

**EXPLORING  
RELATIONSHIPS  
BETWEEN READING  
ATTITUDES, READING  
ABILITY AND ACADEMIC  
PERFORMANCE AMONG  
TEACHER TRAINEES IN  
SWAZILAND**

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

Attitudes to extensive reading have been shown to be crucial in the additional language (AL) learning classroom. Research seems to confirm that the affective domain – attitudes, motivations, interests and personal evaluations – is essential in a study of behaviour and practice in the AL classroom. The current study aims to find out what the reading attitudes and practices of students at a teacher training college are and explore whether there are significant relationships between the students' reading attitudes and their reading ability, vocabulary skills and academic performance.

It is in light of the above-mentioned quest that we seek to understand what reading attitudes are and what they entail. The 'attitude' construct is defined by Guthrie and Greaney (1991: 87) who state that people's attitudes to reading are resultant from "perceptions" acquired from past reading experiences regarding how pleasurable and valuable reading is. It appears that positive reading outcomes assist in the development of a positive attitude, whereas negative outcomes of reading tend to discourage further ventures into reading, resulting in the development of a negative attitude (McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995: 941).

McKenna, in his model of reading attitude acquisition, suggests that each reading experience makes a difference regarding one's attitude towards reading and one's beliefs regarding reading outcomes (2001: 139). Furthermore, 'cultural' beliefs regarding reading contribute to the development of attitudes (ibid: 141). Reading attitudes have been further defined as comprising three aspects:

*feelings* towards an object, *evaluation* of the object in a positive or negative light and *responding* positively or negatively to that object (Mathewson, 2004:1433).

Another operational term that is central to this study is 'leisure reading'. It is defined as reading that can be done in or out of the classroom, for pleasure purposes as opposed to teacher/lecturer prescribed reading for academic purposes (Day & Bamford, 1998). It carries with it the notion of "reading in quantity", as Richards and Schmidt state, in order "to gain a general understanding of what is read [and] ...to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a liking for reading" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002: 193-194).

Reading can instil in students a love for and enjoyment of reading books, mainly novels, but also any other reading material for recreational purposes. Leisure reading material could be books, magazines and newspapers that are not part of school or college/university prescribed texts. The learning/classroom context seems to be ideal for the development of leisure reading habits in learners for, as Macalister (2008: 249) observes, learners are "likely to use their free time for activities other than reading" if this kind of recreational reading is not part of classroom practice/programme from an early age.

In this study, the term 'extensive reading' will be used synonymously with terms such as 'free voluntary reading', 'leisure reading', and 'pleasure reading' (Day & Bamford, 1998: 6-7). The phrase 'free voluntary reading' was coined by Kim and Krashen (1997: 26) who used it to refer to reading that people do in their leisure time as opposed to prescribed teacher-directed literature reading. The phrase 'pleasure reading' was introduced by Krashen and Mikulecky in reference to the non-study oriented kind of reading (1998: 7; in Day & Bamford, 1998).

As will be shown in Chapter 2, there has been a fair amount of research on extensive reading and its effects on additional language (AL) acquisition; an overview of the findings suggests that reading is an effective means of language learning. However, this invaluable activity seems to be the most misunderstood and underrated in the learning of an AL (Kim & Krashen, 1997: 27; Constantino, 1994), especially in the Southern African context in general and the Swazi context in particular.

Reading is neglected for various reasons, one of which may be the lack of a reading culture in most Black Southern African homes and schools. With time, students' language proficiency levels reflect the effects of such a lack, especially when they enter tertiary institutions, where reading in order to learn is the norm and expected to be highly developed for the purpose of gathering information and acquiring knowledge from written texts. However, by this time, their dependence on their lecturers for explaining texts has become entrenched as a habit, due to poorly developed comprehension skills, which should have been acquired during their school years. Their vocabulary mastery also falls short of the acceptable standard for college students. More troubling are the students' seemingly negative attitudes towards extensive reading. In a nutshell, this study aims to explore primary teacher trainees' (students') attitudes towards leisure reading and examine whether there is a relationship between students' attitudes and their reading ability, vocabulary knowledge and academic performance as a whole.

This chapter will outline and discuss the background and context of the research study, present a brief theoretical foundation of the study, identify the research problem, the research questions and hypotheses and, finally, outline the structure of the rest of the dissertation.

## **1.1 Background to the Research Study**

For the purposes of understanding the context of this study, it is necessary to provide a brief sketch of the linguistic and cultural background of the country where this study is located. It is vital to be familiar with Swazi state of affairs such as the availability of print-based resources in the country, the teaching of English in the primary and secondary schools and general academic standards of Swazi students. These aspects are relevant to the study, as will be shown in the next three chapters.

### ***1.1.1 A Linguistic Profile of Swaziland***

The people of Swaziland speak one language, siSwati, which is one of the Nguni languages of Southern Africa. Swaziland is a country of almost a million people, 65% of whom live in rural areas. English is a second language and it shares equal status with siSwati, the mother tongue. SiSwati and English are the only official languages in Swaziland. English is mainly the language of business, government, television entertainment, formal address in public gatherings, and the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in the country's primary and secondary schools and tertiary institutions. Officially, English is the LoLT in primary school from Grade 1 although, unofficially, siSwati is the LoLT in the lower grades up to Grade 3. There have been some attempts in the country's siSwati Inspectorate to have siSwati as the LoLT from Grade 1 to Grade 3, but these attempts have not yielded any significant success as most parents (and teachers) emphasize the importance of English for their children's success at school and those who can afford the fees will send their children to English-medium pre-schools and later to English-medium primary schools. However, for most Swazi people, English medium private pre-schools are a luxury they cannot afford. Generally, schools are characterised by inadequate supplies of stationery and textbooks. Non-existent school libraries and a lack of class readers seem to

herald a bleak future for children's learning of English and further academic achievement.

Education is neither free nor government-subsidized in the country. This is contrary to the political and constitutional aims of the state to provide free education at the primary school by 2009. Such good intentions have mainly been derailed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic which has left over 60,000 orphans and vulnerable children for whom government has to provide food, school fees and books.

### ***1.1.2 A Cultural Perspective***

The Swazi nation, like most African peoples, is on the whole an oral and very traditional community (Matsebula, 1988). Important traditional customs are transmitted to younger generations by word of mouth, especially in the rural areas of the country.

Rural folk, who make up about two-thirds of the population, have not incorporated leisure reading into their lifestyle; they are still a largely oral-oriented people. As Machet (2002: 8) comments about Black people's attitudes in South Africa, Swazi society, at large, associates reading and books primarily with education, not leisure. Most Swazi people do not read even when they have hours of travel by public transport; buses and taxis are just hives of communal chatter as everyone talks to the next person. If one decides to read in such situations one is considered arrogant and unsociable. Hence, local people have developed a saying that if one wants to effectively hide anything from a Swazi, one should place it in a book! Anecdotally, this has been shown to be true of most Swazi people, even the young. In the urban areas, the most common medium of leisure reading is the daily newspaper; people spend time reading the main stories of the day and the sports pages. The two print-media houses print about 150,000 newspapers between them daily, which shows just how many

people do this kind of leisure reading, but that seems to be the only leisure reading they generally do. Reading books for leisure is a most uncommon practice.

Furthermore, Swazi society is still largely traditional to the extent that the gender lines are sharply etched, even in the minds of the youth today. Boys' attitudes towards female teachers generally seem to be negative and disparaging. This negativity extends to an unwillingness to do things that are perceived to be the reserve or domain of women such as the reading of novels during one's leisure time. Real men, in Swazi culture, refrain from emulating women, otherwise they would be regarded as effeminate individuals, something that would stigmatise them. Boys would rather engage in acts and hobbies of physical strength to show that they are men.

Generally, boys' lives are dedicated to serving the king, in the form of regiments that answer to every summons by King Mswati III. This is still very strong in the rural areas where being male is the ultimate good, reinforced amongst the youth regularly during the *"kubutseka"* rights of passage (literally translated, it means being "brought in" or "being married to" – giving one's complete allegiance to the king). In these annual gatherings in the royal kraal, thousands of Swazi youth are put through rigorous cultural and traditional training by older regiments who have "chosen to marry the king". Generally, in a context where being a traditional Swazi male is a source of pride, it seems that attitudes to leisure reading can best be modelled by male teachers/mentors, as Gentile (1975) and Shapiro (1980) observed in their own research in an American and Canadian context.

Figure 1.1 below shows the location of Swaziland, a small kingdom wedged between South Africa and Mozambique. Mbabane is the capital city. Manzini (not

shown in map) is in the hub of the country, about 25 kilometres southeast of Lobamba, the traditional headquarters of the country.

*Figure 1.1 Map of Southern Africa Showing the Location of Swaziland.*



The country has moderate levels of literacy (79%) and very high poverty levels (Tibane, 2007:2). In reality, the literacy level referred to is a basic form of the ability to read and write. The Human Development Index (HDI), which is “a comparative measure of life expectancy, literacy, education and standards of living for countries worldwide”, asserts that 69% of the Swazi population lives below the poverty line, living on less than US\$ 1.25 a day. By 2007, Swaziland was placed at an HDI of 0.542 which is moderate, but compared to Botswana and South Africa, this is low. Botswana’s index is at 0.664, while South Africa’s is at 0.670. Botswana is ranked in the 126<sup>th</sup> position, while South Africa is in the 125<sup>th</sup> position. Swaziland, on the other hand, is at the 141<sup>st</sup>, in the same league as countries like Zimbabwe, which stands at 146<sup>th</sup> position. Tibane (2007) points

out that with such high poverty levels in the country (currently at 69%), “education costs are [so] unaffordable for the poor” that 23% of Swazi children have never been to school, and 17% drop out of primary and secondary school annually (2007: 2). The country’s educational policy states that primary school education will be free for all by 2009. However, schooling has not been made compulsory for Swazi children; perhaps the government envisages a financial burden it cannot afford if schooling were to be made compulsory.

There may be several reasons for the moderate levels of literacy for the majority of Swazi people. One reason for this state of affairs could be the vicious cycle resulting from the fact that some rural people are semi-literate with a minimal level of education; they read only when it is absolutely necessary. Parents in such situations cannot be role models of learning and leisure reading in the home. These parents cannot read to their children or help them with school work in the evenings, for they are not familiar with reading and school tasks. Moreover, the socio-economic situation of over two thirds of the Swazi community is characterised by abject poverty (Tibane, 2007: 2) and unemployment – 40% of the active labour force is unemployed (Gumede, 2007). This is 40% of 342,127 people in a population of one million (ibid: 3).

Needless to say, many families struggle to make ends meet. Such households cannot afford even the textbooks required for learning at school, let alone extensive reading materials that parents would have to purchase for their children’s exposure to print and development of reading skills. It does not help that national libraries, where membership is free, are only located in the urban areas. If schools and the community could provide reading materials, then children are more likely to become readers later on. But this is not the case in Swaziland, and so the majority of Swazi children lack the foundation that would predispose them to the acquisition of good reading skills and a positive attitude toward reading.

The situation in the urban areas is only slightly different. The towns and cities are mainly populated by rural area immigrants who go there to seek jobs as shop assistants, street vendors, bus conductors, domestic servants, common labourers and factory workers after receiving a minimal education (Grade 10 or below). Most of these people can barely make ends meet even though they are in the urban areas. On the whole, therefore, parents can hardly afford the required school texts and stationery, not to mention additional leisure reading material. Extensive reading in such areas would need to be mainly modelled and encouraged in the schools.

Those learners who love reading for pleasure can rely on the national libraries in the towns. Although these resource centres are not exactly well stocked with books, they are relatively of greater assistance to the youth than the so-called school libraries, if any, as these latter are mostly empty rooms and shelves with, less than a hundred, dusty old books. Membership to national libraries is free to any citizen. The only expense involved is the filling in of a form which requires a passport-size photograph of the aspiring member.

