating focused strategy instruction.

As outlined by Bharuthram (2012), South African secondary school learners are expected to use their EFAL skills to analyse, criticise, evaluate, and synthesise information from diverse sources. Yet, most high school entrants are ill-prepared to meet these demands. Overcoming obstacles to implementing effective reading strategies is a challenge for both teachers and learners in the South African context (Cekiso, 2012; Madikiza et al., 2020; Zano, 2020), resulting in EFAL learners struggling with inadequate English language strategies, impeding their academic progress.

Thage, Makgosi, and Mthembu's (2021) South African study highlight the significant benefits of guided teaching approaches, encouraging shared learning and enhancing EFAL learners' reading proficiency. Guided teaching empowers learners to control their learning, encouraging innovation and curiosity. This iterative process of strategy guidance empowers learners to independently apply strategies, fueling motivation and improving comprehension skills.

A South African study by Bergbauer and Van Staden (2018) reveals that a lack of active engagement between learners, parents, and teachers hampers the development of competent readers. Similarly, schema theory posits that inactive engagement between the reader and the text hinders meaning construction. To effectively teach learners reading strategies, teachers must possess a solid theoretical foundation. Cordeur (2012) underscores that reading strategies should be employed across all subjects, by all teachers, not limited to language teachers. This collaborative approach is vital to sparking learners' interest in reading, particularly in EFAL contexts. Rule and Land (2017) assert that motivation and strategy instruction are interlinked, with learners losing interest in reading due to poor strategy implementation. Klawijk (2015) concurs, emphasising the flexible, simple incorporation of reading strategies across subjects to enhance comprehension.

Zano and Phatudi's (2019) study on Grade 11 EFAL learners' reading comprehension reveals that depth of vocabulary knowledge is a stronger predictor of reading ability

than breadth. Quality prevails over quantity, highlighting the impact of meaningful vocabulary knowledge on comprehension. Similarly, Sebole, Khoza-Shangase, and Mophusho (2019) found better performance in Sepedi than English reading comprehension, due to the learners' familiarity with their home language. Despite differing views on the root of reading problems, the need for teaching effective strategies to enhance EFAL learners' comprehension skills remains evident. Mpiti and Makena (2020) affirm that learners benefited from discussing texts in their native language, utilising trans-language strategies to comprehend the primary idea. This underscores the challenge of mastering English when it is not the learners' primary language. A strategy-focused approach can bridge this gap and encourage meaningful comprehension in EFAL contexts.

2.5   Approaches and strategies for reading used in other developing countries

The challenges surrounding the implementation of reading comprehension strategies and approaches extend beyond South African learners. International studies indicate that the effective usage of strategies for teaching reading comprehension is a growing concern in various countries (Adutu & Wamulwa, 2019; Anyiendah, Odumo & Kibui, 2020; Kiew & Shah, 2020; Naafan, 2018).

Wibowo, Syafrizal, and Syafiyadin (2020) investigated the strategies employed by senior high school teachers in Bengula, Indonesia, revealing a limited usage of reading comprehension strategies—namely, question generation and dictionary use. Similarly, Saputri, Rizali, and Afriani (2021) found that teachers in Kota Bengkulu, Indonesia, primarily employed scaffolding and question-answer methods. Reflianto, Setyosari, Kuswandi, and Widiati (2022) attributed this limited use of strategies to teachers' insufficient understanding, hindering effective learner engagement. Muhassin, Annisa, and Hidayati (2021) recommended introducing targeted reading programs for Indonesian teachers to enhance their grasp of reading comprehension strategies and subsequently improve learners' academic achievement.

Effective reading strategies extend beyond English lessons. A study by Mafarja, Zulnaidi, and Fadzil (2020) in Palestine, Malaysia, focused on the influence of reciprocal teaching methods on Physics learners' critical skills among Grade 10

learners. Kiew and Shah (2020) identified motivation, prior knowledge, and vocabulary knowledge as factors influencing learners' reading skills in Sub-Urban schools. In Malaysia, however, Kung and Aziz (2020) found that despite metacognitive reading strategy teaching efforts, Malaysian learners still lack essential reading skills. Halim, Arif, and Supramaniam (2020) noted the limited use of explicit instruction to expose Malaysian learners to reading comprehension skills.

Kuvani and Amjadiparvar's (2018) study in Iran highlighted the significant impact of strategy-based instruction (SBI) on EFAL learners' reading comprehension, motivation, and self-regulation. This aligns with the South African context, where learners and teachers often lack motivation and interest in reading development. Developing countries face similar challenges. Primary school learners in Vihiga, Kenya, exhibit poor performance in reading comprehension compared to grammar (Anyiendah, Odundo & Kibui, 2021). A study by Kulo, Odundo, and Kibui (2020) in Kisumi, Kenya, found a strong correlation between interactive reading strategies and learner achievement in reading comprehension. Adamu, Tsiga, and Zuilkowiski (2022) identified the struggle of Nigerian teachers due to large class sizes, hindering effective reading instruction for EFAL learners. Muodumugu (2015) found that teachers' instructional practices in Nigeria were at odds with balanced program guidelines. Oyentunde et al. (2019) recommended intervention programs to train Nigerian government schoolteachers in specific reading strategies for enhanced instructional practices.

In Ghana, Naafan (2018) argued that reading difficulties among learners were linked not only to socio-economic and environmental factors but also to language factors, reading strategies, and inadequate exposure to books. This parallels the situation for South African EFAL learners. Encouraging a reading culture is pivotal in developing countries. Mohammed and Amponsah (2018) pointed to the education system's shortcomings in promoting reading culture, involving teacher motivation, parental encouragement, availability of pre-reader materials, and learners' lack of comprehension skills. These international examples emphasise the universal need to create effective reading strategies to bolster comprehension, motivation, and literacy rates among learners.

2.6   Challenges for reading strategy use in the EFAL context

The effective utilisation of reading strategies is crucial for enhancing the reading comprehension of EFAL learners, which significantly impacts their academic achievement. Numerous researchers have investigated the challenges surrounding reading strategy use in various EFAL settings, and a consensus has emerged that explicit instruction is vital for effective reading strategy implementation (Boakye & Linden, 2018; Mavuru & Ramnarain, 2020; Dorasamy, Reddy, & Naidoo, 2014; Van Staden & Bosker, 2014).

Boakye and Linden (2018) conducted a study on tutorial instructions for strategy use among South African learners, observing that learners were motivated and benefited from the intervention in terms of reading assigned texts. Similarly, Van Staden and Bosker (2011) investigated evidence-based and reading scaffolding strategies for South African EFAL learners, finding that combining direct instruction with scaffolding significantly improved literacy and academic skills. These findings underscore the need for the intentional cultivation of effective reading strategies among both EFAL teachers and learners, mirroring the process of schema activation. Zano (2020) further highlighted the challenge of inconsistent reading strategy use due to varying individual preferences among learners. To address this, explicit instruction in strategy use is paramount to equip both teachers and learners with effective tools. Owen and Mantlana (2017) explored challenges faced by Grade 10 EFAL learners, indicating that learners struggled with higher-order reading skills like skimming, scanning, and identifying keywords. This impedes their abilities to summarise English texts effectively. To overcome this, interventions such as intensive academic reading and writing workshops are recommended (Zano, 2020).

Dorasamy, Reddy, and Naidoo (2014) identified difficulties within South Africa's educational system that hinder effective reading strategy use, including lack of parental support, teacher comprehension limitations, crowded classrooms, and non-native English usage as the LoLT. Mavuru and Ramnarain (2020) investigated the code-switching reading strategy's impact on learners' understanding of Natural Sciences concepts in South Africa, revealing that learners struggled with tests

requiring English responses. These challenges emphasise the need for explicit strategy instruction to enhance EFAL reading comprehension.

International contexts reflect similar issues. For example, Matsepe (2018) examined overcrowded classrooms among primary school EFAL teachers, revealing limitations in strategy use due to an overreliance on a single method. Addressing these challenges requires both teachers and learners to be equipped with a comprehensive range of strategies through explicit instruction (Kung, 2017). Miyamoto, Pfost, and Artelt (2019) noted limited exposure to reading strategies among German learners, while Okkinga et al. (2018) found that explicit instruction significantly improved Dutch learners' reading skills. Al-Meklafi (2018) highlighted EFAL learners' inadequate reading strategies, suggesting the need for effective strategies beyond superficial approaches. Similarly, Al Jarrah and Ismail (2018) investigated Malaysian EFAL learners' reading strategies and identified commonly used techniques.

Assessing the effectiveness of reading strategies is challenging due to variations in learners' abilities, contexts, and tasks (McNamara, 2011). The complexity of good strategy use demands interactive teaching, feedback, and monitoring from teachers (Al-Meklafi, 2018; Graham et al., 2020; Maphoto & Sevnarayan, 2021). A consistent approach to explicit strategy instruction is imperative for enhancing EFAL learners' reading comprehension skills and supporting their academic success.

2.7   Reading comprehension strategy intervention

Reading comprehension can pose challenges for many EFAL learners, particularly when encountering unfamiliar, technical, or complex topics. This difficulty can lead to frustration, decreasing their motivation and causing them to avoid reading, thereby missing valuable practice and opportunities for improvement (D'mello & Graesser, 2012). Existing literature underscores the vital role of effective reading comprehension strategies in enhancing the reading proficiency of EFAL learners (Amin, 2019; Ali & Razali, 2019; Kurani & Amjadiparvar, 2018; Mafaraja, Zulnaidi & Fadzil, 2020; Haerazi, Priyati & Vikasari, 2019; Thage, Makgosi & Mthembu, 2021). Nevertheless, the utilisation of reading strategies is not an innate process for both EFAL teachers and learners (Ali & Razali, 2019; Brevik, 2017). Effective reading requires persistence, as

pointed out by Torgesen (1977), who recognises that some learners struggle with engagement.

Various researchers have extensively investigated the challenges associated with implementing reading comprehension strategies, consistently emphasising the crucial role of strategy interventions for both EFAL learners and teachers in effectively employing reading strategies during teaching and learning (Mohammed & Amponsah, 2018; Klapwijk, 2015; Muhassin, Annisa & Hidayati, 2021). Hendricks and Fuchs (2020) define reading intervention as approaches and programs designed to prevent or address persistent reading difficulties. Additionally, Toste, Capin, Williams, Cho, and Vaughn (2019) identify 'Intensive' interventions as those delivered alongside core training and extended over a substantial period. In the context of this study, intervention strategies refer to methods aimed at raising awareness of reading challenges faced by both EFAL learners and teachers, as well as implementing educational programs to effectively address these challenges. The subsequent subsection explores the discussion of intervention strategies that hold the potential to ameliorate the reading comprehension difficulties experienced by EFAL learners.

2.7.1 Explicit teaching of reading strategies

Research findings consistently highlight the benefits of teaching reading strategies and engaging EFAL learners in text discussions for enhancing reading comprehension skills (Mafaraja, Zulnaidi & Fadzil, 2022; Muhassin, Annisa & Hidayati, 2021; Oyentunde, 2016; Thage, Makgosi & Mthembu, 2021; Van Staden & Bosker, 2014; Zano, 2020). Notably, both learners and teachers face challenges in utilising these strategies effectively (Al-Meklafi, 2018; Dorasamy, Reddy, & Naidoo, 2014; Suraprajit, 2019; Klapwijk, 2015). While comprehension strategies are pivotal for reading proficiency, they do not naturally manifest (Klapwijk, 2015; Miyamoto, Pfost & Artelt, 2019), underscoring the importance of teachers encouraging strategy implementation through comprehensive instructional approaches (Brevik, 2017; Zano, 2020).

Prior research in the present study reveals instances where certain EFAL teachers relied on a limited array of strategies (Madikiza et al., 2020; Saputri, Rizali & Afriani, 2021; Wibowo, Syafrizal & Syafiyadin, 2020), thereby restricting learners from experiencing the benefits of diverse reading strategies in different contexts. Other

studies indicate that some teachers employed ineffective reading strategies (Nuzurty, Priyanto, Anggia, Pratiwi & Mukminin, 2019; Suraprajit, 2019). Furthermore, while some EFAL learners excelled in comprehending passages, they faced challenges in summarising content (Anyiendah, Odumo & Kibui, 2020; Owen & Mantlana, 2017). Explicit instruction in reading strategies can significantly address many of these issues.

A noteworthy concern pertains to the insufficient application of meta-cognitive strategies such as summary writing and inference, considered higher-order reading skills that empower learners to effectively engage with complex tasks. To bridge this gap, the current study centered on Grade 10 EFAL teachers and learners, emphasising their abilities to make inferences and predictions. Proficiency in these strategies can notably enhance academic performance. Attaprechakul (2013) investigated inference strategy application and found that learners succeeded in interpreting thesis statements, section content, and term meanings. However, they faced challenges in deducing the core thesis, tone, and author's stance on research findings. This underscores the necessity for explicit instruction in reading strategies, particularly those that are less commonly employed by teachers and learners alike.

2.7.2 Using technology to teach reading comprehension

The conventional approach to teaching, often reliant on textbooks, can fail to captivate learners, especially in strategies for language education such as reading comprehension. This lack of engagement, combined with factors like ineffective reading strategies, low motivation, and insufficient materials, contributes to challenges in EFAL learners' reading comprehension (Mohammadian, Saed, & Shahi, 2018). However, integrating technology into educational settings can provide a solution by boosting learner motivation and participation (Sevnarayan, 2022a; 2022b; 2022c). Several researchers have investigated this approach and consistently underscore the strong correlation between technology use and motivational aspects of language learning (Huang & Hong, 2016; Kroesch, Jozwik, Douglas, Chung, Uphold, & Baker 2022; Klimova & Zamborova 2020; Sevnarayan, 2022c; Stott & Beelders, 2019). By embracing technology, teachers gain access to a vast array of rich target language resources not typically available in traditional classrooms (Nurie, 2017; Sevnarayan, 2022a).

A study by Jozwik and Douglas (2017) explored the effects of technology-assisted reading comprehension intervention among Grade 4 learners in Chicago. Their findings indicated the positive impact of integrating technology tools into reading comprehension instruction, particularly when combined with explicit teaching methods. Similarly, a study by Dewi, Zahrowi & Sulistyawati (2019) focused on Grade 6 learners and explored the use of Google Classroom to enhance reading comprehension. The results showed improvements in reading comprehension through this technological intervention. While some learners preferred face-to-face interactions for direct engagement with teachers, others found learning through Google Classroom more engaging and convenient.

Despite the apparent benefits of technology integration for reading comprehension, socioeconomic limitations hinder its widespread adoption in African schools (Zano, 2020; Rapetsoa, 2017; Rule & Land, 2017; Brevik, 2017; Stott & Beelders, 2019). A study by Stott and Beelders (2019) evaluated the impact of technology intervention on EFAL learners' reading comprehension in a South African township. While many learners benefited, some required additional support in developing English for science and technology (EST) skills to fully leverage the intervention's potential. Additionally, Mwapwele, Marais, Dlamini, and Biljon (2019) explored the adoption of information and communication technologies (ICT) by rural teachers according to South African policy objectives. The study revealed teachers' optimism about ICT use, despite challenges such as financial constraints and technical skills gaps. However, schools' policies often limited learners' access to personal digital devices, except for calculators.

The integration of technology into language education, particularly for teaching reading comprehension, offers promising avenues to address challenges and enhance learner engagement. While this approach holds significant potential, careful consideration of socioeconomic factors and teachers' readiness is essential for its successful implementation.

2.7.3 Peer assistance learning strategy

Active engagement of EFAL learners in the teaching and learning process is a paramount concern for teachers. Among the strategies that facilitate cooperative

learning, the peer assistance learning strategy holds immense potential (Mahmoud, 2014; Omidire, 2022; Adebola, 2020). Research has consistently demonstrated that learners who collaborate with peers during reading tasks exhibit higher levels of self-motivation compared to those who work in isolation (De Smedt, Graham & Van Keer, 2019). Mahmoud (2014: 618) argues that this strategy, rooted in the natural communication practice of seeking assistance, is "more learner-centered and safeguards against the social, psychological, organisational, and time constraint problems." Peer assistance learning is bolstered by various educational theories, encompassing cooperative learning, process-oriented learning, and scaffolding, while also promoting interaction in language acquisition.

A study by Omidire (2022) explored the use of group discussions as a peer-assistance teaching strategy among South African teachers in EFAL classrooms. The study revealed that teachers employed various approaches, including peer assistance teaching and group discussions, as well as the quiz-bowl method. However, the quiz-bowl method sometimes restricted learners' abilities for independent reasoning during discussions. Omidire's findings indicated that with proper training, teachers could model and scaffold question-asking techniques during group discussions to yield more significant benefits. This aligns with previous literature highlighting the effectiveness of explicitly teaching reading strategies to enhance learners' reading comprehension. Another South African study by Adebola (2020) examined the implementation of supplemental instruction (SI) – a form of academic support – to enhance reading comprehension among first-year university students. The study identified challenges such as communication gaps and overcrowded classes as obstacles to SI implementation. It can be inferred that employing peer assistance learning strategies could mitigate these challenges by motivating active participation and encouraging effective group discussions to address overcrowded classrooms.

The impact of peer assistance learning strategies extends beyond South Africa. Badakhshan, Motallebzedah, and Maftoon (2021) conducted a study on peer tutoring among Iranian learners, investigating the efficacy of reflective reciprocal teaching (RRT) – a novel instructional model – on EFAL learners' reading comprehension abilities. The study affirmed the significance of RRT in teaching reading comprehension and highlighted its positive effects on self-regulated learning,

perceived competence, meta-cognitive awareness, confidence, and intrinsic motivation. These findings align with Mahmoud's (2014) assertion that peer assistance strategies not only encourage active communication but also enhance motivation among EFAL learners.

2.8   Reading comprehension

The paramount objective of the reading process is undoubtedly reading comprehension, forming the very essence of the present study. The act of reading loses its value if an individual cannot grasp the meaning of what they are reading. Moreover, reading with comprehension stands as a pivotal predictor of academic achievement. As reading approaches have evolved, so too has the definition of reading comprehension. In the early 1960s and 1970s, traditional theories, adopting a top-down perspective, perceived comprehension as the ability of learners to decipher the meanings embedded within the text (Smith, Snow, Serry & Hammond, 2021). If learners could extract the textual meaning, comprehension was deemed to naturally follow suit. However, the notion that comprehension was automatically achieved through decoding alone was challenged by subsequent researchers (Crosson & Lesaux, 2010). It became clear that a focus solely on decoding did not guarantee genuine comprehension. Thus, reading theories began incorporating higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), encouraging learners to engage in critical reading and inferential reasoning (Anderson, 1994).

Transitioning from the 1970s to the 1980s, a paradigm shift occurred, conceptualising comprehension as an active process where readers actively construct meaning by engaging with the text (Pearson, 2014). Furthermore, reading comprehension encompasses more than merely understanding and memorising the definitions of individual words within a text. It involves the intricate interplay between the reader's prior knowledge and the information presented in the text, culminating in an understanding of the text's underlying message (Sari, 2017). This perspective emphasises that reading comprehension extends beyond the rote memorisation of definitions; rather, it underscores how learners synthesise and build upon the text's significance. This dynamic relationship between the reader and the text stands as the

cornerstone of comprehension, challenging the antiquated notion that comprehension is solely about extracting meaning from the printed words on a page.

2.9 Factors influencing EFAL learners' reading comprehension

Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the factors that impact the reading comprehension abilities of EFAL learners holds paramount importance, especially within the South African context where English is used as an EFAL. Teachers stand to benefit from possessing insights into essential reading skills and an acute awareness of the diverse range of reading challenges confronted by EFAL learners (Mncube, Mkhasibe & Ajani, 2021). This knowledge equips teachers to adeptly address the reading difficulties that EFAL learners commonly face. Numerous factors contribute to the intricacies of EFAL reading comprehension. In the ensuing discourse, I explore several of these pivotal factors.

2.9.1 Reading competence

The significance of reading comprehension for academic achievement cannot be overstated, yet many learners struggle to grasp its intricacies. Maruma (2017) highlights the imperative role EFAL teachers play in guiding learners with difficulties toward achieving language competency essential for effective reading comprehension. One avenue through which this can be accomplished is by implementing classroom interaction activities that enhance meaningful discourse in the LoLT, thereby actively engaging learners. This approach not only encourages effective communication but also allows learners to take charge of their learning experience within the framework of their FAL (Maja, 2015).

In pursuit of enhanced language competence, EFAL teachers should adopt a range of communicative strategies within their classrooms. Maja (2019) underscores the significance of teachers serving as role models, adeptly utilising the target language at a level accessible to learners. Employing diverse reading strategies that promote active learner engagement becomes pivotal. The transformative potential of teachers within South Africa's educational system is substantial. "Irrespective of the educational phase or grade, teachers must possess adeptness and proficiency in the LoLT to facilitate optimal skill transfer and effective instruction" (Makhwathana, 2020:3).

Ideally, teachers should be equipped through comprehensive training to effectively impart reading comprehension skills to learners, encouraging language competency. Maja (2019) advocates for teacher development through interactive activities, indicating a need for in-service training initiatives tailored to EFAL teachers.

2.9.2 Meaning making

Comprehending written text to extract meaning and engage in real-world experiences is a fundamental process known as reading for meaning or sense-making. Within teaching and learning, teachers grapple with numerous challenges that impede effective reading comprehension among EFAL learners. In this pursuit, teachers actively seek strategies to facilitate learners' improved grasp of textual content, enabling them to make sense of the material (Vundla, 2020). Linake and Mokhele (2019) underscore the issue of EFAL learners struggling to discern both language and textual intricacies, alongside the objectives of reading that encompass dissecting literary experiences and adeptly extracting and applying information. Regrettably, these difficulties lead to inadequate reading skills, significantly hindering academic achievement, often resulting in poor performance and even dropout rates. Rapetsoa and Singh (2017) propose a solution, emphasising the imperative role of training EFAL teachers to effectively implement the new curriculum. This training should particularly focus on vocabulary enhancement and the teaching of comprehension skills, ultimately elevating the reading proficiency of EFAL learners during the FET phase (Rapetsoa & Singh, 2017). Taylor (2019) contends that for South African teachers to effectively cultivate EFAL learners' reading comprehension abilities, they must possess three essential language competencies: disciplinary or content knowledge, curriculum knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge. This aligns seamlessly with the core objective of this study, which explores the strategies employed by Grade 10 EFAL teachers to enhance learners' reading comprehension. Given the prevalent high failure rates in reading instruction, the cultivation of pre-service teacher readiness emerges as a potent solution. It holds the potential to not only break South Africa's cycle of educational mediocrity but also to narrow the substantial inequality gap that plagues the nation (Taylor, 2019).

2.9.3 Limited vocabulary

Nndwamato (2021) underscores the essential nature of a robust vocabulary repertoire for EFAL learners in fulfilling their academic responsibilities, comprehending content, and expressing themselves adeptly, especially during examinations. Existing research underscores the restricted vocabulary of EFAL learners as a pivotal factor in subpar reading comprehension (Zano, 2018; Martens, 2014; Olifant, Cekiso & Rautenbach, 2020). Vocabulary knowledge is deemed an indispensable constituent of reading skills, given that meaning emerges from words and the intricate connection between words and text comprehension (Martens, 2014). Given that South African learners use EFAL when English is not their mother tongue, they encounter challenges in developing reading comprehension (Vundla, 2020). Consequently, EFAL teachers must guide learners in making sense of their reading material to effectively expand their vocabulary. Hence, effective instruction and modeling of reading strategies play a pivotal role in augmenting learners' reading comprehension.

In the pursuit of refining their reading comprehension during the teaching and learning process, EFAL learners must grasp the significance of vocabulary and background knowledge. Proficient vocabulary skills enable learners to decode words through alphabetic patterns and phonological awareness (Vundla, 2020). According to Olifant et al. (2020), phonology, ontology, grammar, morphology, syntax, meaning-making, and text modeling collectively enhance profound development, thereby enhancing learners' competency levels. This underscores the responsibility of EFAL teachers to facilitate the acquisition of these language skills, culminating in academic success.

Stoffelsma (2019) conducted a study on English vocabulary teaching strategies in South African townships, scrutinising the implementation of vocabulary teaching strategies by EFAL teachers. The findings underscore that while teachers utilised a spectrum of fundamental vocabulary teaching techniques, these approaches often fell short of encouraging advanced levels of active learning, where learners are challenged and empowered to assume ownership of their educational journey. This points to a deficiency in equipping teachers with diverse strategies that encourage robust learner engagement.

The influence of vocabulary knowledge extends beyond the South African context. Aprilia (2019), in an examination of the relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge among senior high school learners in Pekanbaru, found a profound impact of vocabulary mastery on learners' reading comprehension. This study demonstrates the significant sway of vocabulary proficiency on the reading comprehension capabilities of Grade 10 learners at State Senior High School Pekanbaru.

2.10 Socio-economic factors affecting EFAL learners' reading comprehension

The literature examined in this study underscores the multifaceted and often intricate nature of factors that impact learners' reading comprehension, some of which extend beyond the sphere of teachers' influence (Linake & Mokhele, 2019; Owen & Mantlana, 2017; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016; Rule & Land, 2017). The South African educational landscape is marred by socio-economic challenges that exacerbate reading difficulties, encompassing poverty, limited resources, family dynamics, instability, teacher competency, dual-working parents, and communication gaps between parents and their children (Rule & Land, 2017).

2.10.1 Teachers' attitudes towards reading strategies
There is an abundance of evidence highlighting the tremendous benefits of explicitly teaching reading comprehension strategies to students across all levels of education. When teachers take the initiative to clarify and model individual or multiple strategies for reading comprehension, and then provide guided and independent practice with constructive feedback until learners internalise the strategies, the reading proficiency of both primary and secondary school learners witnesses notable improvements (Maphoto & Sevnarayan, 2021; Oyentunde, Ojo, Korb & Babudoh, 2019; Stott & Beelders, 2019; Thage, Makgosi & Mthembu, 2021; Van Staden & Bosker, 2014; Zano, 2020). Despite the weight of this empirical support, it remains an unfortunate reality that many teachers are hesitant to deliver explicit reading comprehension instruction within their secondary school classrooms (Brevik, 2017; Klapwijk, 2015; Olifants, Cekiso & Rautenbach, 2019; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). In addressing this, Stott and Beelders (2013) emphasise that encouraging a positive reading attitude emerges as a pivotal predictor of improved reading comprehension. By cultivating a

conducive learning environment, teachers possess the potential to positively influence learners' reading skills (Natsir & Anisati, 2016).

A South African study conducted by Olifant et al. (2019), explored the perspectives of Grade 8-10 EFAL learners, and investigated teachers' perceptions of learners' attitudes, habits, and motivation towards reading. The findings underscored a crucial dichotomy: while teachers acknowledged that poor reading practices hinder learners' academic progress, they also conceded a substantial connection between learners' academic achievements and their productive reading habits and attitudes. However, a significant portion of teachers seemed oblivious to their role in perpetuating the decline of strong reading practices among their learners.

In the context of reading comprehension within South African schools, Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) researched teachers' attitudes toward teaching reading practices. The research revealed a disconcerting trend—many teachers appeared disengaged from active reading instruction, with a prevalent belief that they were exerting more effort than reflected in their learners' reading scores. This disconnect further highlighted a gap in teachers' understanding of reading concepts, development, and techniques. The implications are clear: teachers necessitate comprehensive training in the utilisation of effective reading comprehension strategies to enhance their grasp of the subject (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016).

2.10.2 Teacher competence
The deficiency in reading comprehension skills among EFAL learners has garnered attention both on a global scale and within local contexts (Al-Meklafi, 2018; Caga & Soya, 2019; Kostons & Van der Werf, 2015; Fesi & Mcube, 2021; Rapetsoa, 2017). Particularly concerning is the observation that this issue is not confined to the foundation phase alone; it persists throughout the entire educational journey in South Africa, spanning from foundational to tertiary levels. While many teachers acknowledge the reading challenges faced by EFAL learners, viable solutions remain elusive (Caga & Soya, 2019; Olifant et al., 2019).

The lack of emphasis on reading comprehension instruction can be attributed to multiple factors, yet a common thread is that teachers seem to grapple with the

comprehension strategies or lack the pedagogical knowledge to effectively teach them (Fesi & Mncube, 2021; Madikiza et al., 2020; Klapwijk, 2015). Various researchers have explored reading strategies and unanimously endorse the explicit teaching of such strategies to bolster the reading comprehension capacities of both EFAL learners and teachers (Muhassin, Annisa & Hidayati, 2021; Caddy, 2015; Thage, Makgosi & Mthembu, 2021; Van Staden & Bosker, 2014; Zano, 2020). The sentiment echoed by Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016: 8) further underscores this narrative: "Classroom reading instruction should be the focal point of change because it is one of the most important factors in preventing reading difficulties." Teachers should not rely on the assumption that learners will instinctively grasp and apply these strategies; rather, they should be explicitly taught how to effectively employ reading strategies during their reading endeavours.

A study by Lesi and Mncube (2021), exploring the challenges of EFAL teaching and learning among East London learners in South Africa, investigated the obstacles teachers encounter when instructing reading comprehension. The research brought to light a significant deficit in teachers' training on reading strategies during their tertiary education. This lack of training poses a challenge for teachers to consistently implement reading strategies throughout the learning process. Consequently, EFAL learners are deprived of opportunities to enhance their comprehension through diverse reading strategies vital to their academic achievements. The issue does not lie solely with the learners but is intrinsically linked to the need for well-prepared teachers equipped with the proper training to enhance effective reading comprehension instruction.

2.10.3 Overcrowded classes

Overcrowding stands out as one of the most significant contributors to dismal academic achievement (Caddy, 2015; Kganedi, 2015). The South African education system grapples with a dearth of qualified teachers and inadequate school infrastructure, culminating in soaring classroom enrollments. The national learner-teacher ratio (LER) currently hovers at 33:1, with some classes reporting alarmingly high LER values of 50:1 or more. It is noteworthy that the South African LER more than doubles the international average of 16:1 as set by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Meier & West, 2020). The spatial

arrangement of seating is pivotal, directly affecting interactions between learners and teachers, thereby impacting teaching, and learning quality (Akhtar, Zamurad, Arif, & Hussain, 2012). The pervasive issue of overcrowding impedes teachers from effectively overseeing learners' progress, as maneuvering around the classroom becomes a challenge. Ntsala (2021) underscores that learners in overcrowded classes suffer from fatigue, heightened aggression, defiance, anxiety, compromised privacy, competition for attention, and a cascade of negative effects on their performance.

Ntsala, Ramabenyane, Koen, and Loock (2021) highlight the bleak reality that despite overcrowding's detrimental impact on teaching and learning within South African EFAL classrooms, this situation is likely to persist due to factors such as the lack of collaboration between the DBE and the Department of Public Works (DPW) in certain provinces. Additionally, limited human resources and challenging geographical terrains in rural areas compound the problem. They emphasise that teachers could benefit from best practices in such contexts. Aligned with the present study, a range of research asserts that explicit teaching of reading strategies can enhance EFAL learners' reading comprehension by encouraging cooperative learning (Adebola, 2020; Caddy, 2015; Mahmoud, 2014; Omidire, 2022; Rapetsoa, 2017).

Kucukler and Kodal (2019) posit that overcrowded classes represent a paramount obstacle for EFAL learners. The endeavour to achieve quality outcomes in such an environment is hampered, partly due to the restricted weekly hours allocated for reading instruction (Kucukler & Kodal, 2019). Learner-centered pedagogy may be compromised in crowded settings (Naziev, 2018). Given that the predicament of overcrowding would not be rectified overnight, it becomes imperative for EFAL teachers to leverage effective instructional practices to bolster learners' reading comprehension.

A study focusing on tackling overcrowding in intermediate-phase EFAL classrooms in the Motheo District of the Free State Province was undertaken by Ntsala, Ramabenyane, Koen, and Loock (2021). They researched the causes of poor performance in this context and found that overcrowding emerged as a primary culprit. The study underscored crucial teaching practices that could prove beneficial for EFAL teachers in these crowded classrooms, such as meticulous planning and preparation,

skill integration, constructive teaching methods, explicit instruction, a selective approach, note-taking techniques, and the process-oriented approach. These findings parallel the core objective of the present study, which aimed to explore the teaching strategies employed by Grade 10 EFAL teachers and the methodologies utilised in their implementation.

2.10.4 Change of curriculum

Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, the DoE has embarked on numerous curricular revisions and reforms as part of a comprehensive drive to enhance education within the country (DBE, 2011). Extensive research undertaken on curriculum change unanimously underscores the imperative for equipping teachers with support and training to align their mindset, practices, and value systems with the tenets of the new curriculum (Rapetsoa, 2017; Ntatamala, Ngobese & Mukhuba, 2019; Zano & Phatudi, 2019). Zano and Phatudi (2019) contend that the new curriculum for EFAL learners is encouraging a shift towards self-directed learning, with an accent on metacognition and learner-centeredness during the instructional process. Within the evolving landscape of learning paradigms, this notion represents a progressive step. However, operationalising such principles is a complex endeavour, necessitating further research to illuminate the most effective approaches for cultivating these practices within educational environments (Ntatamala, Ngobese & Mukhuba, 2019).

The literature examined in this study resoundingly emphasises that explicit instruction in reading strategies is a cornerstone of EFAL learners' reading competence (Fesi & Mncube, 2021; Ntsala, Ramabenyane, Koen & Loock, 2021; Thage, Makgosi & Mthembu, 2021; Al-Meklafi, 2018). In an exploration of the impact of curriculum change on EFAL learners within selected South African schools, Rapetsoa (2017) investigated the effects of altering the curriculum on Grade 10 EFAL learners' reading skills. The study reported a detrimental impact of curriculum change on learners' reading abilities and the overall quality of education. It further highlighted a range of adverse consequences on academic achievements, including curriculum shortcomings and the sluggish adaptation of teachers to the new curriculum. The attitudes of teachers toward curriculum transformation significantly influence the teaching and learning process, rendering their reluctance to embrace change a significant barrier to academic success.

Singh and Shaari (2019) undertook a study examining the utilisation of HOTS in Grade 8 English comprehension tests within Malaysia. The findings illuminated a pressing need for the rephrasing of many reading comprehension questions in these examinations to align with the elevated standard of HOTS mandated by the new curriculum and national education policy. As posited by Ntatamala et al. (2019), HOTS encompass a pedagogical approach rooted in learning taxonomies such as Bloom's taxonomy. This implies that certain forms of learning necessitate more intricate cognitive engagement while yielding greater overall benefits. Consequently, it becomes pivotal for EFAL learners to cultivate skills encompassing "critical, logical, reflective, metacognitive, and creative thinking" (King, Goodson & Rehani, 1998: 213), ensuring the activation of these faculties when grappling with novel challenges, uncertainties, inquiries, or quandaries demanding resolution.

2.10.5 Parental involvement

Throughout the educational journey, from primary to tertiary levels, parental involvement has been consistently linked with learners' academic success (Otani, 2020). However, when it comes to EFAL learners, effective parental support requires specific guidance for South African parents (Motseke, 2020; Scherman & Tsebe, 2020; Gwija, 2016). The significance of parents' role in their children's education becomes evident in school performance when parental engagement is prioritised (Gwija, 2016). As highlighted by Scherman and Tsebe (2020), the intricate nature of parental support underscores the need to account for the interplay of various systems surrounding both parents and children. Gwija (2016) underscores that the role of parents is occasionally overlooked by some South African school administrators.

The challenge of parental involvement is not unique to South African EFAL learners. Zenda (2020) conducted a study focused on the implementation of parental participation policies to elevate the academic achievement of Physical Science learners in rural secondary schools. The findings underscore that effective parental participation in school activities is pivotal for the success of parental involvement policies. These activities encompass assisting learners with homework, discussing learner behaviour with teachers, offering motivation, and engaging in science-related

activities. This underscores the critical importance of adeptly training parents to actively participate across various learning domains.

Motseke's (2020) exploration of the role of parents in teaching EFAL among South African learners in rural regions exposes the limited engagement of parents in their children's EFAL learning. The study unveils that parents often play minimal or no role in their children's EFAL education. Furthermore, parents struggle to aid their children with EFAL tasks, monitor their progress, visit the school, and provide essential EFAL reading resources. Consequently, encouraging parental visits to schools to monitor progress and supply relevant English reading materials to support their children emerges as a vital endeavour.

A South African study by Mbembeni (2018) within a cluster of remote schools in the King William's Town District examines parental involvement in children's homework. This investigation reveals a disconnect between teachers' acknowledgment of the need for parents to assist with schoolwork and their negative attitude toward parents' capabilities. Teachers express skepticism about parents possessing the requisite reading skills to aid with homework. Simultaneously, parents recognise the importance of their involvement in homework, yet their actual participation varies. The study attributes these variations to several obstacles faced by parents in rural areas, including limited content knowledge, negative attitudes toward homework, financial constraints, lack of resources, time limitations, community obligations, family responsibilities, learner disinterest, and an excessive homework load. These difficulties underscore the challenges that parents in rural settings encounter in offering essential support to their children's education.