However, it is noteworthy that most primary schools, even in the towns, do not have leisure reading materials except in a few privately owned schools. This is because of the parents' poverty levels; they can hardly afford the fees that they have to pay. Worse still, the scourge of the pandemic HIV/AIDS has left many families impoverished (Editorial, *SAfAIDS*, 2007: 2) as can be seen from statistical evidence. (The country has one of the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence percentages in the world at 38.8%, and has a low life expectancy at 31.88 years). Next to the college where I teach, there are three primary schools within a three-kilometre radius, and these are all Nazarene mission schools, considered to be among the best in the country. However, none of these schools has a library, nor are there any class readers for the children's print exposure. The

government has offered to provide free textbooks and stationery in 2009 for all schools; still, provision of reading material is not on the government agenda. Perhaps the provision of school texts and stationery will alleviate some of the financial strain on parents and guardians of orphaned and vulnerable (single-parent) children. However, there has been no commitment on government's part to provide readers to instil a reading culture in Swazi schools. Currently, the American Embassy – working with Macmillan Publishers – is making attempts in the right direction by sponsoring colleges to engage in Foundation Phase presentations of reading workshops and selecting some schools in the country to pilot reading materials and develop a culture of reading at primary level.

### ***1.1.3 Availability of Print-Based Resources in SiSwati***

The inception of the siSwati language orthography came at a time, in the 1970s, when the Zulu language had already been the official written language of the Swazi people for decades. The Zulu language had much written material by way of novels, poems and short stories, so that the generations that learnt through Zulu had access to a variety of print material in Zulu to stimulate a love for reading. In contrast, siSwati books were few and far between, and this state of affairs has extended to the present. The limited amount of literature that was produced as siSwati novels and short stories became prescribed texts for the secondary and high school siSwati literature courses.

It is not surprising that there is not much material for leisure reading in the mother tongue. There is not even one newspaper or magazine in siSwati. Nevertheless, a student who has developed a love for books reads all the siSwati texts that are not prescribed for their class/level. The only problem is that many young Swazi people and their parents look down upon siSwati since they believe it offers no future job opportunities such as those offered by a mastery of English. This negative attitude toward siSwati has culminated in very little reading being done in the first language (L1). Clearly, good readers generally

read anything they can find and so they will read even in the L1 (Grabe, 1991:388). Still, it seems that teachers in primary and high schools need to play a more proactive role in influencing young people to love books and reading, which is the next point of focus.

#### ***1.1.4 The Teaching of Reading at Primary and Secondary School***

Generally, at the lower primary level in schools, some learners struggle to learn to read, to identify and recognise words and make sense out of them, a common occurrence as Stanovich (1991: 418) observes. By the third grade, learners embark on a more complex task that should take them through their academic career: reading in order to learn (Heath, 1991: 5). Up to that point, teachers concentrate mainly on getting their learners to master decoding and decoding in a text and to read fluently. In the higher grades, children need to develop automaticity in their decoding skills in order to simultaneously engage higher order skills of processing the meaning of a text (Grabe, 1991: 380). Unfortunately, that is when most teachers in this country no longer stress the importance of reading in all the disciplines. And, to aggravate matters, leisure reading material in Swaziland is inadequate, if not non-existent, in most primary schools. This results in serious reading difficulties.

Locally, the reading period that is slotted in the class time-table after Grade 3 at primary school is invariably used, not for reading, but for the writing of corrections to language work done earlier and any other English activity. Teachers are at a loss regarding what to teach during that period as the learners are presumed to be able to read. Some practitioners in language teaching do not realise that word recognition does not necessarily mean that the learners have acquired the higher order reading skills they will need as they advance through their learning. Comprehension skills are not explicitly taught.

Still, as already pointed out earlier, most schools, even some of those in urban areas, do not have any reading material that can help foster a love of reading at the primary school level. In most schools, class readers are never bought and, unless they are donated by publishing houses in the country, many school principals never perceive books to be a priority in their yearly budget of school finances. A similar situation prevails in the secondary schools. Very few school administrators have become enlightened about the role that books/class readers can play in the development of proficiency in the AL and success in learners' academic performance. Their argument is that they were able to learn English without reading books; so teachers of English just have to make sure learners pass and master the AL.

The *O' Level Examiners' Reports* (November 2006) issued by the Examinations Council of Swaziland (ECOS) paints a very vivid picture of students' performance in general at the matriculation level: "Examiners have observed with concern the fast declining standards of the command of the English language" (2006: 4). This is a noteworthy statement that sums up the students' performance in the English composition paper. The lack of apt vocabulary has drawn the comment: "Candidates continue to use vernacular words and expressions in their pieces of work. This makes one wonder if they do make an effort on their part to read extensively" (ibid.: 4). One of the recommendations directed to teachers of reading comprehension at secondary and high school is that "[p]upils should be exposed to more extensive reading to improve their vocabulary" (ECOS, 2006: 8).

Examiners are concerned about the students' use of memorised idioms that are written one after the other in English composition. Teachers drill the learners to use these "and pupils just list these expressions in their work...even when they are not related to or do not convey the same meaning" as intended (ECOS, 2006: 4). These are the students' (and teachers') attempts at making up for a

lack of adequate vocabulary. In the reading comprehension, learners “simply lifted some lines from the text” (ibid: 6) without understanding the question and the lifted text. Learners would also write unnecessarily lengthy responses because they were not sure of the right answer. The most enlightening comment was: “A majority of the candidates were handicapped by poor vocabulary acquisition” (ibid. 6). In addition, most of the learners could not answer inferential questions in the comprehension exercise (ibid: 6).

In most secondary schools, reading is not encouraged through the purchase of library books which the students can read for pleasure. Sometimes, the students spend the library period paging through magazines without reading the articles inside and never take out books they can read later at home. Jardine (1986: 57) points out that reading is the most important skill to be acquired if one's academic career is to advance beyond the school setting into tertiary education. The overall picture of education in the country leaves much to be desired. An overall sketch of the country's academic performance is our next focus.

### ***1.1.5 Overall Academic Performance***

Reliance on the Audio-lingual Method (ALM) in instruction has facilitated some success for most children at the primary school level. However, as learners proceed with their education, the demands of academic texts take their toll on the students, and the ALM can only do so much. Most primary school teachers were trained as teachers decades ago with the concomitant outcome that they hold tenaciously to the ALM in classroom instruction. Efforts to have them adopt the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach seem to be futile, as some of these teachers avoid in-service workshops or do not implement what they have been exposed to in the workshops.

Change in instructional methods would mean embracing the CLT approach with its feared uncertainties and insecurities in the use of conversational English in

group work, games, role plays, problem-solving tasks and information gap activities (Larsen-Freeman, 2000: 129). The familiar teacher-centred ALM effectively conceals these teacher problems. The same picture prevails in the secondary schools, even though the teachers are younger, more recently trained college and university recruits who should be more comfortable with using the CLT approach. The lure of the ALM with its rote-learning, memorisation and grammatical patterns is too strong even at this level and with younger teachers. It seems to provide a 'safe' and carefully scripted structure for most Swazi teachers to follow and this automatically ensures a more confident (in their view) lesson delivery in class.

At the primary level, the majority of learners make it past the seventh grade with second and third class passes, which assure them of entry into secondary school. The second and third class passes are mainly characterised by very low grading symbols ranging between C and E. For the most part, in these cases, the children's performance in mathematics and English ranges between D and E, a substantial number fails altogether. It is not unheard of to have three quarters of a class fail the final examinations in the primary school (*The Times of Swaziland*, 12 January, 2007).

Entry into secondary school means that instruction in every subject, except siSwati as a subject, is in English and textbooks have to be read in the second language, especially literature texts. Even though they are required to read the prescribed texts, students do not bother; they do not read on their own as their reading is too time consuming and effortful. In spite of knowing better, the teacher is forced to read the texts aloud in the classroom if s/he hopes to help them pass the examinations. Teacher dependence starts at this point, with the students demanding notes from the teacher instead of reading their textbooks, and subsequently expecting to regurgitate, verbatim, these notes in tests and examinations. Hence, for subjects like History, Science, Geography and Biology,

the students have notebooks which reflect teacher effort at simplifying the textbooks. The students' task becomes one of simply memorising the notes in order to pass. Thus, the need to have students read for their academic success and develop higher order reading skills is downplayed and a shortcut to apparent success is embraced. The same expectations extend to tertiary education, where the students still demand to be spoon-fed by the lecturers in every subject, rather than read on their own.

The next subsection discusses the immediate context of the research problem: tertiary level education detailing college students' reading ability, proficiency in the second language and academic performance.

## **1.2 The Context of the Research Problem**

*Figure 1.2 Nazarene Teacher Training College (Front View)*



The focus of this research is on the attitudes and perceptions of primary teacher trainees at the Manzini Nazarene Teacher Training College in Swaziland (shown in picture), towards extensive reading. I needed to explore their attitudes and perceptions to leisure reading and determine whether these are related to reading ability and other related competences. The study thus further investigates whether reading attitudes are also related to print exposure, reading ability and vocabulary knowledge, and whether reading ability is related to academic performance.

Research seems to point to the involvement of affective factors in matters of reading and language proficiency. However, little research has been done on this topic in developing countries. Exploring these affective factors in Swaziland may enlighten us with regard to the trainee teachers' attitudes, leisure reading habits and practices, which may further affect the school children that they will be teaching on completion of the diploma. However, before moving on with the investigation, the context in which this study was conducted is first described.

### ***1.2.1 Entry into College***

The research study was conducted at a teacher training college in Manzini Swaziland. This is a small college that has a total enrolment of slightly over 300 students from first year to third year. The current yearly intake of new trainees is 100 students. The entry requirements for the three-year Primary Teachers' Diploma (PTD) are stipulated by the University of Swaziland's Board of Affiliated Institutions (BAI). New entrants are expected to have credit passes (50% and above) in at least four subjects in the Cambridge O' Level examination. One of the four subjects passed should be English, but a 40% pass (E symbol) in this subject is accepted. Most prospective students who hold C and better symbols in English are absorbed by the University of Swaziland (UNISWA). It is to be expected that the students who have D and E symbols will enrol in the colleges. Thus, very few students hold C or higher symbols in English in the college.

The students need to have credit passes in at least four of the following content subjects in order to qualify for entry in the PTD: Mathematics, Science, Geography, History, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Home Economics, Agriculture and Religious Education. The students encounter all of these subjects and more in the college classroom and must pass them in order to proceed to the next level. For most of the students, this is a feat which is very difficult to achieve.

*Figure 1.3 Nazarene Teacher Training College Students*



### ***1.2.2 Proficiency in English at Entry and Beyond***

I have already alluded to the fact that very few students hold C or higher pass in English at entry in the PTD. Most of the students have had to upgrade the F symbol to reach the minimum pass of E in order to qualify for college entry. Generally, the D and E symbols mean that the student can hardly construct a

good sentence. If they can, it has to be a simple sentence of the Subject – Verb – Object type. Anything more complex is beyond their capability. Spelling and punctuation are serious problems that lecturers have to deal with in essays. Lack of precise, meaningful vocabulary is common and detrimental to composition and other essay-type assignments and tests. However, as a lecturer, one keeps on hoping that there will be some improvement as the students progress from one level to the next; sadly, that is not the case for many students.

Proficiency in English is taught in the Academic Communication Skills (ACS) course; this involves grammar, composition writing, reading comprehension, literature, report and minute writing, essay writing, library use and research skills and many other relevant skills. The average mark that students attain in tests and in the final examination is in the 50 – 60% range. Those who fail in the 40-49% range form about a quarter of each class and they have to write supplementary examinations in the failed courses. If they fail the supplementary examinations they have to repeat the course, a prospect which is likely to occur, since the supplementary mark does not include the continuous assessment (CA) mark in a 50:50 ratio as the final grade does. About six percent of each class simply repeat the course. Sometimes, the percentage of repeating students is higher.

Repeating a course has very serious consequences as the student loses government sponsorship for the year during which s/he repeats the course(s). The students tend to blame the lecturer for failing them, hardly taking responsibility for their own failure. Thus, teaching ACS is indeed more of a challenge for the lecturer at college level than teaching English at high school. It is also discouraging because the students are not motivated to do better than they have ever done before: twelve years of school, years of struggling with English in schools that do not have a reading culture or print resources, have, by

this time, convinced them that they just cannot crack the difficult code called English.

### ***1.2.3 The Students' Reading Ability and Academic Performance***

The students enrol at the college after writing and passing a specific number of subjects in the O' level examination. Their reading levels after O' level are, on the whole, very low. It seems that by the time they come to the college they have decided that English is only learned through grammar instruction and all other language components; to them, extensive reading, as suggested by the examiners' Report (mentioned in §1.1.4), does not appear to be an answer to their language learning and academic problems. In their study of literature texts, the students' comprehension is almost non-existent. The ACS lecturer is burdened with the task of reading the texts aloud to the class and explaining what the story or poem is about. This dependence on the teacher/lecturer is only an extension of the same learning strategy that they become accustomed to in earlier learning experiences.

Furthermore, the students' lack of skilled reading ability is reflected in the other subjects. Research for assignments requires individual library work, looking for relevant information from additional sources and writing up a summary or report. The tendency is for the students to get together in order to discuss the work and to group-write the assignments, so that those who have a better understanding assist those who do not. Research assignments in Education, History, Mathematics, Agriculture and other subjects are 'successfully' written using this strategy, with the frustrating outcome of lecturers having to read the same points over and over in the students' scripts.

Some of the students either repeat yearly, so that they complete the three-year diploma in five or six years, or are discontinued from the programme. In the last

five years, repeaters formed about 14.5% of the student body each year, a fact that does not go down well with the administration since it means a considerable reduction of government funding. Five students have been discontinued in the same period. This is the context of the current research study. The next subsection focuses on a presentation of the theoretical basis of the research study.

### **1.3 A Theoretical Outline of the Study**

The following paragraphs only sketch briefly the main theoretical strands that form the framework of this study. The theoretical component will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 2. In this enquiry, the researcher investigated relationships between attitudes, access to leisure reading resources, exposure to print resources, leisure reading habits, L2 reading ability, vocabulary skills, reading in the L1 and academic performance. The theoretical basis relates to these aspects of the study. In addition, contrasts between first and third year student performance will be made on all these measures in the study. A more detailed discussion relating to the central constructs in the study will feature in Chapter 2.

#### ***1.3.1 Reading Ability***

Reading is a complex phenomenon, consisting of both cognitive and linguistic processes which develop within a broad socio-economic and cultural context. Reading ability is not only about the ability to decode the written word but also involves other skills such as comprehension and interpretive skills and these are interactive and simultaneous (Grabe, 1991: 379). This means that during the reading process readers are not passive but continuously construct meaning as they read. Furthermore, reading is affected by affective factors like attitudes, motivations and interests. This means that every reading act, to a greater or lesser extent, engages our senses and emotions.

Reading skills are acquired through practice and constant reading (van Wyk, 2002: 30). Blacquiere points out that these skills cannot be “isolated” as they are “a complex and tightly interrelated set of cognitive and psychomotor skills and subskills” (1989: 76).

### ***1.3.2 Access to Reading Resources***

Extensive reading is “quantity reading” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002: 193) and this can only happen if students actually have access to reading resources. As such, the amount of reading one does counts if the reading is to have an impact in developing the relevant skills and affecting all the other components that are related to reading ability. Research has shown that being flooded with leisure reading materials and the regular reading of such material improves not only reading and vocabulary skills but also academic performance (Elley, 1991; Pretorius, 2002). The current study sought, inter alia, to investigate the link between students' access to leisure reading resources and their reading ability.

### ***1.3.3 Attitudes to Extensive Reading and Reading Ability***

Attitudes refer to the “psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (Day and Bamford, 1998: 22). Perceptions refer to what a person believes regarding a given phenomenon. Attitudes seem to be generated by perceptions since attitudes appear to be a reaction based on how one perceives a phenomenon. It is worth noting that due to their being closely intertwined, attitudes and perceptions pose a problem when one attempts to separate them. Furthermore, attitudes prove to be “difficult to measure as they are very subjective” (Roy-Campbell & Qorro, 1997: 43). However, Mathewson (2004) provocatively proposes that measuring attitudes seems irrelevant in research as it takes a greater influence to achieve reading behaviour than simply positive/negative attitudes per se. This “greater influence” is the *intention to read/continue to read*. He argues that students can

have positive attitudes but, without the intention to read/continue reading, they will not engage in leisure reading.

Nevertheless, it is possible that a bi-directional relationship may exist between affect and reading ability in that attitudes to extensive reading may indirectly reflect a student's reading ability. It seems that attitudes and perceptions influence individual life experiences. This suggests that reading is an individualistic experience that seems to be shaped by one's attitudes; it seems that so-called negative attitudes to reading affect students' desire to read during their leisure time, with the sad consequence that their reading ability deteriorates with time. The lower the reading ability is, the lower the desire to read. This creates what Stanovich (1986) calls "Matthew effects", a phrase coined from the biblical reference of the gospel of Matthew (Matthew 25:30) which refers to the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. The effect is that, over time, reading ability is weakened. The point is that the less extensive reading one does, the fewer the benefits in terms of reading skills and ability. Gee points out that "there is a vital relationship between affect and reading" (1999: 3). Research suggests that leisure reading improves attitudes just as positive attitudes assist in cultivating exceptionally good reading ability (Kim & Krashen, 1997; Tse, 1996b). In this study, the research instrument used to measure the participants' attitudes was a questionnaire.

#### ***1.3.4 Vocabulary Acquisition and Reading Ability***

The acquisition of vocabulary depends to a great extent on reading extensively (van Wyk, 2002: 30-31). The more students read, the more words they are exposed to, the more quickly they recognise words and the more steadily they acquire the meanings of words encountered in the texts they read. Students who read a lot know more words than students who do very little reading (Stanovich & Cunningham, 1993). Cooper argues that successful comprehension of academic texts depends on familiarity with the "subtechnical or academic" words

that are used in many academic texts (2000: 27). On the basis of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and the Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) distinction, Cummins (1981, in Cooper, 2000:22) argues that AL students need more than a BICS competence to be successful academically since college or university texts are CALP-oriented (these concepts are discussed more comprehensively in Chapter 2). The study seeks to find out if the students' performance in the reading test will be significantly related to their vocabulary test performance.

### ***1.3.5 Reading Ability and Academic Performance***

Reading seems to be linked to student academic success (Elley, 1991). Research indicates that academic achievement relies on fast and accurate comprehension skills. Automaticity in decoding and word recognition is necessary to set the higher cognitive processes free to comprehend the meaning of the text (Pretorius, 2002b: 91-92). Moreover, reading ability links with the amount of reading an individual engages in; the more a person reads, the more exposure to forms of knowledge that open academic possibilities for the reader (Stanovich & Cunningham, 1993). This is more so because low frequency vocabulary, especially the academic type, is acquired through reading texts (Corson, 1997). Since the aim of reading is comprehension, academic texts can be understood through familiarity with academic vocabulary and the application of all the complex reading skills. If students' reading abilities are not highly developed, they will have difficulty reading and comprehending academic texts in the content subjects (Cooper, 2000). The current study intends to find out if the participants' reading ability is related to their overall academic performance by correlating their performance on a reading test with their academic performance.

### ***1.3.6 First and Second Language Reading Ability***

The Interdependence Hypothesis holds that literacy skills acquired in one language transfer to another language (Cummins, 1979, 1991, in Yamashita,

2002: 81). The position assumes that reading skills are developed in the L1 in the first place before transfer can occur. The Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis adds another dimension to the Interdependence Hypothesis, positing that for L1 reading ability to be transferred to L2 reading ability, a learner must have reached a certain level of L2 proficiency. Some research has been carried out in an attempt to examine the link between literacy and academic performance (Yamashita, 2002: 82). This discussion will be dealt with more fully in Chapter 2.

In the current study, I seek to examine the L1 reading ability of the participants and determine whether this ability is related to their L2 reading ability.

#### **1.4 The Research Problem**

The research study aims at, firstly, investigating the perceptions of and attitudes toward extensive reading that are held by students enrolled in the Primary Teachers' Diploma (PTD) teacher education course in Swaziland. Secondly, the study aims to look at the extent to which students have access to leisure reading resources, and what their leisure reading habits and exposure to print-based materials are, and to examine how these relate to their reading attitudes and ability. Thirdly, the research seeks to establish whether there is a link between student teacher attitudes toward extensive reading, their reading ability, their vocabulary knowledge in English and their academic performance. In addition, an enquiry into the relationship between L1 and L2 reading ability is undertaken.

A battery of tests was used and included a questionnaire, exposure to print-based materials tests (Author and Magazine Recognition Tests) L1 and L2 reading tests, a vocabulary test and a compilation of students' academic performance. These research instruments will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 3.

The outcomes of the study should place us in a better position to understand the ESL teaching and learning situation and make vital recommendations for the College and specifically for AL teaching and learning in developing countries in general. Based on the findings, the research will consider the implications of the study for the teaching of English as a second language and the development of a reading culture in Swazi schools.

The research problem was broken down into two sets of questions: exploratory questions and hypothesis-driven questions. There are three exploratory questions that were investigated in the main study, as follows:

1. *What are the participants' attitudes to and perceptions of extensive reading?*
2. *How much access to leisure reading and resources do the participants have?*
3. *Do the participants exhibit habits that favour leisure reading?*

The research questionnaire was used to capture the teacher trainees' attitudes towards extensive reading; their responses to the questions indicate whether their attitudes towards reading are positive or negative. The scores from the participants' responses to some of the items in the questionnaire were used to determine how much access to leisure reading and resources the participants had. Access to print sought answers in terms of whether students own a collection of books, are library members and whether they do buy leisure reading material. The reading questionnaire was also intended to capture the habits of the participants in relation to leisure/extensive reading.

The research problem was further broken down into eight research questions and hypotheses.

- 1. *Is there a relationship between the students' attitudes to extensive reading and their L2 reading ability?*

The corresponding hypothesis to the question is:

**H1:** There is a significant relationship between the students' attitudes to extensive reading and their L2 reading ability.

- 2. *Is there a relationship between the students' access to leisure reading resources and their L2 reading ability?*

The corresponding hypothesis to the question is:

**H2:** There is a significant relationship between the students' access to leisure reading resources and their L2 reading ability.

- 3. *Is there a relationship between the students' access to leisure reading resources and their exposure to print?*

Exposure to print was operationalised in this study to refer to whether the students were exposed to leisure reading judging from their recognition of popular author names and magazine titles.

The corresponding hypothesis to the question is:

**H3:** There is a significant relationship between the students' access to leisure reading resources and their exposure to print.

- 4. *Is there a relationship between the students' leisure reading habits and their L2 reading ability?*

The corresponding hypothesis to the question is:

**H4:** There is a significant relationship between the students' leisure reading habits and their L2 reading ability.

- 5. *Is there a relationship between the students' vocabulary knowledge and their L2 reading ability?*

The corresponding hypothesis to the question is:

**H5:** There is a significant relationship between the students' vocabulary knowledge and their L2 reading ability.

- 6. *Is there a difference between the PTD 1 and PTD 3 students' vocabulary knowledge and their L2 reading ability?*

In order to determine if the three-year attendance at college makes a difference in the comprehension and vocabulary skills of the trainees, I was interested in discovering whether the final year students, after all the learning and reading they had done in these years since their arrival, show any improvement in these two areas of competence.