2.10.6 Lack of reading resources

Moswana (2019) underscores the absence of a unified policy governing school library funding, which has led to the inadequacy of libraries within our communities. This often translates to insufficient seating, ill-equipped facilities, untrained staff, and a dearth of relevant informational resources like books and instructional materials. In the context of EFAL learners' reading development, books, and libraries assume paramount importance as primary resources for honing reading skills (Khoza, 2015). To address this deficit, Moswana (2019) advocates for shared accountability among various

stakeholders, including governments, publishers, writers, booksellers, media outlets, teachers, librarians, NGOs, and religious communities, to ensure the provision of well-equipped libraries for schools and communities alike. Libraries, being pivotal to education, have been shown to suffer from underfunding, which in turn contributes to the current levels of low reading proficiency (Mabasa & Lumadi, 2016).

Numerous scholars have investigated the availability of resources to bolster the performance of South African schools and uniformly highlight the shortage of functional school libraries, particularly well-stocked ones (Kepe & Linake, 2019; Mojapelo, 2015; Madikiza et al., 2018; Simelane, 2015). Distressingly, the statistics reveal that only a minority (7.2%) of schools in South Africa possess adequately stocked and functional libraries (Mojapelo, 2015). Consequently, EFAL learners are denied ample opportunities for reading practice, and forced to navigate an environment deficient in reading materials. Learners from these disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds inevitably lag behind their peers in reading competency, often grappling with feelings of inadequacy and academic underperformance (Kepe & Linake, 2019; Nqoma, Abongdia, & Foncha, 2017). Spaull and Pretorius (2019) underscore that the home environment of most EFAL learners, particularly those from rural communities, fails to promote improved reading performance due to the lack of reading resources available at home, exacerbated by financial constraints. Ngoma and Foncha (2017) attribute EFAL learners' poor reading competence to the scarcity of reading resources and inadequate libraries. Their study focusing on teachers and learners' perspectives on EFAL learners' use of LoLT in the East London District of South Africa unveils resource scarcity as a major hindrance in schools. Libraries and computer labs are plagued by inadequate resources, which ultimately undermines their effectiveness. Mojapelo (2015) advocates for a shift from the National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services (SA DBE, 2012) to a more regulated school library policy to revitalise dysfunctional libraries across many schools.

Even more concerning is the observation that, despite the usage of various resources by EFAL teachers in the teaching and learning process, learners continue to grapple with reading challenges. Zano's (2020) study investigating EFAL teachers' perspectives in the FET phase underscores this point. The study reveals that while EFAL teachers employ a range of resources to teach reading comprehension, learners

still face hurdles such as excessive reliance on dictionaries, limited vocabulary range, and poor skills in skimming and scanning. This underscores the need for schools to create a supportive learning environment to elevate learners' reading comprehension capabilities.

2.11   Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, I explored a curated selection of literature concerning reading strategies and approaches, addressing the challenges encountered by EFAL teachers and learners in utilising these strategies effectively and exploring strategies that encourage improved reading comprehension. By doing so, Chapter 2 has illuminated the pivotal role that reading strategies play in bolstering EFAL reading comprehension. The insights on the usage of reading strategies within EFAL classrooms have been gleaned from a range of sources, spanning from local to international contexts. A convergence of evidence underscores the potential efficacy of reading strategies in enhancing EFAL reading comprehension. However, it is notable that teachers often grapple with using a limited number of strategies due to factors like overcrowded classrooms and inadequate knowledge about effective strategies. These constraints often lead teachers to opt for strategies that they are most familiar with or find convenient within their specific teaching contexts. The challenge of high learner numbers and constrained reading time could also inadvertently curtail the diverse application of teaching strategies, thereby limiting learners' exposure to a broader spectrum of effective reading techniques.

This study, informed by a comprehensive review of existing research, recognises the inherent variability in the practical adoption of efficient reading strategies and approaches by both teachers and learners. This variance can be attributed to the prevalent challenges that teachers face within the EFAL landscape, which often hinder the widespread use of a wide array of reading strategies. Further research stemming from this study could explore explicit reading skills instruction, specifically targeting teachers and learners' practices regarding the utilisation of reading strategies, especially within larger educational contexts. Additionally, instead of merely identifying challenges, future studies could investigate specific difficulties encountered in different settings, such as vocabulary-related obstacles. Moreover, prospective research

endeavours could shed light on the unique hurdles that both teachers and learners encounter in the EFAL context, encompassing factors such as overwhelming responsibilities and inadequate teaching skills.

The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework underpinning this study. Drawing on schema theory, which resonates with the findings of other South African and international studies explored in this chapter, Chapter 3 further elaborates on how the study's objectives were operationalised through the lens of schema theory, a theory of reading comprehension pioneered by Bartlett (1932) and subsequently expanded upon by Rumelhart (1980).

CHAPTER 3

SCHEMA THEORY: THE USE OF BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE TO ENHANCE READING COMPREHENSION

"Every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world as well"

-Anderson, Reynolds, Schallert & Goetz (1977: 369)

3.1   Introduction

In Chapter 2, the literature underscores the significance of using reading strategies and approaches to enhance the reading comprehension of learners. Additionally, Chapter 2 highlights the importance of encouraging strong reading comprehension skills to support learners' academic achievements. The literature demonstrates that learners of EFAL bring their past experiences to their reading. The diverse range of prior knowledge that readers possess influences how they perceive and understand English language texts. Unfortunately, teachers often overlook the relevance of this prior knowledge during the teaching and learning process (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). According to Kivunja (2018: 14), a theoretical framework serves as a "structure that summarises concepts and theories from existing, tested, and published knowledge. Novice researchers should synthesise this framework to establish a theoretical foundation for their data analysis and interpretation in their study." Swanson (2013: 122) explicitly states, "The theoretical framework provides the structure that can uphold or support a research study's theory." In this study, the aim is to investigate the utilisation of reading strategies and approaches within Grade 10 EFAL classrooms by both teachers and learners. The study draws upon schema theory (Bartlett, 1932) as its theoretical basis, offering insights into the use of reading strategies and approaches when learning to read to derive meaning.

Initially, the study outlines and elucidates the operational concepts within the theoretical framework to clarify their pivotal role as foundational elements in the research. Understanding these concepts is crucial for comprehending why they play such a fundamental role in this study's context. To establish the instructional practices

within Grade 10 EFAL classrooms, it is essential to familiarise oneself with schema theory, which forms the underlying framework of this study. As per Bartlett (1932) and Nunan (1999), proponents of schema theory propose that meaning is constructed by comprehending the entire text through the lens of an individual's background knowledge. The subsequent discussion discusses the operational concepts specific to this study.

3.2   Operational concepts for theories that underpin this study

Ali and Hassan (2018), as well as Petronio and Child (2020), perceive conceptualisation as the procedure of delineating concepts according to their theoretical implications. They emphasise that conceptualisation holds significance within studies, as it not only aids readers in understanding written text but also enables them to perceive the study from the author's perspective. Muller (2013) supplements this by asserting that during this phase, concepts are acknowledged and elucidated, thereby establishing precise meanings for particular terminologies. This process elucidates how abstract notions are expounded in theoretical contexts. Subsequently, I proceed to establish the definitions of the foundational concepts employed in this study.

3.2.1 Strategies

Karimi and Hosseini Zade (2019) and Olifant et al. (2019) underscore the paramount importance of establishing effective reading strategies for learners of EFAL to extract meaning from written texts. Individuals who can read with comprehension are often referred to as strategic readers. When learners can engage in reading to derive meaning, they are demonstrating strategic reading. Reading strategies have been empirically shown to facilitate learners in connecting printed words with their intended meanings. Karimi and Hosseini Zade (2019) additionally highlight that strategies aimed at enhancing decoding and comprehension are beneficial for all learners, but they hold particular significance for those who struggle with reading. Therefore, grasping the concept of reading strategies is integral to the current study's context.

To elucidate this concept for the reader, the researcher offers multiple definitions. Brown (2007) defines a strategy as a methodical approach to address a specific issue,

usually designed to counteract and manipulate specific information. In a similar vein, Haris, and Hodges (1995) concur that a reading strategy entails a purposeful and organised plan employed to enhance learning outcomes. Moreover, Aşıkcan, Pilten, and Kuralbayeva (2018), as well as Cohen (2014), suggest that reading strategies encompass a collection of problem-solving techniques employed to comprehend a text or intellectual tools that can enhance reading comprehension and aid decision-making when facing challenges in understanding. Karimi (2018) contends that the effective utilisation of reading strategies is the differentiating factor between proficient and struggling readers. Various reading techniques are adopted by individuals to augment their reading comprehension (Brown, 2007; Panu, 2004; Zano, 2020).

In my perspective, reading strategies are deliberate and explicit actions that assist readers in constructing meaning from written texts. Both EFAL teachers and learners employ reading strategies to enhance their reading skills. The definitions are significant as they all converge on the idea that reading strategies are consciously and intentionally employed, subject to assessment and monitoring. This enables teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies used by both teachers and learners alike.

3.2.2 Schema

Various scholars offer differing definitions of schema. While these definitions may vary in focus, they all acknowledge the significance of the reader's purpose, active engagement, and the written text. Brown (2001) and Emmott and Alexander (2014) characterise schema as mental frameworks that embody a reader's comprehension of everyday events. Omaggio (1993) echoes this view, describing schema as inherent patterns that readers utilise to organise, interpret, and understand their external world. Furthermore, Bensalah and Gueroudj (2020) conceptualise schema as background knowledge that empowers the reader to anticipate outcomes, facilitating more fruitful interactions. In the context of this study, schema pertains to readers utilising their existing knowledge to predict and derive meaning from written texts.

Numerous schema theorists concur that written texts, by themselves, cannot convey meaning (Bartlett, 1932; Emmott & Brown, 2001; Rumelhalt, 1980). Instead, a text serves as a guide for readers to construct meaning based on their previously acquired information. This prior knowledge is often referred to as the reader's background

knowledge or schema, which plays a fundamental role in the comprehension process. Within this study, the learners' background knowledge is regarded as one of the most effective reading strategies that teachers should employ to enhance reading comprehension. Therefore, understanding the perspective of both EFAL teachers and EFAL learners regarding the utilisation of prior knowledge proves indispensable to the present study.

3.2.3 Reading

Du Toit, Heese, and Orr (1995) define reading as an active interaction between the reader and a text, driven by the pursuit of meaning. Conversely, Sari (2017) characterises reading as the ability of individuals to understand, perceive, and grasp the content they are learning. Marliasari (2017) aligns with this perspective, describing reading as a process of extracting meaning from the text while attentively observing language nuances. Marliasari (2017) emphasises that reading entails learners' active engagement, where they employ various strategies to decipher unfamiliar words and visuals, contributing to their understanding. Successful reading for meaning requires readers' active involvement in the process. In this study, I consider reading to be a process of comprehending a text through the utilisation of diverse reading strategies and approaches by both EFAL teachers and learners within their classroom environments. Coffi (2017) underscores that the motivation behind reading is its role as a determinant of academic success. Additionally, Palani (2012) concurs, highlighting that academic achievement is intrinsically linked to a reader's proficient reading abilities. To enhance their reading skills, learners must cultivate effective reading habits. Du Toit, Heese, and Orr (1995) emphasise the importance of becoming critical readers for academic success.

From the array of definitions presented for reading, it becomes evident that readers bring their interests, emotions, general and subject-specific knowledge, educational experiences, life encounters, beliefs, and values into the reading process. These elements collectively aid learners in constructing meaning from the texts they engage with. Learners employ their background knowledge to reconstruct messages from printed sources. Bensalah and Gueroudj (2020) and Caddy (2015) elucidate that the intricate nature of the reading process necessitates the interplay of numerous components, and the presence or absence of any of these elements can determine

the success or failure of reading. According to Harmer (2001) and Zano (2020), for readers to grasp the intended meaning beyond the literal words, they should employ an array of reading strategies to comprehend the author's intent or proposition. Thus, the cultivation of reading techniques enabling learners to derive meaning from the text should stand as the central objective of reading instruction.

3.2.4 Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension encompasses a range of skills that significantly impact learners' reading proficiencies. The importance of reading comprehension is widely recognised, particularly in schools where English serves as both the primary language of instruction and an additional or foreign language. This scenario is particularly relevant in many South African schools. Consequently, it becomes crucial for these nations to enhance their learners' comprehension abilities. As previously mentioned, proficient reading comprehension is pivotal for student success across grade levels, from elementary to high school (Bharuthram, 2017; Coffi, 2017; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016; Rule & Land, 2017). Thus, reading comprehension stands as a paramount objective in reading education.

Sari (2017) perceives reading comprehension as an individual's capacity to comprehend and interpret information embedded within a text. In a similar vein, Duke (2003) agrees, characterising reading comprehension as a process where individuals construct meaning by actively engaging with the text through their prior knowledge, textual information, and personal opinions relevant to the text. In the context of this study, reading comprehension is understood as learners' capability to grasp a written text by linking it to their existing background knowledge. According to McNamara and Magliano (2009), this process is influenced by both reader-specific and text-specific factors, taking place within a broader social context. These definitions aptly align with the focus of this study, which aims to explore the application of reading strategies to enhance learners' reading comprehension.

Bharuthram (2012) and Coffi (2017) emphasise that despite English being spoken by a minority group, it remains the preferred language even among speakers of indigenous languages. Similarly, Coffi (2017) underscores that English holds prominence in contexts such as business, industry, and academia. Additionally,

English retains its status as a global and economic language. Multiple researchers attribute parental preference to these factors (Rapetsoa, 2017; Reeves, 2012; Sheralievna, 2022).

3.2.5 English First Additional Language

Providing context regarding the adoption of English as LoLT in many South African schools is of utmost importance. As highlighted by Chaka (2015) and Bharuthram (2017), English serves as the primary LoLT in many South African educational institutions. Rapetsoa (2017) elaborates on this, explaining that the preference for English as LoLT is rooted in its numerous advantages across various sectors. Given that English stands as the predominant global language, its significance cannot be overstated (Chaka, 2015; Zano, 2020). Scholarly discourse asserts that due to English's potential to facilitate social and economic progress, it is widely favoured by South African parents (Caddy, 2015; Gardiner, 2008; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016; Zano, 2020). Echoing this sentiment, Coffi (2017: 13) affirms that "English has become the most important language in trade, industry, and education." This reality underscores the necessity for learners to attain proficiency in English to enhance personal growth, social interaction, academic attainment, and international employment prospects.

In the wake of South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994, the nation embraced 11 official languages, with English adopted as the LoLT (DBE, 2011). South African schools are mandated to use their mother tongue as the LoLT from Grade R to 4; thereafter, English primarily takes on the role of LoLT (DBE, 2011). Proficiency in reading is imperative for learners to succeed academically and lead productive lives. Hence, the development of EFAL is a vital pursuit, considering its widespread utilisation as LoLT in most South African schools.

As per the DBE (2011: 8), FAL refers to a language not commonly spoken by most learners at home yet employed as the LoLT. Chaka (2015) regards EFAL as the LoLT in most subject areas within South African schools. Moswane (2019: 28) defines EFAL as "the language formally learned in school in addition to the home language." Within this study, EFAL pertains to the use of English as a medium for teaching and learning, targeting learners whose home language differs from English. Pretorius and Klapwijk

(2016) stress that EFAL teachers must employ FAL teaching strategies that accommodate the diverse backgrounds of their learners. Additionally, the curriculum acknowledges that in the initial years of schooling, learners might have limited prior exposure to the FAL (DBE, 2011). Consequently, emphasis should be placed on cultivating learners' foundational interpersonal and comprehension skills. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to explore teachers' perceptions regarding the application of reading strategies to augment learners' reading comprehension. In the subsequent section, I explore the theoretical foundations underpinning this study.

3.3 Theoretical framework

In this section, I elaborate on the theory that forms the foundation of this study, namely schema theory. As elucidated by Harmer (2001), readers utilise a multitude of reading strategies to deduce the intended meaning implied by the author. By employing these strategies, readers can attribute significance to the text. Schema theory, which contends that a reader's pre-existing knowledge is pivotal in facilitating the anticipation of information for meaningful comprehension, holds significant relevance in the pursuit of understanding. This is because successful interpretation is contingent upon the integration of the reader's existing mental frameworks, or schemata. The EFAL reading process is intricate, requiring the intricate interplay of numerous elements. Consequently, the reading process might falter if any of these essential components are absent.

3.3.1 Schema theory
Schema theory stands as a foundational principle in the realm of language processing, elucidating how readers employ their prior knowledge to imbue textual content with meaning (Rumelhart, 1980). The concept of schema was originally introduced by Kant (1781), suggesting that thoughts attain meaning through their connections to pre-existing knowledge held by individuals. This signifies that individuals possess broad conceptions to which they refer when discussing more specific topics. This notion evolved in the reading context when Rumelhart (1980) introduced the term 'schema' to delineate the significance of background information for reading comprehension. Schema theory posits that a written text lacks inherent meaning; rather, it serves as a guide for listeners or readers on how to retrieve or construct their understanding. This

previously assimilated knowledge, referred to as the reader's background knowledge (schema), significantly contributes to the process of comprehension (Bartlett, 1932; Rumelhart, 1980). Schema can be conceptualised as a network of mental structures that denote comprehension of everyday experiences. Schema theory asserts that comprehending a text entails an interplay between the text and the reader's prior knowledge. This underpins the emergence of two fundamental information processing models known as bottom-up and top-down processing (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1988).

Effective comprehension hinges on the ability to link textual content with one's pre-existing knowledge. As Anderson (1994: 369) aptly suggests, "every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world as well." This study adopts schema theory as its theoretical framework to elucidate how Grade 10 EFAL teachers and learners utilise a spectrum of reading strategies and approaches to enhance EFAL learners' reading comprehension. Schema theory proves invaluable in aiding readers to navigate novel experiences, enabling them to predict potential encounters within specific contexts. The application of schema theory in this study serves to probe issues that may hinder reading comprehension and illuminate the intricacies of the comprehension process.

Focused on Grade 10 EFAL teachers and learners, this study explores their application of reading strategies and approaches to enhance and encourage meaningful reading. Given the diverse cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds of these learners, as outlined in Chapter 1, the utilisation of schema theory is apt. While English is their LoLT, they primarily communicate in a language distinct from English at home. According to schema theory, effective comprehension necessitates the ability to bridge connections between the text and one's knowledge (Zimmerman, 2013). To address the concerns, schema theory introduces a distinction between formal and content schemata that aid reading comprehension through the utilisation of background knowledge. Carrell (1984) and Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) differentiate formal schemata from content schemata. Formal schemata encompass "background knowledge of the formal, rhetorical organisational structures of different types of texts" (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983: 79). In contrast, content schemata pertain to the knowledge of a text's subject matter (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). Consequently, failure to activate the appropriate schema, be it formal or content, during reading can lead to

text incomprehension. Effective comprehension is challenged if the reader is unable to initiate the proper schema (formal or content) while reading. The inadequacy to activate the appropriate schema might arise from the textual cues provided by the author failing to trigger the reader's pre-existing schema. Alternatively, the reader might lack the expected schema, leading to a breakdown in comprehension. This underscores the importance of activating the pertinent schemas during text processing (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1988). Anderson (1994:473) concurs that the recall of information in a text is affected by the reader's schema and explains as follows:

> a reader comprehends a message when he tries to recall a schema that gives account to the objects and events described in the message. Comprehension is activating or constructing a schema that provides a coherent explanation of objects and events mentioned in a discourse.

Bartlett (1932) and Rumelhart (1980) assert that the discovery of a schema empowers readers to extract meaningful interpretations, resulting in comprehension. Furthermore, Wilkinson and Son (2011) highlight that readers may struggle with text comprehension if they fail to identify a schema that aligns with the content. At times, readers may require assistance in activating the appropriate schema to grasp the text effectively. This study employs three core research questions to explore the underlying perceptions of Grade 10 EFAL teachers and learners concerning the utilisation of reading strategies and approaches. It is important to acknowledge that no theory is immune to critique. Subsequently, I discuss the criticism directed at schema theory.

A significant critique leveled against the concept of schema revolves around the definition of what precisely constitutes a schema (Brown, 1980; Sadoski, Paivio & Goetz, 1991). To illustrate, Sadoski, Paivio, and Goetz (1991) contend that the term 'schema' is overly expansive and vague, leading to diverse theorists proposing varied formulations of its characteristics, structure, and purpose. Brown (1980: 78) concurs by highlighting that:

> The defining features of schema theories are somewhat difficult to specify. The use of the term schema is widespread, vague, and not always overladen with meaning. One of my favourite games is to remove the word schema from a paper written in schematise and look for changes in meaning. Take, for example, the sentence 'pre-existing knowledge schemata function to orient people to interpret a message in a certain way.' Where is the loss of clarity in removing the word schemata? It is somewhat surprising to find that there rarely is a loss of meaning following such ablation tactics.

Sadoski, Paivio, and Goetz (1991) emphasise that schema theory tends to overlook the role of imagery and emotional responses to the text, as knowledge is often represented abstractly. However, the emotional aspect holds considerable importance in the reading process. This gives rise to confusion regarding the nature of knowledge comprising a schema and the degree of abstraction preceding the formulation of a schema. As previously noted, schemata can be activated through either top-down or bottom-up processing. The next section is a discussion of bottom-up processing.

3.3.2 The bottom-up approach to reading

Back in the 1960s, the bottom-up approach, also known as the text-based approach, gained prominence as an explanatory framework for the reading comprehension process. This approach primarily zeroes in on the intricate linguistic components of a text, where schemata come into play. The bottom-up approach initiates comprehension at the word level, encompassing aspects such as meaning, pronunciation, and sound. Consequently, this process is often deemed passive, as readers must first grasp isolated words before progressing to phrases, sentences, and paragraphs to fully comprehend the entire text (Atashova & Djumabaeva, 2020; Carrell, 1988; Grabe & Stoller, 2013). As underscored by Atashova and Djumabaeva (2020:460-461), this perspective lacks insight into the mental processes that enable humans to make sense of printed material.

Angosto et al. (2013) elucidate that the bottom-up process places a strong emphasis on the reader's knowledge of individual words in isolation. This implies that understanding individual words leads to a holistic comprehension of the text. Furthermore, the bottom-up approach treats language as a code, casting the reader as a passive decoder tasked with identifying lexical and grammatical functions to derive meaning from the complete text. The essence of bottom-up processing lies in the assumption that a reader can extract meaning from a text when comprehending it word by word (Hudson, 1998; Goodman, 1988). Consequently, three pivotal skills are paramount in bottom-up processing: decoding, word recognition, and lexical access. Each of these skills is elaborated upon next.

3.3.2.1 Decoding

Decoding, as defined by Tunmer and Chapman (2012), pertains to a reader's capacity to identify the correspondence between letters and their associated sounds. Bottom-up processing theory posits that readers can effectively read a word and glean the text's meaning if they can differentiate the sounds corresponding to each letter. As mentioned earlier, the essence of bottom-up processing lies in the assertion that the reader's ability to decode acts as the foundational step for reading comprehension. This process unfolds from grasping the meaning of individual words to progressing through sentences and, paragraphs, and culminating in the overall text understanding. Therefore, proficiency in decoding is paramount for effective reading. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that excessive focus on learners' decoding skills, as noted in the existing literature, can detrimentally impact their comprehension of the broader content. Erasmus (2022:35) highlights that:

> reading comprehension is impaired if struggling readers exert their energy and attention trying to decode words instead of making meaning. More time spent on decoding leaves little time for meaning making and this becomes problematic when learners are subjected to time limits in formal assessment opportunities.

Although decoding is a crucial element of reading fluency, readers' decoding abilities are not sufficient to aid reading comprehension development. I elaborate further on this concept in Chapter 6.

3.3.2.2 Word recognition

According to Emmorey, Giezen, and Gollan (2016) and Vundla (2020), word recognition denotes a reader's capacity to retrieve words from memory. This retrieval of words, as emphasised by Bharuthram (2017) and Carr and Levy (1990), also encompasses the swiftness with which words are recollected. Furthermore, scholars such as Carr and Levy (1990) and Linake (2021) assert that the rapid recognition of words plays a pivotal role in reading development, outweighing the reliance on prediction, which can be time-consuming. Similarly, Beck and McKeown (1986) and Hiebert and Mesmer (2013) align in their view that automatic word recognition significantly influences reading fluency in a text—a challenge faced by many inexperienced readers during lower-level processing.

Numerous scholars, including Adams (1990), Carrell (1983), and Eskey (1988), underscore the critical role of automatic word recognition within the EFAL context.

Given that EFAL learners often grapple with bottom-up processing, they frequently adhere to a word-by-word approach. Grabe and Stoller (2013) contend that learners are not only tasked with swift and accurate word retrieval but must also consistently consider the visual configuration of words. Notably, within EFAL contexts, learners must contend with a variety of linguistic forms, demanding their attention. Highlighting this, Bharuthram (2012) underscores that many South African schools primarily focus on vocabulary development during lower grades, leaving secondary schools with a limited approach. As elucidated in earlier chapters, numerous factors contribute to poor reading abilities in most South African schools. Another crucial facet that warrants discussion is lexical knowledge (Brevik, 2019; Madikiza et al., 2018; Pretorius, & Klapwijk, 2016; Vundla, 2020).

3.3.2.3 Lexical access

According to Green (1998), lexical access refers to the process of retrieving knowledge about a word stored in a mental dictionary, encompassing aspects like word meanings and phonological awareness. This notion aligns with Dijkstra and Van Heuven's (2002) perspective, which portrays lexical access as a step-by-step process that unfolds when deciphering meaning from external information. It can be argued that lexical access shares a close relationship with word recognition. The ability of readers to recognise words forms the foundation of proficient reading rapidly, efficiently, and effortlessly. However, learners with slow and non-automatic lexical access may encounter hindrances in their reading comprehension. In cases of reading difficulties, distinguishing between word recognition and lexical access can pinpoint specific issues requiring remediation (Dijkstra & Van Heuven, 2002).

In examining the definition of lexical access, it becomes apparent that word retrieval hinges on the presence of a word within a learner's mental lexicon (de Groot & Nas, 1991; Dijkstra & Van Heuven, 2002; Dijkstra, van Hell & Brenders, 2015). Within the context of bottom-up processing, Hudson (1998) elucidates that learners abstain from making predictions about the text's content. Instead, comprehension unfolds naturally when learners utilise their prior knowledge, including word meanings and structural understanding, to crack the textual code. Readers engage with the text by dissecting the smallest units—words, clauses, sentences—without invoking prior experiences.

This process aligns with the conceptual order of schemata. While reading transpires organically with the aid of prior knowledge and contextual cues, the use of contextual clues is often associated with struggling readers (Erasmus, 2022; Green, 1993; Perfetti, 1995). However, Atashova and Djumabaeva (2020) and Eskey (1973) critique bottom-up processing for its limited recognition of the reader's active role in predicting and understanding texts based on language knowledge. Nonetheless, the importance of word knowledge within the reading process remains undeniable. The bottom-up approach proves essential, particularly for EFAL readers who are less proficient (Bharuthram, 2012). The inability to comprehend word meanings, a crucial element of bottom-up processing, can hinder reading and comprehension.

Zano and Phatudi's (2019) study, investigating vocabulary knowledge's impact on EFAL reading comprehension, underscores that both the depth and breadth of vocabulary are vital. The depth of vocabulary knowledge, defined by how well a reader understands a word, holds more significance than its breadth—the number of words a reader knows. This aligns seamlessly with the bottom-up processing concept, as word recognition is tied to the ability to retrieve word meanings from memory. Given the South African context where English is the LoLT, vocabulary knowledge's misinterpretation as reading comprehension is a common challenge for many EFAL learners. Similarly, Lauro and Schwartz's (2017) study on lexical access and its impact on second language learners' word recognition and reading comprehension skills is relevant. Their findings indicate that the knowledge of lexical access does not significantly contribute to complete activation levels in either the first language or FAL learners. This perspective resonates with the South African context, where EFAL learners' reading difficulties are attributed to language barriers. However, there is a dearth of understanding of actual teaching practices in classrooms. The knowledge of both bottom-up and top-down strategies is imperative for enhancing EFAL learners' reading comprehension, a topic I explore further in Chapter 6 when discussing the top-down approach to reading.

3.3.3 The top-down approach to reading

For the process of top-down processing to unfold, readers must possess a wealth of schemata that enable them to recognise, comprehend, and interpret visual cues effectively. This reservoir of schemata also aids readers in anticipating the kind of

information they can expect within a given text. Unlike the bottom-up approach that downplays the reader's active role in the reading process (rendering it passive), top-down processing fully acknowledges the reader's background knowledge as a crucial factor (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1988; Grabe & Stoller, 2013). While bottom-up processing primarily centers around deciphering the code of the text, the top-down approach pivots towards extracting meaning. Consequently, top-down processing stands as an active form of learning, encompassing high-order cognitive components and strategies such as utilising prior knowledge and reader expectations. Thus, top-down processing is characterised as being concept-oriented (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1988; Grabe & Stoller, 2013).

Ausubel (1966, cited in Atashova & Djumabaeva, 2020: 464) highlights a crucial distinction between rote learning and meaningful learning:

> An example of rote learning is simply memorising lists of isolated words or rules in a new language, where the information becomes temporary and subject to loss. Meaningful learning, on the other hand, occurs when new information is presented in a relevant context and is related to what the learner already knows so that it can be easily integrated into one's existing cognitive structure. Learning that is not meaningful will not become permanent.

This emphasis on meaningful learning played a pivotal role in shaping the top-down approach to EFAL learning, as highlighted by Grabe & Stoller (2013). They also note that during the 1960s and 1970s, teaching methods and activities that heavily prioritised the learner's experience and expertise were rapidly evolving.

In the framework of top-down processing, readers rely on contextual cues and their existing knowledge to anticipate the broader content of a text. Reader knowledge, encompassing aspects like syntax, semantics, and phonology, holds significant sway (Atashova & Djumabaeva, 2020; Carrell, 1988). Consequently, the reader's prior knowledge often contributes more to comprehension than the actual content of the text itself. Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) contend that top-down processing empowers the reader to select appropriate language cues during the reading process. It is important to note that top-down processing views all linguistic levels as interlinked, working in harmony, in contrast to bottom-up processing, which compartmentalises communication into distinct levels. In the context of top-down processing, three crucial skills emerge: inferencing, reading comprehension, and synthesis and evaluation

strategies. These skills are of paramount importance within the EFAL context, and I explore each of them next.

3.3.3.1 Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension involves the process of understanding and interpreting the entirety of a text. Research conducted by Anderson (1978) and Stanovich (1990) highlights that when language is employed within a context, such as sentences or paragraphs, readers make fewer identification errors compared to when words are used in isolation. This implies that readers predominantly draw upon their background knowledge and the surrounding context to derive meaning, more often than relying solely on the knowledge of individual words. The significance of reading comprehension was emphasised in Chapters 1 and 2 as a pivotal element within the reading process, making it a critical aspect of this study.

3.3.3.2 Inferencing

Inferencing is the reader's skill of extracting additional information that is not explicitly stated in a text by leveraging prior knowledge. According to Anderson (1994) and Pretorius (2004), inferencing enables readers to bridge gaps within a text, establish connections between textual elements and their existing knowledge, and synthesise information at both local and global levels of the text. Moreover, Anderson (1994) and Solarsh (2002) contend that the capability to answer questions pertaining to a text constitutes a pivotal aspect of the reading process, with proficient readers adeptly responding to both explicit and implicit information. Solarsh (2002) further proposes that abstract reasoning, especially in the absence of tangible cues, draws upon world knowledge, past experiences, or content schemata. Despite the expectation for Grade 10 learners to engage critically with their EFAL, many of these learners struggle to meet this requirement. Consequently, they face considerable limitations in their capacity to extract meaning from texts effectively and apply reading as a robust learning strategy. This deficiency underscores the need to investigate the utilisation of inferencing strategies by both teachers and learners to enhance reading comprehension, a key focus of this study.

3.3.3.3 Synthesis and evaluation strategies

Hoover and Gough (1990) and Goodman (1967) posit that fluent readers engage not only in comprehending a text but also possess the ability to evaluate and synthesise the information within the text in relation to other sources of input. This underscores the vital role of evaluation and synthesis strategies within the reading process. Furthermore, these skills are intertwined with a reader's capacity to predict subsequent text developments and the writer's ideas as presented in the text. The viewpoints articulated by Hoover and Gough (1990) and Goodman (1967) align with the principles of the top-down approach to reading. By relying on syntactic and semantic information, readers reduce their reliance on print and phonological awareness (Hoover & Gough, 1990). According to Goodman (1967), the reading process encompasses four key stages: making predictions, extracting samples, and confirming, or correcting predictions. In this framework, readers predict the textual meaning, sample the print with the goal of verifying or refuting predictions, thus making reading an active process that engages not just the reader's grasp of language, but also their inherent cognitive understanding of language evolution, prior knowledge, and background concepts (Hudson, 1998).

However, like the bottom-up approach, the top-down approach also presents certain limitations (Eskey, 1988; Kintsch, 2005). For instance, Eskey (1988) contends that the emphasis on higher-order thinking skills, such as predicting meaning through contextual cues, might overshadow the importance of lower-order thinking skills like recognising lexical and syntactic forms. This highlights the necessity of striking a balance between these cognitive processes to ensure comprehensive reading comprehension. He adds that:

> in making the perfectly valid point that fluent reading is primarily a cognitive process, they tend to deemphasize the perceptual and decoding dimensions of that process. The model they promote is an accurate model of the skilful, fluent reader, for whom perception and decoding have become automatic (Eskey, 1988: 93).

This indicates that the top-down approach might hold less significance for less skilled readers. Kintsch (2005) posits that second language learners, in many instances, possess limited knowledge of the text's content, making it challenging for them to formulate accurate predictions. Additionally, less proficient readers might spend more

time on prediction than efficient readers spend on word recognition during the reading-learning process. Consequently, Kintsch (2005) argues that the top-down reading approach might not accurately depict effective reading behaviour. It is important to acknowledge that, according to schema theory, the successful reading process does not solely rely on either the top-down or the bottom-up approach. Kintsch (2005) highlights that the knowledge that constitutes a schema is influenced by bottom-up processing and is continuously shaped by top-down processing when it aligns with the reader's expectations. Kintsch (2005: 204) argues:

> Both top-down and bottom-up processes are integral parts of perception, problem-solving, and comprehension. Without sensory input (bottom-up) we could neither perceive, nor comprehend, nor think. However, perception, comprehension, and thought would be equally impossible without a memory or knowledge component (top-down). It makes no sense to ask whether one is more important than the other: Nothing happens without both. So, the question for theorists is not top-down or bottom-up, but how do these processes interact to procedure fluent readers?

This indicates that a successful reading process relies on the synergy between both top-down and bottom-up reading strategies. Consequently, when designing reading strategy interventions, it is essential to consider both top-down and bottom-up processing, viewing them as complementary components rather than standalone methods. Next, I discuss the interactive approach.

3.3.4 The interactive approach to reading

According to Grabe and Stoller (2013), the term 'interactive reading strategy' can be interpreted in two ways. First, it involves the interaction between the reader and the text, where the reader utilises prior knowledge or information from the text itself to comprehend it. Second, it refers to the interaction between the top-down and bottom-up approaches (Grabe & Stoller, 2013; Silberstein, 1987). In this sense, both the lower-level (bottom-up) processing and the higher-level interpretive (top-down) processing collaborate to analyse and understand the text.

However, as noted by Grabe and Stoller (2013) and Kintsch (2005), despite the perceived cooperation between these two viewpoints, some researchers tend to favour one viewpoint while neglecting the other, or even disregard both altogether. The interactive approach emphasises the simultaneous involvement of both bottom-up and top-down processes across all levels of reading. It asserts that reading starts with recognising visual cues, and as these are identified, contextual cues and

language schemata are applied. This approach also contends that text complexity is not solely determined by linguistic aspects; rather, it depends on the reader's prior knowledge. However, even with this emphasis on prior knowledge, the effective use of both bottom-up and top-down processing remains crucial. The lack of harmony between these processes could result in comprehension failure (Kintsch, 2005; Silberstein, 1987). As such, many scholars consider the interactive approach as the most effective strategy for achieving successful reading outcomes (Grabe & Stoller, 2013; Kintsch, 2005; Silberstein, 1987).

Failure to strike a balance between top-down and bottom-up processing can lead to poor reading comprehension, affecting readers' abilities. For example, a learner with strong word recognition skills but lacking inference abilities may still struggle to understand a text since they cannot bridge the gaps in comprehension. As highlighted by Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) and Bharuthram (2017), poor reading skills often correlate with poor academic performance. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the specific reading difficulties faced by EFAL learners is essential to provide effective support. This underscores the need to explore the factors that differentiate proficient readers from struggling readers.

3.4   Reading approaches of good and poor readers

In this section, I outline the distinct approaches and strategies employed by proficient and struggling readers during the reading process. Understanding the essential nuances of these approaches and strategies is of paramount importance for teachers, as it sheds light on the potential negative consequences of deficient reading abilities. By elucidating reading difficulties that EFAL learners might encounter, teachers and stakeholders can implement targeted reading strategy interventions to enhance EFAL learners' reading comprehension. While not all these approaches are directly investigated in the present study, acknowledging their existence is vital as it equips teachers with a comprehensive understanding of the diverse range of strategies available to enhance effective reading comprehension. This knowledge can then be effectively communicated to learners.