The corresponding hypothesis for the question is:

**H6:** There is a significant difference between the PTD1 and PTD 3 students' vocabulary knowledge and their L2 reading ability.

- 7. *Is there a relationship between the students' L1 and L2 reading ability?*

The question's corresponding hypothesis is:

**H7:** There is a significant relationship between the students' L1 and L2 reading ability.

- 8. *Is there a relationship between the students' academic performance and their L2 reading ability?*

The corresponding hypothesis to this question is:

**H8:** There is a significant relationship between the students' academic performance and their L2 reading ability.

These are the hypotheses that were investigated and tested in the study.

## **1.5 The Methodology of the Research Study**

This subsection provides a brief overview of the methodology of the study. The participants, research instruments and the procedures of the study are only sketched briefly as the details will be provided in Chapter 3.

### ***1.5.1 The Participants***

I conducted the research with three groups: a first year class (PTD 1B) who formed the pilot study group in December 2006. For the main study, two groups of subjects were involved, a first-year (PTD 1A) and a third-year class of students (PTD 3B) enrolled for the Primary Teachers' Diploma at Manzini Nazarene Teachers' College. I asked for permission to do the study from the college authorities and the participating students. Details of the particulars of the participants will be dealt with in the Chapter 3.

### ***1.5.2 The Assessment Materials***

In all, five measures were used to obtain relevant data pertaining to the study: a reading attitude questionnaire, an author-and-magazine recognition test, two reading comprehension tests (in the L1 and L2 respectively) and a vocabulary test. They are discussed briefly below and will be described in greater detail in Chapter 3.

***1. The Reading Attitudes Questionnaire:*** This instrument was developed over time and piloted with a class of first year students. The aim of using the questionnaire was to elicit students' attitudes towards extensive reading, their access to leisure reading materials and their reading habits. The questions were refined after the piloting stage and a better instrument was administered to a first year class and a third year class. The questionnaire was designed to inform the researcher about the attitudes towards and the culturally held beliefs about, reading and the students' knowledge and perception of what extensive reading entails.

2. **The Author Recognition Test and Magazine Recognition Test:** The concept for this test was adapted from Stanovich and Cunningham (1993) to triangulate the data obtained from the reading questionnaire and to obtain an independent measure of how much exposure to reading material students really have.
3. ***The English Reading Comprehension Test:*** This criterion-referenced test was made up of a reading comprehension passage followed by 15 questions to answer in an hour. The reading test is produced by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), in Cambridge, United Kingdom. It is designed for the O level (RSA matriculation equivalent) examination which, at the time of this study, served as a school-leaver certificate in the country – a yardstick for college and university entry.
4. ***The SiSwati Reading Comprehension Test:*** This was designed by the siSwati Department in the college where I teach. The students had to read a given passage and answer 16 questions based on it.
5. ***The Vocabulary Levels Test*** (Laufer & Nation, 1995): This is a five-level word frequency test aimed at testing the participants' vocabulary acquisition levels. The five levels are the 2 000–word level, 3 000-word level, 5 000-word level, the University Word List level, and the 10 000-word level.
6. ***End-of-Year Final Examinations Data:*** In order to obtain information about students' academic performance independently from the five measures in the study, the participants' scores in the final examinations formed part of the data to be compared to their performance in the research data.

### ***1.5.3 Outline of the Procedure of the Study***

The research commenced with the administration of the English reading test and the questionnaire to a pilot group in 2006. The pilot study helped the researcher refine the questionnaire as a research instrument and gave some indications regarding the reading ability of the pilot group. For the main study, two groups took the tests separately, the PTD 1 group and PTD 3 students, in February

2007. The siSwati reading test was only administered to the first year group, in November 2007.

The vocabulary test had to be taken on the second day together with the questionnaire. The vocabulary test was administered first, spanning about 50 minutes. Thereafter, the questionnaire was administered to the subjects and they completed it in half an hour. It was completed with the researcher reading out each question, to ensure that no item was inadvertently skipped by the participants.

The Author Recognition Test (ART) and the Magazine Recognition Test (MRT) were administered after the participants had completed their end-of-year examinations, in May 2007<sup>1</sup>.

I obtained the academic performance scores after the college lecturers and administration had processed the results for the first year class (June 8, 2007). The third year participants' results were obtained after being internally and externally processed by UNISWA's BAI and the college (10<sup>th</sup> September, 2007).

## **1.6 Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a background and context to the research study, present a brief theoretical framework of the study in the study, identify the research problem and state the research questions and hypotheses. It also aimed at presenting a brief introduction of the methodology of the research study.

The rest of the dissertation will be structured as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> In Swaziland the college and university academic year starts in August and ends in May of the next calendar year.

Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter 4: Results: Presentation and Discussion

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

In this chapter I shall review the literature that relates to the current research study. Following Mouton (2001: 94), the review will be presented in five main topics that are relevant to the study's various hypotheses. I shall first review the literature that pertains to reading, specifically extensive reading. Attitudes towards reading and how they seem to influence reading activity and reading ability will be discussed as the core of this theoretical framework.

Thereafter, I shall review literature on studies that have sought to establish a relationship between reading and vocabulary knowledge. Further discussion will focus on research conducted to establish the relationship between academic performance and reading ability. The review will then proceed to a discussion of research studies which investigate reading in the first language and how this seems to affect additional language (AL) learning, stressing its connection to reading ability and language proficiency.

Finally, the chapter will focus on reviewing literature which has assisted in informing the current study's methodology, design, materials and execution.

#### **2.1 Reading Ability**

In a review of the literature, it is vital that we discuss reading ability as a key concept in this current study. What exactly does it involve? Following Eskey, many people seem to believe that reading is just the ability to decode and read

aloud (2002: 5). Some people would define reading as the ability to “[convert] written language to spoken language” (ibid: 5). But there is more to reading than this definition would lead one to believe. Decoding is necessary for comprehension but not sufficient. The ability to decode does not guarantee that one understands the decoded text. Thus, decoding processes are necessarily complemented by comprehension processes (Martino and Hoffman, 2002: 310). These processes interact rapidly and simultaneously during the reading comprehension act. The decoding processes involve processing printed letters and words and translating these sequences into units that are meaningful within sentences, across sentences and across paragraphs. Comprehension processes also involve syntactic, textual and discourse knowledge (ibid: 310-311) in order to interpret what is read. It is the interaction of these processes culminating in the accurate comprehension and interpretation of a text that constitutes reading skill and ability. Most Swazi teachers seem to think that if learners can decode the written word, they are able to read. This is partial ability, not skilled reading that would lead to comprehension and interpretation of a text (Pretorius, 2002: 171).

Reading is composed of a number of skills which interact rapidly in the process of decoding so that the reader acquires the meaning of a written text (Castles & Nation, 2008: 1). Haussamen picks up the bi-directionality of reading in his reference to ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ processing that constitutes reading (1995: 379). Bottom-up processing refers to the processing of the orthographic symbols in a written text, while top-down processing is the drawing of meaning and the gaining of understanding from the decoded orthographic symbols in the text (He, 2008: 224).

The concept is emphasized in Pretorius’ view of the bi-directionality of reading, captured in her reference to “decoding” and “comprehension” as the two chief

constituents of reading (2002: 91). It is noteworthy that with skilled readers, these skills do not function as discrete entities, but interact rapidly and simultaneously during the reading process (Grabe, 1997: 378). However, poor readers cannot decode quickly and automatically enough and so focus on word recognition and decoding at the expense of higher level skills (Martino & Hoffman, 2002: 315).

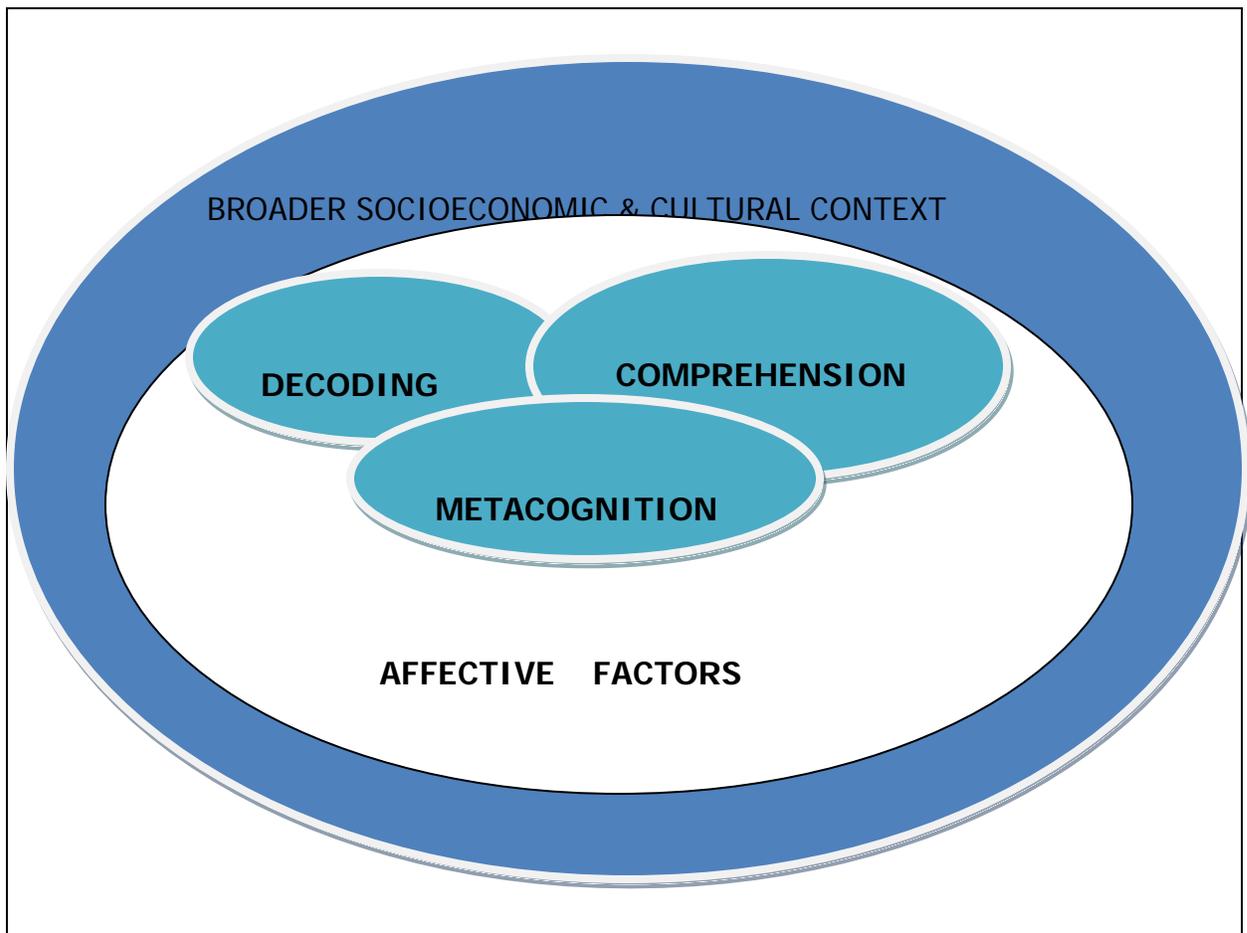
Reading also involves metacognitive skills which enable the reader to monitor, understand and assess his/her own reading skills and strategies as s/he engages in reading for different demands and purposes (Lipson & Wixson, 1997: 43). Metacognition is about being aware of what we do and how we do it. An important observation made by Pretorius (2002) is that the reading process takes place within a socio-cultural context which assists in conferring meaning to the text and to reading practices and values. In other words, reading is a form of human behaviour and different cultures may attach different values and functions to the act of reading. For that reason, she argues, the socio-cultural context should be considered in any discussion of reading (2002: 170-171).

Furthermore, our response to texts and the affective factors that shape our responses cannot be divorced from the reading situation as they also make a considerable contribution to the reading process (He, 2008: 225; Lipson & Wixson, 1997: 45-46). This component of reading involves attitudes, motivations, and behaviour; it determines one's responses to a given text. Day and Bamford refer to the affect as "the secret garden of reading" (1998: 21). Wolf (2008: 132) aptly describes the importance of affect in reading as follows: "... emotional engagement is often the tipping point between leaping into the reading life or remaining in a childhood bog where reading is only endured only as a means to other ends".

Reading ability is categorised into the following levels, namely, frustration, instructional and independent levels and these are used in reading assessment (Lesiak & Bradley-Johnson, 1983; Pretorius 2002; Roy-Campbell & Qorro, 1997).

The figure below represents the context in which the components of reading operate, as discussed above.

*Figure 2.1 Putting Reading in Context*



Assessment of reading is categorised into three levels, namely the frustration, instructional and independent levels (Lesiak & Bradley-Johnson, 1993, in Pretorius, 2002: Roy-Campbell & Qorro, 1997). Reading at the frustration level means that the student has serious reading problems, resulting in lack of

comprehension of written texts. The reader only processes textual information at 60% comprehension and 90% decoding precision (Pretorius, 2002: 171). This means that the student is reading far below the expected level. The student who reads at the instructional level is a much better reader but would still gain better skill if given more reading skills instruction to improve the 75% comprehension and 95% decoding accuracy (ibid: 171). The independent level reader decodes at an accuracy rate of 98% and achieves at least 95% comprehension and is equipped with reading skills that enable easy comprehension of any text chosen for reading.

## **2.2 Attitudes Towards Reading**

The "attitude" construct has already been defined in the previous chapter (§1.7). Guthrie and Greaney (1991: 87) state that people's attitudes to reading are resultant from "perceptions" acquired from past reading experiences regarding how pleasurable and valuable reading is. In similar vein, Day and Bamford (1998: 23-24) point out that students' attitudes towards extensive reading in the AL, positive or negative, have their roots in first language reading attitudes and experiences. The current study explores the attitudes of teacher training college students to extensive reading in the AL and in the first language (L1) to ascertain their relationship to and role in AL extensive reading.

It appears that positive reading outcomes assist in the development of a positive attitude, whereas negative outcomes of reading tend to discourage further ventures into reading, resulting in the development of a negative attitude (McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995: 941). McKenna, in his model of reading attitude acquisition, suggests that each reading experience makes a difference to one's attitude towards reading and one's beliefs regarding reading outcomes (2001: 139). Furthermore, cultural beliefs regarding reading also contribute to

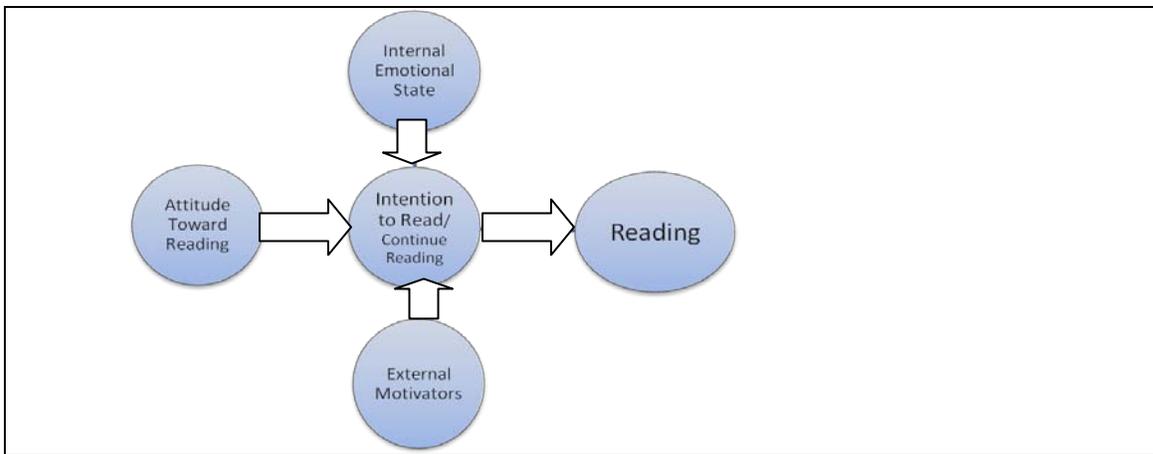
the development of attitudes (ibid: 141). McKenna asserts: "... where reading is negatively valued by people from whom a student seeks approval, the student is unlikely to develop positive reading attitudes" (ibid: 141). This line of reasoning emphasises the tripartite nature of the influence of reading attitudes in the life of a learner by parents in the home, teachers at school and a cultural setting that encourages and develops the culture of reading. It seems that parents and teachers should realise their role as role models of the culture of reading and developing positive attitudes to reading.

However, Mathewson (2004) posits that a positive attitude, on its own, is insufficient in ensuring that actual reading behaviour is cultivated. He argues that there has to be some influence exerted on the positive attitude by *intention to read/keep on reading*. Attitude on its own does not directly influence reading; rather, behaviour as *intention* is the mediating factor in one's decision to read. Mathewson (2004) argues that measuring attitudes is not relevant as one's attitude may be positive but one may lack the aspect of *intention to read*, resulting in one deciding not to read. Mathewson's model of Reading Attitudes comprises *external motivators* and *internal states* as key components influencing the *intention to read/to keep on reading*. External motivators, on the one hand, are constituted by "incentives, purposes, norms, and settings outside of readers" (2004: 1436). Incentives and purposes could be anything that motivates a learner to read such as prizes, attaining good marks or any other socially-based motivators. Norms refer to objectives and putting in place regulatory or procedural expectations to guide lecturers and students in the process of external motivation. Settings should involve creating an atmosphere and environment that is favourable to reading and its development.

Internal emotional states, on the other hand, involve a reader's undivided concentration on a text, barring out all other emotions that the reader may be

experiencing while engaged in the construction of a writer's meaning in the text, so that the reader can recreate the writer's meaning and emotions. These two areas, external motivators and internal emotional states, he argues, require much working on in the school context so that they both exert pressure on the learner's intention to read. This model, shown below in its simplified form in Figure 2.2, presents a comprehensive picture for attitude formation and sustenance in order to achieve reading behaviour.

*Figure 2.2 Mathewson's Model of Reading Attitudes*



There are other components not shown in the simplified model but these components, namely favourable ideas and feelings, seem to strengthen reading behaviour as a result of receiving feedback on the reading experience. This model emphasizes the role of external motivating factors in the form of "incentives, purposes, norms and settings" and it is in this domain that teacher influence can work, to create an impact on the learners' intention to read (Mathewson, 2004: 1438).

Furthermore, reading attitudes seem to be as much linked to the *amount of reading* an individual does, as they are to one's success in reading activities and

assessment (Elley, 1991; Lao & Krashen, 1997; Constantino, 1994; Cho & Krashen, 1994). Access to reading resources, it seems, acts as an external motivator, as Mathewson's (2004) model depicts. The more a person reads the more gains the person makes in the development and entrenchment of a positive attitude to reading (Guthrie & Greaney, 1991). There seems to be a bi-directional or reciprocal link in which the reader's positive attitude towards reading results in more reading which, in turn, leads to more gains in reading skill. The improved reading skill inculcates confidence and high self-esteem in the reader and this invariably leads to increased reading activity (Martino & Hoffman, 2002: 315).

### ***2.2.1 Research Findings on Attitudes to Reading***

Some research has been carried out in the domain of reading attitudes with two age groups: children's attitudes to extensive reading (e.g. Parker & Paradis, 1986; Smith, 1990; Walberg & Tsai, 1995; McKenna, et al., 1995; Sainsbury & Schagen, 2004; Twist, et al., 2004) and college/university students' attitudes towards extensive and academic reading (e.g. Camiciottoli, 2001; Lao & Krashen, 2000).

One study of how children's reading attitudes develop in the first six grades was conducted by Parker and Paradis (1986). The researchers investigated if attitudes changed as children went from grade to grade. They also enquired if "sex by grade interactions occurred for reading attitudes in the primary or intermediate grades" (1986: 313). The 234 participants were randomly chosen from seven primary schools in a region in the USA with 114 primary school learners randomly chosen and their results compared to 120 intermediate-grade learners. Their attitudes were measured using attitude scales – Heathington Primary and Intermediate scales – which were administered first through individual interviews, as a way of piloting of the instruments. Parker and Paradis' findings on primary school children's reading attitudes suggest that learner

attitudes to reading seem to improve in the upper primary grades; in their findings there was an increase in attitude scores in Grades 4 to 5 and this increase showed no signs of change in grades 5 to 6 (ibid: 315). Girls' attitudes to reading appeared to be more positive than boys'. A point to note is that the participants seemed to prefer reading silently outside the classroom rather than classroom reading. These findings suggest that teachers could encourage their learners to do more independent reading than controlled classroom-related reading. Reading ability gains can be expected if reading attitudes are positive.

The role of teachers discussed in Parker & Paradis' study is relevant for the current study, providing information on the task of influencing young learners and mentoring them as readers for life. The current study is based on teacher trainees who will shortly be joining the teaching profession as qualified teachers. As an instructor in the college where this study is conducted, I was interested in finding out whether the students are ready to assume this role on completion of their Primary Teachers' Diploma.

Furthermore, Smith (1990) investigated, in a longitudinal study, the development of attitudes over time, from childhood to adulthood. The 84 participants aged between 35 and 44, were chosen from a wide educational context in ten Wisconsin communities and they had participated in an earlier study by Kreitlow, (1988) which was the reason why they had been tracked down for the Smith longitudinal study. A 40-item reading attitude questionnaire was administered to the subjects. The Adult Survey of Reading Attitudes and the Young Adult Reading Attitudes questionnaires were also developed for the assessment of attitudes to reading. One of Smith's findings was that adulthood attitudes to reading cannot always be predicted from those of childhood (1990: 218). However, his finding that attitudes to reading are generally a "stable construct over time" among children is encouraging (ibid: 219), as it underscores the

importance of developing positive attitudes toward reading early in the lives of children.

Walberg and Tsai's (1995) research study looked at the factors that affect attitudes towards reading in English as a first language and reading achievement and this was conducted with 1,459 nine-year old participants in the USA. The researchers sought to identify factors affecting reading achievement, reading attitude and cognitive learning. The research instruments included test-booklets and questionnaires. The researchers administered the instruments to geographically demarcated counties representing all of the USA's regions and communities, with nine-year olds and school principals responding to the tests and questionnaires. Reading attitude and achievement were the dependent variables; socio-economic status, home environment, spare time, amount of television watched, quality of kindergarten instruction, library facilities and book availability were some of the independent variables being investigated as possibly influencing the two dependent variables (1995: 162-165).

The findings of this study suggest that there are a number of factors that influence reading achievement, such as socio-economic status, pre-school attendance, ethnicity, availability of library reading materials, the home environment, availability of reading material in the home, amongst others. One finding pertinent to the current research study was that children with educated parents had better reading achievement and reading attitude scores. The home environment apparently had a great effect on the learners' attitudes to reading, academic achievement and reading ability (Walberg & Tsai, 1995: 165). Other independent variables such as socio-economic status, ethnicity, access to books in the home and libraries, also correlated with the attitudes and academic achievement of the participants. There was a significant relationship between reading attitudes and achievement.