Numerous scholars have researched reading within the EFAL context, all to enhance learners' reading comprehension. Carr (1981) and Grabe (1991) underline the pivotal role of reading in the lives of EFAL learners. Proficient readers often display strong reading abilities, while struggling readers may exhibit weaker reading skills. Grade (1991) outlines several key attributes associated with fluent readers:

Table 3.1: Characteristics of good readers

Characteristics for fluent readers	
rapid	The reader must read quickly enough to draw conclusions and connections from a text.
purposeful	The objective of reading must be clear to the reader.
interactive	The reader draws on both prior knowledge and the text's information.
comprehending	The reader needs to understand the material being read.
flexible	The reader employs a variety of techniques.
gradually developing	Fluent reading comes with time and consistent effort.

A proficient reader can engage in speed reading or skimming to rapidly process content with moderate comprehension, particularly when complete comprehension is not the primary goal (Grabe, 1991). The key to maintaining high comprehension while reading quickly lies in practice and improving language reading skills, often through expanding vocabulary (Carr, 1981; Grabe, 1991). This is because reading speed fundamentally relies on language proficiency. Rayner, Schotter, Masson et al. (2016) emphasise that reading is a selective process, involving the reader's discernment of relevant language signals from their stored memory of conceptual input. Efficient readers employ their prior knowledge and experience to make predictions, sample the text, and verify predictions. Likewise, Duke and Pearson (2002) note that reading is inherently selective; thus, skillful readers rely on their background knowledge to predict, sample, and validate the content. In contrast, poor readers tend to laboriously read word by word, lacking the capacity to make predictions or apply prior knowledge effectively. Based on my experience as a secondary school teacher, I have observed that many EFAL learners lack sufficient background information in the target language, hindering their academic progress. Consequently, EFAL teachers must activate or bolster learners' background knowledge before introducing new topics.

In accordance with Ali and Razali (2019) and Ehrlich et al. (1993), poor EFAL readers, from early grades to post-secondary levels, struggle with word processing and

identifying word meanings. Conversely, proficient EFAL readers emphasise abstract thinking skills. Skilled readers leverage their background knowledge to select relevant information from the text, enabling them to make and confirm predictions. Additional strategies employed by adept readers encompass adjusting reading pace as needed, scanning, and skimming for patterns, analysing titles, visuals, and structural forms (Ehrlich et al., 1993). For instance, fluent readers possess a tangible grasp of formal structure, enabling them to use textual organisational cues to comprehend the material. This organisational awareness is particularly relevant in EFAL contexts, where different cultures might favour distinct organisational patterns (Carrell, 1984; Whitney, 1985). Furthermore, explicit training in identifying text structures enhances learners' capacities to remember information (Carrell, 1984; Bharuthram, 2017).

Word recognition emerges as a pivotal skill among proficient EFAL readers, contributing significantly to their comprehension (Emmorey, Giezen & Gollan, 2016; Pretorius, 1996). Skilled readers recognise words effortlessly, as this process occurs naturally. Conversely, poor readers heavily rely on bottom-up processing and place increased effort on word recognition. Multiple scholars attest to word recognition's crucial role in reading comprehension (Emmorey, Giezen & Gollan, 2016; Ehrlich, Kurtz-Costes & Loridant, 1993; Perfetti, 1985). Moreover, Baddeley (2010) defines working memory as crucial for tasks like reasoning, comprehension, and learning, revealing that poor readers often possess less effective working memory (Jorm, 1979; Pretorius, 1996). In contrast, proficient readers' robust working memory facilitates easy information recall, enabling them to absorb new background knowledge and expand their vocabulary (Pretorius, 2006).

Research (McNamara, 2011; Shen, 2008; Qin, 2015) underscores the vital role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension. Proficient readers necessitate not only a grasp of language structure but also a substantial vocabulary (Grabe, 1991; Qin, 2015; Zano & Phatudi, 2019). Poor readers, lacking adequate vocabulary, experience limitations in their reading development. The significance of vocabulary knowledge was previously discussed in Chapter 2, as it forms a core component of the proposed interventions in this study.

Synthesis and evaluation skills are crucial components of reading proficiency, allowing adept readers to move beyond comprehension to making judgments and comparisons of material (Hoover & Gough, 1990; Goodman, 1967). On the contrary, poor readers struggle in this regard due to a lack of synthesis and evaluation skills. Teaching learners to analyse titles, topics, identify the purpose of reading, locate topic sentences, and summarise enhances their synthesis and evaluation abilities. These aspects are further explored in Chapters 5 and 6. Effective readers possess metacognitive knowledge, a key element in the reading process, enabling them to reflect on their thinking (Baker, 1984; Baker, Brown & Jonas, 1984; Carr, Borkowski, & Maxwell, 1991). Metacognitive skills empower readers to identify significant information, adjust reading pace, employ contextual cues to predict word meanings, and create summaries. Conversely, readers without strong metacognitive skills proceed at a slower pace, often deemed poor readers (Brown, 1984; Carr, Borkowski, & Maxwell, 1991; Grabe, 1991). Therefore, any reading strategy intervention should incorporate metacognitive skills.

Mental models, also known as situational models, play a crucial role in effective reading, allowing readers to represent the situation in a real or hypothetical environment within their minds (Pretorius, 2004:44). However, poor readers often struggle to construct these mental representations (Borkowski & Maxwell, 1991; Grabe, 1991; Linake & Mokhele, 2019; Zano & Phatudi, 2019). A lack of integration between consecutive sentences and paragraphs, as well as an inability to identify keywords or the purpose of a text, hinders their comprehension. The challenges experienced by poor readers, as outlined by Zano (2021), closely mirror the challenges many EFAL learners in Bushbuckridge experience.

Proficient readers adeptly balance both bottom-up and top-down processing while reading, leveraging past knowledge to enhance comprehension. This interactive approach is essential, especially given the curriculum changes in South Africa (see Chapter 2: 2.11.4). Many EFAL learners lack the necessary skills and strategies for both approaches, hindering their text comprehension in academic contexts. Explicit guidance, as suggested by Linake and Mokhele (2019) and Rapetsoa and Singh (2017) is crucial to equip learners with effective reading strategies. Considering the discourse above, it is imperative to categorise learners as proficient or struggling

readers early in their learning journey. This classification aids in selecting the most appropriate strategy to enhance learners' reading comprehension. The current study explores potential strategies that EFAL teachers could employ to improve reading comprehension in their classrooms.

3.5   Effective strategies for reading comprehension

The present study is dedicated to illuminating effective reading strategies applicable to both English HL and FAL contexts. Within the scope of this study, reading strategies encompass intentional and explicit actions that facilitate the extraction of meaning from written text (Carrell, 1991). Additionally, reading strategies highlight the reader's interactions with texts, often through selective reading techniques. While reading strategies may range from deliberate to automatic, Carr (1981) and Grabe (1991) highlight that these strategies must be initially modeled and taught by teachers before they become ingrained as automatic skills.

Extensive research underscores the value of instructing metacognitive strategies, as teaching reading strategies empowers readers to monitor and enhance their own reading experience (Brown, 1984; Carr, 1981; Flavell, 1979; Grabe, 1991). As mentioned earlier, metacognitive strategies encompass a reader's awareness of their cognitive processes (Carr, Borkowski, & Maxwell, 1991; Grabe, 1991). These strategies encapsulate the continuous mental processes readers employ to extract and construct meanings from text, thus contributing to long-term memory formation. An (2013) underscores that reading without effective metacognitive strategies amounts to 'mindless reading.' The objective of reading transcends mere participation for EFAL readers; it is to evolve into more adept readers through the application of effective metacognitive reading strategies. According to Pressley and Afflerbach (1995), reading is an ongoing endeavour in which readers continually adapt their strategies to align with the demands of various texts.

To equip learners with reading strategies tailored to the purpose and demands of specific texts, McEwan (2004) advocates for explicit instruction in the 'Seven Effective Strategies.' McEwan, a specialist in teacher professional development, focuses on aiding teachers in addressing new literacy challenges. The proposed strategies include activating and leveraging background knowledge, making predictions, drawing

inferences, generating, and posing questions, summarising, visualisation, and comprehension monitoring. Below, I provide a brief discussion of each strategy.
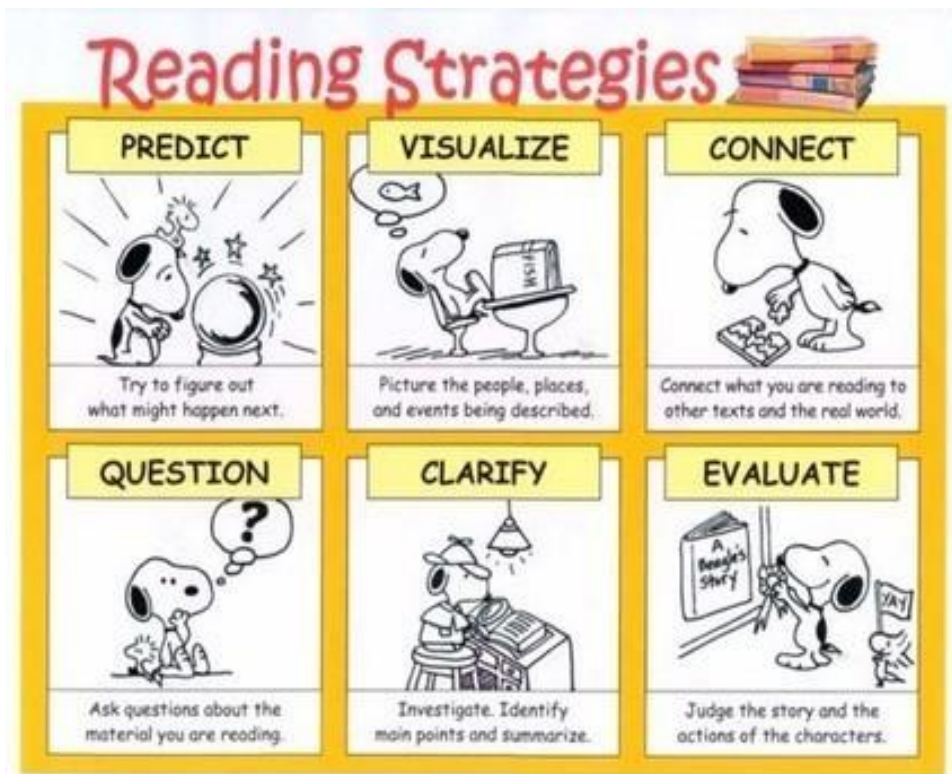
Figure 3.1: Effective reading strategies

3.5.1 Activating and using learners' background knowledge

Carrell (1988) and Pichert and Anderson (1977) emphasise that activating a reader's background knowledge stands out as one of the most effective approaches to enhancing meaningful reading. As mentioned earlier, the activation of prior knowledge involves prompting learners to recall what they already know and establish a foundational understanding necessary to access new information (Carrell, 1988). Moreover, the successful activation and usage of background knowledge necessitate the teaching of automatic schema activation, which in turn contributes to improved text comprehension (Pichert & Anderson, 1977). This knowledge encompasses readers' real-world experiences and conceptual understanding of text elements such as structure, word recognition, word meaning, and structural form (Anderson & Pearson, 1984).

As highlighted earlier in this section, schema or background knowledge refers to the personal mental structures employed for text comprehension (Rumelhart, 1980). It can be argued that teachers should engage learners in background knowledge activation during the pre-reading stage to optimise the effectiveness of this strategy. This approach would prove especially beneficial for EFAL learners, as evidenced by the findings of Bensalah and Gueroudj's (2020) study, which demonstrated that well-executed pre-reading activities prepare learners to engage with the content knowledge of the text.

3.5.2 Using predictions

The process of making predictions involves using available language cues from the reader's mental structure (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Learners draw upon their prior knowledge to construct meaning from the text through predictive assumptions. They subsequently reference these initial guesses, validating them based on their prior knowledge, and then conclude by connecting the new information to their existing understanding. Skilled readers use anticipation to bridge new textual information with their existing knowledge, thereby enhancing their comprehension (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

Making predictions not only stimulates critical thinking and problem-solving skills but also facilitates reflection and evaluation of the text. By engaging in prediction-making, learners actively analyze the text, promoting sustained focus and active involvement in the reading process. This active engagement allows learners to explore the text, extracting richer meaning and refining their reading abilities. The act of formulating predictions while reading encourages learners to stay immersed in the content and provides them with the opportunity to contemplate, refine, and adjust their initial hypotheses (Lea, 1998). Additionally, Jufri (2018) advocates for teachers to guide learners in organising information acquired before reading a text, comparing it to their existing knowledge, and then synthesising this information after reading to draw insightful conclusions.

3.5.3 Making inferences

Inference, as defined by Bailey (2019), involves using prior knowledge to make assumptions and deducing the latest information that may not be explicitly stated. The

ability to make inferences is considered a cornerstone skill for reading comprehension. Proficient readers are adept at making inferences leverage textual cues and their own experiences to comprehend implicitly conveyed information, personalising the text and enhancing memorability (Hansen & Pearson, 1983). Furthermore, Anderson and Pearson (1988) underscore that teaching inference-making to learners empowers them to engage in self-assessment and draw conclusions, given that writers seldom provide exhaustive details about titles, topics, situations, characters, or events. Instead, authors provide cues that readers can employ to deduce and integrate information from the text with their own experiences or prior knowledge. Consequently, inference-making assumes an increasingly pivotal role in reading comprehension, particularly as text complexity and content escalate (Hansen & Pearson, 1983).

It is noteworthy that while teaching learners to make inferences, the goal should be to guide them towards automatic inference-making. A study conducted in Indonesia by Warnidah and Suwarno (2016) regarding the importance of teaching Grade 11 EFAL learners to make inferences revealed that they encountered challenges in making inferences, especially when deciphering the writer's attitude. This suggests that the skill of making inferences was not explicitly taught to these learners, leading to their struggles in comprehension and inability to infer meaning. Another investigation carried out by Pierre (2021) in Santiago, Chile, emphasising the significance of making inferences, demonstrated that inference-making is integral to reading comprehension, tied to evaluation and synthesis skills that underpin drawing conclusions. The study further highlighted that learners with strong inferential abilities also exhibit robust metacognitive knowledge, particularly regarding synthesis and evaluation skills. These learners proficiently adjust their cognitive representations of a text, displaying not only a good grasp of metacognitive comprehension but also a profound inferential understanding. Conversely, poor readers tend to concentrate more on the surface-level content. Recognising that Grade 10 EFAL learners are expected to engage critically with their FAL as they enter the FET phase, the ongoing challenges they face with their reading abilities (DBE, 2011) prompted me to explore whether these learners are advancing in their reading comprehension skills or lagging.

3.5.4 Using the question-and-answer strategy

The act of asking questions stimulates active engagement among learners during the reading process, qualifying it as a learner-centered approach due to its capacity to

prompt learners to interact with the text's intent (McEwan, 2004). According to Woloshyn, Willoughby, Wood, and Pressley (1990), the skill of questioning empowers adept readers to focus on the core elements of a text. Palinscar and Brown (1984) emphasise various forms of questioning, encompassing self-questioning, question generation, and question answering. This interactive strategy not only allows teachers to continuously assess readers' comprehension during the teaching and learning process but also enables them to adapt instruction based on learners' responses (Pressley, Symons, McGoldrick & Snyder, 1995). Moreover, learners' background knowledge significantly influences how they grasp information within texts and the associated lessons or learning opportunities (Carr, 1981).

In a study by Wells and Arauz (2006) that examined teachers' usage of questioning skills in the teaching and learning process, it was revealed that learners exhibit heightened linguistic complexity when engaged in question-and-answer activities facilitated by effective questioning strategies. Further research conducted by Ness (2016), which explored reading comprehension studies focusing on reading strategies, highlighted that questioning learners is one of the most frequently employed methods to bolster comprehension. The objective should be to cultivate automatic questioning skills within learners (Williams, 2010). As learners develop the ability to generate both higher and lower-order questions within and beyond the texts they encounter, their capacity to comprehend text not only improves but also becomes purposeful and vigilant. Additionally, Palinscar and Brown (1984) advocate for generating and asking questions in alignment with Bloom's taxonomy, particularly emphasising higher-order questions, as they provide learners with opportunities to explore abstract meanings. This underscores the notion that teaching learners effective questioning skills can significantly enhance their reading proficiency and understanding.

3.5.5 Summarising

Summarising involves distilling a plethora of information into a concise form by capturing only the key points (Jones, 2018). This sentiment is echoed by Routman (2000), who defines summarising as the ability to convey the main ideas of a text explicitly and coherently. In the act of summarisation, readers distill the essence of the content using their own words while focusing solely on the primary message. Embraced as an effective strategy for meaningful reading (Honig, Diamond & Gutlohn,

2000), summarising not only serves educational purposes but also equips learners with a life skill applicable across various contexts (Carr, 1981).

Brown (1992) suggests that teachers should guide learners towards summarising by gradually transferring the responsibility to learners, enabling them to independently create summaries once they have mastered the skill. This approach creates active learning, as learners become accountable for their learning process. A study conducted by Mills (2008), which evaluated learners' ability to generate a summary of a text within a strict word limit, revealed that many struggled to meet the prescribed criteria. Poor readers often grappled with identifying topic sentences and supporting details, resulting in summaries that included every word from the text. The study also underscored the inherent value of summarisation, which encourages learners to engage in critical thinking, connect their ideas, and justify their choices of inclusion or exclusion of information. Despite its challenges, summarisation proves pivotal for EFAL learners, as it enhances reading development. The difficulties encountered might be attributed to the need for active facilitation of the summarisation process by teachers, requiring them to possess a comprehensive understanding of how to impart summarisation skills. This underscores the importance of training teachers explicitly in employing summarisation and other effective reading strategies as outlined in this study.

3.5.6 Using visual cues

As highlighted by McEwan (2004), the purpose of creating visual cues is to construct a cognitive representation that aids in information extraction and reconstruction according to the reader's requirements. Mudzielwana (2013) reinforces the strategy's value, suggesting that using visual cues allows learners to examine and visually depict relationships, enhancing their ability to craft effective summaries. Lehr, Osborn, and Hiebert (2005) emphasise that visuals serve as tools to visually portray the meanings and connections underlying written text, consequently boosting memory retention of the material. Their assertion underscores the importance of teachers guiding learners in creating images that encapsulate content. Trehearne (2006) advocates that solidifying visual cues, which encapsulate textual knowledge, involves activating learners' background knowledge, encouraging vocabulary development, and

illustrating interconnections between various concepts. Mastering the use of visual cues equips learners to engage in purposeful reading.

Ghazanfari's (2009) investigation on the application of graphic representation to enhance the memory of EFAL learners in Iran reveals that learners taught through visual strategies can recollect information from a written text even four weeks after the initial reading. According to Gambrell and Bales (1986), readers use visualisation to capture the stages of an event or create mental images that facilitate the recall of abstract ideas and vital names. For implementing a visualisation strategy, Gambrell and Koskinen (2002) propose a teacher-guided process. Initially, the teacher reads the text, pausing before and after pivotal sentences. Subsequently, the teacher illustrates visual cues using descriptive terms from the text, elucidating how these images aid in comprehending the unfolding narrative. The process is reiterated with the teacher pausing again at the descriptive sentence, prompting learners to share their visual interpretations of the text. The discussions underscore the potential of visualisation skills to cultivate meaningful learning among learners.

3.5.7 Using comprehension monitoring

According to Routman (2000), comprehension monitoring skills refer to the metacognitive process readers understanding of the use of reading strategies. McEwan (2004) asserts that comprehension monitoring strategy by implication means that the reader monitors their thinking process of the effective use of reading strategies while reading: thinking about how to approach a text, and that which is read. Moreover, comprehension monitoring happens during reading and while reading, as the learner tries to understand that which is read. For Routman (2000) and Gosling and Edwards (2003), comprehension monitoring strategies allow the reader to recognise challenging parts in a text, then apply a relevant strategy to reconstruct meaning of these difficult parts. As previously mentioned, comprehension monitoring assists readers to make sense of the text and have control of their own learning (Routman, 2000).

Routman (2000) asserts that comprehension monitoring strategy builds readers' self-confidence since readers are encouraged to reflect on personal mental processes while reading. In addition, the National Reading Panel (NRP) (2000) alludes that

during the comprehension monitoring process, learners learn how to understand their own learning and the learning materials. This indicates that when learners check their understanding, they realise that reading needs to make sense, and if they experience challenges, they should try to use appropriate reading strategies to solve the problems. Lehr, Osborn, and Hiebert (2005) suggest that during the teaching of the comprehension monitoring strategy, teachers need to make learners aware of the challenges of comprehending words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs. This kind of teaching encourages learners to consider what might be preventing them from understanding.

Paris and Myers (1981) showed the relationship between comprehension monitoring and reading development and their study revealed that most readers who demonstrated the ability to monitor their learning were able to perform better in other reading processes, such as lexical access and word recognition. However, the study also finds that those learners who struggled with comprehension monitoring were mostly word bound. Comprehension monitoring is crucial as it enables learners to identify reasons why some texts become challenging, therefore providing learners with ample time to ask questions, reread challenging terms, paraphrase information, and apply visual techniques of the text.

Given the aforementioned discussion, it must be noted that reading comprehension is a difficult mental task that involves many processes. The seven strategies for reading comprehension proposed by McEwan may be beneficial in helping learners improve their abilities to read for meaning. However, these strategies may only be beneficial when learners can use these strategies in accordance with the three-reading phase. Anstey and Bull (2004) highlight that the seven strategies for reading will only be beneficial if the learner understands how to use the reading strategies and use the strategies at the most appropriate time. Furthermore, for personal development, a learner should have adequate knowledge of reading strategy use. It is, therefore, necessary for the teacher to have a proper understanding of the three reading phases (DBE, 2011). I next discuss the three approaches to reading.

3.6   The three reading phases

As mentioned earlier, the seven strategies for reading will only be beneficial if used appropriately within the three reading phases. Wallace (1992) suggests that reading should be approached in three phases namely: pre-reading, during reading, and post reading. Moreover, in the present study, the three reading phases are crucial as they align with the approaches outline in the CAPS document.

3.6.1 Pre-reading phase

As highlighted by Chastain (1988), pre-reading exercises serve to motivate learners, creating an intrinsic interest in reading rather than pressuring them into it. These exercises not only prepare learners for the reading experience but also instill confidence in their comprehension abilities. By providing various schemata for the text, pre-reading exercises assist learners in organising information (Grabe, 1991). These exercises also offer learners practical ways to connect their prior knowledge to the text, thereby enhancing their ability to read for meaning. Thus, the primary purpose of pre-reading exercises is to cultivate learners' curiosity, stimulate interest, offer predictive activities, activate background knowledge, and prepare learners to grasp the context of a text (Varaprasad, 1997).

Before embarking on the first reading of a text, several considerations should be considered. Firstly, teachers should ensure that the selected reading text is familiar to learners. If the text contains unfamiliar vocabulary, pre-reading activities focused on vocabulary development and language awareness should be incorporated. These activities could involve tasks like identifying synonyms, antonyms, derivatives, and related words (Pardede, 2010). Secondly, teachers should choose topics that are appropriate for the learners' age, gender, and cultural background. If the topics are not inherently familiar, providing learners with background knowledge becomes crucial for comprehension (Pardede, 2010).

Moreover, the reading strategies used by learners during the pre-reading phase tend to carry over to the during and post-reading phases, significantly aiding their comprehension of the entire text (Pardede, 2010). Pre-reading activities encompass a range of techniques, including brainstorming the title, analysing visual clues, and

honing skimming and scanning skills (DBE, 2011). These activities collectively prepare learners for a comprehensive and engaged reading experience.

3.6.2 During reading phase

According to Brown (2002), the during-reading phase often involves the techniques of skimming and scanning to quickly identify relevant content within a text. This phase enables learners to make educated guesses regarding the text's purpose and better comprehend the writer's intentions (De Debat, 2006). During-reading exercises, such as skimming and scanning, empower learners to make predictions about the text's context before exploring more intensive reading. By effectively employing these exercises, learners gain the ability to control their reading development, skipping unnecessary information and honing in on the crucial aspects of a text (Pardede, 2010). Additionally, during-reading exercises serve the purpose of familiarising learners with a text's intention, enriching their language knowledge, deepening their understanding of the content, and acknowledging cultural nuances embedded in the text.

Activities that can be undertaken during the reading phase (Pardede, 2010), include notetaking, reacting to the content, making predictions, selecting the most pertinent information, critically evaluating the writer's standpoint, passing judgements, and relating the text to individual experiences. However, Pardede (2010) also acknowledges the challenges of implementing such activities in EFAL contexts, where learners often heavily rely on dictionaries, the text itself, and the teacher for guidance. It is noteworthy that the CAPS document aligns with the activities proposed by Pardede (2010), as it also suggests activities for the during-reading phase such as making comparisons, expressing emotions in response to the text, using prior knowledge, and drawing on past experiences. These strategies collectively promote an engaged and comprehensive reading experience in EFAL classrooms.

3.6.3 Post-reading phase

As outlined by Barnett (1988), post-reading exercises provide learners with an opportunity to actively address challenging concepts within a text, with a primary focus on understanding the text's meaning rather than grappling with grammatical issues. Moreover, post-reading exercises encourage reflection on the text and enable learners

to respond thoughtfully to its content. Chastain (1988) underscores the significance of applying post-reading exercises as a means for teachers to assess learners' comprehension and guide them towards a deeper exploration of the text. In the broader context, the purpose of reading extends beyond mere memorisation of the writer's viewpoint or recapping the text's content. Instead, it involves gaining insight into another individual's perspective and actively integrating new knowledge with existing understanding. Group work can be leveraged to encourage learners to focus on aspects they find challenging or misunderstand, prompting teachers to emphasise processes that lead to comprehension or clarification. Vaezi (2006, cited in Pardede, 2010: 13) suggests several suitable post-reading exercises, including text discussion, summarising the text (written or oral), generating, and asking questions, completing a text, consulting additional reading materials with similarities, and engaging in role-playing. Notably, these exercises align with the activities specified in the CAPS document for EFAL Grade 10 to 12 (DBE, 2011).

From the discussions surrounding the effective strategies proposed by McEwan (2004), the three reading phases (DBE, 2011), and the distinctions between good and poor readers, it is evident that reading strategies primarily benefit proficient readers. To extend these benefits to struggling readers, explicit instruction in reading strategies is crucial. Scholars concur that for EFAL learners to effectively use reading strategies, teachers must teach these strategies explicitly (Chastain, 1988; Grabe & Stoller, 2013). According to Baker and Brown (1984) and Pressley (2006), explicit teaching of reading strategies is vital as it empowers learners to monitor their learning processes and cultivates a genuine interest in reading. Furthermore, Hudson (1998) advocates for purposeful learning, where learners employ pertinent reading strategies aligned with their reading goals. Thus, the choice of reading strategies depends on the individual learner's needs and specific context. Refer to Figure 3.2 for a visual representation of the three phases of reading.
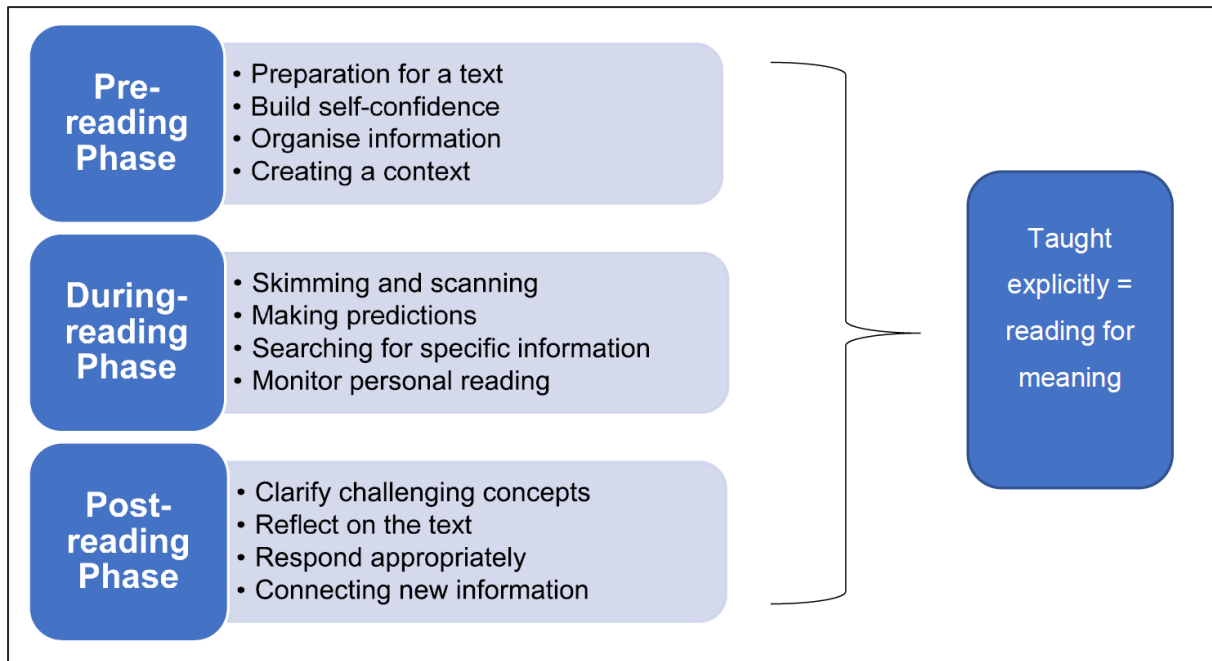
Figure 3.2: The three reading phases (DBE: 2011: 46)

To encourage EFAL learners' capacities to read for meaning, teachers should encourage the integration of diverse strategies, as discussed earlier. Given the current scarcity of comprehensive research in this domain, there exists a pressing necessity to contemplate the strategies and methodologies for instructing reading comprehension to Grade 10 EFAL learners. In response to this void, the research questions outlined in Chapter 1, which serve as the foundation of this study, need to be addressed. These research questions are articulated as follows:

- What are the reading strategies and approaches used by Grade 10 EFAL teachers in the Bushbuckridge region when teaching reading comprehension?
- What are the challenges experienced by Grade 10 EFAL teachers when implementing strategies and approaches for reading comprehension?
- Which reading strategies are stipulated in the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12?

It is important to recognise that aside from the research questions mentioned earlier, there exist additional factors that could contribute to addressing the identified gap in this study. These factors encompass aspects such as the allocated time for reading activities, teachers' attitudes towards reading instruction, and the level of support

teachers receive to enhance their instructional competencies. Exploring whether teachers have adequate time to teach reading comprehension strategies, their perception of the significance of teaching such strategies to learners, and the extent of support they receive from relevant stakeholders to enhance their teaching skills can significantly contribute to bridging the identified gap. In addition to this, the study has explored various models of effective strategies and relevant theories to examine potential approaches and strategies for improving reading comprehension in the South African context. This comprehensive approach ensures that the anticipated outcomes of the research yield positive and constructive results.

3.7   Summary of the chapter

This chapter commences by elucidating crucial concepts employed in this research. A comprehensive examination of reading strategies was conducted, with a specific emphasis on their usage within Grade 10 EFAL classrooms. Both top-down and bottom-up approaches to reading were thoroughly investigated, with the intention of revealing effective strategies and identifying challenges encountered by Grade 10 teachers and learners in implementing these approaches. After an in-depth review of various theories pertaining to reading comprehension, the research gravitated towards schema theory as the guiding framework for this study. The exploration of three distinct reading approaches—namely, the traditional bottom-up perspective (Anderson, 1994), the top-down viewpoint (Bartlett, 1932), and the interactive approach—contributed to a holistic understanding of the theoretical foundation underpinning this study. The analysis of schema theory revealed the pivotal role of learners' background knowledge within EFAL contexts in enhancing reading comprehension. Factors delineating proficient and struggling readers in terms of strategy application were identified. Subsequently, a comprehensive discussion on effective reading strategies was undertaken. Finally, the various phases for approaching reading within EFAL classrooms were outlined. It is believed that this multifaceted exploration will empower the researcher to identify challenges faced by both Grade 10 EFAL teachers and learners in utilising reading strategies, leading to the formulation of viable solutions.

The identification of the research gap underscores the significance of this study. Through the review of existing literature, it has become apparent that limited research

has been conducted in the domain of strategies and approaches for reading comprehension. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the strategies and approaches prevalent in Grade 10 EFAL classrooms, thereby contributing to the establishment of effective practices that positively impact the reading proficiency of Grade 10 EFAL learners. In doing so, the study's overarching goal—to explore the strategies and approaches employed in teaching reading comprehension to Grade 10 EFAL classrooms—comes into sharper focus. The insights garnered from the reviewed literature have served as a foundation for the development of the research tools used to collect empirical data from the participants sampled in this study. The subsequent chapter delineates the qualitative methodology adopted in this study.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGIES TO INVESTIGATE STRATEGIES FOR READING COMPREHENSION

"Write to be understood, speaker to be heard, read to grow"

-Lawrence, Clark, Powell (2012: 3)

4.1   Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the comprehensive research methodology employed throughout this study. I commence by elucidating the chosen research methodology, followed by an extensive discussion concerning the research design, research paradigm, my positionality, target population, research sampling techniques, and the designated research instrument. To ensure the utmost ethical rigor, I explore the ethical considerations that have been weighed. The chapter culminates with a summary. The subsequent figure visually represents the web of the research methodology adopted for this study.
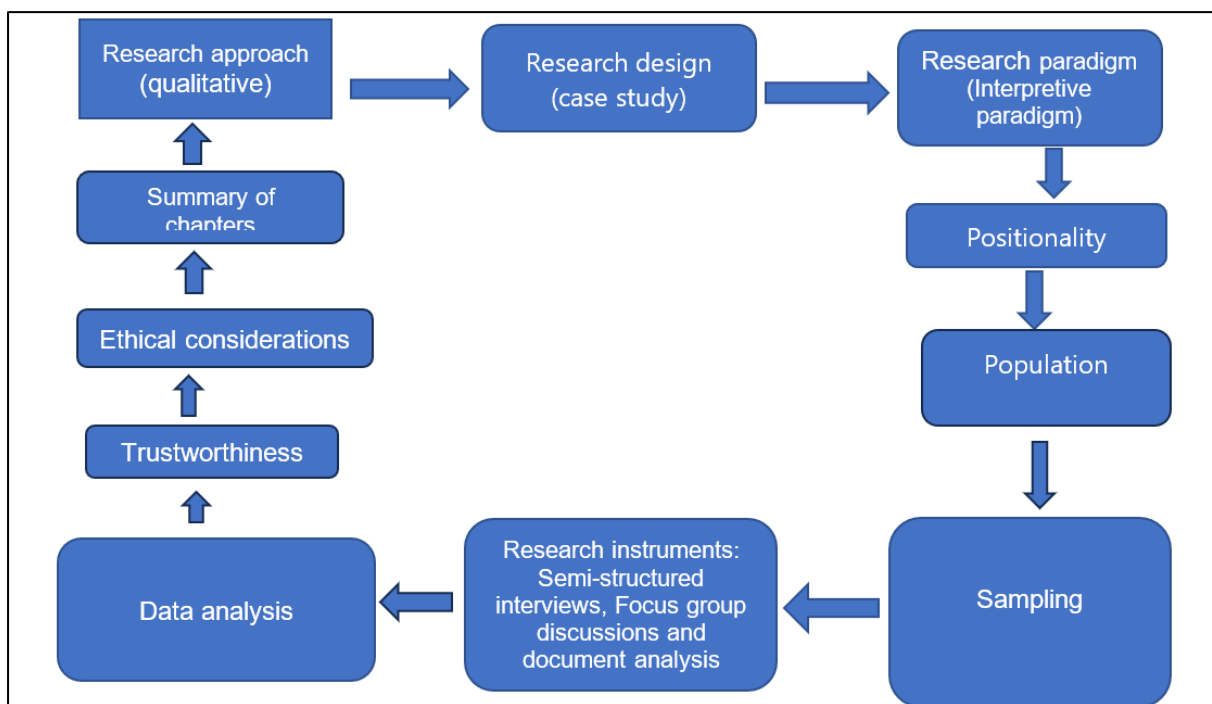
Figure 4.1: A diagram of a qualitative research design for this study

4.2   Qualitative approach

As established in Chapter 1, this study adopts a qualitative approach. Ary et al. (2018) posit that the qualitative research approach is primarily employed to grasp social phenomena from the vantage point of participants. This resonates with Hammersly's stance (2013), which underscores that a qualitative approach enables researchers to investigate phenomena within their specific contextual settings. This is achieved through methods such as classroom observations, interviews, diaries, document analysis, and questionnaires. These methods facilitate the gathering, analysis, and interpretation of data content. The qualitative approach proves instrumental in exploring the perceptions and attitudes of EFAL teachers and learners regarding the use of reading strategies and approaches, aligning with the central research question of this study.

In contrast to quantitative research, which hinges on numerical or measurable data and the presumption of a singular reality (Nieuwenhuis, 2016), qualitative research leans on individual viewpoints and documents to unveil the profound intricacies of how people think and respond within society (Ary et al., 2018). Denzin (1989) accentuates that the qualitative research methodology yields a comprehensive exploration of participants' emotions, opinions, and experiences. This, in turn, facilitates the interpretation of the significance behind participants' actions. Thus, the focal point of qualitative research is to capture the sentiments, perceptions, and opinions of participants within the scope of the case under examination. Nieuwenhuis (2016) highlights that the qualitative approach proves advantageous when dealing with areas where knowledge is scant, enabling researchers to explore further into the case. Moreover, the qualitative approach serves to identify and mitigate potential response bias by participants, safeguarding the validity of the data. Participants often exhibit this behaviour due to their desire to present themselves professionally to the interviewer and meet perceived expectations (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Elyazgi (2018) accentuates that the interpretive nature of the qualitative approach empowers participants to express themselves authentically, thus unraveling the genuine meaning behind their experiences. This inherent interpretive quality stems from the study's naturalistic form. However, qualitative research has its limitations as well. Rahman (2020) contends that qualitative research methodologies often overlook contextual nuances, prioritising

experiences, and meanings. For instance, phenomenology, as exemplified by Tuohy et al. (2013), aims to interpret, and comprehend participants' experiences.

The underpinning framework for this qualitative study is schema theory, chosen for its efficacy in elucidating the role of background knowledge in constructing meaning from textual content. According to Bartlett (1932) and Rumelhart (1980), 'schema' in language learning refers to how readers employ prior knowledge to imbue text with meaning. This theory asserts that written text alone is insufficient to convey meaning; it acts as a guide for readers to employ their pre-existing knowledge (Bartlett, 1932; Nunan, 1999; Rumelhart, 1980). Thus, the interaction between text and readers' background knowledge becomes pivotal for effective text comprehension. Moreover, the schema theory is harnessed to dissect barriers to reading comprehension and illuminate the intricacies of the reading process. The philosophical foundation of the study aligns with the interpretive paradigm, where researchers and participants are seen as co-constructors of knowledge (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). This grounds the study's research questions in qualitative research methods. The subsequent section explores the research design employed in this study.

4.3   Research design

As expounded by Hancock et al. (2021), the term 'research design' encapsulates the overarching strategy and analytical methodology that a researcher employs to seamlessly integrate various components of a study. This orchestration aims to create a cohesive and logical framework, thereby ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the research problem at hand. In concurrence, Mello (2021) emphasises that a meticulously devised research design enhances the alignment between the researcher's methods and the study's objectives. This, in turn, facilitates the collection of high-quality data and the application of suitable analytical techniques, enabling the researcher to produce dependable and valid results.

In this study, a deliberate selection was made to adopt a case study design, in accordance with the qualitative research approach. This choice was driven by the belief that this design offered the most fitting approach for the research goals. The forthcoming section is a discussion of the research design employed in this study.

4.3.1 Case study

The research design employed in this study revolved around a case study approach, a method meticulously chosen to explore the complexities of a challenging scenario (Crowe et al., 2011). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) emphasise that case studies can manifest as heuristic, descriptive, or particularistic. In this study, a descriptive case study design was adopted. Atmowarndoyo (2018) elucidates that such a classification falls under descriptive research, as it aims to depict the existing conditions of a specific case. Similarly, Yin (2014) concurs by defining a descriptive case study as one that illuminates an intervention or phenomenon alongside its natural context. The decision to adopt a descriptive case study stemmed from a desire to investigate how the implementation of reading methods could enhance EFAL learning, a process intrinsic to real-life contexts. Importantly, this approach aligns with the exploration of whether and how reading strategies can benefit EFAL learning, consequently yielding an enriched understanding of how strategies catalyse this learning process.

Furthermore, the case study approach was strategically employed to gather social data, encompassing participants' usage of the target language and their engagement in reading activities. This data was meticulously organised to yield comprehensive, precise outcomes, offering a profound comprehension of the reality being studied. Additionally, the case study methodology was harnessed to synergise various qualitative data collection tools such as individual interviews, focus group discussions, and documentation. This convergence of data sources, often leading to a more profound understanding of the issue, fortified the research findings presented and discussed in Chapter 5.

Choy (2014) underscores the necessity for qualitative researchers to meticulously assess the strengths and weaknesses of their chosen design. Among the merits of employing case studies is their ability to illuminate participants' behaviours, values, beliefs, and attitudes, thus providing authentic portrayals of their essence (Pham, 2018). In this study, an in-depth portrayal of the attitudes, beliefs, values, and experiences of both EFAL teachers and learners pertaining to the impact of strategy deployment in reading lessons was offered. Another advantage is the array of data collection and analysis techniques inherent to case studies, including semi-structured

interviews, open-ended discussions, and purposive sampling (Choy, 2014). To this end, three data collection instruments—semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis—were employed in this study. This multifaceted approach was intended to provide a holistic comprehension of the subject under investigation (Flick, 2018). Notably, EFAL teachers were interviewed via the Zoom platform, while an online focus group was conducted for EFAL learners. This deliberate juxtaposition of teacher and learner responses facilitated a validation process.

The case study approach also excels in pinpointing specific occurrences and their relationship to underlying phenomena (Hammerly, 2013). This precision enhances the research's capacity to illuminate causal relationships and contextual intricacies. Despite its merits, the case study approach does harbor limitations. Certain data collection techniques associated with case studies can be time-consuming (Choy, 2014). While this flaw is a consideration, the online data collection techniques employed in this study mitigated the potential challenges. Another drawback pertains to the potential influence of bias on outcomes (Yin, 2014). This study acknowledges the potential for bias and favouritism, which could have affected the interviews, especially considering the influence of EFAL teachers on participant grouping. To counter this limitation, comprehensive explanations were provided to both teachers and learners regarding the study's purpose. Participants were encouraged to approach the study with ease, promoting the collection of credible and valuable data to enrich the existing literature on the usage of reading strategies.

4.3.2 Key research questions and schema theory

Schema theory (Bartlett, 1932; Rumelhart, 1980) underpins the research questions for the present study. Next, I discuss the research questions that informed this study and their relation to the background knowledge concepts.

Research question 1 - What are the reading strategies and approaches used by Grade 10 EFAL teachers in the Bushbuckridge region when teaching reading comprehension?

The primary aim of Question 1 in this study is to amass insights into teachers' perspectives concerning the usage of reading strategies and approaches during the

teaching and learning process. To effectively underpin this inquiry, the schema theory emerges as an apt choice, being a fundamental tenet of language teaching and learning. As elucidated by Rumelhart (1980), the schema theory elucidates how readers draw upon their background knowledge to imbue textual content with meaning. This theory aligns seamlessly with Anderson's (1977) assertion that reading comprehension inherently involves an individual's worldly knowledge.

To comprehensively understand how teachers leverage reading strategies and approaches to amplify learners' reading comprehension, it becomes imperative to understand how learners' existing knowledge functions as a pivotal strategy within EFAL classrooms. Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) expound that comprehension materialises when prior experiences intermingle with the reader's interaction with the text and the author. This interplay forms the crux of effective comprehension. Consequently, the researcher's interest lies in discerning such pedagogical activities within the data garnered from teachers. The significance of gathering teachers' insights becomes evident in comprehending how reading strategies are harnessed to bolster learners' reading comprehension. Teachers' opinions shed light on the mechanisms through which these strategies are employed, furthering our comprehension of the dynamic relationship between strategy application and enhanced comprehension.

Research question 2 - What are the challenges experienced by Grade 10 EFAL teachers when implementing strategies and approaches for reading comprehension?

The second research question within this study aimed to glean insights into the perspectives of both teachers and learners regarding the challenges associated with the implementation of reading strategies during the reading process. The schema theory serves as a robust underpinning for this question, as it elucidates critical factors that could potentially impede reading comprehension and provides valuable insights into the mechanics of reading (Carrell, 1983). The relevance of the schema theory to this question is manifest in its capacity to shed light on fundamental issues that hinder effective reading comprehension. As outlined by Carrell and Eisterhold (1983), readers must activate pertinent schema to facilitate comprehension. The absence of such activation can result in the text's incomprehensibility. The failure to activate the

requisite schema may be attributed to either inadequate cues within the author's text, which should prompt the reader's pre-existing schema, or to the reader's lack of the precise schema anticipated by the author (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1988).

By drawing on the schema theory, this question digs deep into the complexities of comprehension hindrances, providing valuable insights into the dynamic interaction between textual content and readers' pre-existing knowledge. It facilitates a nuanced understanding of the challenges that teachers and learners encounter when using reading strategies, thereby enriching our comprehension of the multifaceted reading process.

Research question 3 - Which reading strategies are stipulated in the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12?

Data collection for this question was sourced from the CAPS documents, as explained in Chapter 3. There exists an intrinsic interconnection between questions 1, 2, and 3, such that the underlying concepts of the former questions are inherently pertinent to the third question as well. This stems from the fact that data for question 3 lends support to the responses garnered from teachers' semi-structured interviews and learners' focus group discussions. In Chapter 3, I established a correlation between the three phases of reading as posited by McEwan (2004) and Pardede (2010), and the three reading approaches delineated by the CAPS document (DBE, 2011), all within the framework of schema theory. This alignment is harmonious with the essence of Question 3, which sought to investigate whether the reading strategies and approaches outlined in the CAPS document harmonise with the schema theory. The core objective was to fathom how teachers and learners wield reading strategies to amplify reading comprehension and facilitate effective learning.

The research objectives and questions serve as fundamental guiding principles for the research methodology in this study. Moreover, they are deeply rooted in schema theory, as they seek to unravel the way teachers harness reading strategies within EFAL classrooms to bolster learners' reading comprehension. The adoption of schema theory is substantiated by several considerations. Primarily, this theory empowers readers to forecast their encounters within scenarios and aids them in making sense of novel experiences (Bartlett, 1932). Additionally, schema theory

serves as a lens to scrutinise impediments to reading comprehension and to fathom the intricate processes integral to such comprehension (Carrell, 1983). Given the context of EFAL education, where many learners are non-native speakers of the target language, schema theory becomes particularly relevant, as these learners are more susceptible to challenges in grasping meaning through reading. This theory explains the developmental trajectory of reading, addressing the spectrum from adept readers employing effective strategies to struggling readers who grapple with word-level comprehension (McEwan, 2004).

Consequently, this study fixates on how teachers employ reading strategies during the reading process, a focus deeply influenced by schema theory. This theory shapes the research questions by necessitating an understanding of the participants' societal and educational milieu—precisely the terrain schema theory navigates (Pretorius, 2004). It posits that readers harbor cognitive representations of events within actual or hypothetical contexts. This facet was at the heart of the research questions in this study. The existing literature underscores that for reading strategies to bear fruit, explicit instruction is vital (Brevik, 2019; Rule & Land, 2017; Bharuthram, 2017; Zano, 2020). Schema theory has sculpted the research inquiries, demanding an insightful grasp of the target group's context and the imperative of explicit strategy instruction for effective reading comprehension.

4.4   Research paradigm

The interpretive paradigm stands as the foundation of this study. Interpretivism is aptly chosen due to its emphasis on a reader's capacity to construct meaning (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Researchers must adopt a specific paradigm to safeguard against biases rooted in their own theoretical inclinations, which could potentially yield preconceived outcomes and compromised validity. As a result, the conclusions drawn in this study are more likely to be based on the available information rather than preconceived notions (Bowen, 2009). According to Nieuwenhuis (2016), interpretivism draws inspiration from phenomenology, as it recognises the imperative of acknowledging everyone's interpretation and perspective on the world. This, in turn, forms the foundation of the interpretive stance that "reality is not determined objectively but rather socially constructed" (Khaldi, 2017: 428). Moreover, interpretivism contends

that a deeper understanding of individual viewpoints can be achieved when individuals are studied within their natural social contexts (Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

Consequently, both teachers and learners underwent interviews with a specific focus on the usage of reading strategies and approaches to enhance Grade 10 EFAL reading comprehension. The inquiry centered around capturing subjective interpretations from all participants. In the initial phase, Grade 10 teachers were granted the opportunity to articulate their pedagogical perspectives and emotional responses to the implementation of reading strategies to augment learners' comprehension. Teachers were prompted to discuss the challenges they grapple with when integrating reading strategies and approaches within their classrooms, while also elucidating the extent to which they receive requisite support from various stakeholders. Lastly, teachers were prompted to elaborate on the degree to which the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10 to 12 furnishes them with guidance pertaining to the utilisation of reading strategies. The interpretive paradigm serves as the theoretical underpinning of this study, creating an environment conducive to unveiling individual perspectives within their natural social contexts. This approach resonates with the essence of the study, which seeks to comprehensively apprehend the dynamics of reading strategy implementation and its impact on EFAL reading comprehension.

4.5   Researcher's identity and positionality

Holmes (2020) asserts that positionality encompasses an individual's perspective and stance regarding a study's subject matter and its broader social and political context. Marsh et al. (2018) and Grix (2019) further elaborate that an individual's worldview encapsulates their beliefs about the nature of social reality, the scope of attainable knowledge, and the nature of knowledge itself. Positionality significantly influences not only the conduct of research but also its outcomes and findings (Rowe, 2014). Consequently, it mandates explicit self-awareness and self-evaluation on the part of the researcher concerning their ideas and viewpoints and how these might have shaped the planning, execution, and interpretation of the study's findings (Greenbank, 2003; May & Perry, 2017). Given that personal ethics, social principles, knowledge, and preconceptions can permeate the research process (Greenbank, 2003; Bourke,

2014), researchers must remain attuned to their social, political, and cultural context (Bryman, 2016). To mitigate personal influence, Malterud (2001) advises researchers to identify any preconceived assumptions prior to embarking on a project, encompassing personal and professional experiences, pre-study assumptions, motivations, qualifications, perspectives, and theoretical underpinnings relevant to education and interests.

Merriam et al. (2001) identified various roles a researcher can assume within their own study, one of which is the participant-observer stance. According to Grix (2019), the participant observation approach entails researchers becoming active participants in the groups they investigate, aiming to grasp the intricacies of societal issues. This approach facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter without disrupting the event or compromising the authenticity of findings (Spradley, 2016). While participant observation does present challenges such as limited access, obtaining informed consent, and cultivating rapport and trust with participants (Spradley, 2016), many of these challenges were mitigated in my case as I was already an integral part of the group under study. As a past and present EFAL teacher, I have been engaged in the reading development of EFAL learners, and my role as an observer naturally progressed. In this study, I maintained an observer role while actively participating in various research activities.

I embraced the role of both observer and participant, cognisant of the potential for my involvement to compromise the research's validity. I diligently refrained from altering data or findings based on my own experiences. According to Yin (2003), having a researcher already embedded within the group they study carries both advantages and disadvantages. My position allowed me to acquire insights into the multifaceted usage of reading strategies within EFAL classrooms and the nuances available to a researcher. Furthermore, it endowed me with the ability to navigate complex situations (Yin, 2003), including information collection during the COVID-19 pandemic, through streamlined remote coordination with participants. However, a drawback lies in the inclination to selectively employ transcript extracts that substantiate the researcher's arguments, potentially deviating from an accurate representation of the original data. Regardless of the research's trajectory, my commitment has always been steadfast in

aligning with the study's objectives (Yin, 2003). While gathering data, I consciously maintained a reasonable distance from teachers and learners. The COVID-19 pandemic inadvertently offered the advantage of abstaining from face-to-face interactions, thus evading any inadvertent influence on participants, which is counterproductive to the study's integrity.

4.6   Population

The scope of the population in this study encompasses Grade 10 EFAL teachers and learners, specifically excluding teachers instructing subjects other than EFAL, school principals, school administrators, and general staff due to their limited exposure to EFAL content. As highlighted by Asiamah, Mensah, and Oteng-Abayie (2017), population specification is a crucial aspect in both qualitative and quantitative research endeavours. As discussed earlier in Chapter 1, population specification comprises three pivotal concepts: general population, target population, and accessible population. For this study, the population is defined as a group of individuals residing within a specific region and sharing similar resources (Asiamah & Oteng-Abayie, 2017; Choy, 2014).

The geographical focus of this study is the Bushbuckridge region in the Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. The selection criterion for the study site was based on the geographical context of schools and their accessibility to the researcher. Furthermore, Bushbuckridge boasts a diverse student body encompassing learners of various ages, ethnic backgrounds, and linguistic origins. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the population covered in this study:

Table 4.1: Population for the research study

Number of schools in the study	6
Number of learners in all schools	829
Number of teachers in all schools	12
Number of Learners in each school	**Number of teachers in each school**
School A: 215 learners	2 teachers
School B: 141 learners	3 teachers
School C: 168 learners	3 teachers
School D: 137 learners	2 teachers
School E: 81 learners	1 teacher
School F 87 learners	1 teacher

The specified target population for this study encompasses Grade 10 EFAL learners and teachers in the selected participating schools, as outlined in Table 4.1. This population was chosen due to its shared and pertinent attribute, which serves as a focal point for addressing the principal research inquiry of this study (Creswell, 2003; Choy, 2014). Notably, as highlighted by Vundla (2020) and Zano (2020), a limited number of schools in South Africa provide English as a HL. Many schools, on the other hand, offer EFAL. Consequently, the schools chosen for this study are those that offer EFAL at the Grade 10 level, aligning with the researcher's focus on investigating the usage of reading strategies and approaches by Grade 10 EFAL teachers. Additionally, the study's literature review underscores that Grade 10 is a pivotal juncture where learners should be adept at critically employing their FAL skills (Bharuthram, 2017; Coffi, 2017; Vundla, 2020). Nonetheless, it is noted that many learners continue to grapple with effectively utilising English as a tool for learning at this grade level (Bharuthram, 2012; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016).

4.7 Sampling

4.7.1 Teacher participants

According to Krippendorff (2018), simple random sampling is a technique used to select a sample at random, ensuring that each component has an equal chance of being chosen. Unlike quantitative designs, qualitative research often employs a smaller sample of cases or individuals (Theron & Malindi, 2010). However, determining an appropriate sample size is more nuanced than merely considering the number of participants (Daniel, 2019). Yin (2014) emphasises that qualitative researchers aim to engage a select few individuals possessing specific information crucial for addressing the research questions at hand.

In line with these considerations, the present study employed simple random sampling to select participating teachers. With a total of 13 teachers available, the researcher intended to include only one teacher per school. Opting for a smaller number—six teachers—was a deliberate choice to ensure the collection of rich and detailed qualitative data that could provide insights into teachers' perceptions regarding the use of reading strategies. Furthermore, the use of simple random sampling was employed to uphold the integrity of the sampling process and prevent bias (Etikan &

Bala, 2017). Nevertheless, simple random sampling, like any sampling technique, comes with its own set of limitations. Krippendorff (2018) outlines several disadvantages of simple random sampling:

- It is time-consuming to gather the complete list of a particular population since some information may be protected by policy or treated as confidential.
- It may require money to retrieve the contact list of the population in some instances where the list is not available in the public domain.
- It may be impossible to contact the cases which are very widely dispersed.
- Simple random sampling may lead to bias if the sample set is not large enough to adequately represent the full population.

The limitations mentioned earlier did not significantly impact this study due to my concurrent role as a teacher during the data collection period, which granted me access to numerous schools and regional office contact information. Additionally, the district officer at the DBE provided permission for me to access the target population. Except for the constraints posed by the COVID-19 lockdown, accessing the Grade 10 EFAL teacher population and selecting the required sample size was relatively straightforward. The particulars of the participating teacher sample are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Sampled teachers used in this study

Participants and sampling technique	Pseudonym	Gender	Experience and qualifications
Semi-structured interviews with teachers (simple random sampling)	Teacher 1 (school A)	Female	17 years of teaching experience with a Bachelor of Education degree
	Teacher 2 (school B)	Female	6 years of teaching experience with a Bachelor of Education degree
	Teacher 3 (school C)	Male	16 years of teaching experience with a Bachelor of Arts degree
	Teacher 4 (school D)	Female	7 years of teaching experience with a diploma in education
	Teacher 5 (school E)	Male	22 years of teaching experience with a diploma in education

	Teacher 6 (school F)	Male	18 years of teaching experience with a Bachelor of Education degree

As outlined in Chapter 1, my sampling approach encompassed both underperforming and high-performing schools. With the assistance of the school principals, I singled out one teacher from each school, relying on their provision of the teachers' names and contact information. To ensure gender balance, I selected three male and three female teachers, as outlined in Table 4.2. In addition to gender, I considered the qualifications of the teachers, as these credentials can influence how participants utilise reading strategies. However, the factor of age was not considered in the selection process, given that my interaction with the teachers did not involve physical contact.

4.7.2 Learner participants

In contrast to the random sampling of teachers, the selection of learner participants followed a purposive sampling approach. This deliberate choice was made to target learners with specific qualities that could shed light on their reading strategies. Specifically, I chose the highest-performing and lowest-performing learners from each school, aiming to discern potential differences between these two groups. To achieve this, I adopted purposive sampling, a technique highlighted by Krippendorff (2018) and Shaheen and Pradhan (2019), which involves a deliberate selection process guided by research objectives.

Purposive sampling aligns participants with the research design and questions, allowing the researcher to exercise discretion in selecting the most appropriate individuals (Krippendorff, 2018). As Ayres (2018) suggests, this approach optimises insights from a limited population, leading to valuable research outcomes. Correspondingly, Sibona et al. (2020) emphasise that purposive sampling facilitates the collection of qualitative responses, leading to enriched data and more precise findings. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the potential drawback of researcher bias inherent in purposive sampling, where subjective judgement in participant selection could introduce bias to the results (Ayres, 2018).

The selection of these learners was driven by the recognition that distinct practices exist among high and low-performing readers, along with varied approaches to support

each learner group. The formulation of the main research question was designed to elicit rich information on the usage of reading strategies. Given that teachers play a pivotal role in guiding learners' reading development and understanding the challenges they encounter, the selection of learners was critical. Table 4.3 provides an overview of the learner participants included in this study.

Table 4.3: Sampled learners used in this study

Participants and sampling technique	¹Pseudonym	School A Gender	School B Gender	School C Gender	School D Gender	School E Gender	School F Gender
Focus group discussion with learners (Purposive sampling)	Learner 1	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
	Learner 2	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male
	Learner 3	Male	Female	Male	Male	Female	Male
	Learner 4	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female
	Learner 5	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male
	Learner 6	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female
	Learner 7	Male	Female	Male		Male	Male
	Learner 8	Male					Male

As depicted in Table 4.3, my original intention was to include a minimum of four poor readers and four high-performing learners from each school. Yet, due to the circumstances of the study being conducted during lockdown level 5, the number of learner participants varied across schools due to irregular school attendance. Given my inability to physically access school premises, I collaborated with teachers who assisted in the learner selection process. Because of these constraints, the final number of participants varied between schools. I entrusted the task of learner selection to teachers who had better access to the learners during these challenging times. This approach helped to ensure a diverse representation of learners despite the logistical challenges. Furthermore, to safeguard the anonymity of all participants, pseudonyms were employed when referring to both learners and teachers. Acknowledging the potential influence of gender on reading practices, I deliberately considered learners' gender during the selection process. This consideration stems from the understanding that gender might play a role in shaping the ways in which learners engage with

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¹Pseudonyms refers to a name someone uses instead of their real name, especially on a written work

reading activities. By accounting for this variable, the study aims to capture a more comprehensive view of the reading strategies employed by participants.

4.7.3 The CAPS document

The CAPS document, a significant South African policy framework for EFAL learners, provides specific guidelines on how language should be approached at different grade levels (DBE, 2011). This document outlines the learning objectives, expected competencies, and assessment criteria for learners. Teachers rely on the CAPS document to structure their teaching methodologies and curricular content, ensuring alignment with the stipulated grade-level requirements (DBE, 2011). For this study, the CAPS document served as a crucial reference point. It allowed me to corroborate the findings emerging from interviews conducted with both teachers and learners. By consulting the CAPS document, I verified which reading strategies and approaches were recommended for use in the reading process. This information played a pivotal role in enriching the data collected from Grade 10 EFAL classrooms, shedding light on content knowledge and the practical utilisation of reading strategies and approaches. The insights gained from consulting the CAPS document, in conjunction with the qualitative data gathered, enabled me to draw meaningful conclusions and formulate valuable recommendations for the study. This section of the research addressed the interplay between the study's findings and the official educational guidelines outlined in the CAPS document.

- Online semi-structured interview questions were distributed to six Grade 10 EFAL teachers to complete. The teachers were randomly selected from the 13-target population of teachers in the participation schools.
- The focus group discussion questions were sent to the teacher to help with the process of interviews since there was prior arrangement between the teacher and the researcher. I asked the teacher to select the learners and assist in the whole process of interviews.
- Owing to the COVID-19 regulations, I was prohibited from physically going to schools; Consequently, all meetings and data gathering procedures were carried out online. I aimed to conduct all the interviews face-to-face but because of the lockdown, physical contact was restricted.

- I emailed the school heads to request their permission to conduct the study and to choose the appropriate teachers.

4.8   Research instruments

Three research instruments were used to collect data for this study, namely, semi-semi-structured interview, focus group discussion, and document analysis. These three research instruments were used to answer each of the research questions. The following table shows the instruments and the specific research question:

Table 4.4: Research questions and instruments used in this study

Research question	Research instrument
What are the reading strategies and approaches used by Grade 10 EFAL teachers in the Bushbuckridge region when teaching reading comprehension?	Semi-structured interview schedule
What are the challenges experienced by Grade 10 EFAL teachers when implementing strategies and approaches for reading comprehension?	Focus group discussion schedule
Which reading strategies are stipulated in the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12?	Document analysis schedule

In this study, audio conferencing was employed as the method for conducting interviews. Traditional methods such as face-to-face and in-person interviews have been commonly used in qualitative research for data collection (Creswell, 2013; Gnanapragasam, Hariman, & Ventriglio, 2021; Hawkins, 2018). However, logistical challenges such as geographical dispersion, travel constraints, and limited research funding have prompted researchers and participants to explore cost-effective and convenient alternatives, like video conferencing (Gnanapragasam et al., 2021; Gray et al., 2020; Beriswill, 2018). One widely utilised platform for conducting qualitative interviews through audio conferencing is Zoom (Gray et al., 2020; Beriswill, 2018; Gnanapragasam et al., 2021). The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic led to unprecedented disruptions, including lockdown restrictions that compelled researchers to adapt their data collection methods (Nuryana, Pangarso, & Zain, 2021; Kappel et al., 2020; Beriswill, 2018). Originally, I had planned to conduct in-person interviews, but the prevailing lockdown regulations in South Africa during the pandemic made it unfeasible to meet participants physically. Consequently, I opted to use Zoom

to gather data from teachers, ensuring compliance with the lockdown restrictions. This approach allowed me to overcome the challenges posed by the pandemic and continue the research despite the unusual circumstances.

4.8.1 Semi-structured interviews scheduled with teachers
Semi-structured interviews emerged as the chosen method for data collection due to their widespread usage, adaptability, and versatility (Taylor, 2005; Burnard, 2005; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Described by Taylor (2005) as an interview technique involving predetermined themes, semi-structured interviews create a reciprocal dynamic between interviewers and participants (Kallio et al., 2016). This approach permits follow-up questions based on participant responses (Polit & Beck, 2010), while also allowing room for participants to articulate their thoughts in their own words. The semi-structured interview, especially useful for understanding opinions, experiences, and thoughts (Kallio et al., 2016), suits scenarios demanding probing questions (Easwaramoorthy & Zarinpoush, 2006). This approach enabled me to inquire about the study's problem and research question, affording participants the freedom to respond candidly. It also facilitated further exploration and clarification when needed.

However, like any data collection method, semi-structured interviews are not exempt from criticism. Striking a balance between structure and openness is imperative to prevent data collection from becoming overly formal or diverging from the study's focus (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Additionally, managing the capacity to probe, verify, and maintain participant engagement proves challenging (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Safeguarding participants' privacy and using their data responsibly is vital, underscoring the necessity of explicit consent (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). In the context of this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand the reading strategies employed by Grade 10 EFAL teachers to enhance their learners' reading comprehension. These interviews allowed me to explore how teachers at each participating school integrate reading strategies into their EFAL lessons. The interviews were scheduled during teachers' free periods within school hours, utilising Zoom audio conferencing to ensure convenience and minimal disruption. An interview schedule (Appendix A) guided discussion, which typically lasted between 40 to 60 minutes, providing teachers a platform to share their experiences and challenges

related to reading strategy implementation. By allowing teachers to choose a convenient time for the interviews, interruptions were minimised, and probing questions could be inserted to address points of interest.

To assess whether teachers used multiple strategies during their EFAL lessons, I employed a quantitative approach by counting the number of strategies selected by teachers in response to research question 3. This question prompted them to select strategies they employed from a list provided by the researcher. Teachers choosing fewer than three strategies were deemed non-practitioners of multiple strategies, while those selecting more than three were identified as practitioners of multiple reading strategies.

4.8.2 Focus group discussion scheduled with learners

A complementary data collection tool used in this study was focus group discussions (Appendix B). As outlined by Denscombe (2017), a focus group discussion brings together a small group of individuals, usually ranging between six and nine, convened by the researcher. According to Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, and Mukherjee (2017), focus group discussions are a qualitative technique commonly employed to explore social issues, including feelings, perceptions, and attitudes surrounding a particular topic. In this study, I conducted one focus group discussion with Grade 10 EFAL learners from each participating school, involving participants ranging from six to nine (Denscombe, 2017). The goal was to elicit insights into the learners' perceptions of reading strategy utilisation in EFAL learning. Focus group discussions create interactions among participants, allowing them to engage in dialogue about various teaching techniques and reflect on the posed questions, which often yield thought-provoking responses (Litchman, 2010). Notably, the distinguishing feature of focus group discussions in contrast to one-on-one interviews is that participants might express ideas and opinions that may not surface in individual interviews (Litchman, 2010).

To ensure an uninterrupted process, the focus group discussions were scheduled after the semi-structured interviews with teachers, conducted using Zoom conferencing after school hours. A discussion schedule (Appendix B) guided these discussions, which typically lasted between 40 to 60 minutes. The sequencing of focus group

discussions after the teacher interviews served to compare teachers' reported strategies with learners' perspectives on reading strategy implementation. This approach aimed to mitigate the 'interview effect,' where participants may tailor their responses to align with what they think the interviewer desires (Yin, 2014). By engaging in focus group discussions, learners' experiences and insights were discussed, highlighting potential biases from the teachers' interviews. By conducting both semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions at each participating school, a comprehensive picture emerged not only of individual teachers' strategies for teaching reading comprehension to Grade 10 EFAL learners but also of the reading culture and practices specific to each school. The focus group discussions took place on the same day as the individual teacher interviews, with teachers facilitating the arrangement of time and space for the group of learners to be interviewed, ensuring minimal disruption.

4.8.3 Document analysis schedule

The study employed document analysis of the EFAL curriculum policy document CAPS for Grades 10-12. According to Hall and Steiner (2020), document analysis is a method that involves the examination and evaluation of several types of existing documents as a data source. Bowen (2009) supports this perspective, defining documentary analysis as a process encompassing the identification, validation, and assessment of documents relevant to the subject of investigation. To complement this approach, I utilised the EFAL curriculum policy document for Grades 10 to 12 published by the DBE (2011), which is publicly accessible, along with the EFAL Grade 10 textbooks currently in use during EFAL lessons at the participating schools (see Appendix C).

This document analysis enabled me to develop a deeper understanding of the reading strategies implemented in Grade 10 EFAL classrooms to enhance learners' reading skills. This technique provided insights into the secondary questions, particularly focusing on the recommended or prescribed approaches for teaching reading comprehension to Grade 10 EFAL learners as outlined by CAPS. The analysis of these documents shed light on the efficacy of the subject and the reading comprehension skills taught in Grade 10 EFAL classrooms. These insights formed the foundational basis for the study's conclusions and recommendations.

4.9 Data analysis

Data analysis, as defined by Lester and Cho (2020), involves the process of collecting raw data, analysing the collected data, and subsequently interpreting the analysed data. Given the exploratory nature of this study, an exploratory data analysis approach was deemed appropriate. This approach aims to ensure accuracy in data interpretation (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:106). My analysis began by interpreting teachers' perceptions concerning the usage of reading strategies. Subsequently, I explored the learners' perspectives on the challenges associated with applying reading strategies in the learning-to-read process. Lastly, I analysed the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12, focusing on its statements related to reading, especially the employment of reading strategies. The data analysis process followed several stages. Immersion involved initially examining the data to form a basic impression. Then, a reflective process ensued, filtering the raw data to retain the most pertinent information for this study. Open coding was applied next, facilitating data comparison, analysis, conceptualisation, and categorisation. This approach allowed me to identify, analyse, question, and explore various data categories (O'Donoghue, 2007), resulting in the emergence of distinct patterns.

The data collection process for this study commenced with semi-structured interviews conducted with Grade 10 EFAL teachers from the selected schools. The interview questions were designed to illuminate the use of reading strategies and were informed by relevant literature. The thematic areas encompassed teachers' familiarity with reading strategies and their learners' challenges, particularly those tied to the application of reading strategies. After these interviews, focus group discussions were conducted with Grade 10 learners from the same schools. This served to validate findings from the teachers' interviews and provide additional insights into the hurdles learners face when using reading strategies during reading activities. Lastly, I analysed the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12, a process that entailed identifying pertinent content aligned with key themes.

4.10   Trustworthiness

Guba (1981) and Yin (2014) assert the paramount importance of establishing four key dimensions in qualitative research: transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability. These facets collectively underpin the concept of trustworthiness in a research endeavour. Within the framework of qualitative research methodology, trustworthiness assumes a central role, serving as a barometer of the research's excellence and fortifying the authenticity, significance, and trust in the study's results (Creswell, 2014; Daniel, 2019). The present study conscientiously upheld these fundamental criteria, solidifying its commitment to methodological rigor and the attainment of valid and reliable insights.

4.10.1 Credibility

The credibility of a study is enhanced by offering comprehensive descriptions of data analysis and assuring the authenticity of data sources collected from participants (Daniel, 2019). Triangulation is a fundamental practice in qualitative research for bolstering credibility (Cope, 2014). Triangulation involves the convergence of data from multiple sources to validate findings (Daniel, 2019). In this study, triangulation was achieved by employing multiple sources, including participants (teachers and learners) and curriculum documents. A variety of research methods were utilised, namely semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Triangulation provided a panoramic view of the application of teaching strategies in EFAL classrooms by amalgamating insights gathered through diverse techniques and sources. Yin (2014) emphasises that employing various data collection methods enhances the internal consistency of the data. To ensure the authenticity of the findings, participants were given the autonomy to decline participation, thereby ensuring that only those who willingly contributed their insights were included in this study.

4.10.2 Transferability

In qualitative research, the concept of transferability underscores the potential applicability of study findings to diverse settings or groups (Bitsch, 2005; Daniel, 2019). As Bitsch (2005: 77) aptly notes, the researcher assumes the role of a mediator, enhancing "A potential user's judgment of transferability" by furnishing comprehensive

descriptions and employing purposeful sampling strategies. The essence of transferability was distinctly observed in this study, as I diligently incorporated specific and detailed descriptions throughout the research process, in alignment with Li's (2004) recommendations. These elaborate descriptions serve as a resource that can be harnessed by fellow researchers seeking to undertake analogous studies in varying contexts. This meticulous attention to detail not only enriches the present study but also furnishes a scaffold upon which other scholars can build, enhancing the potential transferability of insights across diverse circumstances.

4.10.3 Dependability

In qualitative research, the absence of standardised measures necessitates an alternative avenue to establish the validity and authenticity of findings. This is where the concept of dependability comes into play, serving as a means to assure readers that the outcomes accurately mirror the intricacies of the research endeavour (Bleiker et al., 2019). Achieving dependability often involves the provision of comprehensive records that document the trajectory of the research process, a practice commonly known as an audit trail (Daniel, 2019). In this study, I meticulously employed an audit trail to strengthen the dependability of the findings. A key facet of this approach was the use of audio-conferencing, allowing for the audio recording of interviews and meticulous documentation of data extracted from the document analysis schedule. This meticulous documentation not only ensures the trustworthiness of the study but also enhances the dependability of the research outcomes by providing an auditable trail that captures the progression of data collection and analysis.

4.10.4 Confirmability

Confirmability within qualitative research underscores the imperative of maintaining objectivity and impartiality in the interpretation of data. It mandates that interpretations should be devoid of the researcher's inherent biases and instead be firmly grounded in the data collected (Kortjens & Moser, 2018). Addressing this aspect of confirmability is vital to ensure the integrity and credibility of the study's findings. A valuable technique to encourage confirmability, as suggested by Merriam (2014), is the utilisation of reflection diaries. These diaries serve to contemporaneously document the research process, capturing reflections and insights as the study unfolds. In line with this, to enhance confirmability in this study, I meticulously maintained detailed

notes during conducting interviews. These notes served to differentiate my personal perspectives from those of the participants, thereby preventing any undue influence of my own biases on the interpretation of data. By relying on these diligent records, I was able to navigate the study with a heightened sense of organisation and neutrality, thus reinforcing the confirmability of the research outcomes. The use of these notes as a means of self-audit ensures that the findings stand as authentic representations of the participants' perspectives and experiences, thereby solidifying the study's credibility and the trustworthiness of its interpretations.

4.10.5 Validity

Validity, as articulated by Babbie (2008) and Choy (2014), resides in the capacity of empirical measures to faithfully encapsulate the intended concept they seek to quantify. To achieve this essential attribute of validity, FitzPatrick (2019) underscores the importance of employing research tools that precisely capture the constructs they are designed to assess. By embracing a multiplicity of tools, I fortified the validity of this study's findings and ensured the accuracy of the collected data. In pursuit of enhancing the validity of the research outcomes, a strategic selection of instruments was employed. Three distinct methodologies – email semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis schedules – collectively contributed to the comprehensive acquisition of data. It is important to note that this study's overarching objective was to elicit the diverse viewpoints of participants. In this light, the triad of instruments employed was chosen with a deliberate intention to seamlessly achieve this objective. By harnessing the synergistic power of these varied tools, the study's validity was fortified on multiple fronts. The diversity of approaches allowed for a holistic exploration of the research question, accommodating the multifaceted nature of participants' perspectives. This methodological richness further concretised the validity of the research findings, affirming that the study's conclusions were genuinely rooted in the experiential insights of the participants.