This finding is worth mentioning in relation to the current study as it highlights a significant issue. As has been mentioned earlier, the generally low literacy levels and poverty in Swaziland mean that teachers, as enlightened practitioners, need to be in a position to assist learners to develop positive reading attitudes and good reading habits, in a situation where access to books in the home is almost impossible. Moreover, the school environment could play a major role if it were furnished with graded readers.

McKenna et al.'s (1995) large-scale research into the development of reading attitudes among 18,185 children in Grades 1 to 6 in 38 states of the USA seems to indicate some pertinent issues about reading attitudes. The researchers set out to determine the factors involved in the development of reading attitudes and the relationship between reading attitudes and reading ability, gender and ethnic affiliation (ibid: 942). The research material consisted of an Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, a pictorial rating scale featuring Garfield made up of 20 items and a 39-item questionnaire designed to measure attitudes toward reading.

One significant finding from this research was that children's attitudes towards reading seemed to be mainly positive in the lower grades but became more negative by the sixth grade (1995: 955). However, this attitudinal decline seems to be closely linked to reading ability in the sense that the poor performers were more likely to have negative reading attitudes (ibid: 952). The second finding, similar to Parker and Paradis' (1986) study findings, was that girls in this study seemed to have more positive attitudes to reading than boys. Additionally, research seems to suggest that gender has much to do with the development of reading attitude (McKenna, et al., 1995; Shapiro, 1980). Perhaps, due to a lack of male models of reading for leisure purposes, girls' attitudes to reading were found to be more positive than boys'.

The findings discussed in the preceding paragraphs may reflect contrasts between the reading attitudes in first and third world contexts. Perhaps, in first world countries like England and the USA, there may be factors favouring such results, including the availability of reading materials and cultural beliefs that value reading as a leisure activity, higher literacy levels of the society at large and a longer history of reading and writing in English; all these are factors which may not readily apply to third world countries. The current study focuses on reading attitudes in a third world country, where there is a dearth of research in this area.

In another study in the UK, Sainsbury and Schagen (2004) investigated upper grades' (children's) reading attitudes and also tried to establish if these had changed in the five-year period since the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. They studied 5,076 Grade 4 and 6 children in 74 schools and another 2,364 children who had filled in the same questionnaire that was being administered, five years previously. The researchers found that 9-11 year-olds in England had, by and large, positive attitudes towards extensive reading but these had changed to some extent between the "younger and older of these age groups" (2004: 373). Also, the children's enjoyment of reading had declined in the 5-year period. The study also showed that the learners' confidence as readers had increased during this time. However, in a later survey, Twist, Gnaldi, Schagen & Morrison (2004) investigated learner attitudes to reading in England, and whether these had recently changed among primary school children. This study was a questionnaire survey that involved children in 34 countries for comparative purposes. The outcome of the study was that the attitudes of English children towards reading seemed to have become more negative as the children became older. However, the researchers were reluctant to stress that children's reading attitudes had become more negative over the years because of lack of conclusive data (ibid: 393-394). Their study indicates a significant

problem in research: there has been inadequate enquiry into the issue of attitudes (2004: 399).

It should be noted that the studies discussed above were conducted with first language speakers of English, rather than with AL speakers of English. Also, in some studies, the participants were children. In contrast, the current study investigates the attitudes of adult ESL students towards reading at college level. Some research has been done with college and university students to explore their reading attitudes, even though, in the words of Camiciottoli, "there is a paucity of research at the level of EFL instruction in higher education" (2001: 136). This is true even at the level of ESL and AL instruction at tertiary level in Southern Africa (Pretorius, 2002b: 93, 96-98).

Camiciottoli's (2001) research into the reading habits and attitudes of 182 Italian university EFL students enrolled in a two-year English course, which was part of the requirements for a Business Administration degree, is one study conducted in the Western world that seems to share some similarities with the current study. The participants had to respond to a questionnaire which was in the L1 (Italian) of the students to ensure fair comprehension of the statements in the study. The study results indicate a negative correlation between years of English study and attitude. Surprisingly, it appears that the more years the students spent studying in English, the less inclined they were to seek reading opportunities (2001: 144). The students' attitude to extensive reading matched their lack of enthusiasm for voluntary leisure reading. On the other hand, those who read more books in their free time in their native Italian were eager to find and read books in the AL, thus indicating a positive correlation between attitude to extensive reading and reading in the native language (ibid: 144-5).

Camiciottoli's comment in her discussion of the results significantly touches on the fossilization of a "defeatism" attitude toward the AL and reading in it, such that AL students seem to throw in the towel, accepting the consequences of an academic life void of leisure reading in the AL (ibid: 147-8). It is true that this context is different from the current study, in that in the Italian study English was a foreign language and not a LoLT; however, her findings seem to match my own insider observations in the context of the current study. The fossilization seems to be generated by two separate feelings, namely, feelings of defeatism and indifference linked to leisure reading.

Feelings of defeatism are evident in that students seem to find reading so time consuming, effortful and unrewarding that they give up on the task. At the same time, they seem to experience feelings of indifference to reading (i.e. not caring about reading and only getting by with the minimum of work). These feelings seem to negatively reinforce each other. This could be attributed to ignorance about the role of the written word in their reading ability and academic performance. Since they can get by with little spoken language competence, they think that this is adequate mastery of the English language. This competence is mainly oral, a basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) type of competence, whereas academic achievement requires cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) type of competence (Pretorius, 2002: 192). This concept will be discussed later in this chapter (§ 2.5).

Another study similar, to some extent, to Camiciottoli's was conducted by Lao and Krashen (2000) in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) situation at a university in Hong Kong in which they investigated the impact that leisure reading could have on university students' vocabulary acquisition, reading rate and reading attitudes. The 91 participants were first year university students whose major course was translation. The experiment involved the students'

reading of six books in fourteen weeks whereas the control group, made up of 39 students majoring in social science, was engaged in the normal academic skills course of note-taking from lectures and academic texts, and communication and presentation skills (ibid: 264). For the experimental group, one book was selected by the students and the other five were pre-selected by the researchers and these were all read privately and individually. Films/videos were shown for four of the pre-selected books. During class periods, the students discussed the books they had read, focusing on the content or language points in the text. After the discussions the participants had to write short essays on the books and finally had to review the self-selected book.

The findings after the experiment were significant for the experimental group in that they showed some growth in vocabulary and reading speed. The experimental group made significant gains in reading rate, thus enhancing their reading ability (Lao & Krashen, 2000: 265). The experimental group's exposure to free voluntary reading had paid off even in terms of gains in vocabulary acquisition and a change of attitude towards reading (ibid: 267). They began to view reading as a pleasurable activity and that showed a change of reading attitude as a result of engaging in extensive reading, a significant finding for this study.

A study conducted in Africa, bearing much resemblance to the current enquiry into attitudes and perceptions of reading and English as a language, was set up by Roy-Campbell and Qorro (1997). The study was a large scale survey involving Form 2 and Form 4 learners (i.e. Grades 9 and 11) in 15 Tanzanian secondary schools, categorised as "boys-only, girls-only and co-educational schools" (1997: 22) to avoid any bias in the data-collection process. The research instruments in this study were student and teacher questionnaires, a reading skills test that was administered first in Kiswahili and then in English, assessing how quickly a

student can access textual information through text scanning, reading comprehension tests and finally readability tests which measured the vocabulary and syntactic features of the reading skills tests and a number of textbooks used in Tanzanian secondary schools to check if these were easy or difficult to read. The questionnaires sought data on linguistic background, attitudes to English and personal perceptions on the amount of reading done each day on a selection of subjects. Seventy-three teachers and 100 students who were selected from each of the 15 schools, 50 in Form 2 and 50 in Form 4, were involved in the study.

One of the findings was that the students perceived themselves as keen readers preferably in the English language. However, this was contrary to the fact that books were inaccessible to the students (ibid: 57). Another finding of the study was the students' low reading ability in all 15 schools, with most of the learners unable to reach a reasonable score in the tests. A few students scored between 60% and 100%. Some of the participants were slow readers and did not finish writing the tests. This study, conducted in Africa, seems to address the same concerns as the current study; however, their focus seems to be on school children, and not on trainee teachers, as is this study's focus.

In South Africa, Pretorius' research studies have been a milestone in the investigation of tertiary students' "reading practices, attitudes and problems" (2005: 790). In one of her studies, Pretorius (2005) investigated the reading attitudes and practices of five first-year university psychology students who volunteered for three-month interview sessions during which they worked with the researcher in what she refers to as a "read-and-probe procedure" (2005: 791). The students' exposure to what reading really entailed was the beginning of an awareness of more than decoding ability. In as far as attitudes were concerned in this study, it may not be easy to assess attitude change in students who have been poor readers and are ignorant of what constitutes good reading

practice. Seemingly, though, as the students' reading confidence levels increased, their attitudes towards reading took on a positive turn because of some of the reading techniques they had successfully picked up during the sessions with the researcher (2005: 809-810). Clearly, the years of reading failure that they had experienced had made them reluctant to use new reading strategies that they viewed as time-wasting (ibid: 809), but an introduction to the strategies at their own leisure helped improve their view of reading.

In the local Swazi scene, no research study on reading attitudes has been carried out. An article by Allan (1983) only outlines how to investigate the attitudes of students at the University of Swaziland (UNISWA) toward a Communication Skills course, Communication Skills. The rationale behind his discussion was that it is necessary for teachers to know how successful or unsuccessful their course is with students (1983: 21). The article does not report on any study but simply discusses how a study can be conducted with the aid of a questionnaire. Hence, the current study fills a serious void in this very important area of research and education in the country.

It has been observed that generally Swazi people, on the whole an oral society, do not regard reading highly. The saying: "Ufundza kakhulu, utawuhlanya!" (loosely translated as "You read too many books, you will go mad!"), directed to people who do much reading, captures the general attitude of the average Swazi towards books and reading. I think that this common perception, to some extent, consciously or unconsciously affects people's inclination to read and also provides an excuse for those who do not want to engage in pleasure reading. It seems to function as a cop-out for students who would rather not read extensively. Our college shares a fence with a mental institution and the students often make remarks to the effect that too much study may send them to the other side of

the fence. Although used in a jocular manner, these remarks seem to sum up the general perception of reading in the Swazi context.

As Day and Bamford (1998) observe, negative attitudes are not cast in stone; they can change, and this can result in improved reading ability and much more. Investigating the reading attitudes of college students in Swaziland helps us and so enables us to understand them better and devise better action strategies to address the issues effectively.

The next subsection will focus on a review of the literature pertaining to extensive reading and how it relates to reading ability.

### **2.3 Extensive Reading and Reading Ability**

Extensive reading, also referred to in this study as “leisure reading”, “pleasure reading” and “free voluntary reading” (Lao & Krashen, 2000) entails reading a large quantity of reading materials for non-academic purposes and thereby cultivating a love of reading and subsequently a culture of reading (Day & Bamford 1998: 8-9). Jacobs and Gallo (2002) declare that “reading brings with it great delights... [and] these delights [assist students] by spreading the joy of reading” (2002: 8).

However, Green (2005) challenges Krashen’s view of extensive reading, arguing that “reading for pleasure” may appeal to young learners but bear “little or no literary merit”. Green argues against an individualistic approach to extensive reading where the reader silently goes through a text, asserting that such reading is “unguided activity [that] fail[s] to provide a clear and direct purpose for the reading and do[es] not exploit the opportunities extensive reading presents for the dynamic processes of presenting and debating what has been

read” and is opposed to interactionist theory (2005: 307). Although Green concedes that extensive reading is an “important medium for long-term second language acquisition”, he posits that it might not be “the most effective means of promoting acquisition” unless it is the key element in the L2 curriculum (ibid: 306).

Extensive reading is the opposite of intensive reading, the latter which involves the concentrated study of a text. Extensive reading is about reading widely, across genres, in and out of the classroom, for the purpose of enjoyment, rather than teacher-assigned or prescribed reading. Day and Bamford (1998) view extensive reading as “one of four styles or ways of reading, the other three being skimming, scanning and intensive reading” (ibid: 6).