4.11   Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations in research serve a dual purpose. It enhances the study's quality while safeguarding the well-being of participants (Kyngäs, Kääriäinen, & Elo, 2020). While informed consent has traditionally been the cornerstone of ethical

research, contemporary ethical practice entails providing participants with comprehensive information, including study background, significance, and necessary details beyond mere consent (Yin, 2014). Participants were informed of their voluntary participation and the freedom to withdraw without repercussions. Beyond this, several other ethical aspects were thoughtfully observed and adhered to.

Recognising my ethical duty to safeguard participants' privacy and confidentiality, I ensured that sensitive information shared by participants remained anonymous and protected. Participants' private spaces were respected, and I outlined the study's purpose and expected outcomes transparently. Privacy was upheld by allowing participants to turn off their video during recordings and by using coded identifiers to ensure confidentiality (Gray, Wong-wylie, Rampel, & Cook, 2020).

Permission to collect information from both learners and teachers was formally granted by school principals and the Mpumalanga Department of Education (Appendix G). Furthermore, parental consent was obtained for learners aged between 10 to 16, aligning with ethical guidelines (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, the Unisa Research Ethics Committee provided formal ethical approval for the study to be conducted (Appendix J). These stringent measures were taken to ensure that the research was carried out ethically and responsibly, prioritising the well-being and rights of all participants involved.

4.12   Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, I explored the methodological framework employed in this research, centered around a qualitative approach and a case study design. The chapter commenced by providing an overview of its contents to guide readers. Subsequently, I detailed pivotal aspects of the research methodology, including the formulation of key research questions, the selection of a research paradigm, and a comprehensive exploration of the researcher's positionality and identity within the study. The chapter also encompassed a meticulous description of the targeted population and the rationale behind the selected sample size, with a table offering a concise summary of the participant criteria. The fundamental matter of trustworthiness was given due consideration. Notably, the chapter discussed crucial elements that ensure the

robustness of qualitative research, encompassing credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and validity. Additionally, the chapter explored the measures undertaken to uphold ethical standards throughout the study. The focus was on confidentiality and informed consent, both of which are pivotal for safeguarding participants' rights and well-being. The study was unequivocal in its commitment to strictly adhere to Unisa's ethical guidelines and practices. As the chapter concluded, it paved the way for the subsequent chapter to explore the findings gleaned from this comprehensive research endeavour, shedding light on the valuable insights and discoveries that emerged from the data collected and analysed.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS ON READING STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES USED BY GRADE 10 EFAL TEACHERS IN THEIR CLASSROOMS

"Once you learn to read, you will be forever free."

– Frederick Douglass

5.1   Introduction

In Chapter 4, the research methods employed in this study, specifically a qualitative approach, were thoroughly examined. This chapter serves to encapsulate, dissect, and deliberate upon the outcomes derived from the qualitative data collected through interviews with teachers, focus group discussions with learners, and the analysis of CAPS documents. Researchers have previously explored reading strategies and approaches across diverse contexts. Their consensus underscores that within the EFAL setting, both teachers and learners encounter a plethora of challenges in effectively employing reading strategies during the reading instruction and learning process (Brevik, 2019; Klapwijk, 2015; Olifant, Cekiso & Rautenbach, 2019; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). Within this chapter, I present and analyse the findings gleaned from the semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and analysis of pertinent documents. The following were the research questions for the study:

- What are the reading strategies and approaches used by Grade 10 EFAL teachers in the Bushbuckridge region when teaching reading comprehension?
- What are the challenges experienced by Grade 10 EFAL teachers and learners when implementing strategies and approaches for reading comprehension?
- Which reading strategies are stipulated in the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12?

Since this study is aligned with Rumelhart's (1980) and Emmott and Alexander's (2014) schema theory, the current chapter is guided by this pertinent theory which was discussed in the theoretical framework (Chapter 3):
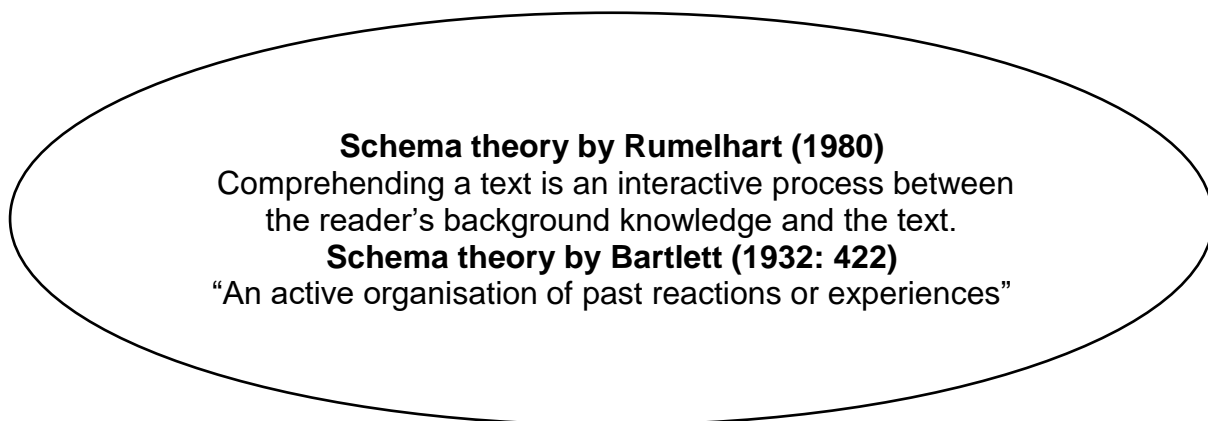
Figure 5.1: Critical points from the theoretical framework

The primary focus of this chapter centers around two prominent theorists outlined in Figure 5.1. As elucidated in Chapter 3, Rumelhart (1980) characterises schema as "a data structure for representing the generic concepts stored in memory" (An, 2013:47). This concept is foundational to schema theory, positing that written language lacks inherent meaning and instead directs readers to derive significance from their preexisting knowledge. This reservoir of prior knowledge is referred to as readers' background knowledge (schema), comprising cognitive frameworks known as schemata (Bartlett, 1932). Consequently, both these language learning theorists converge in their concern for the utilisation of prior knowledge to construct meaning from textual content, as well as in recognising the interplay between context, cultural background, and meaning extraction from written text.

Throughout the preceding chapters of this study, the significance of leveraging learners' background knowledge (schema) to augment reading comprehension has been underscored. Scholarly works by Bharuthram (2017), Chaka (2015), Olifant, Cekiso & Rautenbach (2019), and Pretorius (2004) have collectively demonstrated that many teachers lack the requisite skills to effectively implement reading comprehension strategies. To understand the underlying causes of this issue, this chapter explores a case study account detailing the application of reading strategies by teachers during reading instruction, while concurrently exploring challenges encountered throughout the teaching and learning process. The chapter further explores learners' difficulties in employing effective reading strategies to enhance their reading comprehension. Employing a case study approach expounds the actual

pedagogical practices of both teachers and learners in reading, elucidating how the deployment of reading strategies stimulates EFAL learning. A discourse on teachers' knowledge and practices aims to ascertain whether teachers' awareness of reading strategies influences learners' reading development. Furthermore, I contend that for learners to proficiently apply reading strategies, teachers must possess a comprehensive grasp of how to deploy these strategies adeptly within the reading process. Collectively, these insights illuminate the crucial role of reading strategies in advancing learners' reading comprehension and explore whether external factors like learners' exposure to English in their social milieu influence their academic progress.

The chapter is structured into three distinct sections. The first section examines the findings drawn from the semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers. This section is pivotal, as it directly addresses the first research question of this study: "What are the reading strategies and approaches employed by Grade 10 EFAL teachers in the Bushbuckridge region when instructing reading comprehension" In the subsequent section, I elucidate the focus group discussion tailored for learners, a research instrument designed to tackle the second research question: probing the impediments encountered when implementing reading strategies in the instruction of reading to Grade 10 EFAL learners. The third section engages with the CAPS document, scrutinising its contents through a specific lens—reading strategies. This is of particular importance, as it corroborates participants' perspectives with data gleaned from the official curriculum documents. The second and final sections collectively underscore my central assertion: the explicit teaching of reading strategies is indispensable. They also underscore the challenges confronted by both teachers and learners in employing these strategies during the reading process. Next, I discuss insights garnered from the semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers.

5.2 Findings from the semi-structured interviews

The first research question was addressed by the following semi-structured interview questions illustrated in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Semi-structured interview questions posed to teachers

Research instrument	Research questions posed to teachers
Semi-structured interview schedule for teachers	1. Describe your philosophy about reading comprehension strategies and or approaches, how you define it, and how you implement it. 2. From the list below, choose three (2-5) strategies which you are most likely to use while teaching reading comprehension. A) Generating and asking questions B) Making predictions C) Summarising D) Using learners' background knowledge E) Making Inferences F) Comprehension monitoring G) Visualisation 3. Explain the reason for your choice of each strategy. What is your perception regarding your learners' abilities to read with comprehension? 4. Which method do your learners seem to understand the most when teaching reading comprehension? Explain.

The information obtained from the semi-structured interview questions has produced the following themes, which will be addressed next:

- Teachers' understandings of effective reading strategies;
- Reading strategies used by teachers during the reading process;
- Teachers' preferences of strategy use; and,
- Teachers' perceptions of their learners' abilities to read for meaning making.

5.2.1 Teachers' understandings of effective reading strategies

Scholars advocate for the integration of reading strategies within the teaching and learning process, asserting that such incorporation significantly enhances the reading comprehension abilities of EFAL learners—skills paramount to academic achievement (Brevik, 2019; Cekiso, 2012; Chaka, 2015; Zano, 2020). While strategies and approaches for bolstering reading comprehension hold importance across the educational spectrum, their significance is particularly pronounced for EFAL learners (Coffi, 2017). Consequently, EFAL teachers must possess an in-depth understanding of these strategies and approaches. It is intriguing to observe that virtually all participants in the semi-structured interviews expressed a grasp of the strategies requisite for instructing reading comprehension and affirmed their usage within their teaching and learning pedagogies (EFAL Teacher 1, EFAL Teacher 2, EFAL Teacher

3, EFAL Teacher 5, and EFAL Teacher 6, 2021, online semi-structured interviews). When probed to elaborate on their comprehension of teaching strategies, their responses yielded insights such as:

> Reading strategies refer to the method or approaches you use in a classroom to make learners understand what they are reading and be able to respond to the questions that is being asked. I use different strategies depending on the learners' need, I need to check which method best suit my learners because they are not the same… (Teacher 1, 2021, semi-structured interviews).

> Reading strategies are skills teachers use to teach learners reading comprehension. Given that we teach English as a FAL I must make sure that I read the comprehension before in to make summaries for the learners, ask them questions to see if they understand what we are reading… (Teacher 3, 2021, semi-structured interviews).

> Reading strategies can be described as actions that a teacher makes to help learners make meaning of what they read. Generally, learners come from different backgrounds; so, it is the teachers' responsibility to make sure that they follow as the engage a reading text I use strategies such as skimming and scanning and reading the comprehension three times (Teacher 4, 2021, semi structured interviews).

> Reading strategies are creative skills which a teacher uses to approach a reading comprehension task. I normally start my lesson by asking learners questions about the topic of the reading comprehension we must read. I introduce them before the actual reading so that it becomes easy when we start reading the passage (Teacher 5, 2021, semi-structured interviews).

> Reading strategies are pre-reading and post reading strategies that we use when we teach. I use pre-reading strategies and also post reading strategies, for example, I can use pre-reading strategies to introduce the lesson and ask questions and see if learners are familiar with the text. (Teacher 5, 2021, semi-structured interviews).

The responses provided by EFAL teachers in the study reveal a prevalent comprehension of the purpose behind employing reading strategies and approaches to enhance reading comprehension. Many respondents emphasised that reading strategies play a pivotal role in aiding their learners' comprehension of reading texts. Furthermore, the definitions articulated by these teachers underscore their grasp of the essence of reading strategies. They indicated that strategies are methodologies wielded by teachers to facilitate reading instruction. However, an underlying concern surfaces regarding the lack of solid theoretical underpinnings accompanying the utilisation of reading strategies (Zimmerman, 1998).

These findings resonate with the conclusions drawn from a study conducted by Maite et al. (2022), which scrutinised the challenges encountered by Grade 11 EFAL teachers across certain South African schools within the Limpopo province. This investigation illuminates that a significant portion of the challenges faced by teachers stems from inadequate training in the application of reading strategies, coupled with difficulties in correctly interpreting the policy document governing the usage of these strategies. For instance, while numerous teachers acknowledged the diversity amongst learners, with varying needs necessitating distinct strategies, none of them explicitly outlined which strategy is tailored to accommodate each specific learner. This discordance between explanations and practice contradicts the assertions made by several teachers. For instance, Teacher 1 mentioned, "I use different strategies depending on the learners' needs, I need to check which method best suits my learners because they are not the same..." Despite this statement, the precise differentiation among learners and the exact methods suitable for each remains unclear. This implies that while teachers possess a general awareness of reading strategies, a comprehensive understanding of their nuanced applications appears lacking. This deficiency could potentially be attributed to the dearth of comprehensive training (Maite et al., 2022).

The existing literature examined in the context of this study points to a deficiency in teachers' comprehensive understanding of reading strategies (Brevik, 2019; Madikiza et al., 2020; Olifant et al., 2020; Zano, 2020). Madikiza et al. (2020) underscore that a considerable number of EFAL teachers within South African secondary/ high schools struggle to implement the critical reading skills requisite for enhancing learners' reading comprehension. Building on this, Brevik (2019) and Zano (2018) attest that many South African teachers lack a thorough grasp of reading comprehension strategies. This paucity of robust understanding precipitates a substantial challenge, as some teachers remain unaware of the essence of teaching strategies and how to effectively integrate them into their instructional practices. Consequently, learners find themselves lacking the necessary reading prowess to excel academically.

Compounding the issue, Madikiza et al. (2020) and Zano (2020) expounds that teachers' inadequate grasp of reading strategies leads them to rely solely on the strategies they feel more comfortable with, thereby severely restricting learners'

exposure to a diverse array of reading strategies. This predicament is concerning since certain teachers lean exclusively on traditional reading methods that do not actively aid readers in comprehension. For instance, Teacher 3 resorts to creating summaries for learners, inadvertently depriving them of the opportunity to actively engage with the reading material. Furthermore, the role of teachers should ideally transition towards that of facilitators in the learning process, encouraging an environment where reading becomes learner-centered as opposed to teacher-centered.

Consequently, it becomes evident that equipping EFAL teachers with substantial knowledge of implementing reading strategies takes on paramount importance. Language practitioners are tasked with this responsibility, aiming to enhance the reading comprehension capabilities of EFAL learners. An intriguing avenue to explore would be the explicit strategies employed by EFAL teachers to guide Grade 10 learners in the adept application of reading strategies, thereby enriching their reading comprehension abilities. Upon examining the preceding responses, it becomes apparent that while teachers possess a certain level of familiarity with reading strategies, they lack the underlying theoretical knowledge pertaining to the reading process (Zimmerman, 1998). As previously indicated, the definitions provided by most teachers do indicate an awareness of reading strategies; however, their explanations thereof expose a deficiency in theoretical understanding. Notably, many teachers do not address the active interaction between learners and the text. Instead, they tend to assume the primary role in engaging with the text. This effectively translates into a teacher-centered learning process, which departs from the ideal of a learner-centered approach. This is a challenge as An (2013: 52) explains

> In a teacher-centered learning environment, the teacher functions in the familiar role of classroom lecturer, presenting information to the students, who are expected to passively receive the knowledge being presented. This may be considered the more traditional or conventional approach to education.

Schema theory stands as a cornerstone in language teaching and learning. Rooted in the insights of Bartlett (1932) and Rumelhart (1980) it elucidates how readers harness their pre-existing knowledge to derive meaning from textual content. Moreover, schema theory posits that text comprehension is a dynamic interplay between the written material and the reader's reservoir of prior knowledge. Carrell and Eisterhold

(1988) emphasise that this schema framework births two pivotal information processing models: bottom-up and top-down processing. In essence, readers necessitate both 'word' knowledge (bottom-up) and comprehension of the text (top-down) to effectively engage in the reading process.

Examining Teacher 4's response, "Generally, learners come from different backgrounds, so it is the teachers' responsibility to ensure their comprehension as they engage with a reading text." This insight underscores the variability among learners; some exhibit adeptness in reading, possessing word and text knowledge, while others grapple with reading, lacking the capacity to decipher the text. Although the teacher seems cognisant of potential reading difficulties, the inadequacy of the explanation could hinder their ability to tailor assistance according to individual needs. Similarly, another teacher articulates, "I typically initiate my lessons by querying learners about the subject of the impending reading comprehension. I introduce them to the topic before commencing the actual reading, making the process smoother when we read the passage" (Teacher 3, 2021, semi-structured interviews). As discussed in Chapter 3: 3.4, proficient readers harness their existing knowledge and experiences to extract meaning from the text. Conversely, struggling readers tend to laboriously decipher each word, progressing sluggishly due to their inability to anticipate content and employ their prior knowledge for comprehension (Ali & Razali, 2019; Rayner et al., 2016). While this approach may suit adept readers, it poses a challenge for struggling readers who grapple with text interpretation. The dominant theme emerging from this section is that the strategies often employed by South African teachers, such as leveraging background knowledge, prediction-making, and question-and-answer techniques, might not optimally benefit the majority of learners who happen to be struggling readers (Erasmus, 2022; Zano, 2022). This underscores the imperative of a symbiotic interaction between bottom-up and top-down processing. In practice, teachers should prioritise assisting learners with word recognition before embarking on the intricate endeavour of text interpretation.

5.2.2 Reading strategies used by teachers during the reading process
Teacher participants were requested to choose any reading strategy/strategies from the list provided by the researcher to check which strategy/strategies is/are most likely

to be used in the Grade 10 EFAL classroom. The number of strategies used by individual teachers varied. Table 5.2 illustrates the strategies chosen by each teacher.

Table 5.2: Strategies used by individual teachers

Teacher	Reading strategies used by individual teachers						
	Background knowledge	Summary	Question and answer	Making inference	Comprehension monitoring	Prediction	Visualising
Teacher 1	X	X	X				X
Teacher 2		X	X		X		
Teacher 3	X	X	X				
Teacher 4	X	X			X		
Teacher 5		X	X			X	
Teacher 6	X	X	X				

In analysing Table 5.2, it becomes evident that most teachers integrate learners' background knowledge to amplify reading comprehension. Nevertheless, the infrequent utilisation or outright neglect of prediction-making and inference-drawing strategies is noteworthy. This omission is disconcerting as these two strategies are widely acknowledged as pivotal higher-order reading techniques (Bailey, 2019). The table distinctly illustrates that summarisation is a favoured approach among most teachers to augment learners' reading comprehension. Brown (1992) postulates that the instruction of summarisation should be scaffolded, progressively transferring the responsibility to learners so they can eventually craft their summaries. The responses from teachers, as discussed earlier, prompt an intriguing inquiry into how the strategy of summarisation is executed within the classroom.

Another noteworthy revelation from the findings is that teachers employ a limited array of strategies, with a substantial number indicating the use of only two to three reading strategies. This constraint poses a challenge, impeding learners from exploring a

broader spectrum of reading strategies, a concern previously discussed in the literature review of this study (see Chapter 2). Schema theory, as a foundational premise, posits that textual meaning is not intrinsically carried within the written words. It is the learner's prerogative to construe interpretations and establish connections with the text. Recent research underscores the pivotal role played by reading strategy development in the reading proficiency of EFAL learners (Karimi & Hosseini, 2019; Rautenbach, Olifant & Cekiso, 2019). The employment of reading strategies has proven instrumental in linking printed text to meaning. Karimi and Hosseini (2019) assert that while all learners benefit from strategies that enhance both decoding and comprehension, these strategies hold particular significance for struggling readers. This assertion potentially resonates strongly with Grade 10 EFAL learners in Bushbuckridge, where many of them converse in languages other than English at home, limiting their opportunities for engagement with the target language beyond the school environment. Throughout the study, teachers consistently view reading strategies as integral components of reading development. Consequently, an exploration into teachers' rationale behind their selection of specific strategies becomes imperative. In the subsequent section, I investigate the factors influencing teachers' choices of reading strategies.

5.2.3 Teachers' preferences of strategy use

Teachers were prompted to provide justifications for their selection of each reading strategy. This inquiry aimed to understand the underlying rationale guiding the preference for specific strategies. The goal was to discern whether teachers' strategy choices were driven by a belief in the efficacy of one approach over others, or if ease of application played a pivotal role in their selection. Moreover, an additional objective was to gauge teachers' cognisance of the advantages inherent in employing multiple strategies during the reading process. As previously highlighted, teachers ascribe value to the utilisation of diverse reading strategies. However, certain responses from teachers suggest a dearth in the theoretical underpinnings of strategy selection. Consequently, a predilection for strategies may inadvertently restrict learners from engaging with a wide spectrum of techniques. For example,

> I prefer the strategy of giving a summary of the comprehension passage we have to read. My learners seem to understand the most when I provide them with summary of what we have to read because this is where I am most likely to receive positive feedback from my learners (Teacher 3, 2021 semi-structured interviews).

Another two teachers added:

> Most of the time I use background knowledge of the learners to check their knowledge of the topic. Also, this strategy allows me to generate and ask questions to see if they understand what we are reading about. I also like using comprehension monitoring to check if learners understand or they just make noise while we are reading (Teacher 1, 2021, semi-structured interviews).

> I use different strategies because learners understand different strategies. Let me take the example that I use in Grade 8 but can work also in Grade 10. First, I use generating and asking questions, this one I use previously about the cheetah, its lifestyle and how it runs, so when I generate and ask questions, is to check how much they know, they might be familiar with the topic since they stay close to Kruger. They may be familiar with the life of animals (Teacher 5, 2021 semi-structured interviews).

The responses underscore an inclination among teachers to favour specific strategies while inadvertently constraining learners' exposure to a broader array of reading techniques. Researchers widely concur that the gap between a reader's existing knowledge and the information embedded in the text can be bridged by providing a range of reading strategies (Kyler, 2020; Nurie, 2017; Zano, 2020). Zano (2020) specifically emphasises that South African teachers exhibit a deficit in their grasp of reading strategies. This poses a significant predicament, as some teachers possess limited familiarity with these strategies and consequently fail to incorporate them into their teaching practices. Consequently, learners struggle to cultivate the necessary reading skills essential for academic achievement. In the same vein, Madikiza et al. (2020) argue that numerous EFAL teachers in South Africa not only grapple with comprehending certain reading strategies but also resort to adopting only those strategies they are comfortable with, thereby severely restricting learners from exploring alternative methods. The study revealed instances where teachers solely employed conventional reading strategies that offered little aid in comprehending the reading material.

Parallel to the findings of the present study, it is evident from teachers' responses that some strategies are chosen primarily for their ease of application, often catering to proficient readers. For instance, Teacher 1 employs a single strategy—summarisation. However, the way this strategy is implemented leans toward a teacher-centered approach, contradicting the principles of learner-centered language learning (Brevik, 2019; Zano, 2022). Furthermore, within the same response, certain implicit strategies

are used, though they are not explicitly recognised as reading strategies. For instance, when she states, "this strategy allows me to generate and ask questions to see if they understand what we are reading about," the implication is the usage of prediction-making. This nuanced understanding hints at a partial awareness of reading strategies, albeit incomplete comprehension of their scope. The literature reviewed in the context of this study consistently underscores teachers' lack of theoretical comprehension concerning strategy employment (Olifant et al., 2019; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016; Rule & Land, 2017; Zimmerman, 2014). Zano (2020) further contends that the choice of a reading strategy hinges on the needs of both teachers and learners. He maintains that gauging the consistency of strategy application remains challenging due to the absence of definitive indicators pinpointing when a particular strategy is being employed. Considering the schema theory, which underpins this study, active engagement of the reader with the text is advocated through the application of reading strategies by teachers. However, the teachers' responses above suggest a lack of clarity in the selection of reading strategies, resulting in a diminished promotion of active reader-text engagement. Instead, teachers tend to assume the dominant role in the reading process. This deviation from schema theory's guidelines is concerning, as the theory emphasises that to accommodate both struggling and proficient readers, the interaction between lower-order skills (like word recognition) and higher-order skills (such as prediction-making and employing background knowledge) is essential to enhance learners' capacities to derive meaning from the text.

I probed teachers to elucidate the rationale behind their selection of specific reading strategies. This inquiry aimed to reveal potential challenges that teachers might encounter when implementing reading strategies. Responses from other teachers unveiled that the issue of overcrowded classrooms hampers the seamless integration of a diverse range of reading strategies. For example,

> All thanks to COVID, but normally our school will have a class of about 70-80 learners and at the end of the day one will have to produce good results. We are talking about only Grade 8, which has 400 learners, and one teacher must teach across the Grade. We are only six teachers, our school has 1600 overall, so it is only 6 of us in the English department" (Teacher 3, 2021, semi-structured interviews).

Another two teachers added:

> And one other thing is because of our high enrolment in our schools, you are unable to focus on which type of learners who have difficulty in reading because you can't even move in between the desks in grades 8, 9 and also Grade 10; yes, classes are overcrowded (Teacher 1, 2021, semi-structured interviews).

> You know sir actually is hard in our schools, the classes are fully packed very difficult for one to even know the names of the learners (Teacher 5, 2021, semi-structured interviews).

The observations underscore that teachers grapple with challenges arising from the issue of overcrowded classrooms. Responses from teachers explicitly indicate the difficulty in implementing certain reading strategies, such as tailoring approaches to individual learners' backgrounds. This suggests that some impediments to the usage of strategies stem from factors beyond teachers' control. Overcrowded classrooms, a recurring theme in the literature underpinning this study, have been identified as a significant contributor to learners' subpar academic performance (Caddy, 2015; Linake & Mokhele, 2019; Mabasa & Lumadi, 2016). Moreover, Meier and West (2020) contend that teacher shortages and inadequate school facilities compound the challenges. It makes sense that employing comprehensive reading strategies becomes an arduous task within overcrowded classrooms, as previously discussed in Chapter 2. The DBE must extend support under such strenuous circumstances. The learning environment, in which teaching takes place, plays an instrumental role in shaping academic success. Hence, the DBE's intervention becomes critical to mitigate the challenges posed by these adverse conditions.

Another salient reason inhibiting the diversification of reading strategies lies in time constraints. The findings underscore that time limitations serve as a major impediment for numerous teachers, hindering their effective implementation of strategies designed to enhance reading development. Teachers articulated their concerns as follows:

> I am unable to assist learners as I wish because I have to run with the ATP (Annual teaching plan) run with the activities that are expected of me, I must correct, I enter marks to SA- SAMS (South African School Administration and Management System), even the year has been shortened, learners are coming this week, the next week they are not in, in fact, there is a content gap (Teacher 6, 2021, semi-structured interviews).

> Look at the time now, we don't have the learners every day, so sometimes is just a rush thing, you find that most of the time it is just touch and go is not easy to apply all the reading strategies (Teacher 1, 2021, semi-structured interviews).

The insights gleaned from the above responses unveil a disconcerting trend: teachers' strategy selection often caters more to the expedient completion of the syllabus than to the potential benefits of enhancing learners' reading comprehension. This indicates a deficiency in teachers' comprehensive understanding of the nuanced use of reading strategies and approaches. Unfortunately, the value placed on time appears to outweigh the prioritisation of active reader-text engagement. This shift in focus has the potential to cast a negative pall over learners' academic achievements, impeding their ability to effectively apply reading strategies throughout their learning-to-read journey. These viewpoints further corroborate Owen and Mantlana's (2017) contention that time constraints can serve as a contributory factor to the scant implementation of strategies in many EFAL classrooms. The sentiments voiced in this section collectively signal a sense of dissatisfaction among teachers. Yet, when teachers are unable to dedicate ample time to teaching reading, the activation of schemas to aid learners in mastering the art of information retention becomes a formidable challenge. Wilkinson and Son's (2011: 367) assert "[t]eaching strategies can take several years for teachers to learn to do well, requires a considerable amount of classroom time and may conflict with [teachers'] prior beliefs and practices." This underscores the gravity of this issue, emphasising the critical role of adequate time allocation in facilitating comprehensive learning outcomes. It is imperative to underscore the fact that a rushed approach to covering the syllabus may inadvertently undermine the holistic development of learners' reading capabilities, potentially hampering their academic progress.

The existing literature underscores a concern that many EFAL teachers struggle with the adept use of effective strategies (Al-Meklafi, 2018; McNamara, 2011). McNamara (2011) contends that the skillful application of reading strategies is a multifaceted endeavour that necessitates comprehensive and detailed instruction. This resonates with the findings articulated in the preceding sections, wherein teachers express a value for reading strategies, yet simultaneously reveal a deficit in their theoretical understanding of their application. Consequently, it becomes evident that the driving force behind teachers' strategy selection revolves around fulfilling their task obligations.

This study contends that to cultivate a robust grasp of reading strategies, teachers need dedicated training in the proficient usage of effective strategies. The findings presented to align with the literature explored within this study, which underscores teachers' inclination to favour certain strategies over others (Ali & Razali, 2019; Zano, 2020). To explore the ramifications of employing a limited number of strategies, I explored further into teachers' experiences concerning their learners' reading capabilities. This examination sought to uncover teachers' perceptions of their learners' reading abilities, offering a more comprehensive perspective on the outcomes of their chosen strategies. Next, I turn my attention to teachers' perceptions of their learners' reading abilities.

5.2.4 Teachers' perceptions of their learners' abilities to read for meaning making

To assess teachers' grasp of their Grade 10 EFAL learners' reading abilities, I inquired about their perceptions regarding their learners' capacities to read for comprehension. This line of questioning aimed to ascertain whether teachers are attuned to contemporary challenges related to reading within the EFAL context. To this end, I posed queries centered around learners' aptitude for reading with genuine comprehension. Aligned with one of the core arguments of this study, which posits that a written text does not inherently convey meaning, I sought to discern teachers' awareness of the necessity to impart effective reading strategies vital for encouraging comprehension development. The responses provided by teachers shed light on their comprehension of their learners' reading capabilities. A considerable proportion of teachers indicated that their learners struggle to independently read and comprehend comprehension passages. The following responses exemplify some of the voices articulated by participating teachers:

> It is not easy for them to understand what they are reading on their own, they have a language barrier. Understanding what they are reading is a problem because they can't respond if they don't understand (Teacher 1, 2021, semi-structured interviews).

> There are those learners who cannot read at all, for instance, when they come across a difficult word, those are the challenges (Teacher 3, 2021, semi-structured interviews).

> We have Grade 12 learners who just can't understand anything (Teacher 4, 2021, semi-structured interviews).

> Certain words are alien to them, you find them struggle to pronounce it, immediately when they come across such words, they get stuck (Teacher 5, 2021, semi-structured interviews).

The responses offer a diverse range of insights, collectively shedding light on the challenges teachers encounter when assisting learners in comprehending text. Of paramount significance, the responses underscore the intricate nature of encouraging reading for meaningful understanding among the majority of EFAL learners. This correlation resonates strongly with the foundational premise of schema theory (Rumelhart, 1983), asserting that a written text lacks inherent meaning and instead necessitates active engagement between the learner, the text, and the author to derive significance. In this regard, teachers are urged to prioritise strategies that facilitate learners' interactions with the text, creating a dynamic process of meaning construction.

Furthermore, the integration of bottom-up and top-down processing should be a focal point for teachers, necessitating clear communication of the cognitive processes involved during reading. As previously elucidated in Chapter 3, the effective usage of reading strategies is not an automatic procedure. This underscores the pivotal role of reading comprehension strategies as essential skills for enhancing EFAL learners' comprehension abilities. Caddy (2015) aptly underscores that reading is a demanding task, requiring the adept use of a diverse repertoire of reading strategies. Hence, the instruction of these strategies becomes an indispensable facet of nurturing EFAL learners' reading proficiencies (Amin, 2019; Ali & Razali, 2019; Haerazi, Priyati & Vikasari, 2019). Exposing learners to a range of reading strategies serves to elevate their reading proficiencies by empowering them to deploy strategies effectively in deciphering written content. Song (1998) concurs, emphasising the need for explicit instruction in reading strategies in second language (L2) reading contexts. The studies concur that strategies for reading comprehension are pivotal, underlining the necessity for teachers to undergo dedicated training in these strategies.

It is worth noting that many of the cited studies were conducted within EFAL contexts, mirroring the English-as-a-first language (FAL) landscape within Bushbuckridge. Consequently, the strategic utilisation of reading strategies holds exceptional importance for South African learners.

While some teachers assert that guiding learners to identify keywords allows them to independently generate summaries, implying comprehension, a significant majority opine that they must first create summaries for learners before meaningful comprehension can take place. When probed about the strategies learners seem to grasp most effectively, teachers' responses encapsulate the following viewpoints:

> I think they understand the strategy of generating and asking questions because that's where they tend to see where they don't know, how they don't understand, it is the one that gives them the idea whether they know what they are reading about (Teacher 5, 2021, semi-structured interviews).

> I think is the reading method question and answer method when you are reading to them, then you ask questions to them, they can simply understand it better orally, learners like oral questions that when to read on their own, when I read in front of them orally so ask questions, they understand it better (Teacher 4, 2021, semi-structured interviews).

From the above responses, it is evident that teachers recognise the reading comprehension challenges their learners face. However, they appear uncertain about the most effective ways to address these challenges. This uncertainty is exemplified by the response of Teacher 5, who relies on questioning learners to assess their understanding. Although this method serves to adjust teaching, it often falls short of prompting meaningful improvement in learners' understanding. Instead, learners tend to wait for the teacher to provide further explanations, assuming that they cannot grasp the material independently. This tendency to conflate reading difficulties with language issues is a recurring theme, echoing prior research findings (Bharuthram, 2017; Rule & Land, 2017).

This alignment with existing literature underlines the core issue affecting South Africa's literacy levels – learners' struggles in reading for meaning (Bharuthram, 2017; Rule & Land, 2017). The inadequacy of reading skills among South African EFAL learners underscores the challenge faced by Grade 10 EFAL teachers: a lack of comprehensive knowledge of effective reading strategies to enhance learners' reading comprehension. The responses collected suggest that the assistance provided by teachers often fails to engage learners actively with the text. While Teacher 5's approach to questioning learners' comprehension is theoretically sound (Caddy, 2016; McEwan, 2004), it lacks clear guidance on how learners are supported when they struggle to understand the text.

Schema theory further emphasises that not all schemas are readily accessible in learners' memories. Therefore, teachers must be prepared to activate or construct new schemas as needed (Hermosa, 2011). Moreover, employing question-and-answer methods to assess background knowledge primarily benefits proficient readers with both decoding skills and text knowledge. However, struggling readers, often described as 'word bound,' face the challenge of comprehending words in isolation. Consequently, teachers need to design activities that aid these learners in decoding the text. Despite teachers' best efforts, the approach to reading presents a challenge, as it struggles to cater effectively to the diverse needs of all learners simultaneously.

In summary, while teachers exhibit awareness of learners' reading difficulties to a certain extent, they lack comprehensive knowledge of effective reading strategies and their proper implementation. This points to a need for thorough training in reading instruction, particularly the use of diverse strategies, to enhance learners' reading comprehension and address the prevalent challenges in EFAL education. The following points, as perceived by teachers, are identified as hindrances to the successful implementation of reading strategies:

- Most teachers mentioned their use of various reading strategies to improve learners' reading comprehension skills (Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3, Teacher 5, and Teacher 6, 2021, semi-structured interviews). However, their explanations revealed a lack of theoretical understanding. Notably, none of the teachers mentioned facilitating active interaction between the top-down and bottom-up processes. Schema theorists emphasise that successful reading for meaning requires the harmonious interplay of both top-down and bottom-up processes, involving interaction between the reader and the text (An, 2013; Bartlett, 1932; Rumelhart, 1980).
- Evidence suggests that teachers often hold preferred strategies. For instance, Teacher 1 favours employing background knowledge, Teacher 3 leans towards making summaries, and Teacher 5 opts for the question-and-answer method as their chosen reading strategy (2021, semi-structured interviews). Such preferences might restrict learners' exposure to a variety of reading strategies.

This limitation in strategy use obstructs learners' chances to actively engage with the reading text effectively.

- Teacher participants in the study hold the belief that their learners struggle to independently read and comprehend comprehension passages (Teacher 1; Teacher 3; Teacher 5). There appears to be a tendency to confuse language difficulties with reading challenges (Bharuthram, 2017; Pretorius, 2004). The evident lack of comprehensive understanding of reading strategies among teachers inhibits their effective application in the classroom (Olifant et al., 2019; Zimmerman, 2014). With insights from schema theory, it becomes apparent that readers encountering difficulties in comprehending a text often lack the necessary background knowledge (Hermosa, 2011). Wilkinson and Son (2011) assert that readers might struggle to grasp a text if they cannot identify a schema that aligns with it. Hermosa (2011) adds that the absence of assumed background knowledge in the text can contribute to comprehension issues, further highlighting teachers' dual role. Teachers must both stimulate pre-existing schemas and aid learners in integrating fragmented pockets of knowledge into a cohesive schema. Therefore, this study emphasises that equipping teachers with proper training, especially in the application of reading strategies, is crucial for them to effectively support their learners.

- In the context of EFAL, it is evident that teachers employ a limited number of reading strategies, thereby constraining learners' exposure to a diverse array of strategies (Teacher 3; Teacher 5). This limitation directly contributes to the challenges EFAL learners face in comprehending texts (Madikiza et al., 2020). Madikiza et al. (2020) concur with this observation, asserting that EFAL teachers tend to utilise only a subset of strategies, restricting learners' potential to explore a broader range of strategies for enhancing their reading skills. An essential concept for teachers to grasp is that no solitary strategy can sufficiently address the varied reading difficulties encountered by learners. This perspective aligns with schema theory, which posits that learners benefit from employing a spectrum of cognitive strategies to comprehend reading materials (Ali & Razali, 2019). This assertion implies that learners' social and cultural backgrounds are pivotal in shaping their acquisition of knowledge. However, for many learners in Bushbuckridge, this dynamic is challenged, as they lack

opportunities to interact with the LoLT, limiting their exposure to the target language. Proficiency in a FAL necessitates substantial language exposure, as emphasised by the DBE (DBE, 2011: 36). Time constraints seem to be a major hindrance for the majority of teachers to effectively employ strategies for teaching reading. One teacher protested, "I am unable to assist learners as I wish because I have to run with the ATP, run with the activities that are expected of me, I must correct, I must go to SAMS, even the year has been shortened, learners are coming this week, the next week they are not in, in fact, there is a content gap" (EFAL Teacher 6, 2021, semi-structured interviews). Wilkinson and Son (2011) attest to this view by highlighting that employing various teaching strategies is time-consuming and sometimes it is against teachers' prior beliefs and practices. If teachers do not have enough time to teach reading using various strategies will not be possible.

In the next section, I explore the learners' challenges of employing reading strategies during the reading process.

5.3   Findings from EFAL learners' online focus group interviews

The focus group discussion questions were designed to address the second research question: "What are the challenges experienced by Grade 10 EFAL teachers and learners when implementing strategies and approaches for reading comprehension?" The intention behind this was to validate and cross-reference the responses provided by learners with those obtained from teachers during the semi-structured interviews. This approach aimed to mitigate the potential influence of the 'interview effect,' as discussed earlier in Chapter 4. Additionally, existing research consistently underscores the challenges that many EFAL learners encounter in reading comprehension (Ali & Razali, 2019; Chaka, 2015; Erasmus, 2022; Vundla, 2020). Notably, there seems to be a tendency to attribute reading difficulties to language-related issues (Bharuthram, 2017; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). The reviewed literature in this study highlights the utilisation of ineffective reading strategies by both EFAL teachers and learners during the reading process (Olifant et al., 2019; Rule & Land, 2017). Consequently, the data presented in this section offers insights into the actual

reading practices of EFAL learners. Table 5.3 outlines the questions that were posed to learners during the focus group discussion.

Table 5.3: Focus group discussion questions for learners

Research instrument used	Research questions asked
Focus group discussion schedule with learners	Have you heard of reading strategies or tactics to assist you understand a passage in class? Explain.
	Have you been taught about using keywords to find meaning in a text?
	How do keywords help you understand a reading passage? Explain.
	Describe the skills/strategies you use while reading a text, to improve your understanding of a text/passage.
	Which skills/strategies do you use the most? Explain.
	Where did you learn the skill/strategy you mentioned above? Explain.

The information collected from the focus group discussion generated the themes that will be addressed next:

- Learners' awareness of reading strategies;
- Reading strategies used by EFAL learners during the reading process;
- The abilities of EFAL learners to read for meaning-making; and
- Learners' preferred strategies to use during the reading process.

5.3.1 Learners' awareness of reading strategies

Most of the questions posed to learners during their focus group sessions mirrored those from the teachers' semi-structured interviews (refer to Appendix A and B). The objective was to validate and reinforce the data collected from the teachers' interviews by comparing it with the responses gathered from the learners' focus group discussions. Additionally, this approach aimed to address any ambiguities or uncertainties that might have arisen in the teachers' interviews. Throughout this section, wherever feasible, the data obtained from both the teachers' interviews and the learners' focus group discussions are analysed collectively, offering a more comprehensive portrayal of the perspectives of both stakeholders regarding the use of reading strategies during the reading process. Inquiring whether learners were acquainted with reading strategies, it is noteworthy that across all participating

schools, many learners expressed familiarity with the concept of reading strategies. This is evident from the following responses:

> I have heard about reading strategies like mmmh ok, I will read it three times before answering the questions, then check the meaning of unfamiliar words, if I don't understand I go to explanation, then I try to get the answers (Learner 7, School A, 2021, focus group discussion).

> Yes, I heard about reading strategies, but even now I don't understand anything about reading strategies to help me understand the passage (Learner 3, School A, 2021, focus group discussion).

> Our teacher taught us about reading strategies, for example, the one for reading the topic and trying to guess the meaning (Learner 7, School D, 2021, focus group discussion).

> I know of reading strategies, and I use them when I struggle to understand a comprehension passage (Learner 6, School E, 2021, focus group discussion).

The findings from the learners' focus group discussions serve to reinforce and corroborate the insights derived from the teachers' semi-structured interviews, as they echo and substantiate several of the comments made by the teachers. Parallel to the responses garnered from the teachers' interviews, a notable number of learners expressed their awareness of reading strategies. However, like the teachers, the responses provided by the learners also reveal a lack of comprehensive theoretical understanding of these strategies. This parallel can be illustrated by the response of Learner 7 from school D, which lacks a clear demonstration of active engagement with the text. Notably, the learner does not elucidate the rationale behind reading the text multiple times and fails to grasp the concept of using keywords for comprehension enhancement. Instead, the learner has been instructed to utilise keywords without fully comprehending their purpose.

A study conducted by Zano (2023) exploring the impact of appropriate resources on teaching reading comprehension to South African EFAL learners in the FET phase aligns with these observations. Zano's findings underscore the utilisation of various resources by EFAL teachers, including textbooks, dictionaries, digital tools like WhatsApp, parental involvement, and videos. However, challenges identified by learners in comprehension stem from excessive reliance on dictionaries, limited vocabulary scope, and an inadequate grasp of how to effectively deploy reading strategies. Zano emphasises that teachers must grasp that profound comprehension

emerges when learners progress beyond the literal grasp of a text to synthesising it with their prior knowledge for understanding.

Similarly, Reflianto, Setyosari, Kuswandi, and Widiati (2022) emphasise that teachers' limited comprehension of reading strategies hampers the ability to engage learners during reading lessons. The lack of teacher understanding leaves learners reliant on guidance rather than internalising these strategies. Such patterns are mirrored in this study. For instance, in school A, Learner 3 conveys her awareness of reading strategies but admits to having no substantial grasp of their essence. It is crucial to note that exclusive reliance on reading strategies might not exclusively explain the challenges in EFAL learners' comprehension. This aligns with the existing literature suggesting that South African teachers' subpar practices hinder most EFAL learners' development as critical readers. In these circumstances, explicit instruction in reading strategies becomes imperative for learners to assume ownership of their reading processes and develop metacognitive skills (Carr, Borkowski, & Maxwell, 1991).

The literature reviewed in this study underscores that proper knowledge of reading strategies empowers learners to discern vital information within texts, pace their reading, employ techniques like scanning and skimming, predict word meanings based on context, and succinctly summarise crucial content (Carr, Borkowski, & Maxwell, 1991). However, to effectively impart these skills, teachers must first possess a comprehensive understanding of reading strategies themselves. Considering these considerations, the study suggests that the DBE should offer substantial training to teachers in utilising reading strategies, enabling them to subsequently impart these skills to EFAL learners.

It is noteworthy, though, that while a considerable number of learners exhibit an inadequate grasp of reading strategies, responses from other learners manifest a better understanding of their application. Exemplifying this, the subsequent responses are illustrative of such learners:

> Employing reading strategies assist me to know what is expected of me, and how best can I read and make meaning of what I am reading. For example, I use the strategy of reading the title and try to guess what I will find in the passage. This assists me to check my understanding of the passage (Learner 4, School E, 2021, focus group discussion).

> When I use summarisation skill, I use my own words to memorise what I have learnt about in the passage. The skill of summary writing helps me to only pick up the main point so that I can understand what the passage is about (Learner 8, School B, 2021, focus group discussion).

> Sometimes I look at the topic and pictures, to try and guess what the passage is about. If I understand the topic, I will be able to answer the questions at the end of the comprehension passage (Learner 2, School C, 2021, focus group discussion).

The responses provided above align with the findings of the literature explored in this study, which demonstrate that proficient readers employ effective reading strategies to enhance their comprehension (Brevik, 2019; Owen & Mantlana, 2017). These insights are also consistent with the tenets of schema theory, which postulates that learners are not passive recipients of information; instead, they actively employ an array of reading strategies to construct meaning from textual content (Brown, 1984; Grabe, 1991). However, the diversity within EFAL classrooms necessitates cautious consideration from teachers. The comment made by Learner 4 serves as a case in point, showcasing the learner's adeptness in utilising effective reading strategies. If all learners possessed such skills, challenges in reading comprehension within most EFAL schools might not be as pronounced. Nevertheless, the responses from other learners shed light on the need for targeted attention towards reading comprehension. This disparity among learners' abilities underscores the importance of tailoring teaching approaches to accommodate the varied reading levels within EFAL classrooms. The next subsection explores learners' capacities for reading with the intent of deriving meaning from the text.

5.3.2 Reading strategies used by EFAL learners during the reading process

Continuing to address the second research question, Grade 10 EFAL learners were tasked with describing the reading strategies they employ while engaging with a text to enhance their comprehension. This approach was taken to validate the insights gathered from teachers' responses in the first research question, which pointed to learners struggling to independently read with comprehension. The findings from this section are in line with existing research. Miyamoto, Pfost, and Artelt (2019) emphasise that a considerable number of learners in German schools lack exposure to reading practices and remain unfamiliar with reading strategies. This observation gains further support from a study by Okkinga et al. (2018), which parallels the findings of Miyamoto, Pfost, and Artelt (2019). The latter study reveals that, following

comprehensive training and coaching centered around the reciprocal teaching approach for low-achieving learners in the Netherlands, substantial improvements were observed only when teachers delivered effective reading strategy instruction. In a similar vein, the responses provided by Grade 10 EFAL learners in this study also highlight a lack of proficient application of effective reading strategies:

> I read the passage three times, find the keywords, then translate it into my mother tongue (Learner, 3 School A, 2021, focus group discussion).

> Sometimes I try to understand the key words but still don't understand the passage, I reread, if it doesn't work, I try to translate to my mother tongue (Learner 5, School A, 2021, focus group discussion).

> I need to read the title first before I can read and understand the passage (Learner 4, School C, 2021, focus group discussion).

> At time I will read the question first, it will make it easier for me to find the answers fast (Learner 2, School B, 2021, focus group discussion).

> I use the reading aloud because I can understand the text or passage clearly and it can make me understand just through reading at one time (Learner 4, School C, 2021, focus group discussion).

> I mostly use summarisation because it is easy for me to understand when I use my own explanation and to remember what the comprehension is about (Learner 2, School D, 2021, focus group discussion).

> Sometimes I use that strategy of first reading the comprehension then reading the questions and going back (Learner, 7 School D, 2021, focus group discussion).

Analysing the learners' responses, a clear pattern emerges. Many learners rely on a single strategy or, at best, a couple of strategies in their attempts to derive meaning from the reading text. This poses a significant challenge, as the literature in this study underscores that reading remains a complex undertaking for the majority of EFAL learners (Rule & Land, 2017; Zano, 2020), necessitating the application of a repertoire of reading strategies (Ali & Razali, 2019; Brevik, 2019). Learner 1 and 2's responses exhibit limited engagement with the reading text. The notion of identifying key words is viewed as a passive form of reading development since it does not draw upon learners' background knowledge and the constructive contributions that learners' interpretive abilities can bring to the text (Brown, 1984; Grabe, 1991). Effective strategy acquisition thrives in interactive classroom settings, where teachers offer responsive feedback. Many learners adhere to ineffective reading strategies because

both EFAL teachers and learners lack a solid foundation in strategy monitoring (Al-Meklafi, 2018; Graham et al., 2020).

Linake and Mokhele (2019) underscore that EFAL learners encounter difficulties in distinguishing between linguistic and textual elements and comprehending the purpose of reading, which encompasses analysing literary content and acquiring and effectively utilising information. Consequently, learners experience deficits in their reading abilities, a barrier to academic achievement that leads to subpar performance and even school dropouts. According to Brevik (2019), this situation arises because teachers engage their learners in reading comprehension through specific strategies tailored to their existing needs, rather than introducing them to new strategies. This observation is congruent with the teachers' responses; for instance, one teacher acknowledges initiating with summaries because he recognises his learners' limitations in independent reading comprehension. When examining the learners' responses, it is evident that some learners mention utilising summaries as a means of making sense of the text. This mirrors what the teacher instructed them. Consequently, it can be argued that these learners lack exposure to a diverse array of reading strategies that could facilitate enhanced understanding. As articulated by Carrell (1989: 224):

> Strategy use is different in more and less proficient readers, and more proficient readers use different types of strategies, and they use them in different ways. While poor readers use few strategies, and they often use the same strategies.

Introducing learners to a diverse range of reading strategies plays a pivotal role in enhancing their reading skills, enabling them to apply these strategies to extract meaning from written texts (Erasmus, 2022; Madikiza et al., 2018; Zano, 2020). Proficiency in strategies for reading comprehension is paramount, underscoring the need for teachers to receive explicit training in this domain (Bharuthram, 2017; Pretorius & Kjapwijk, 2016). Without a comprehensive grasp of effective reading strategies, the act of teaching or incorporating them into the teaching and learning process becomes a daunting task (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016).

According to the insights of schema theorists, the comprehension of a text is an active interplay between the reader's background knowledge and the text itself, all in pursuit of meaning (Bartlett, 1932; Nunan, 1999). This underscores that learners need a

profound understanding of the context and background associated with a specific text to fully comprehend it. However, a closer examination of most learners' responses reveals a notable deficiency in recognising the significance of background knowledge. Only a handful of learners mentioned utilising background knowledge as a strategy to enhance their reading effectiveness (Learner 4, School A, 2021, focus group discussion; Learner 7, School E, 2021, focus group discussion). One learner articulated, "She once taught me that I should first read the title, understand it in my own words before I go to reading the comprehension passage, it will help me to get a better understanding of what the passage is about" (Learner 4, School A, 2021, focus group discussion). Another learner explained, "sometimes looking at the topic and pictures I can explain what the passage is about" (Learner 7, School E, 2021, focus group discussion). If all learners fail to recognise the importance of contextual knowledge, achieving meaningful reading outcomes becomes elusive. This aligns with the sentiment expressed by learner 5 from School A, indicating that the employed strategy may not effectively address the underlying issue. Research in the field indicates that to ensure the effective implementation of reading strategies, teachers must receive comprehensive training in reading, with a specific emphasis on the application of reading strategies (Erasmus, 2022; Madikiza et al., 2018; Zano, 2020).

5.3.3 Learner preference of strategy use

During the focus group discussion, learners were prompted to elucidate the strategies they employ to enhance their understanding of reading texts. The aim was to gauge whether learners were cognisant of the obstacles they encounter and whether they had devised alternative methods to overcome these challenges. Parallel to the teachers' acknowledgment of the difficulties in utilising diverse reading strategies, learners' responses mirrored the notion that challenges persist even when attempting to employ such strategies. For example:

> Sometimes I try to understand the key words but still don't understand the passage, I reread, if it doesn't work, I try to translate to my mother tongue (Learner 5, School A, 2021, focus group discussion).

> Sometimes I look at the topic and pictures, to try and guess what the passage is about (Learner 2, School C, 2021, focus group discussion).

> I get more knowledge when I read on my own, it gives me more time to understand the things that I want to understand than having a teacher to explain how to do it in their own way (Learner 5, School E, 2021, focus group discussion).

> I mostly use summarisation because is easy for me to understand when I use my explanation and to remember what the comprehension is about (Learner 2, School D, 2021, focus group discussion).

The preceding responses exhibit a range of perspectives. In the case of Learner 5 from School A, the learner mentioned resorting to translating to their mother tongue as a last resort if other reading strategies prove ineffective. This seems akin to the approach of Teachers 3 and 5, who employ summarisation. These teachers might utilise learners' home languages to clarify concepts or provide text overviews. While the translation method can be advantageous, it poses challenges during formal assessments where time constraints render its application difficult (Mavuru & Ramnarain, 2020). Moreover, it has limitations, particularly during exams when instruction is solely in English (Pretorius, 2004). Learner 5 from School E indicated that they comprehend better when reading alone, without teacher assistance. This could imply that the learner's struggle with reading might stem from inadequate teacher support, eroding trust in their guidance. On the other hand, Learner 2 from School E demonstrates an ability to read and understand autonomously, reflecting proficiency. Learner preferences align with teacher choices, yet learners select strategies to enhance understanding, while some teachers prioritise syllabus coverage. Interestingly, the concurrence between learners and teachers' responses implies that learners heed their teachers' guidance. Consequently, proper teacher training could positively impact learners, given the shared responses.

Regarding the integration of ICT in education, Henderson (2020) emphasises its role in enhancing individual learning and life skills. However, incorporating ICT in some EFAL schools has proven challenging (Carrim, 2022; Munje & Jita, 2020; Ntsala & Seabela, 2023; Oke & Fernandes, 2020). While technological innovations permeate various spheres of life (Oke & Fernandes, 2020), Ntsala and Seabela's (2023) study on ICT integration in EFAL classrooms in South Africa's Limpopo province reveals complex impediments. These include limited collaborative time, ICT expertise, power issues, learners' poor reading competence, pedagogical limitations, workload, resource scarcity, network problems, and safety concerns. Amidst these challenges,

Carrim (2022) suggests that EFAL teachers should strive to understand how ICT can enhance reading competence. Successful ICT integration requires support from managerial levels to empower teachers effectively.

5.3.4 The abilities of EFAL learners to read for meaning making

The DBE stipulates that Grade 10 learners should possess proficiency in their FAL. However, the study's findings reveal a stark contrast, as a considerable number of learners grapple with comprehending their reading material. While several teachers acknowledged utilising diverse reading strategies in their classrooms, learners still struggle to grasp content due to language barriers. For instance, one learner remarked, "I can identify key words but struggle to find their meaning, and the text confuses me" (Learner 7, School A, 2021, focus group discussion). Another learner indicated, "Sometimes I cannot understand when I read, but when someone, like the teacher, helps explain, then I start to understand" (Learner 9, School D, 2021, focus group discussion). Furthermore, a different learner shared, "I can understand, but some words are unclear to me; it's easier when the teacher explains" (Learner 8, School D, 2021, focus-group discussion). The responses collectively highlight that learners encounter reading challenges even when employing reading strategies.

Taking the example of learner 7 from School A, it is plausible that this learner might interpret unfamiliar words as key words, struggling to decipher their meaning. This approach involves laboriously dissecting each word, a widespread practice among poor readers. Conversely, learner 9 relied on teacher support to comprehend, echoing the teacher-centric approach to reading instruction. Most teachers acknowledged their learners' struggles to independently read and understand texts, a sentiment mirrored by the learners' feedback. The practice of teachers providing summaries or resorting to code-switching is not a comprehensive solution. According to Sevnarayan (2022c), incorporating podcasts and vodcasts is essential to enhance EFAL learners' engagement. She recognises that learners have diverse learning styles - visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, necessitating varied approaches for effective learning. Sevnarayan's (2023) exploration of the Telegram messenger as a tool to motivate OdeL students to learn English further supports this notion. Telegram can potentially captivate disinterested learners who find conventional reading unappealing. Similarly, Isma and Nur (2023) studied learners' reading performance challenges in an

Indonesian institute of higher learning. Their findings imply that these difficulties significantly impede learners' reading performance. Accordingly, they recommend integrating learning media, technological tools, and effective reading strategies to address these issues and enhance learners' reading skills, aligning with Sevnarayan's study (2023). These insights could potentially apply to the context of the present study. The DBE's vision of Grade 10 learners' FAL proficiency is challenged by the study's findings. Despite teachers' efforts in employing strategies, learners still grapple with reading comprehension. Addressing this issue requires innovative methods such as multimedia tools, diverse learning approaches, and effective strategies. This perspective resonates with the present study and the recommendations made by other researchers.

The existing literature and the voices captured in this study corroborate the challenges faced by EFAL learners in comprehending texts (Linake & Mokhele, 2019; Olifant, Cekiso & Rautenbach, 2020; Rule & Land, 2017). Nndwamato (2021) emphasises that EFAL learners require an extensive vocabulary repertoire to effectively meet their academic responsibilities, understand content, and communicate articulately. Martens (2014) further underscores the significance of vocabulary knowledge in reading skills, asserting that meaning is derived from words and their connections to text comprehension. With most South African schools adopting EFAL and a minority of learners being natural English speakers (Vundla, 2020), EFAL teachers play a pivotal role in aiding learners' comprehension and vocabulary expansion. Effective instruction and modeling of reading strategies can enhance learners' comprehension. Furthermore, teachers should possess a deep understanding of teaching strategies and practices that enhance vocabulary acquisition, as well as the speed at which learners identify and comprehend unfamiliar words, along with content schemata, which proves to be a vital predictor of comprehension development.

Scholarly literature highlights that reading strategies are integral to enhancing reading comprehension skills (Grabe & Stoller, 2013; Madikiza et al., 2020; Omidire, 2022; Thage, Makgosi & Mthembu, 2021). Pardede (2010) provides invaluable reading tips for EFAL teachers. To facilitate a more comprehensible reading process, teachers should take several considerations into account before embarking on reading activities. Firstly, they should ensure that the chosen reading material aligns with

learners' familiarity with vocabulary and grammatical structures. Teachers might introduce essential vocabulary through pre-reading activities that focus on language elements, such as identifying antonyms, synonyms, derivatives, or related words, especially when the text contains unfamiliar terms. Secondly, teachers should meticulously select books that suit the age group, interests, gender, and cultural background of their learners. If this alignment is lacking, it is crucial to provide learners with the necessary context to understand the material (De Debat, 2006). This can be achieved by engaging learners in discussions about their existing knowledge and brainstorming interpretations of titles or images (Pardede, 2010).

As explored in Chapter 3, the traditional dichotomy of bottom-up versus bottom-down processing is no longer definitive in the context of effective reading. Instead, learners often draw from both processes based on individual needs. According to schema theory, the interaction between the learner and the reading text involves both the engagement of the learner with the text itself and the interplay between bottom-up and top-down processing (Bartlett, 1932). This dynamic is evident in the learners' responses provided earlier. For instance, learner 7 from school A focuses more on identifying key words rather than making meaning from the text, a practice that challenges holistic comprehension since individual word knowledge does not guarantee an understanding of the entire text (Rumelhart, 1980). This tendency is also mirrored in teachers' responses, as time constraints often compel them to meet deadlines rather than prioritise thorough understanding (Teacher 3, School D, 2021, semi-structured interviews). The importance of word recognition over prediction is highlighted by Beck and McKeown (1986) and Moats (2020). Moats (2020) further underscores that automatic word recognition significantly contributes to EFAL learners' reading development. However, this poses a challenge for many struggling readers who remain bound in lower-level processing. Recognising words efficiently forms the foundation for proficient reading (Dijkstra & Van Heuven, 2002). It may be beneficial to differentiate between word recognition and lexical access to pinpoint the specific reading challenges that hinder critical comprehension. Additionally, an individual's ability to answer questions about a text serves as a key component of the reading process, wherein proficient readers respond to both explicit and implicit information. Abstract thinking is informed by word knowledge, particularly when tangible cues or content schemata are absent (Goodman, 1976). Successful readers

not only comprehend the text during reading but also evaluate and synthesise information within the context of other inputs. Schema theory further illustrates that schema formation results from the interplay of bottom-up and top-down processing if it aligns with the readers' anticipations. Thus, both processing modes are integral to perception and comprehension, contributing to the development of fluent readers. Aligning with responses from both teacher and learner participants, Brown (1984) underscores that researchers often favour one processing view over another or overlook both entirely. In this context, this study emphasises the necessity of providing teachers with proper training in reading strategies to facilitate effective reading.

In summary, the findings highlighted in this section echo teachers and learners' perceptions of reading strategies and approaches, addressing the first and second research questions: "What are the reading strategies and approaches used by Grade 10 EFAL teachers in the Bushbuckridge region when teaching reading comprehension?" and "What are the challenges experienced by Grade 10 EFAL teachers and learners when implementing strategies and approaches for reading comprehension?" These findings align with schema theory (Bartlett, 1932; Nunan, 1999), which posits that prior knowledge forms mental structures that aid readers in interpreting new content, underlining the importance of interaction among the reader, author, and text for comprehension. This alignment further supports the study's theoretical foundation, which emphasises the enhancement of learners' reading abilities using reading strategies (Anderson, 1994; Bartlett, 1932; Nunan, 1999). The next subsection explores the analysis of the CAPS document to validate the findings gleaned from the semi-structured interview schedule with teachers and the focus group discussions with learners.

5.4 Findings from the document analysis

In this section, I aim to address research question 3: "Which reading strategies are stipulated in the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12?" The purpose of this analysis is to provide readers with insights into the content of the EFAL CAPS document regarding reading strategies. This encompasses the methodologies outlined, the expected skills for Grade 10 EFAL learners as specified in the CAPS document, and the prescribed approach for Grade 10 EFAL teachers to facilitate

reading. By examining the alignment between Grade 10 EFAL teachers' practices and the CAPS guidelines, as well as assessing the potential efficacy of these guidelines in promoting effective reading strategies, readers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the situation.

Upon thorough examination of the EFAL CAPS for Grades 10-12, it becomes evident that certain aspects related to reading comprehension and the usage of effective reading strategies warrant attention. To conduct a comprehensive analysis of the content pertaining to English as a First Additional Language (FAL) within the EFAL CAPS for Grades 10–12, a comprehensive review of all relevant statements is necessary to grasp the scope of the data (Vundla, 2020). This foundational understanding serves as a basis for further exploration. Subsequently, I engaged in data refinement, clarifying essential details aligned with the focus of this study. Employing open coding techniques, I identified, categorised, and reviewed all pertinent content. This process was guided by the study's aim and primary research question: "Which reading strategies do Grade 10 EFAL teachers use in their classrooms?" Specifically, I extracted data related to concepts such as 'reading,' 'reading strategies,' 'reading comprehension,' and 'reading development.' These data points were then mapped onto established patterns, allowing for connections with the existing literature. Several issues were identified during this analysis of the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12. Notably, the document lacks a clear and comprehensive explanation of effective reading strategies. Moreover, the allocated time for reading activities is often insufficient to create meaningful comprehension. Compounding this, there is a tendency to conflate comprehension challenges with language difficulties. Furthermore, inconsistencies emerge regarding the level of teacher support provided and the expectations set forth, with the nature of English as an additional language adding to the complexity. Table 5.4, presented below, outlines the key questions that emerged from the document analysis schedule, which guided the exploration of the EFAL CAPS content. This approach aids in structuring the investigation and aligning the findings with the research objectives.

Table 5.4: Document analysis schedule questions

Research instrument	Document analysis questions
Document analysis schedule	What are the approaches recommended/ prescribed by CAPS for teaching reading comprehension for Grade 10 English first additional language?
	What are the most effective strategies for reading comprehension, prescribed by the CAPS document?
	How many hours are allocated for teaching reading in the EFAL classroom per week?
	Which theoretical perspective/s that guide/s the approaches that are used in the CAPS curriculum?

This section deals with the implementation of reading strategies for both Grade 10 EFAL teachers and learners; therefore, the data gathered from the document analysis schedule have led to the following themes which will be discussed next:

- EFAL CAPS for Grades 10 – 12;
- Reading in the CAPS document for Grades 10-12;
- Stages of approaching reading in the CAPS document for Grade 10-12; and,
- Evidence of the effective reading strategies in the CAPS document for Grades 10-12.

5.4.1 EFAL CAPS for Grades 10 – 12
In Chapter 4, I conducted an analysis of the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10 – 12, which was published by the DBE (DBE, 2011). The CAPS document serves as a revision of the previous National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and provides guidelines for curriculum and assessment within the education system. The NCS Grades R–12 underwent modifications to enhance implementation, with these changes taking effect in January 2012. The CAPS document offers teachers specific directives regarding curriculum content and assessment criteria at both the grade and subject levels (DBE, 2011). This in-depth analysis provided me with a clear understanding of the reading strategies and approaches delineated in the CAPS document for Grade 10 EFAL teachers to employ in improving their learners' reading proficiencies.

Upon scrutinising the way EFAL is described within the CAPS document, it becomes evident that EFAL instruction in South Africa is categorised into two levels: Home Language (HL) and First Additional Language (FAL). HL pertains to a language that learners acquire initially, while FAL refers to a language learned in addition to one's HL (DBE, 2011). In South Africa, HL teaching typically encompasses only one or two languages, thus not encompassing the diverse range of native languages spoken by enrolled learners. Consequently, the designations of HL and FAL do not merely signify 'native' or 'acquired' languages but denote the skill level at which the language is taught (DBE, 2011; Vundla, 2020). This distinction holds relevance in many EFAL contexts within South Africa, given the heterogeneous linguistic backgrounds of Grade 10 learners, each of whom speaks a different language at home (Coffi, 2017; Klapwijk, 2015). This diversity can pose challenges for learners in developing reading comprehension, as schema theory posits that background knowledge is applied to ascribe meaning to text (Bartlett, 1932; Rumelhart, 1988). The incorporation of varied backgrounds into the classroom setting complicates the teacher's task of utilising background knowledge as a strategy to enhance reading comprehension, as it becomes impractical to activate the background knowledge of every individual learner. As Anderson (1994: 473) aptly states, "a reader comprehends a message when he is able to recall a schema that gives account of the objects and events described in the message."

Rather than assuming that teachers can rely solely on activating learners' background knowledge, a more effective approach could involve explicitly teaching learners how to employ their background knowledge as a tool for improving reading comprehension. However, this approach's success hinges on teachers possessing adequate knowledge and training in the implementation of reading strategies. Furthermore, the CAPS document for Grades 10-12 emphasises that successful language acquisition necessitates extensive exposure to the language itself (DBE, 2011). The document highlights that texts should strike a balance: if texts are excessively challenging, learners become discouraged, while texts that are overly simple lack the necessary challenge for meaningful learning to occur (DBE, 2011:11). Accordingly, teachers are tasked with the responsibility of carefully selecting reading materials that are appropriately challenging yet not overwhelming for learners. However, as previously discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, a considerable number of EFAL learners have limited

exposure to the LoLT. This lack of exposure presents a challenge, as learners may not have adequate opportunities to practice the target language.

The findings of the present study underscore that Grade 10 learners grapple with language barriers, particularly due to their limited exposure to English outside of the classroom environment. A teacher shared, "There is this home language background, our learners do not use English at their homes at all, usually they want to write English words in vernacular" (Teacher 5, 2021, semi-structured interviews). Consequently, the responsibility of exposing learners to FAL often falls squarely on individual teachers. Given the lack of standardised direction, this task can be daunting for many teachers, leading to ineffective learning experiences that contribute to suboptimal performance in EFAL.

Furthermore, the EFAL CAPS for Grades 10-12 explicitly states that Grade 10 EFAL learners should be proficient in using their FAL (DBE, 2011b:15). The curriculum expects Grade 10 EFAL learners to employ higher order thinking skills, using EFAL for critical thinking, problem-solving, and the evaluation and synthesis of English texts (DBE, 2011b:15). While these objectives appear viable in theory, the reality on the ground often contrasts with this ideal. Many Grade 10 EFAL learners continue to struggle with effective FAL use (Linake & Mokhele, 2019; Olifant, et al., 2020). A considerable number of EFAL learners encounter challenges in mastering word knowledge, a fundamental component of lower-level learning (Grabe, 1991). According to schema theory, comprehension involves an active interaction between the reader and the text. However, this process is not always realised in the context of Grade 10 EFAL learners in South African classrooms (Bharuthram, 2017; Madikiza et al., 2020; Pretorius, 2004; Rule & Land, 2017). Critically, the CAPS document for Grades 10-12 lacks clear directives on how teachers can effectively guide learners in developing critical reading skills within the FAL domain. The next section explores the delineation of reading within the CAPS document for Grades 10-12 EFAL. It explores how reading is defined, the prescribed implementation strategies, and the strategies to equip Grade 10 EFAL learners with improved reading capabilities.

5.4.2 Reading in the CAPS document for Grades 10-12

Within the CAPS document, a clear definition of the term 'reading' is conspicuously absent. Although the CAPS document addresses 'reading and viewing,' it fails to isolate and define reading as a distinct skill (DBE, 2011:14). In the context of the CAPS document, the section dedicated to reading and viewing commences by emphasising the importance of these skills without providing a precise elucidation of their meanings. According to Du Toit et al. (1995), reading can be understood as an active interaction between the reader and a text, conducted in pursuit of meaning. Notably, while both reading and viewing entail cognitive engagement, subtle distinctions can be drawn between these two skills. Reading encompasses the act of viewing something, such as perusing a notice, text, image, or billboard.

In contrast, viewing involves the learner's capacity to construct meaning through the interpretation of visual elements (symbols, context, conventions, images) that contribute to the visual message's narrative (Trabasso & Nickels, 1992). In the context of the CAPS document for Grades 10-12, the term 'viewing' might be employed to denote learners' competence in comprehending visual content. Erasmus (2022) concurs that reading, and viewing diverge in terms of the cognitive processes involved during encoding. However, it is important for learners to cultivate proficiency in both these skills, as reading comprehension necessitates a diverse range of skills extending beyond just oral and written language. Anstey and Bull (2006) posit that an individual should possess a comprehensive understanding of semiotic systems, including visual, spatial, auditory, linguistic, and gestural components, and their employment within a text to convey meaning.

Moreover, the CAPS document for Grades 10-12 underscores the significance of robust reading and viewing capabilities for effective learning across the curriculum (DBE, 2011). The document further asserts that learners refine their reading and viewing skills through continuous engagement with these activities (DBE, 2011). Nonetheless, the development of the skill to read for meaning cannot solely rely on the process of reading and viewing various texts. Many learners encounter difficulties comprehending what they read, necessitating the utilisation of effective reading strategies. These strategies enable learners to engage critically with their reading process, apply appropriate strategies for comprehension, and become proficient

readers (Linake & Mokhele, 2019; Olifant et al., 2020). Consequently, the mere act of ongoing reading, devoid of explicit instruction in reading strategies or intervention strategies, falls short of yielding meaningful reading comprehension improvement.

In addition, the EFAL CAPS document explicitly asserts that "reading is critical for learners who use English as the Language of Learning and Teaching" (DBE, 2011:15). It explicitly states that by Grade 10, learners should transition from learning to read to reading to learn. Despite its centrality, reading remains a multifaceted activity and is firmly regarded as a government priority (Vundla, 2020: 27). This sentiment was echoed by President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa in his State of the National Address in 2019, where he highlighted the inability of South African learners to read for meaning. In recognition of this challenge, the National Reading Coalition was established in 2019, aimed at providing reading interventions and serving as a platform for stakeholders to share knowledge and learning experiences. Acknowledging the complexity of reading, the CAPS document for Grades 10-12 underscores the imperative for learners to develop critical skills to wield their FAL with proficiency.

The significance of reading for meaning, particularly within the context of a FAL warrants increased attention. As highlighted earlier, reading for meaning stands distinct from mere decoding (Carr, Levy & Linake, 2021). Proficiency in reading for meaning empowers learners to effectively use their FAL across the curriculum, as all subjects necessitate comprehension-based reading. In the absence of this skill, learners risk squandering valuable time during reading, as cognitive engagement remains absent. This underscores the imperative of bolstering reading comprehension through explicit instruction in reading strategies (Ali & Razali, 2019; Boakye & Linden, 2018).

Within the CAPS document, a claim is made that researchers validate a learner's "vocabulary development is heavily dependent on the amount of reading they do" (DBE, 2011: 17). However, this statement, while valid to some extent, neglects to acknowledge that vocabulary development is not solely contingent upon reading frequency. A learner's vocabulary expansion hinges on comprehension—new words' meanings need to be grasped for meaningful progress. While a learner might swiftly acquire decoding skills, the development of semantic understanding can be a more

intricate process, especially for EFAL learners (Erasmus, 2022). It is worth noting that reading does indeed serve as a foundational pillar for vocabulary enrichment. It becomes evident that the CAPS document for Grades 10-12 lacks an explicit definition of reading and fails to underscore the significance of reading comprehension. Alongside this deficiency in addressing reading's intricacies, there is also a notable dearth of emphasis on reading strategies. Boakye and Linden (2018), and Olifant et al. (2020), emphasise the necessity for teachers to impart explicit instruction in reading strategies, a pivotal step to significantly enhance learners' aptitude for reading for meaning. Consequently, the next section explores the reading approaches delineated within the EFAL CAPS for Grades 10-12.

5.4.3 Stages of approaching reading in the CAPS document for Grade 10-12

As previously mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3, reading strategies are embedded with the three stages in which reading occurs; the pre-, during- and post-reading stages (Cekiso & Madikiza, 2014; Pardede, 2010). The CAPS document for EFAL Grade 10-12 outlines three phases, in addition, state reading strategies that should be used during these phases. Table 5.5 illustrates the phases and purpose of each phase.