Extensive reading is linked to the kind of access to reading resources a person has, in the sense that a wider exposure to print seems to augur well for a number of things, including reading ability. It seems that the more reading a person does, the more gains the reader makes in aspects like “second language reading ability, affect, vocabulary, linguistic competence, writing and spelling” (Day & Bamford, 1998: 35).

Besides, the benefits of extensive reading have conscientiously been researched, mainly through intervention programmes in many studies. One such benefit seems to be that it provides input for knowledge building in the areas of reading skills, language knowledge, discourse knowledge, vocabulary and general knowledge. The current study has been undertaken with the rationale that if extensive reading is such a vital force in acquiring reading habits, skills and ability, as well as the acquisition of an AL and success in academic performance, then we need to examine the reading attitudes of student teachers who will

themselves be highly influential in the formation of attitudes and perceptions of reading of their learners in the various schools in Swaziland.

In the foregoing subsection on attitudes to reading the bi-directional nature of influence was pointed out (in §2.1) where extensive reading in itself was shown to have an effect on attitudes; the less an individual reads, the more negative the attitudes and the less the gains in terms of reading ability and academic performance may be (McKenna et al., 1995). This is what Stanovich termed "Matthew effects" (1986: 381), following a biblical verse in the gospel of Matthew in which it is implied that the rich get richer and the poor lose even the little they have (Matthew 25: 29). On the upside, the more extensive reading one engages in, the more positive the attitude becomes and the more gains in reading achievement. However, Green (2005) levels criticism against extensive reading schemes, arguing that such schemes focus mainly on moving from one completed text to another, at the expense of developing students' "target language systems", thus cultivating what he refers to as "superficial fluency" (p. 309). It seems that there has to be balance in intervention programmes for the best results, with students being able to read widely but at the same time being taught effective comprehension strategies in the classroom.

One advantage of extensive reading is that it brings with it different kinds of knowledge. Stanovich and Cunningham (1993) conducted a study in which they investigated sources of content knowledge: "Where does knowledge come from?" they enquired. They challenged the cognitive efficiency hypothesis which holds that knowledge differences are a matter of what an individual learns, how effectively it is learned and what the individual subsequently does with that learned knowledge (ibid: 211). In this view, individual differences in information exposure do not have any appreciable cognitive effect. In contrast, another school of thought holds the view that if there are individual differences in

knowledge it is a result of “experiential differences” (1993: 211). In this latter view, the argument is that knowledge differences are a consequence of differences in the opportunities of exposure to knowledge sources (1993: 211).

Stanovich and Cunningham (1993) investigated if individual differences regarding print exposure did make a difference in individual knowledge acquired by subjects. Their study involved 268 participants consisting of 106 students from a large, highly selective western American university and 162 students from a smaller, not-so-selective mid-western American state university. The subjects were tested for general reading ability using the Nelson-Denny Reading Test for reading comprehension, the Raven Advanced Progressive Matrices for problem-solving and analytical skills, and a mathematics test as research instruments (ibid: 213). The students were further tested for print exposure using an author recognition test (ART), a magazine recognition test (MRT) and a newspaper recognition checklist (NRT), in which they had to identify popular author names, magazines and newspapers.

On other media exposure, the subjects were tested using the Television Preference Questionnaire, a television recognition checklist, the three popular shows questionnaire, a cultural literacy test (CLT), a practical knowledge test, an acronym test, a cultural knowledge checklist (CKC) and a multicultural checklist. All these tests were administered in a 2-hour period. The findings showed that the participants from the highly selective university outperformed those from the less selective university in all the categories and tests. Participants who were voracious readers proved to be good at reading, mathematics and nonverbal problem-solving. There were correlations between general knowledge measures and print exposure measures significant at the .01 level.

In an investigation of whether the correlations between these measures were authentic or not, a hierarchical regression analysis was applied to the data and it was found that print exposure was a strong predictor of general knowledge, especially reading comprehension, mathematics, the Raven Advanced Progressive Matrices in both university groups. Television exposure did not account for any variance in the regression analysis. The researchers successfully refuted the cognitive efficiency hypothesis; in addition, their results challenged the view of television exposure as an information machine when they discovered that the participants did not know of information that had been on television for a year (ibid: 224). The researchers claimed that individual differences in knowledge are based on experiential factors such as print exposure. Stanovich and Cunningham (1993) emphasised the role of print exposure as being more effective than media exposure in bringing knowledge to a student. Avid readers were shown to be more likely to know about phenomena that affect their world than those who spent time watching television (1993: 225). The results further challenged the view that print can only be linked to academic kinds of knowledge that have no bearing on practical everyday life, in the finding that eager readers could apply what they read to real-life situations such as how a carburettor functioned, what kinds of vitamins citrus fruits contained and what a stroke entailed.

Extensive reading seems to be effective in all language situations and for all levels of learners. Hafiz and Tudor (1989) experimented with a group of 16 Pakistani subjects aged between 10 and 11 years in Leeds in the United Kingdom (UK), learning English as a second language in a three-month programme. The researchers ensured that for their study purposes they had two control groups (N=30) from the same area. The participants spoke mostly Punjabi as their first language. The three-month study involved the subjects in a programme of reading graded readers after school each day for an hour. They could take these

books home after the reading sessions. The two control groups were not given any such treatment. Instead, they only took the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) tests as pre-tests with the experimental group. The researchers had given pre-tests to the participants at the commencement of the study which showed the experimental group constantly getting lower scores than the control groups, in all the pre-tests in reading and writing ability, focusing on proficiency in English (ibid: 6). However, in the post-tests the experimental group out-performed the control groups on the tests. Not only did the participants enjoy the leisure reading, which meant an improvement of their attitudes towards reading, but the experience also assisted in improving their language and academic performance in both reading and writing skills (Hafiz & Tudor, 1989: 7-8). Pleasure reading appears to have led to success in this research study.

Admittedly, this was a very short term research intervention study for conclusive claims and suggestions. However, Hafiz and Tudor's study draws attention to the benefits of establishing positive reading habits at the primary school level, even among AL learners from an emigrant culture where pleasure reading is not traditionally part of children's daily activities. One wonders what a longer term study can do if a short one could yield such results. I argue in the current study that teacher trainees can be effective in the schools if their attitudes to extensive are positive and if they themselves enjoy reading and read widely, so that they can introduce learners at primary school to the joy of extensive reading and thereby assist them to become good readers.

Elley's (1991) book flood programme also lends support to the effectiveness of extensive reading in an ESL situation in Niue, Fiji and Singapore. In the three areas of intervention, learners were flooded with books in a shared-book programme designed specifically for young readers aged between six and eleven.

In the Fiji context, the books were shared among more than 500 learners aged between 9 and 11. These learners were in Class 4 and 5, based in 15 rural area schools (1991: 384). Half of these schools were engaged in the shared-book programme, while the other half followed the sustained silent reading programme. They read the books over an eight-month period in the first year and another eight-month period in the second, before being tested. The control students in the four control schools followed the traditional Tate syllabus which was mainly audiolingual oriented (ibid: 377).

The results of this study, conducted over two years, showed Class 4 and 5 in the shared book programme out-performing both the Tate and the sustained silent reading participants. However, the sustained silent reading subjects were a close second to the shared-book group. In language tests involving reading comprehension, vocabulary, composition and listening comprehension tests (ibid: 385), the experimental groups did exceptionally well, with the shared-book group leading in performance in the second year of the programme. The participants' external examination results showed a remarkable improvement, out-performing the controls by far in all the school subjects (ibid: 388). Clearly, the South Asia Pacific programme makes a strong case for extensive reading and its effectiveness for improving reading ability, language proficiency and academic success (cf. also Elley & Mangubhai, 1983), in the context of a developing country.

Tse's (1996) single case study was conducted in an ESL setting. The subject was a 36-year-old Indonesian woman at university in the USA. Her initial attitude toward reading was that it was a waste of time. The treatment period was 15 weeks during which the subject read leisure materials such as George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. The student had to read between 15 and 25 pages each night, followed by a 45-minute discussion of the stories read with the tutor (1996: 20-

21). In the semester, the subject read 13 books and continued with reading even six months after the course was over. Tse's research took six months, four spent in classroom observation and another two in private classes. One finding in this research was that "reading is the most effective and efficient way to learn a second language" (ibid: 27). Furthermore, as the subject's reading ability improved significantly her attitude toward reading improved at the same time, setting her free to express her opinions on the materials she had read (ibid: 23). However, critics of the effectiveness of extensive reading point out that studies such as these raise false expectations that extensive reading will magically fix all language learning and development problems. It is true that these intervention programmes are set up for only a few months and they are stopped before the benefits take root in the community being studied. What has to be acknowledged and understood is that extensive reading has to be sustained over time for it to be effective. Also, in situations where children already have reading problems, extensive reading may not necessarily work, as Scheepers observes in her own research (2008), especially if learners do not have access to books at their reading level. There have been claims that vocabulary skills and language proficiency are improved through extensive reading. In reality, it seems, the first skill to respond to a reading programme is reading ability; children become better readers, but vocabulary and language proficiency occur at a slower rate and may be manifested later in the readers' lives, provided they keep on reading.

In Swaziland, one study has been conducted on reading ability. Allan (1983) investigated whether "reading for understanding did actually improve reading for understanding" (p.29). He enquires if the reading card kits produced by Science Research Association (SRA) Inc., of the USA were really effective in improving reading comprehension in learners in Swaziland where these cards were used by many teachers in English language learning classrooms in the 70s and early 80s. The reading card kits were brought into the classroom and learners started

reading from a low level of difficulty, advancing to cards at a higher level of difficulty. They would read these individually and check their performance against answer cards that were provided in the boxes, independently of the teacher. Allan's hypothesis was: "*Studying SRA cards does not improve reading abilities*" (1983: 30).

Allan conducted his pilot study with two (N= 27 and N=31 each) groups of new university students at the University of Swaziland (UNISWA) to find out if the SRA cards would improve the reading ability of first-year students. Each student took pre- and post-tests, formulated from Placement, consisting of 60 items; these tests were taken from the senior's SRA kit. The students read the cards in a 50-minute period once a week for 7 weeks. There was no control group as this was a pilot study. The researcher found that the participants' reading performance had improved in the post-tests. The findings indicate that there had been some gains in the reading ability of the students in the 7-week session. Further findings from his quasi-experimental study conducted in the same year with Faculty of Science students show that the experimental SRA card-reading group performed better than the control non-SRA card-reading group. Allan admits that the correlations were rather low, but concludes that there were gains in reading ability, contrary to his expectations. And so he had to accept the null hypothesis in this enquiry. Despite its very short intervention period (7 weeks only) the results were encouraging. This appears to be the only study on reading ability, conducted locally.

The next subsection is a discussion of what access to leisure reading resources seems to achieve in terms of reading ability.

### ***2.3.1 Access to Reading Resources and Reading Ability***

Research regarding whether the students' access to leisure reading resources is related to reading ability of the student is scant, yet this is one area which would enrich reading research. Only a few studies address this aspect on extensive reading.

Anderson, Wilson and Fielding (1988) in the USA compared 155 Grade 5 children's activities out of school to their reading ability and achievement (1988: 287) over 8 to 26 weeks. Questionnaires given to the children provided data on the learners' out-of-school activities. The probe involved a report regarding the children's out-of-school activities in relation to their reading ability. They were tested on reading ability, reading rate and vocabulary. The findings of this study indicate that the amount of reading varied from child to child, depending on the teacher's influence on the child in relation to the access to leisure reading resources (ibid: 296). The children's reading proficiency seemed to be related to reading more books during out-of-school hours. The amount of reading (words per year) was calculated by multiplying the child's mean of reading minutes per day by the reading rate in words per minute.