Table 5.5: Approaches to reading in the CAPS document for Grade 10-12

Approaches to reading in the CAPS document	Purpose
Pre-reading phase	Prepare learners for the reading process
During-reading phase	Prepare learners for reading for meaning
Post-reading phase	Prepare learners to make summaries and judgement of the reading activity

As evident from Table 5.5, the initial phase within the reading process is the pre-reading phase. These reading phases are pivotal for achieving meaningful comprehension, a perspective reinforced by Pardede (2010). The CAPS document underscores specific reading strategies to be employed within each phase. Within this schema, activating prior knowledge is advocated (DBE, 2011). However, while the CAPS document offers activity suggestions for the pre-reading phase, it does not explicitly elucidate the significance of this phase as a foundational reading approach (Madikiza et al., 2018). Elmore and Sykes (1992:187) aptly point out that policy documents frequently lack detailed implementation instructions. Consequently, it falls upon teachers to bridge the gap between policy and pedagogical practice. This

underscores the need for explicit clarification on the purpose of the pre-reading phase, along with a thorough breakdown of how each recommended activity contributes to enhancing learners' aptitude for reading for meaning. Another recommended activity within the pre-reading phase is 'making predictions' (DBE, 2011:16). However, the challenge here could be a lack of theoretical knowledge among teachers on teaching reading strategies, a sentiment reflected in the confusion faced by "English teachers about how to apply relevant teaching strategies in the context of learning processes" (Solikhah, 2018:73). Similarly, the strategy of monitoring, though recommended in the pre-reading phase, lacks explicit elucidation on its significance and its relevance to enhancing meaning-making through reading.

Shifting to the during-reading phase (DBE, 2011), we observe a dynamic interaction among the three reading phases, each impacting the others. The during-reading phase is instrumental in cultivating strategies for reading for meaning. Within this phase, the CAPS document prescribes a variety of activities, including employing "contextual clues" and "phonics," responding to text-related questions, elucidating the "subject line," and identifying "key characters" (DBE, 2011:37). This well-rounded approach contributes to more adept reader development. The CAPS document also encourages learners to persevere in reading even when comprehension falters, suggesting re-reading sections if necessary (DBE, 2011:16). Such strategies, known as fix-up and self-regulatory strategies, as detailed by Muhassin, Annisa and Hidayati (2021) and Ali and Razali (2019: 24), are crucial. However, the effective application of these strategies necessitates explicit teaching, particularly for struggling EFAL learners (Rule & Land, 2017). To prime learners for the ensuing post-reading phase, the CAPS document must provide explicit rationale for the continued reading effort, especially when comprehension lags. Teaching additional strategies becomes essential if comprehension issues persist (Ali & Razali, 2019; Brevik, 2019), leading to the likelihood of spontaneous strategy application (Zano, 2020). Moreover, the activities recommended for the during-reading phase—such as deciphering "contextual clues" and "phonics," addressing text-related questions, explaining the "subject line," and identifying "key characters"—demand EFAL teachers' comprehensive grasp of their successful application (DBE, 2011). Consequently, it is intriguing to explore how Grade 10 EFAL teachers navigate these strategies within their classrooms.

The final phase, the post-reading phase, serves to cultivate learners' summarisation and judgment skills concerning the reading text. As we explore the post-reading phase, it becomes apparent that the terms correlated with recommended activities are clarified, offering EFAL learners rich avenues to acquire the skill of reading for meaning. Notably, the learners' competence in post-reading is underpinned by the pre-reading and during-reading phases. If skills are not effectively cultivated in the initial two phases, meaningful reading in the post-reading phase cannot be achieved. The skill set prescribed for the post-reading phase encompasses remembering specific details, crafting graphic organisers for pertinent information, deducing conclusions, comprehending, evaluating, and crafting summaries of key concepts. The strategy of remembering key concepts is a recurrent theme within the CAPS document, and learners' abilities to recollect information is regarded as a pivotal outcome (DBE, 2011; Vundla, 2020). Organising new information, while the term 'organising' lacks definition in the EFAL CAPS, gains clarity through the glossary's concept of a "mind-map" (DBE, 2011: 119). Similarly, drawing conclusions or making inferences, explained in the glossary as deducing meaning beyond explicit text, is vital, even though the CAPS document does not explicitly present it as a reading strategy. Summarisation is a recurring theme within the EFAL CAPS for Grade 10-12, though it lacks comprehensive guidance on teaching or implementing the skill. The CAPS document stipulates that learners should apply summarisation skills, ranging from completing missing words to summarising "a story with help," "a passage with support," and "a text in a few sentences" (DBE, 2011: 54-89). While the CAPS document accentuates summarisation, the research underscores it as one of the most demanding tasks for EFAL learners (Grabe, 1991; Owen & Matlana, 2017). Despite its pivotal role, the challenges EFAL learners face with summarisation must not be underestimated. Throughout the CAPS document, the theme of learner comprehension prevails. References to "comprehending a text," "understanding word meanings," demonstrating comprehension while reading, "developing vocabulary," understanding text attributes, grasping plot evolution, and interpreting poetic elements appear (DBE, 2011:30-86). However, what 'understanding' entails remains unspecified, as does a clear framework for assessing comprehension. Evaluation, explained in the glossary as forming opinions, exercising judgment, and cultivating ideas (DBE, 2011), stands out as an indispensable skill for enhancing reading for

meaning. The EFAL curriculum is anchored in "what teachers will teach" or "what learners will learn" (Su, 2012:153). Furthermore, a curriculum's effectiveness is closely intertwined with learners' mastery of the outcomes (Su, 2012:153). Given the weighty significance of reading, it is imperative to allocate greater emphasis to the definitional precision of relevant terms and the elucidation of each skill's purpose and importance.

5.4.4 Evidence of the effective reading strategies in the CAPS document for Grades 10-12

In this section, I sought to compare the references to reading strategies as stipulated in the EFAL CAPS for Grades 10-12, with McEwan's (2004: 48) "Seven effective reading strategies". Figure 5.2 illustrates McEwan's effective reading strategies.
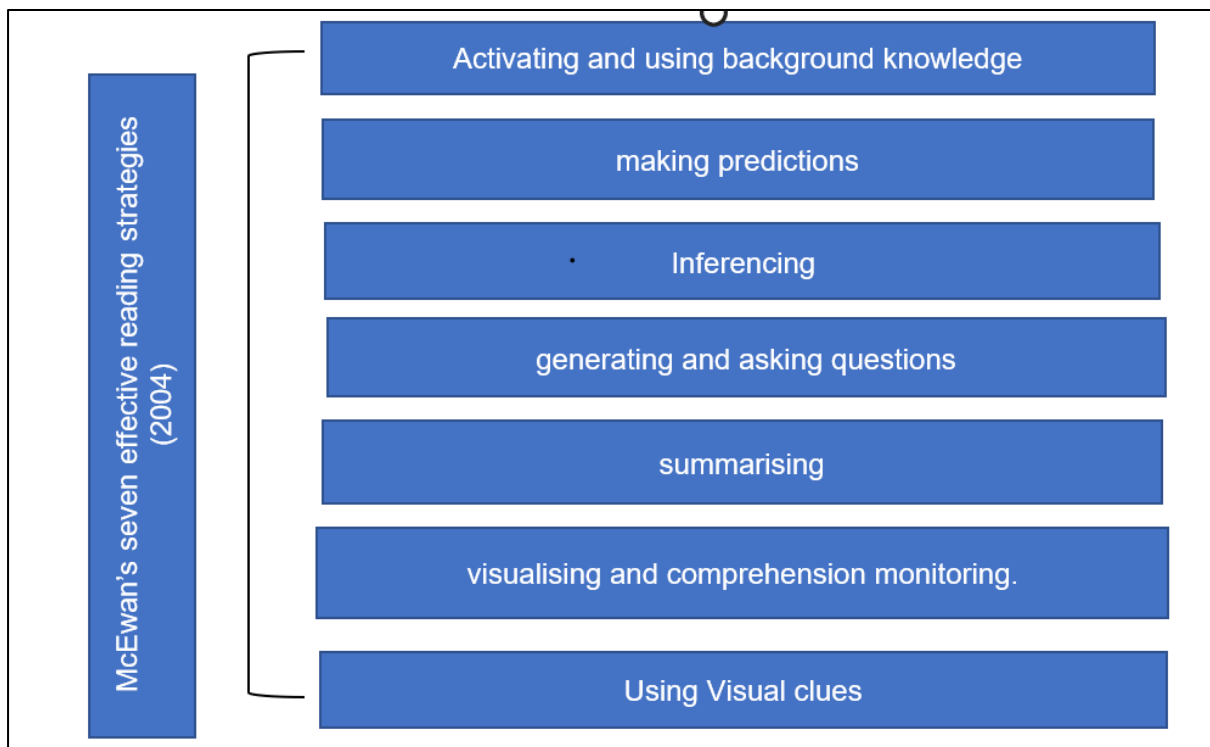
Figure 5.2: McEwan's seven effective reading strategies

Figure 5.2 serves to encapsulate McEwan's (2004) seven effective reading strategies, facilitating a comparative analysis with the strategies outlined in the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12. This comparative framework has enabled me to provide a comprehensive response to the central research question of this study: "What reading strategies and approaches do teachers in the Bushbuckridge region employ when teaching reading comprehension to Grade 10 first additional language learners?" The first reading strategy advocated by McEwan (2004) is the activation

and usage of background knowledge. This involves eliciting what learners already know and building upon this foundational knowledge to access latest information (Carrell, 1988). While the term 'background knowledge' references schemas are essential for comprehending a particular context, the CAPS document only mentions the use of learners' prior knowledge once. According to the CAPS document, learners' prior knowledge should be applied throughout the pre-reading phase (DBE, 2011: 15). It is worth noting that knowing how to activate learners' background knowledge benefits EFAL teachers more than the learners themselves (Ali & Razali, 2019). While the ability to activate background knowledge is embedded in the strategies and sub-skills section, it is not explicitly highlighted (DBE, 2011:34). Van der Walt and Evans (2019:177) offer strategies for EFAL teachers, including encouraging learner interest, "activating schemas," raising cultural and semantic awareness, teaching rhetorical organisation, and cultivating anticipation. Yet, as mentioned earlier, policy documents often lack comprehensive explanations, requiring teachers to exercise "high levels of interpretation and discretion" (Cekiso & Madikiza, 2014: 44). This underscores the need for teachers to possess both pedagogical content knowledge and interpretive abilities (Van der Walt & Evans, 2019:184). The challenge arises when teacher pedagogy, particularly in South Africa, remains an area of concern, necessitating attention to bolstering teachers' abilities, especially if the DoE does not offer Grade 10 EFAL teachers training on effective reading strategies.

Another strategy, making inferences, is defined by Bailey (2019) as the reader's capacity to draw assumptions based on prior knowledge, even from implicit information. Inference is often deemed the cornerstone of reading for meaning. While the strategy of making inferences is consistently mentioned in the CAPS document across grades, the term 'inference' is not explicitly defined. For instance, the CAPS document requires learners to read a story and subsequently "make predictions and inferences" (DBE, 2011:48). However, the document lacks concrete examples illustrating how to enable learners to make inferences. This gap becomes significant when we consider that South African teachers may not be trained in applying effective reading strategies (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). Policy documents offer pedagogical guidance (Su, 2012; Vundla, 2020), but if teachers do not understand the concept of making inferences, its successful integration into the reading process becomes challenging.

Comprehension monitoring, as articulated by Routman (2000), involves the reader's active tracking of their cognitive processes while employing reading strategies. This dynamic process empowers readers to identify and address challenging sections in a text through the application of relevant strategies (Gosling & Edwards, 2003). Surprisingly, the CAPS document does not explicitly mention the concept of 'monitoring' rather, the term 'clarifying' is used interchangeably and defined as "helping the reader understand the meaning of the text" in the glossary (DBE, 2011:116). While clarification aids in making sense of the text, the CAPS document neglects to emphasise that successful clarification depends on the reader's active cognitive engagement during reading. This strategic self-awareness encourages learner self-confidence, as teachers encourage learners to contemplate their cognitive processes. The lack of explicit definitions and practical examples relating to comprehension monitoring may stem from broader pedagogical challenges (Bharuthram, 2017; Pretorius, 2004).

The skill of questioning, according to Wood, Woloshyn, and Willoughby (1995), enables proficient readers to discern the most critical aspects of a text. Palinscar and Brown (1894) distinguish between question generating, self-questioning, and question answering. While the CAPS document frequently mentions the act of questioning throughout various grades, it does not explicitly classify generating and asking questions as reading strategies. Instead, it defines several types of questions, such as "closed questions," which demand explicit answers, and "higher-order questions," which require higher cognitive engagement (DBE, 2011:117). However, these references lack comprehensive practical examples of how to employ these question strategies. The teaching of questioning strategies may be stymied by the pedagogical challenge of translating policy guidelines into effective classroom practice. The comparison of McEwan's effective reading strategies with those outlined in the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12 provides a comprehensive lens through which to address the research question. It underscores the need for explicit definitions and practical examples to bridge the gap between policy recommendations and effective classroom implementation.

Jones (2018) defines summarising as the process of condensing a substantial amount of information by highlighting key points, and creating a compressed form of the content. This notion is echoed by Routman (2000), who characterises summarising as the reader's capacity to articulate the essential ideas succinctly and coherently in a text. The term 'summarising' is consistently mentioned throughout the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12. However, like other reading strategies, the CAPS document fails to offer clear instructional guidance for teachers on facilitating accurate content summarisation. Summarisation is integrated into the reading process, where learners are prompted to "create summaries to aid in understanding and retaining main ideas" (DBE, 2011:16). Additionally, within the glossary section, the term 'restating' is used instead of 'summarising.' Restating refers to a reading strategy where a learner retells segments of the text (DBE, 2011: 120). While this represents the first instance of a reading strategy being explicitly identified, no further guidance is provided on effectively teaching summarisation.

Another reading strategy put forth by McEwan (2004) is the usage of visual cues. This aspect is addressed within the EFAL CAPS document's "Writing and Presenting" section. According to McEwan (2004), employing visual cues serves to construct a cognitive image that aids in information extraction and reconstruction as required by the reader. Moreover, Mudzielwana (2013) asserts that the use of visual cues allows learners to visually represent relationships, facilitating the creation of sound summaries. To effectively instill this strategy in learners, teachers often model or demonstrate its application. Despite its evident value, the EFAL CAPS document does not explicitly categorise this as a reading strategy. However, it is integrated into the post-reading phase, where learners are prompted to recall information by constructing a 'graphic organiser' that highlights essential concepts (DBE, 2011: 16). Furthermore, the glossary section fails to offer a comprehensive definition of 'visualise.' Thus, it becomes apparent that this reading strategy receives insufficient attention, without clear directives on how teachers should incorporate it into their instruction.

The discussion of McEwan's "Effective Reading Strategies" (2004) has highlighted the presence and varying degrees of implementation of each reading strategy within the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12. Van der Walt and Evans (2019:176) argue that:

the current practice of teaching reading in South African classrooms is the teacher pre-teaches the vocabulary, reads the text aloud, learners read the text silently, the teacher goes through the questions, the class responds orally or in writing, and the answers are checked.

This highlights a concerning trend where the instruction of reading strategies is either overlooked or given minimal emphasis. This is particularly worrisome considering that the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12 aims to encourage and enhance critical thinking among learners, promoting their role as 'problem solvers' who can exhibit responsibility in organising and managing their activities (DBE, 2011b:10). For learners to truly evolve into critical thinkers and adept problem solvers, active engagement in the learning process is paramount. As such, it becomes imperative for the EFAL CAPS document to offer explicit and comprehensive guidelines on effectively incorporating strategies to enhance learners' reading comprehension.

5.5 Summary of the chapter

This chapter serves to present and analyse the data relevant to this study's objectives. Initially, the outcomes of the semi-structured interviews with Grade 10 teachers, focusing on their usage of reading strategies, were scrutinised. The insights drawn from these interviews revealed a noteworthy observation: while Grade 10 EFAL teachers exhibit awareness of reading strategies, their comprehension lacks the essential theoretical foundations underpinning these strategies' usage. This was supported by the rationales provided by teachers for employing reading strategies. From the data at hand, it becomes evident that while teachers possess some degree of familiarity with these strategies, their comprehension of the comprehensive benefits of deploying effective reading strategies remains inadequate. The root of this issue can be traced to insufficient training received by teachers, particularly in the domain of reading and the strategic implementation thereof. As a result, teachers tend to rely on strategies that they perceive as more comprehensible, inadvertently constraining Grade 10 EFAL learners' exposure to a wider array of reading strategies.

Subsequently, the focus-group discussions conducted with Grade 10 learners across participating schools aimed to explore the challenges they encounter during the reading process. Given the pivotal role teachers play as conduits of knowledge, the insights emerging from the learners' discussions resonate with the outcomes of the

teacher interviews. To a certain extent, learners exhibit a degree of awareness regarding reading strategies, yet they confront difficulties in effectively employing these strategies during their reading activities. The limited information they possess about these strategies renders them unable to independently engage in reading for meaning. For Grade 10 EFAL learners to competently apply reading strategies during their reading endeavours, it is imperative that Grade 10 EFAL teachers first acquire the necessary proficiency in guiding learners in the judicious use of these strategies.

Proceeding further, an analysis of the data extracted from the CAPS document was conducted to ascertain the reading strategies prescribed therein. The document analysis underlined the significance of reading throughout the curriculum. However, it became apparent that there could be a greater emphasis on both reading and the approaches thereto. On closer inspection, the applicability of schema theory and McEwan's suggested reading strategies was evident. The concept of active interaction between the reader, author, and text consistently manifested. While decoding is a foundational skill, it alone does not guarantee comprehension. Considering this, McEwan's recommended seven strategies for effective reading gain prominence. This study contributes to the understanding of Grade 10 teachers and learners on how reading strategies and approaches can bolster reading comprehension, especially within EFAL contexts. Furthermore, this study proposes suggestions for supporting teachers in developing innovative methodologies for teaching reading.

To conclude, the data collection, documentation, analysis, and subsequent reporting have enabled a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, paving the way for conclusions to be drawn and recommendations to be outlined for future research endeavours, as discussed in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION

"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body."
—Richard Steele

6.1   Introduction

I embarked on this study with the overarching goal of understanding the intricate tapestry of reading comprehension strategies and approaches employed by Grade 10 EFAL teachers and learners. The gaps, as outlined in Chapter 1, in the usage of these strategies by both teachers and learners have set the stage for this investigation. Chapters 2 and 3 presented the perspectives of various researchers and theorists, underscoring the significance of exploring language learning and reading comprehension. The methodologies that comprised the fundamental core of this thesis were discussed in Chapter 4, as well as the qualitative approaches that enabled this study to be completed. Data were analysed and discussed in Chapter 5 using the qualitative research methods covered in Chapter 4. Within this chapter, a panoramic view of the findings takes center stage, accompanied by recommendations for further exploration, implications for education, and conclusions.

The ramifications of this study reverberate in the comprehension prowess of Grade 10 teachers and learners, particularly in the EFAL contexts. When holistically analysing data, I observed that some teachers and learners employ effective reading strategies and approaches in their process of teaching and learning to read, while others experienced challenges in utilising effective reading strategies and approaches. On the contrary, both the teachers and learners indicated that reading strategies and approaches are crucial components for learners' reading development. Some teachers further reported that some learners are typically unprepared for reading for meaning-making and possess language difficulties. These facets find resonance in prior research on reading comprehension (Brevik, 2019; Erasmus, 2022; Madikiza et al., 2020; Zano, 2020), thereby elevating the stock of existing knowledge through fresh contributions.

This study's distinctive mark lies in its amalgamation of traditionally opposing theories - the bottom-up approach to reading (Goodman, 1988) and the cognitive perspective (Top-down approach) (Bartlett, 1932) - within the confines of a single research endeavour. It is noteworthy that prevailing studies tend to align with one theoretical camp, rendering this study's synthesis a notable advancement in the pedagogy of reading comprehension within EFAL contexts (Ali & Razali, 2019). The qualitative contribution was a comprehensive investigation of Grade 10 EFAL teachers, and the case study method was used to make this a success. By involving teachers and learners, which was frequently not done in earlier studies in reading strategies and approaches, the study contributed to the body of case study research already in existence.

6.2   Summary of the key findings

The main findings of this study underscore a significant pattern - Grade 10 EFAL teachers do incorporate reading strategies, albeit with a notable dearth in both quantity and diversity. Consequently, this deficiency constrains Grade 10 EFAL learners, depriving them of opportunities to engage with a broad spectrum of reading strategies and approaches. Thus, the research outcomes unambiguously advocate the imperative for the DBE to institute comprehensive training for teachers, specifically centered around reading techniques. This pedagogical enhancement, particularly focused on the adept usage of reading strategies and approaches, emerges as an indispensable avenue for elevating learners' reading comprehension. This study was fundamentally motivated by the intention to explore strategies and approaches employed in nurturing Grade 10 EFAL reading comprehension. Anchored in Bartlett's seminal work (1932) and Nunan's schema theory (1999), the data collection process was meticulously guided by a set of key questions that stood as a beacon throughout this study:

What are the reading strategies and approaches used by Grade 10 EFAL teachers in the Bushbuckridge region when teaching reading comprehension?

The data collected under this question revealed the following issues:

- In the Grade 10 EFAL context, teachers acknowledge the usage of learners' pre-existing background knowledge as a means of gauging their cognitive starting point and subsequently building upon it, revealing an inherent awareness of reading strategies. However, further probing deeper uncovers a noticeable void of a lack of robust theoretical understanding among teachers regarding the implementation of strategies to enhance reading comprehension. Notably, one salient strategy that surfaces is rooted in schema theory, emphasising the efficacy of capitalising on learners' prior knowledge. Nevertheless, the potency of this approach predominantly caters to proficient readers, who possess the capacity to extract meaning from textual content. In contrast, struggling readers find themselves inadequately equipped to independently navigate and comprehend the text, rendering this strategy inadequate in aiding them to derive meaning (Carr, 1984; Grabe & Staller, 2013). This insight seamlessly aligns with the observations of Hattan and Alexander (2020), asserting that learners' activation of prior knowledge serves as a foundation for bridging the cognitive divide between their existing understanding and novel information presented to them. As alluded to earlier, a distinct dichotomy emerges - while skilled readers adeptly employ this strategy, learners grappling with reading challenges predominantly concentrate their efforts on deciphering individual word meanings, underscoring the pronounced stratification in strategy usage based on varying levels of reading proficiency.

- Although the use of schema or background knowledge plays a fundamental role in learners' abilities to develop reading skills, employing this strategy may be difficult in EFAL contexts since most learners do not have prior knowledge of the target language (Bharuthram, 2017; Coffi, 2017; Madikiza et al., 2020; Omidire, 2022; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016; Zano, 2020). According to Wilkinson and Son (2011), learners may not have a schema that is appropriate to the material in some cases, or they might require assistance activating the necessary schema to understand a text. For this reason, learners may not be able to employ prior knowledge to understand the reading text. As a result, the

teacher must be prepared to "build new background knowledge while also activating existing background knowledge" (Wilkinson & Son, 2011:362).

- Some teachers employ the summarising reading strategy to enhance EFAL learners' reading comprehension. However, the teacher provides summaries of the reading text since learners are unable to create their summaries. This is a challenge as learners need to control their learning that is learners should be taught to make their summaries. The teacher's role should be to facilitate the learning process; learners should be actively involved in the learning process. When the teacher makes summaries, the learning process is passive and teacher-centred where else, the learning approach should be learner-centred. This is in line with Owen and Mantlana (2017: 44) who argue that: "EFAL learners lack the higher order reading skills such as skimming and identifying keywords which are critical for the learners to develop the ability to summarise English text and comprehend it". According to schema theory for effective learning to occur, learners should actively engage with the reading text (Bartlett, 1932). This means that instead of teachers making summaries, they should teach learners how to summarise reading text.

- Teachers utilise the generating and asking question reading strategy to help learners make connections to the reading text and to see where learners are lacking understanding. Literature to the present study shows that asking questions encourages learners to actively participate in the reading process (McEwan, 2004; Caddy, 2016; Pardede, 2010). It is also seen as a learner-centred approach to reading as it allows learners to answer to the text-related questions (Carr, 1981; Brevik, 2019; Palinscar & Brown 1894). Woloshyn et al. (1990) at that asking questions helps good readers focus on the most significant part of a text. Furthermore, asking questions allows the teacher to continually verify if learners understand what is being taught during the process of teaching and learning. This means that teachers should ask questions with the purpose of assisting learners to make meaning of the reading text and to see where

learners are lacking so that they can find alternative measures to solve the problem.

- Another strategy that Grade 10 EFAL teachers employed is making predictions, where teachers ask questions to allow learners to guess the kind of information, they are most likely to find in the text. Jufri (2018) highlights that making predictions is not automatically available in learners' memories since most of Grade 10 EFAL learners are not native speakers of English. They are not familiar with most text. As a result, teachers should facilitate the mastery of this strategy by choosing text that are familiar to the learners.

- Teachers employed single strategy approach to reading since most teachers encouraged their learners to identify key words in finding the main theme of the reading text. This is in line with Wilkinson and Son (2011) who explain that:

    The term 'single wave' relates to research done in the 1970s and early 1980s that focused on the impact of training learners' individual comprehension strategies in comprehending a single text. Many of these studies "have targeted special population of learners who were at risk for academic failure or who were learning English as a second language (Wilkinson & Son, 2011: 362).

This is a challenge as literature to the present study shows that learners benefit from using multiple reading strategies (Erasmus, 2022; Madikiza et al., 2020; Zano, 2020). Moreover, schema theorists argue that for learners to develop as critical readers, they need to be an active interaction between the reader, the author, and the text. The use of single strategy can hinder the progress of EFAL learners to read for meaning.

What are the challenges experienced by Grade 10 EFAL learners when implementing strategies and approaches for reading comprehension?

- Learners, as observed, display a degree of familiarity with reading strategies. However, akin to their teachers, a comprehensive grasp of the nuanced application of these strategies appears to elude them. To illustrate, learners could articulate the strategies they employ, yet it becomes apparent that certain learners find this approach less efficacious (Learner 3, School A, 2021, focus

group discussion). Examining existing literature reveals a parallel concern where certain teachers resort to ineffective strategies (Brevik, 2019; Rule & Land, 2017; Vundla, 2020). An illustrative instance emerges in School D, where teacher 5 employs summary writing across all learners – a practice that poses challenges as no singular strategy can be universally applicable to address the gamut of reading difficulties (Ali & Razali, 2019; Carr, 1981). Anchored in schema theory, effective learning hinges upon the triadic engagement between the reader, the author, and the text (Bartlett, 1932; Nunan, 1999). This underscores the necessity of equipping learners with the proficiency to wield a diverse array of reading strategies to effectively navigate varied reading challenges.

- Some learners face challenges when attempting to craft their own summaries of the reading text (Learner 7, School D, 2021, focus group discussion; Learner 9, School D, 2021, focus group discussion). This aligns with insights garnered from semi-structured interviews with teachers, where a subset of them acknowledged employing summary writing to offer learners a concise overview of the text's content. The learners' viewpoints accentuate the imperfect implementation of this strategy, often relying on the summaries provided by teachers. A survey of literature underscores that EFAL learners frequently lack HOTS like summary writing and prediction-making (Bharuthram, 2012; Omidire, 2022; Olifant et al., 2020; Rule & Land, 2017). This links effortlessly with schema theory, suggesting that struggling readers might find summary writing challenging due to difficulties in extracting meaning from the text (Carr, 1981; Grabe & Staller, 2013). Honig, Diamond, and Gutlohn (2000) alongside Mills (2008) emphasise that grappling readers struggle in identifying topic sentences and essential terms, thereby impeding their capacity to construct their own summaries. The implication emerges that if learners wrestle with summarisation, their ability to comprehend while reading is compromised.

- Another notable finding from this question is that certain learners encounter difficulties in reading for meaning (Learner 5, School A, 2021, focus group discussion; Learner 4, School C, 2021, focus group discussion). The literature

review underscores that many EFAL learners grapple with decoding skills (Carr & Levy 1990; Linake, 2021; Tunmer & Chapman 2012; Zano & Phatudi, 2019). The theory of bottom-up processing posits that if readers can decode letter sounds, they can read words and infer meaning from the text (Eskey 1988; Rumelhart, 1980). Tunmer and Chapman (2012) further stipulate that decoding ability aids reading comprehension from the base—comprehending individual words—ascending to sentences, paragraphs, and the entire text. This underscores the role of adequate vocabulary knowledge in developing decoding skills (Zano & Phatudi, 2019). Vocabulary forms the foundation for learners' comprehension of reading texts, their grasp of the purpose of reading hinges on their vocabulary prowess. It can be contended that learners struggle with reading for meaning because some teachers do not furnish them with activities that foster vocabulary growth. For instance, teacher 1 leans towards leveraging learners' existing knowledge to enhance their reading comprehension. However, this approach can pose challenges as most EFAL learners lack sufficient vocabulary.There were language barriers experienced by the Grade 10 EFAL learners. Almost all the learners speak a language other than English at home. As a result, it is difficult for them to use the English language with proficiency (Learner 5, School A, 2021, focus group discussion; Learner 7, School D, 2021, focus group discussion). This corroborates with findings from the semi-structured interviews since some teachers mentioned that their learners experience language problems (Teacher 5; Teacher 3, 2021 semi-structured interviews). Reviewed literature shows that sometimes reading problems are mistakenly associated with language problems (Bharuthram, 2017; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). Additionally, Mavuru and Ramnarain (2020) highlight that South African EFAL teachers still use traditional method of teaching reading such as pointing fingers to the print and teaching language in isolation. This study argues that teachers need to be equipped with the know-how of the use of reading strategies. Klawijk (2015) argues that the method used by EFAL teachers need revisions.

- Mirroring their teachers, learners rely on a limited array of strategies to grapple with reading challenges. Inadequate implementation of effective reading strategies by EFAL teachers translates into poor academic performance among

EFAL learners (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). Learners' grasp of the true purpose behind employing reading strategies and approaches becomes compromised when teachers predominantly use their personal preferences. For learners to proficiently harness reading strategies, it is imperative that teachers possess a comprehensive understanding of their effective application. Anderson (1994) elucidates that the usage of background knowledge does not inherently present itself to learners; it is the teachers' responsibility to activate or aid learners in constructing new cognitive frameworks. This facilitation becomes untenable unless teachers themselves possess the requisite knowledge.

Which reading strategies are stipulated in the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12?

The study used the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10–12 to address this question. The study revealed varying responses from the teachers' interviews and learners focus group discussion:

- McEwan's "Effective reading strategies" (2004) are integrated with varying depth into the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12. However, the CAPS document lacks clear elucidation on the practical implementation of each reading strategy, omitting concrete examples of their application. Additionally, a survey of literature underscores the advantageous nature of possessing comprehension strategy proficiency for both EFAL teachers and learners (Ali & Razali, 2019; Erasmus, 2022; Klapwijk, 2015; Omidire, 2022). This underscores the issue that instruction in reading strategies is either marginalised or afforded minimal attention. This is disconcerting, particularly considering that the EFAL CAPS for Grades 10-12 seeks to cultivate learners who are astute critical thinkers, adept problem solvers, and capable of "organising and managing themselves and their activities responsibly" (DBE, 2011b:10).

- The EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12 unmistakably delineates the pedagogical approaches for teaching reading as communicative, text-based, process-oriented, and integrated. This perspective mirrors the consensus in the reviewed literature, which underscores reading strategies as intricate endeavours involving interactive reader-text engagement and a multitude of

skills (Anderson, 1994; Nurdianingsih, 2021; Ulker, 2017). However, this study's findings spotlight a shortfall. The CAPS document falls short in furnishing teachers with adequate guidance for effective reading instruction. While many teachers recognise the hurdles learners face, they grapple to proffer suitable remedies for the encountered predicaments (EFAL teacher 2, EFAL teacher 3, EFAL teacher 4, and EFAL teacher 6, semi-structured interviews, 2021). This underscores that the CAPS document's guidance falls insufficient in addressing the teachers' challenges, given its lack of explicit direction on how to effectively impart reading comprehension strategies to learners.Although reading is mentioned throughout the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12, the term reading is not clearly defined in the CAPS document. Furthermore, the CAPS document for Grades 10-12 stipulates that reading skill is crucial for successful learning across the curriculum (DBE, 2011). In addition, a learner develops reading proficiency a significant amount of reading and viewing (DBE, 2011). The findings to this study show that Grade 10 learners do not have much exposure to the English language outside the classroom because many learners do not speak English at their homes. EFAL learners may not develop a skill to read for meaning by simply reading various texts because some learners find it difficult to read independently and comprehend what they are reading. Reviewed literature shows that reading comprehension requires effective use of reading strategies by individual learners (Linake & Mokhele, 2019; Olifant et al., 2020). Schema theory asserts that for active reading to occur, there should be active interaction between the reader, the author, and the text (Carr, 1981; Erasmus, 2022; Grabe, 1991). This means that EFAL teachers should teach learners to apply appropriate reading strategies to read for meaning.

- The CAPS document for Grade 10-12 does not clearly state the significance of the pre-reading phase as an approach to reading. Reviewed literature shows that policy document often lacks sufficient explanation (Elmore & Sykes, 1992; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). This is a challenge because EFAL teachers must use their pedagogical knowledge to decide on the methods to teach content. The challenge in this activity may be that teachers lack theoretical knowledge on how to teach reading strategies, since "English teachers are confused" about

how to "apply relevant teaching strategies in the context of learning processes" (Solikhah, 2018:73). Another finding is that during-reading phase prepares learners for reading for meaning by means of applying reading strategies such as making predictions, using background knowledge, and using contextual cues. The literature reviewed shows that many EFAL learners struggle to use complex reading skills mention above as they are mainly poor readers (Erasmus, 2022; Rule & Land, 2017). This means that they still struggle with decoding skills. To improve word knowledge teachers should improve learners' vocabulary. The post-reading phase and the suggested activities are sufficiently explained in the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12 and will provide EFAL learners great opportunities to learn to read form meaning. The learners' abilities to read for meaning during the post-reading phase will transpire from pre-reading and the during-reading phase. If skills are not successfully incorporated during the first two phases, reading for meaning will not be developed during the post-reading phase.

6.3 Teachers' recommendations

Teachers advocate for a strategy that harnesses learners' pre-existing knowledge to encourage comprehension (Teacher 3 and Teacher 5, 2021, semi-structured interviews). Notably, teachers must possess a nuanced understanding of their learners' backgrounds to pose questions that facilitate connections to the reading material (Hattan & Alexander, 2020; Kostons & Van der Werf, 2015). However, the process of activating this background knowledge is deliberate and time-intensive, demanding teacher scaffolding, particularly when personal connections to the text remain tenuous.

The development of schemas, aiding readers in navigating novel concepts, is rooted in past experiences. Both teachers and learners should leverage these experiences to enrich reading skills (Bartlett, 1932; Nunan, 1999). However, this approach may benefit proficient teachers and readers, as discussed earlier. Given that many EFAL learners grapple with decoding, the usage of background knowledge proves impractical for struggling readers. To address this, teachers should guide learners from decoding to comprehension, recognising the symbiotic relationship between the two. Numerous teachers concur that providing summaries enhances learners'

comprehension (Teacher 3 and Teacher 5, 2021, semi-structured interviews). Creating summaries is considered a higher-order reading skill, albeit one that few Grade 10 EFAL learners master (Owen & Mantlana, 2017). Consequently, it is pivotal to instill the art of self-generated summaries in these learners, enhancing their reading comprehension growth. According to schema theory, teachers should progressively delegate summarisation responsibilities to learners, enabling independent mastery of the skill (Bartlett, 1932; Honig et al., 2000). Empowering learners in this way cultivates active learning and self-accountability.

The strategy of generating and posing questions is recommended by many teachers to facilitate text-context connections (Teacher 1, Teacher 4, and Teacher 6, 2021, semi-structured interviews). This sentiment aligns with Wood, Woloshyn, and Willoughby's assertion (1995) that adept readers concentrate on a text's pivotal details through relevant questions. While this sounds promising, the effectiveness of the strategy can be challenged when learners choose not to respond or struggle to express themselves in English. In this context, teaching learners to formulate questions during their reading process might prove more beneficial than responding to teachers' questions.

These recommendations were forged in response to the first research question during online semi-structured interviews: 'What are the reading strategies and approaches used by Grade 10 EFAL teachers in the Bushbuckridge region when teaching reading comprehension?' (Appendix A). The consensus among teachers is that harnessing learners' background knowledge is pivotal for robust reading development, an opinion echoed by EFAL teacher 1 during the 2021 semi-structured interviews: "I refer them to the community where they are coming from, asking them what they know about the topic which is related to their community." Effective utilisation of learners' background knowledge should culminate in the construction of mental models aiding the assimilation of latest information, as emphasised by Nunan (1999) in his call for both teachers and learners to draw from past experiences to enrich reading skills. These assertions find theoretical backing, as outlined by schema theory, which posits that learners form diverse schemas to comprehend latest information (Bartlett, 1932). Furthermore, Pichert and Anderson (1977) contend that adept readers consistently link their prior knowledge to new textual information. This underscores that employing

prior knowledge during the learning-to-read process can enhance comprehension, though learners might not consistently use their background knowledge as teachers anticipate. In this context, teachers bear the responsibility of overseeing learners' reading comprehension, echoing Nunan's (1999) stance as discussed in Chapter 3.

6.4   Learners' recommendations

The recommendations stem from insights gained during the learners' focus group discussion on the challenges experienced by Grade 10 EFAL teachers and learners when implementing reading comprehension strategies and approaches. The learners' perspectives are of paramount importance as they offer teachers valuable insights into the effective utilisation of reading strategies to enhance comprehension.

A pivotal recommendation voiced by many learners is the practice of reading the title before reading the text. One learner emphasised, "I need to read the title first before I can read and understand the passage" (Learner 4, School C, 2021, focus group interview). Interestingly, while many teachers endorse utilising learners' background knowledge to enhance comprehension, they often harbor doubts regarding learners' autonomous reading comprehension capabilities. This juxtaposition signifies a gap in understanding reading strategy application. When learners read the title to extract meaning from the text, they employ pertinent prior knowledge to construct new schemas. This perspective aligns with Anderson's assertion (1994) that a reader comprehends a message when they can invoke a schema that encapsulates the objects and events described in the message (Anderson, 1994: 173). As mentioned earlier, utilising background knowledge can enable learners to read for meaning, albeit this skill may be more applicable to adept readers who can navigate this complex process.

Another noteworthy recommendation from several learners is the practice of reading the passage three times (Learner 3, School A, 2021, focus group discussion; Learner 2, School B, 2021, focus group discussion). Given the atypicality of EFAL learners instantly comprehending and retaining a text due to limited exposure to the LoLT (Coffi, 2017; Klapwijk, 2015; Ntatamala et al., 2019), this recommendation gains significance. Learners should approach the text with three readings: the first to acquaint themselves, the second to forge connections, and the third to derive

meaning. This approach aligns with reviewed literature that advocates a three-stage reading process (Caddy, 2016; McEwan, 2004; Omidire, 2022; Pardede, 2010). However, the study's findings indicate that time constraints hinder learners from engaging with the text, as one teacher lamented due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Teacher 1, 2021, semi-structured interviews). Contrastingly, Anyiendah, Odundo, and Kibui (2020) propose improving teacher training to incorporate modern instructional practices, including ICT integration, to enhance reading comprehension. Similarly, Kung (2017) contends that while empirical evidence highlights the importance of reading strategies in most African countries, exam-focused reading habits often prevent explicit instruction. This might also hold true for South Africa. Teachers are inclined to focus on completing the syllabus rather than ensuring comprehension of the reading material. By cultivating a proper understanding of reading strategies' application, both teachers and learners could potentially shift their perspectives to embrace strategies that benefit both parties.

A distinct perspective arose during a 2021 focus group discussion at School B, where learners recommended reviewing questions before reading the text (Learner 2, School B, 2021, focus group discussion). This approach, they argued, serves as a navigational guide, outlining the expected outcomes upon completing the reading journey (Ntsala et al., 2021). By doing so, learners could simultaneously extract answers while navigating the text. Implicit in this recommendation is the idea that learners should self-monitor, assessing their comprehension alignment with anticipated objectives during the reading process. This pedagogical insight seamlessly aligns with schema theory, which emphasises the dynamic interaction between the reader and the textual content (Brown, 2004; Hermosa, 2006).

In a separate focus group discussion, a learner offered a distinct perspective by proposing an individualised reading approach, allowing her the time needed to grasp the text comprehensively (Learner 5, School E, 2021, focus group discussion). As mentioned earlier, certain learners perceive the challenges faced by teachers, including the pressure to cover the syllabus rigorously. Consequently, they proactively adopt a stance that supports their self-directed learning. This stance echoes Maja's (2015) assertion that learners should be exposed to interaction strategies to enhance their ability to express themselves effectively in the second language.

6.5   Recommendations by the CAPS document

The recommendations stemming from the analysis of the CAPS document revolve around the question, 'Which reading strategies are stipulated in the EFAL CAPS document for Grades 10-12?' This inquiry, forming the basis of the document analysis schedule, sheds light on essential guidelines for effective reading instruction.

Foremost among the CAPS document's recommendations is the imperative for teachers to enhance learners' reading and writing competencies, enabling them to evolve into discerning, lifelong readers. As extensively discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, the significance of reading strategies pervades the academic spectrum, with learners' reading proficiency being a pivotal predictor of academic achievement (Brevik, 2019; Zano, 2020). Thus, it becomes incumbent upon teachers to equip EFAL learners with the requisite reading strategies essential for cultivating adept readers. Pre-reading activities are pivotal in this endeavour, as they furnish learners with a preliminary understanding of the material before embarking on the actual reading. Acknowledging the literature's contention that learners draw upon their prior knowledge to derive meaning from texts (Linake, 2019; Ntsala, 2019; Zano, 2020), engaging learners in discussions about the topic can effectively activate pertinent concepts and language. Another strategy advocated by the CAPS document pertains to skimming and scanning. Skimming, a quintessential top-down reading strategy, empowers EFAL learners to grasp a text's main ideas, consequently priming prior knowledge for a subsequent, more in-depth reading (Okkinga, 2018; Pierre, 2021).

The study's findings underscore learners' deficiencies in making personal summaries, attributed to their lack of skimming, and scanning skills (Teacher 3, 2021, semi-structured interviews). Teachers can scaffold this process by demonstrating skimming techniques, encouraging learners to run their fingers along lines while identifying relevant vocabulary. Meanwhile, scanning, an effective bottom-up technique, prompts learners to begin at the word, phrase, or sentence level (Linake, 2019). This method involves searching for specific words or concepts within a text, proving invaluable for EFAL learners seeking information or responding to activity questions. The implication

is clear - schools should create a supportive classroom atmosphere to enhance the development of learners' reading comprehension skills.

Furthermore, EFAL teachers are encouraged to furnish learners with graded reading materials, aligning the complexity of the texts with learners' proficiency levels. Overloading a text with unfamiliar words can lead to cognitive strain, culminating in frustration and negative associations with reading. This assertion resonates with schema theory, asserting the need for teachers to match reading materials with readers' levels (An, 2013). This prudent selection of appropriate reading materials not only facilitates classroom engagement but also promotes incremental enhancement of learners' reading aptitude.

The recommendations sourced from the CAPS document's analysis underscore the significance of equipping learners with effective reading strategies. These strategies encompass enhancing prior knowledge activation through discussions, teaching skimming, and scanning techniques, and ensuring that reading materials align with learners' proficiency levels. By adhering to these recommendations, teachers can construct a more conducive learning environment, nurturing proficient readers and create a culture of comprehensive understanding.

6.6   Implications and recommendations of the study

Based on the amalgamation of findings from teacher interviews, learners' focus-group discussions, document analysis, and the extensive literature review, a resounding affirmation emerges - reading strategies and approaches undeniably augment the reading comprehension of EFAL learners. Consequently, this study strongly advocates for targeted reading interventions aimed at resolving the persistent reading challenges prevalent in the EFAL context. Given the nuanced dynamics, intensive interventions are warranted, with an awareness campaign imperative to highlight the shared struggles faced by both EFAL learners and teachers (Brevik, 2019; Erasmus, 2022; Zano, 2022). Educational programs should then be meticulously devised to ameliorate these issues. In this regard, the DBE should prioritise the enrollment of teachers in comprehensive training programs geared toward enhancing their mastery of reading strategies (Graham et al., 2020; Reflianto et al, 2022; Zano, 2023).

However, the emphasis must extend beyond mere training attendance; it must encompass the active implementation of acquired knowledge in their pedagogical practices.

Furthermore, a compelling recommendation takes shape, advocating for the introduction of structured reading programs specifically tailored for teachers by the South African DBE. This entails carving out dedicated time within the teaching schedule for focused reading activities and encouraging a platform for weekly discussions of the material covered. Active learner engagement during the process of teaching and learning to read should be the norm, shifting away from teachers reading on behalf of learners to encouraging independent reading. To enhance effective strategy utilisation, the study promotes the adoption of explicit instructional techniques, particularly when introducing learners to an array of reading strategies. Recognising that strategy employment is a learned skill, EFAL teachers play a pivotal role in nurturing this skill through intensive strategy instruction during reading sessions.

Moreover, the study underscores the significance of instilling self-monitoring skills in learners. The ability to assess their comprehension using reading strategies empowers learners to identify areas of confusion and proactively enhance their understanding before proceeding. This recommendation encompasses the incorporation of prior knowledge activation, making pre-reading connections to the topic, employing inference-making strategies, and attempting to summarise texts. Beyond foundational strategies, the study posits that EFAL teachers should impart HOTS, including inference-making, skimming, scanning, and identifying keywords. These skills, when honed, culminate in the ability to effectively summarise English texts, and comprehend them. The development of learners' summarisation abilities is pivotal for their academic success, warranting focused teaching efforts. While some strategies may not come intuitively to EFAL learners, targeted instruction has the potential to enhance their grasp. Remarkably, existing research aligns with these recommendations, highlighting the positive impact of interactive text engagement and explicit teaching of reading methods on learners' reading comprehension skills (Linake & Mokhele 2019; Madikiza et al., 2018; Zano, 2023). The challenges posed by utilising reading strategies are acknowledged not only by learners but also by teachers, reinforcing the significance of focused strategies to surmount these difficulties.

Considering these findings, an intriguing observation surfaces: minimal overlap between the perspectives of teachers and learners regarding the application of reading strategies. However, this study contends that the anticipation for effective strategy utilisation resonates deeply among both parties, evident in their shared acknowledgement of employing such strategies. Consequently, it is robustly argued that the adoption of reading strategies and approaches bears undeniable importance, invigorating learners' reading comprehension and wielding considerable influence as a predictor of academic triumph.

The study underscores the value of integrating technological applications to elevate EFAL learners' reading comprehension. As Sevnarayan (2022c) asserts, podcasts and vodcasts are indispensable tools to cater to diverse learning styles, accommodating visual, auditory, and kinesthetic preferences. This diversification ensures that comprehension skills are honed through avenues beyond traditional reading (Klapwijk, 2015; Sari, 2017). Leveraging technology effectively bolsters reading comprehension, bridging the epistemic gap between learners and the text. This is particularly relevant in the current educational landscape, with the transformative impact of COVID-19 reshaping the learning paradigm. For instance, teachers can establish communication channels like WhatsApp and Telegram groups to stimulate discussions centered around the reading material, creating a community of practice.

In terms of vocabulary enrichment, the study highlights its pivotal role in reading development and comprehension. Learners with robust vocabulary tend to exhibit higher comprehension scores, emphasising the interdependence of vocabulary and comprehension (NRP, 2000). Acknowledging the context where learners often lack rich vocabulary backgrounds, teachers are urged to curate materials closely related to learners' experiences, nurturing early reading comprehension development and monitoring progress diligently. The creation of competitive reading environments, complete with awards, competitions, and recognition, further enhances learners' motivation to engage actively with reading.

The study exposes the challenge of overcrowded EFAL classrooms, hindering the effective implementation of various reading strategies. A prudent recommendation

calls for the limitation of classroom sizes in the Bushbuckridge area, ensuring teachers can dedicate adequate time to comprehensive reading instruction. Alternatively, the flipped classroom pedagogy can be harnessed, with learners completing reading tasks at home and in-class discussions steered by teachers.

Furthermore, the study underscores the paramount importance of reading culture cultivation. Robust reading programs encompassing activities like debates, spelling bees, reading clubs, and comprehensive library setups should be instated, creating a reading-focused ethos among EFAL learners. Another notable recommendation revolves around the three-stage reading strategy - pre-reading, reading, and post-reading. This comprehensive approach offers tailored strategies accommodating learners' diverse backgrounds and learning needs. This is aligned with the schema theory, recognising learners' individuality, and advocating for adaptive strategies.

Exploring effective reading strategies in crowded classrooms, exploring teachers' prioritisation of strategies, and scrutinising the impact of technology on learners' comprehension are worthy pursuits. Additionally, the influence of learners' learning styles and preferences on strategy efficacy warrants investigation. The present study's findings, while providing a solid foundation, call for extended research to refine our understanding of optimal reading strategies for EFAL learners.

6.7   Limitations of the study

The limitations inherent in this study underscore the geographical challenges that impeded direct researcher-participant interaction during data collection. The context of the COVID-19 pandemic, marked by stringent lockdown regulations during levels 5 and 4, necessitated strict adherence to physical distancing protocols. Consequently, the selection of the data collection method was judiciously influenced by these restrictive circumstances. The ensuing separation of the researcher and participants, while pragmatic, curtailed opportunities for on-site participant engagement and field observations. Furthermore, the study's scope was confined to a specific geographic locale, encompassing six schools within the Bushbuckridge region of South Africa. This spatial limitation inherently restricts the generalisability of the findings to a broader context, as they might not be indicative of prevailing trends on a nationwide scale. This regional focus, while providing valuable insights into localised dynamics, cannot be

extrapolated to encapsulate the entirety of the educational landscape. Another potential constraint revolves around the veracity of responses provided by teachers. There exists the possibility that participants might have provided information that aligns with expected outcomes, potentially embellishing their proficiency in utilising reading strategies and approaches within their teaching methods. To mitigate this concern, a comprehensive approach was adopted, cross-referencing insights gleaned from teachers' interviews with the perspectives voiced during learners' focus group discussions. Moreover, a transparent discourse ensued, ensuring participants comprehended the study's objectives and were encouraged to contribute candid responses.

6.8   Concluding remarks

Several studies that have investigated strategies for reading have hinted at its importance in enhancing learners' reading comprehension, particularly EFAL learners. The theoretical framework underpinning this study underscores the inability to overstate the role of reading strategies in enhancing Grade 10 EFAL reading comprehension. Examining the perceptions of both teachers and learners regarding the application of these strategies is crucial, as it explores the phenomenon and offers actionable solutions. By exploring diverse viewpoints from various stakeholders, the study sheds light on the disconnect between actual reading strategies and learners' expectations.

Nonetheless, a concerning observation arises when analysing teachers' discussions about the challenges faced by learners. Surprisingly, teachers fail to articulate how their instructional practices contribute to the reading comprehension difficulties experienced by EFAL learners. Rule and Land (2017) assert that inadequate approaches to reading instruction can adversely affect learners' competence. According to Brevik (2019), teachers' comprehension of various reading strategies is pivotal in comprehending how learners evolve into strategic readers, and how integrating these strategies harmoniously with other aspects of reading comprehension instruction is imperative. Intriguingly, none of the participating teachers in this study pointed out their instructional strategies as potential contributors to learners' reading challenges.

The current study explores the perceptions of Grade 10 EFAL teachers and learners regarding the usage of reading strategies and approaches. Its contribution lies in adding to the existing body of literature on reading strategies, aiming to enhance the reading comprehension of EFAL learners. Through online semi-structured interviews, teachers were provided with a platform to introspect on their competency in employing reading strategies, as well as to identify challenges and requirements concerning these strategies and approaches. The findings underscore the pivotal role of teachers' adeptness in implementing diverse teaching strategies during instruction, thereby enhancing EFAL learners' reading comprehension.

However, a noteworthy discovery emerges from the study's results. While Grade 10 EFAL teachers indeed deploy reading strategies, they tend to utilise a limited number of strategies and approaches. Their explanation for this discrepancy is often attributed to time constraints imposed by the need to cover the syllabus, exacerbated by the overcrowded EFAL classrooms. This poses a substantial concern, as many learners struggle to read and comprehend autonomously. The resultant discouragement among learners could potentially lead to dropout rates. Addressing this issue necessitates comprehensive training for teachers on the effective use of reading strategies, thereby raising awareness of the pivotal role these strategies play in enhancing the development of EFAL learners' reading skills.

In contrast to the assertions made by both teachers and learners in this study, which underscore the pivotal role of reading strategies and approaches in the process of learning to read, a more nuanced perspective emerges. The reality becomes evident as certain teachers find themselves constrained by the immense enrolment numbers and the resultant time limitations, preventing them from employing a comprehensive array of strategies to cater to each learner's individual needs. Furthermore, the study exposes an aspect of Grade 10 EFAL teaching where some teachers adopt a teacher-centric approach to reading strategies, centered on providing explanations and summaries of the reading material. Unfortunately, this approach inadvertently curtails learners' opportunities to independently derive meaning from the text. Because of this approach, learners are deprived of the chance to employ effective reading strategies that empower them to construct meaning from the text. This deviation from the theoretical framework underpinning the study and the strategies outlined in the CAPS

document raises concerns. Notably, some teachers' strategies absolve learners of their own learning responsibilities, a departure from the intended approach that should promote learner autonomy. This disparity between learners' experiences and teachers' assertions occasionally gives rise to a disconnect. Nonetheless, preliminary findings shine light on the impediments thwarting the successful implementation of effective reading strategies in EFAL classrooms. Particularly, the pervasive language barrier experienced by EFAL learners emerges as a dominant challenge. The discourse argues in favour of EFAL teachers' involvement in specialised programs and training dedicated to enhancing their comprehension and application of reading strategies. By honing their grasp of these strategies, teachers can better navigate the multifaceted challenges posed by EFAL contexts and create a more conducive environment for effective reading instruction.

Given that many learners are not native speakers of the target language, the investigation sought to unearth the challenges Grade 10 teachers face while implementing these strategies in their instruction of EFAL learners. The outcomes underscored the difficulties faced by Grade 10 EFAL learners in grappling with the English language, culminating in hurdles in comprehending and engaging with texts autonomously. However, the broader objective encompassed comprehending the diverse viewpoints presented by both teachers and learners, thereby paving the way for the formulation of all-encompassing recommendations. These recommendations, which include advocating for training programs to elevate teaching practices, have the potential to bring about a transformative shift. By instilling explicit instruction on strategy implementation for both teachers and learners alike, the study envisions a trajectory towards heightened reading comprehension. Consequently, this could catalyse the motivation of EFAL learners, prompting them to actively participate in reading pursuits and consequently achieve success in their academic pursuits.

In conclusion, the challenges encountered within varied learning environments concerning reading strategies and approaches demand meticulous investigation to instill a rewarding learning experience and enhance the reading proficiencies of EFAL learners. The evolving landscape of South African education, marked by curriculum changes, necessitates corresponding measures of teacher training and support to realign their pedagogical paradigms, methodologies, and values with the evolving

curriculum. While it is acknowledged that teachers may grapple with the application of effective reading strategies, the provision of adequate guidance and instruction can pave the way for a shared journey of discovery for both teachers and learners. In this collaborative endeavour, the process of teaching and learning can evolve into a potent and fruitful enterprise. In this pursuit, the journey of enhancing reading skills becomes a beacon illuminating the path towards empowerment and academic triumph for EFAL learners, forging a legacy of knowledge that transcends the boundaries of the classroom.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Teachers' online semi-structured interview questions

1. Describe your own philosophy about reading comprehension strategies and or approaches, how you define it, and how you implement it.

2. From the list below, choose three (3) strategies which you are most likely to use while teaching reading comprehension.
A) Generating and asking questions
B) Making predictions
C) Summarising
D) Using learners' background knowledge
E) Making Inferences
F) Comprehension monitoring
G) Visualisation

3. Explain the reason for your choice of each strategy.

4. What is your perception regarding your learners' abilities to read with comprehension?

5. Which method do your learners seem to understand the most when teaching reading comprehension? Explain.

Appendix B: Learners' focus group interview questions

1. Have you heard of reading strategies or tactics to assist you understand a passage in class? Explain.

2. Have you been taught about using key words to finding meaning in a text?

3. How do key words help you understand a reading passage? Explain.

4. Describe the skills/strategies you use while reading a text to improve your understanding of a text/passage.

5. Which skills/strategies do you use the most? Explain.

6. Where did you learn the skill/strategy you mentioned above? Explain.

Appendix C: Document analysis questions

1. What are the approaches recommended/ prescribed by CAPS for teaching reading comprehension for Grade 10 English first additional language?
2. What are the most effective strategies for reading, prescribed by the CAPS document?
3. How many hours are allocated for teaching reading in the EFAL classroom per week?
4. Which theoretical perspective/s guide/s the approaches that are used in the CAPS curriculum?

Appendix D: Parents' consent form

<div align="right">

P O Box 1118

Mkhuhlu

1246

12 March 2021

</div>

Dear prospective parent

This serves as an invitation to your child to be participate in the study: An exploration of strategies and approaches used in teaching reading comprehension: A case study of selected Grade 10 EFAL classrooms in Mpumalanga, South Africa.

My name is Khoza Brain Emanuel. I am a student at University of South Africa, and I am conducting a study in the department of English studies. As a student of English, I would want to request your consent to gather information from your child for my PhD research project. My research topic is "An exploration of strategies and approaches used in teaching reading comprehension: A case study of selected Grade 10 EFAL classrooms in Mpumalanga, South Africa".

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This research should gather crucial data that I could use to further my exploration on the use of reading strategies and approaches in the Grade 10 EFAL classrooms by both teachers and learners to provide guidelines on the effective use of reading strategies.

WHY IS YOUR CHILD INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

There is a general outcry of the use of effective reading strategies particularly in the English First Additional context. English is a challenge to many South African learners. This study wishes to address this problem.

Your child is therefore chosen to participate in this study because he/she is a learner in one of the schools in South Africa and he/she speak a language other than English at home. The child may assist in providing valuable information pertaining to the use of reading strategies. Learners in Grade 10 constitute population sample of this study. The privacy and anonymity of every participant will be respected, and they are free to stop taking part at any moment.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF YOUR CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Learners are expected to participate in a focus group discussion. Every interview will last no longer than 1 hour. The interview schedule is set for March 2021.

CAN YOUR CHILD WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Your child is not obliged to consent to participation in this study because participation is entirely voluntary. If you allow your child to participate, you need to sign and retain the information sheet to give consent for your child to participate. Your child can stop participation at any moment without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no rewards for taking part in this research, however, since your child is a learner at Grade 10, he/she may want to reflect on the way he/she use reading strategies during reading.

ARE THEIR ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR YOUR CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

There will be no negative effects. Since no one will be aware that your child participated in the study. Nowhere will the name of your child be mentioned.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT YOUR CHILD CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND HIS/HER IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

In this study, anonymity and confidentiality will be upheld. Individual participants' responses and outcomes will remain confidential and only be used for this study.

There is an understanding between the researcher and the participants that no personal information will be shared. I shall protect their right to privacy.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

I will keep the data with me all the time. Since it will be password-protected, no one will be able to access it. The information from the interview will be captured as audio and save as password protected. To ensure that the information is safer, I will use a laptop rather than a cell phone because a cell phone is simpler to lose or misplace than a laptop.

WILL YOUR CHILD RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

There will be no compensation for taking part in this study.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

Yes.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

Contact the researcher at 0130020501 for any details, such as the research findings. You can also contact the researcher's mentor, Dr Sevnarayan on 012 429 382.

CONSENT FORM

Please check the appropriate boxes, enter names, and sign the form below if you allow your child to participate in this project.

I_____, parent of _____ hereby give consent to Khoza Brain Emanuel to work with my child in his study "An exploration of strategies and approaches used in teaching reading comprehension: A case study of selected Grade 10 EFAL classrooms in Mpumalanga, South Africa".

However, the information that will be gathered from my child should be applied to the study that Brain Emanuel Khoza has presented to me.

I_____, parent of_____ hereby refuse to consent to Brain Emanuel Khoza to work with my child in his study "An

exploration of strategies and approaches used in teaching reading comprehension: A case study of selected Grade 10 EFAL classrooms in Mpumalanga, South Africa".

Researcher's name and surname: Khoza Brain Emanuel

Signature_____

Parent's Surname and initial_____

Parent's Signature_____

Appendix E: Teachers' consent form

<div align="right">
P O Box 1118

Mkhuhlu

1246

12 March 2021
</div>

Dear prospective participants

Invitation to be part of the study: An exploration of strategies and approaches used in teaching reading comprehension: A case study of selected Grade 10 EFAL classrooms in Mpumalanga, South Africa.

My name is Khoza Brain Emanuel. I am a student at University of South Africa, and I am conducting a study in the department of English studies. I would want to ask you participate in my PHD thesis. Since you are a teacher of English at Grade 10. My research topic is "An exploration of strategies and approaches used in teaching reading comprehension: A case study of selected Grade 10 EFAL classrooms in Mpumalanga, South Africa".

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This research should gather crucial data that I could use to further my exploration on the use of reading strategies and approaches in the Grade 10 EFAL classrooms by both teachers and learners to provide guidelines on the effective use of reading strategies.

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY?

You have been selected to take part in this study because you teach English as a First Additional Language to Grade 10 learners at your school.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

I want to conduct semi-structured interviews with each English teacher in Grade 10 at your school. Every interview will last no more than an hour. Please take note that the study will respect your right to privacy and that you can revoke your consent at any moment.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Unfortunately, there are no financial rewards for participatingtaking part in this study. Since you teach English to teacher in Grade 10, you should be able to utilise this experience to reflect on the usage of effective reading strategies in your classroom.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA? I will keep the data with me all the time. Since it will be password-protected, no one will be able to access it. The information from the interview will be captured as audio and save as password protected. To ensure that the information is safer, I will use a laptop rather than a cell phone because a cell phone is simpler to lose or misplace than a laptop.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

Yes, the University of South Africa has granted ethical approval for the project.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

Contact the researcher at 0130020501 for any details, such as the research findings. You can also contact the researcher's mentor, Dr Sevarayan on 012 429 382.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (Surname and full names of the participants), Verify that the researcher who requested my permission to participate in this study fully disclosed the procedure, nature, expected drawbacks of participation, and potential advantages. I have read and comprehended the study as it is described in this fact sheet. I have had enough time to ask questions, therefore I am ready to take part in the study. I am aware that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to discontinue at any moment.

Participant's signature…………………………………………… Date…………………

Researcher's Name and Surname Mr. Khoza Brain Emanuel

Researcher's signature: Date: 12 March 2021

Appendix F: Letter to the department of education

Request for permission to conduct research at your schools

Enquiries: Khoza BE   P.O BOX 1118

Cell: 0760761235   Mkhuhlu

                                         1280

Email: Braine913@gmail.com   Date: 17 March 2021

The Head of Department

Department of Education

Private Bag X11341

Nelspruit

1200

Contact: Mr. Mthembu T.

Email: n.madishaba@mpuedu.gov.za

Dear Mr. Mthembu

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SOME OF YOUR SCHOOLS

I Khoza Brain Emanuel am doing research with Dr. Sevnarayan, K. senior lecturer in the Department of English Studies towards an English PHD (Code: DPCHS02) at the University of South Africa. I am hereby requested to conduct research in some of your schools that have met the requirements of the sampling technique that was used in the study. Namely: Gezinqondo high school; Madzuma High school; Makhosana Manzini high school; Chayaza high school; Mkhukhumba high school and Mkhuhlu high.

The title of my research is: "An exploration of strategies and approaches used in teaching reading comprehension: A case study of selected Grade 10 EAL classrooms in Mpumalanga, South Africa". The aim of the study is to explore three selected strategies (The use of prior knowledge, making predictions, and inferencing) and

approaches used to teach reading comprehension and whether or to what extent they are taught to Grade 10 learners in some South African (SA) high schools in Mpumalanga Province, specifically in the Bushbuckridge region.

Your schools have been selected because of the richness of data the researcher wish to explore. English is offered as a first additional language at your schools and the use of reading strategies is deemed important in such context. Also, the objective of this study may be well achieved in such a context.

The study will use qualitative design using exploratory case study approach where data will be collected from selected teachers and learners. The study will entail electronic interviewing of Grade 10 English first additional language teachers, conduction electronic qualitative questionnaire for learners, as well as document analysis all of which will be for the purpose of the current study.

The benefits of this study are that participants in this study will have the opportunity to verbalise their perception of the strategies and approaches for teaching reading comprehension in Grade 10 EFAL classrooms.

The risk associated with this study might be in covid 19 infections, of which precautionary measures will be taken. No visit will be made to schools during lockdown until it is safe to do so. All the data collection procedures will be administered online.

Feedback procedure will entail sending of summary of report of the study to the participants by the researcher.

Yours sincerely

Khoza BE

Researcher

Appendix G: Permission letter from the Department of Basic Education

education
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ikhamanga Building, Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Mpumalanga Province
Private Bag X11341, Mbombela, 1200
Tel: 013 766 5552/5115, Toll Free Line: 0800 203 116

Litiko le Temfundvo, Umryango we Fundo   Departement van Onderwys   Ndzawulo ya Dyondzo

Enquireis: DM Mtembu
Contact:013 – 766 5148

Mr Brian Emmanuel Khoza

PO Box 1118

Mkhuhlu

1280

Email: Brain913@gmail.com

RE: AN EXPLORATION OF STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES USED IN TEACHING READING COMMPREHENSION: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED GRADE 10 EFAL CLASSROOMS IN MPUMALANGA, SOUTH AFRICA
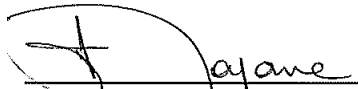
Your application to conduct research study was received and is therefore acknowledged. The tittle of your research project reads: **"An exploration of strategies and approaches used in teaching reading comprehension: A case study of selected grade 10 EFAL classrooms in Mpumalanga, South Africa".** I trust that the aims and the objectives of the study will benefit the whole department especially the beneficiaries. Your request is approved subject to you observing the provisions of the departmental research policy which is available in the department website. You are requested to adhere to your university's research ethics as spelt out in your research ethics.

In terms of the research policy, data or any research activity can be conducted after school hours as per appointment with affected participants and COVID -19 regulations to observed. You are also requested to share your findings with the relevant sections of the department so that we may consider implementing your findings if that will be in the best interest of the department. To this effect, your final approved research report (both soft and hard copy) should be submitted to the department so that your recommendations could be implemented. You may be required to prepare a presentation and present at the departments' annual research dialogue.

MPUMALANGA
THE PLACE OF THE RISING SUN

For more information kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5124/5148 Or n.madihlaba@mpuedu.gov.za
The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.

MRS LH MOYANE
[A] HEAD: EDUCATION

23 / 03 / 2021
DATE

Appendix H: Ethical clearance from the University of South Africa

UNISA | university of south africa

UNISA COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

17 July 2020

Dear Mr Khoza

| NHREC Registration # : REC-240816-052 |
| CREC Reference # : 2017-CHS-026 |
| Name : Mr Brain Emanuel Khoza |
| Student #:64102815 |

Decision: Ethics Approval from 17 July 2020 to 16 August 2023

_____

Researcher(s):   Brain Emanuel Khoza

+27760761235/ 0787629841

Braine913@gmail.com /64102815@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Ethics Committee on 17 July 2020 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the CREC

3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.

6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
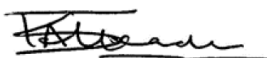
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date (16 August 2023). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number Dept-Eng-student-64102815 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Signature   Signature

Dr Josephine Alexander   Dr. E.E. Dube
DREC Chair : English   CREC Chair : CHS
E-mail: busarjo@unisa.ac.za   E-mail: dubeen@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429-3904   Tel: (012) 429-3892

Appendix I: Turnitin report

AN EXPLORATION OF READING STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES USED IN

TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED

GRADE 10 EFAL CLASSROOMS IN MPUMALANGA, SOUTH AFRICA

by

BRAIN EMANUEL KHOZA

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

at the

Word Count: 88351

Match Overview

24%

Matches

1	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	3%	>
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Appendix J: Language editing certificate

EDITOR'S LETTER

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

EDITING OF THESIS: MR. B. E Khoza

STUDENT NUMBER: 64102815

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (ENGLISH STUDIES)

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

TITLE: AN EXPLORATION OF STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES USED IN TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED GRADE 10 EFAL CLASSROOMS IN MPUMALANGA, SOUTH AFRICA

I hereby confirm that I have undertaken a rigorous and comprehensive critical review of the above-mentioned thesis. This review involved in-depth analysis and editing of various elements, encompassing the preliminary pages, chapters, references, and appendices. All edits and discussions were conducted using onscreen markup, ensuring meticulous attention to detail.

Throughout this editorial process, I provided valuable guidance on multiple aspects, including:

- Substantive and structural matters, ensuring the coherence and logical flow of ideas.

- Paragraph and sentence structure, enhancing clarity and coherence in the presentation of arguments.

- Language proficiency, encompassing the use of academic language, appropriate phrasing, and accurate labelling of figures and tables.

- Formatting concerns, encompassing font size, clarity, referencing format, verbosity, circumlocution, voice and tone, grammar, spelling, repetition, and punctuation.

- Contextual considerations, ensuring that the content is appropriately situated within the relevant academic framework.

- Presentation of content, optimizing the overall visual and textual appeal of the thesis.

It is important to emphasize that throughout the editing process, the core research and the student's original intentions were upheld and remained unaltered. The student's has full discretion to accept or reject any comments or suggestions presented in the edited document. For any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at the provided contact information: Kelle.steinke@ump.ac.za

Yours faithfully,

Dr Steinke (Copyeditor)   11 August 2023

Appendix K: Permission letters to the schools

Request for permission to conduct research at your schools

Enquiries: Khoza BE	P.O BOX 1118
Cell: 0760761235	Mkhuhlu
	1280
e-mail: Braine913@gmail.com	Date: 17 March 2021

The Principal

Chayaza Secondary school

Private Bag X3001

Mkhuhlu

1246

Contact: Mrs Mokgane B. 082 51020248

Email: Busmog@live.co.za

Dear Mrs. Mokgane

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

Dear Mrs. Mokgane

My name is Khoza Brain Emanuel, and I am doing research with Dr. Sevnarayan, K. senior lecturer in the Department of English Studies towards an English PHD (Code: DPCHS02) at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled "An exploration of strategies and approaches used in teaching reading comprehension: A case study of selected Grade 10 EFAL classrooms in Mpumalanga, South Africa".

The aim of the study is to explore three selected strategies (The use of prior knowledge, making predictions, and inferencing) and approaches used to teach reading comprehension and whether or to what extent they are taught to Grade 10 learners in some South African (SA) high schools in Mpumalanga Province, specifically in the Bushbuckridge region.

Your school has been selected because of the richness of date the researcher wishes to explore. English is offered as a first additional language at your school and the use

of reading strategies is deemed important in such context. Also, the objective of this study may be well achieved in such a context.

The study will entail interviewing Grade 10 English first additional language teachers, conducting questionnaire for Grade 10 learners, as well as document analysis all of which will be for the purpose of the current study.

The benefits of this study are that participants in this study will have the opportunity to verbalise their perception of the strategies and approaches for teaching reading comprehension in Grade 10 EFAL classrooms.

The risk associated with this study might be that participants may be infected by the corona virus through contact with others. The rules and regulations for lockdown will be observed and precautionary measures will be made such as there will be no visit to schools as data will be collected electronically.

The feedback procedure will entail sending of summary of report of the study to the participants by the researcher.

Yours sincerely

Khoza BE

Researcher

Request for permission to conduct research at your schools

Enquiries: Khoza BE   P.O BOX 1118

Cell: 0760761235   Mkhuhlu

                                                         1280

Email: Braine913@gmail.com   Date: 17 March 2021

The Principal

Gezingqondo secondary school

P O Box 1856

Mkhuhlu

1246

Contact: Dlamini D.T. 082350 6399

Email: Gezingqondo93@gmail.com

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

Dear Mrs. Dlamini (Principal)

My name is Khoza Brain Emanuel, and I am doing research with Dr. Sevnarayan, K. senior lecturer in the Department of English Studies towards an English PHD (Code: DPCHS02) at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled "An exploration of strategies and approaches used in teaching reading comprehension: A case study of selected Grade 10 EFAL classrooms in Mpumalanga, South Africa".

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Khoza BE

Researcher

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Enquiries: Khoza BE	P.O BOX 1118
Cell: 0760761235	Mkhuhlu
	1280
e-mail: Braine913@gmail.com	Date: 17 March 2021

The Principal

Madzuma High school

Private bag X1330

Mkhuhlu

1246

Contact: Mr. Ntimane C.I. 0826934629

Email: Madzumahigh@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Ntimane

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

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Khoza BE

Researcher

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Enquiries: Khoza BE   P.O BOX 1118

Cell: 0760761235   Mkhuhlu

                                                                    1280

e-mail: Braine913@gmail.com   Date: 17 March 2021

The Principal
Makhosa Manzini high school
P O Box 15
Mkhuhlu
1246
Contact: Mr. Nkuna M.V   083 7474 244
Email: Makhosanamanzini@gmail.com
Dear Sir/ Madam,

<u>REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL</u>
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Researcher

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Enquiries: Khoza BE   P.O BOX 1118

Cell: 0760761235   Mkhuhlu

                                                          1280

e-mail: Braine913@gmail.com   Date: 17 March 2021

The Principal

Mkhuhlu high school

Private bag X3022

Hazyview

1246

Contact: Mrs. Makukule B 082 5303 538

Email: Mkhuhluhigh@gmail.com

Dear Mrs Makukule

<u>RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL</u>

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Researcher

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Cell: 0760761235	Mkhuhlu
	1280
e-mail: Braine913@gmail.com	Date: 17 March 2021

The Principal

Mkhukhumba Secondary school

Private Bag X3015

Mkhuhlu

1246

Contact: Mr. Mhlabini C.T. 0769969013

Email: Mkhukhumbahigh@gmail.com

Dear Mr Mlhabini

<u>REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL</u>

Dear Principal

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