One finding of this study was that the children who read the most, and spent more time reading after school hours, had had much teacher influence, a finding that ties in with Mathewson's assertion that teachers can influence children's intention to read (Mathewson, 2004:1455). The good readers read 3.6 times more than the class that did minimal reading. Also, the child who was regarded as a reader in class seemed to spend the most time reading books. Furthermore, the children were found to have made some gains in vocabulary skills. Interestingly, girls were found to be spending more of their leisure time on reading than boys did. It was estimated that some children who were good readers read about 1 million words per year in English. Their reading speed had

increased by 12 words per minute per grade level. This was in contrast to weaker readers who, it was estimated, were only reading about 251,000 words a year (Anderson, et al., 1988).

This is a valuable study for the present research in indicating what access to reading resources can achieve. Also, the role of the primary school teacher in inculcating positive reading attitudes is evident. Besides, it indicates the important relationship between access to pleasure reading resources and reading ability (ibid: 297).

Cho and Krashen (1994) conducted research in which the amount of reading done and the reader's ability were compared. The four Korean participants had been raised in a Korean educational system which encouraged the memorisation of vocabulary and language accuracy rather than communicative competence, thus inculcating self-consciousness in the use of English by Korean native speakers. They were given access to novels and encouraged to read as many of these as they could. The researchers state that in just about four months, some of their participants had read over twenty volumes of the Sweet Valley Kids' series (ibid: 666-667). The subjects' reading rate had increased by about 60%, with some of them reading between 80,000 and 160,000 words per month. Not only did their attitudes toward reading change for the better, but their reading ability also improved, judging from the gains in vocabulary acquisition (ibid: 665). What is more interesting is that they became avid readers of the Sweet Valley series after the experiment. Here, too, we see how access to books combined with encouragement to read can develop ESL proficiency, reading ability and positive reading attitudes.

In their investigation of the reading habits of ESL university students at graduate and undergraduate levels with different proficiency levels, Mokhtari and Sheorey

(1994) examined reading habits (the amount of reading) of 158 international graduate and undergraduate students enrolled in an American university. Their reading habits, attitudes and interests for academic and non-academic purposes were investigated in a questionnaire which was divided into eight categories, such as academic reading, reading volume, non-academic reading and others by indicating the amount of time spent on each kind of reading respectively (1994: 52). The results show that the students who spent more hours (approximately 16 hours a week) on reading academic and non-academic materials had higher TOEFL scores. The lower proficiency groups turned out to be those who spent an average of 11.8 hours reading per week.

The amount of reading done by a student invariably has an effect on the student's reading ability. All the intervention programmes I have referred to in this review (e.g. Elley, 1991; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Lao & Krashen, 2000) suggest that the more students read, the better their reading ability becomes, while the opposite obtains for less reading done ("Matthew effects", according to Stanovich, 1986).

Learners of ALs in Southern Africa are plagued with many socio-economic problems which make extensive reading an experience reserved for the lucky few (Pretorius & Machet, 2004). Poverty in most black African families has made it difficult for literacy to take root in school children (Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007: 40). Poverty has contributed to a "print-poor" educational environment in many African countries (Paran & Williams, 2007: 2). Williams points out the effects of poverty in Malawi, one of which is how it affects reading in the evenings, due to lack of electricity (2007: 61-62). Machet (2002) reiterates the socio-economic aspect of a lack of reading resources: "In general, South Africans are not book buyers. There are various reasons for this, including the lack of disposable income, but the most important one from our perspective is that reading is

regarded by many black people as being related only to education. They do not read for pleasure" (2002: 8). The development of a culture of reading in an economic situation that does not give people any surplus income with which to buy books is hardly likely, unless the schools are empowered to make a difference.

There may be many reasons for the low literacy levels in the SADC region. The unfortunate consequence is that primary and secondary education has suffered considerably, producing students whose literacy levels are generally below the expected levels, such that most of them can justifiably be viewed as "high risk" students. College/university students generally face the consequences of an inadequate and ineffective primary and high school literacy programme (as observed by Radebaugh & Kazemek, 1989, in their article). This state of affairs requires research with a view to gathering information on the problems and making attempts to improve the state of our reading and literacy development in the region. Such research should be made known to those in authority who can make a difference in this challenging state of affairs (Pretorius, 2002b: 99).

The findings of the Roy-Campbell & Qorro study (1997, already discussed in §2.2) conducted in Tanzania reflect the SADC region's common problem of the inaccessibility of reading resources in Black schools. The researchers observed that "the dearth of textbooks and indeed other reading materials, in the schools denied students the opportunity for sufficient practice in reading. Consequently, the reading competence of many of the students was slow in developing, if not stifled" (1997: 57).

Research into the role of extensive reading has increased in the past few decades but many of these studies have been done in the developed world. The same cannot be said for SADC countries in general, and Swaziland, in particular.

Extensive reading has been shown to not only relate to the improvement of reading ability and AL proficiency, but also to the acquisition of vocabulary. The relationship between leisure reading and vocabulary acquisition will be discussed as the next topic. The current study aims at establishing whether there is a connection between these variables in the context of the teacher trainees in Swaziland.

## **2.4 Extensive Reading and Vocabulary Acquisition**

One aspect that the current study investigates is students' knowledge of vocabulary. The rationale behind this investigation is that vocabulary mastery seems to portend good reading ability. Wenborn (1981, in Cooper, 2000: 19) aptly articulates the role of words as: "the means of organizing experience, of marshalling ideas, and of the ability to use them efficiently [which] will not only improve your own capacity for assimilating new ideas and for passing them on and making them work for you, but will also enable you to make that capacity known to other people". Words are like vehicles; without them we cannot convey any meaning. AL learners need vocabulary in order to understand written discourse and to understand their content subjects (i.e. for meaningful learning).

Coady (1993) asserts that vocabulary teaching was neglected in the audiolingual method, with emphasis on habit-drilling and phonological accuracy more than on the acquisition of vocabulary, which earlier approaches had stressed (1993: 4). However, his view does not take into account the fact that even the relatively newer communicative language teaching (CLT) approach has not elevated vocabulary instruction to its place of importance among other language activities in ESL. Proponents of CLT argue that learners acquire vocabulary through authentic real life communication the learners engage in (ibid: 4) rather than through explicit classroom instruction or extensive reading. Still, it is evident that

vocabulary acquisition should engage all available structures and resources for the success of the AL learner.

In as much as oral communication is important, academic vocabulary cannot be acquired through verbal discourse alone since such words tend not to occur in everyday conversations but rather in academic or scientific writing and discourse. Oral communication is basically contextual and informal, and in terms of vocabulary, consists of mainly high frequency words which are contained in the 2 000-3 000 word levels. Notably, oral communication is context-embedded and this means that participants in conversation enrich the communication with gestures and body language that do not necessitate formal, involved vocabulary for clarity of the message. However, "book language" (Lipson and Wixson, 1997) is different and is typically acquired from books, and requires a larger vocabulary, especially of words at the lower frequency levels.

It appears that knowledge of the 2,000 most frequent word families alone would give a lexical coverage of about 85% of words in written text (Nation 2006, in Stæhr, 2008:150), but this is not enough for proper text comprehension. As Stæhr (2008:150) points out, although knowledge of these high frequency words is sufficient for basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and for understanding most oral discourse (giving about 90% lexical coverage of conversations), it is inadequate for written comprehension purposes and a student would read with difficulty. Thus, a vocabulary size of 6 000 to 7 000 word families would enable 98% lexical coverage of a written text. Stæhr (2008: 150) also makes the point that in order to demonstrate mastery of words at a particular level, students should obtain scores of at least 85% on a vocabulary levels test. In other words, to demonstrate mastery of the 2,000 most frequent word families, a student would need to obtain at least 85% or more on a vocabulary test that tests these kinds of words.

Day and Bamford (1998) argue that extensive reading assists in the acquisition of vocabulary knowledge and they base their view on Grabe's (1988: 63) statement that young language learners have to acquire "a massive receptive vocabulary that is rapidly, accurately, and automatically accessed" and a lack of this could be "the greatest single impediment to fluent reading by ESL students" (in Day and Bamford, 1998: 17). The larger the vocabulary size, the better one's reading comprehension of a text is. Lack of adequate vocabulary often leads to lower and slower reading comprehension levels as fewer words are recognised, and this, more often than not, culminates in an aversion to leisure or academic reading, invariably affecting reading attitudes to some extent.

Nevertheless, Min (2008) points out that there has been a heated debate over the view that extensive reading is effective in vocabulary acquisition. The critics, he states, are "questioning the effectiveness" of extensive reading on vocabulary acquisition (2008: 75). The contention has been that in all the studies reported on extensive reading and vocabulary acquisition, the vocabulary gains seem to be minimal (Laufer, 2003) and not retainable in the long-term (Min, 2008: 80). In spite of such criticism, further research has shown that extensive reading is effective even in the long-term (ibid: 80) and that reading ability seems to be the first skill that develops from reading rather than vocabulary.

Extensive reading seems to be linked to the development of large amounts of vocabulary. Ulijn and Salager-Meyer (1998) argue that vocabulary knowledge is vital for comprehension purposes and is a "predictor of reading ability" (p. 81). One of Saville-Troike's concluding comments following her research conducted with 19 ESL children who came from seven different language backgrounds is that vocabulary acquisition is the most important factor for one to attain academic success (1984: 216). Still, there are critics of this view who hold that extensive reading does not ensure that one will acquire vocabulary (Sternberg,

1985: 307, in Stanovich and Cunningham, 1993, discussed in §2.3). For example, proponents of the cognitive efficiency hypothesis posit that cognitive mechanisms control the ability to infer meaning from context. Differences in vocabulary knowledge, it is argued, are attributed to the strength of learners' cognitive ability and unequal vocabulary learning opportunities (ibid: 211). Thus, it is argued that only readers with well-developed cognitive abilities will infer the meanings of new words and so benefit from extensive reading.

In addition, Jiya (1993) observes that the most serious problems in the comprehension of scientific knowledge for black BSc (i.e. Science) students in South African universities are the "interpretations of scientific phrases and concept-words" (1993: 80). He states that the transfer of concepts across the two languages may not be easy as these concepts feature in the world of physics and are not conceptualised as different phenomena in the local Bantu languages. For example, the three different words in physics: 'force', 'energy' and 'power' refer to different concepts, but they may be interpreted as one concept 'amandla' in most indigenous languages in Southern Africa (ibid: 80). For black students in Southern Africa, extensive reading and the development of reading ability may be the answer to the lack of scientific vocabulary, as scientific vocabulary is not encountered in everyday conversation, but in written texts.

Vocabulary development and growth are vital for the tertiary level student. A low vocabulary repertoire could well predict failure as the student cannot comprehend even the simplest academic text. To this effect, Hubbard (1995) points out that students who are "at-risk" in the University of South Africa (UNISA) may be familiar with mostly high-frequency words, those words that appear more often in written texts, rather than the low-frequency words that characterise academic texts (1995: 98). Reading and understanding study guide texts, as the main mode of instruction at UNISA, means that the student's

academic vocabulary levels should meet the demand. Clearly, students have to rely heavily on these written texts and library books to pass their academic coursework. The lecturers at this institution assume that the students understand the general academic (low-frequency) words that are used in these texts (Cooper, 2000: 28). Cooper (1999) suggests that students comprehend less than 70% of the University Word List (UWL) which lists only 836 words. In her study, she points out that the vocabulary levels of most students are far below the expected standard and therefore they cannot meet the academic requirements at tertiary level (ibid: 28).

This is further emphasised by Scheepers (2008) who confirms that exposure to print is very important for the acquisition and growth of vocabulary; however, where even basic high-frequency words have not been acquired, extensive reading intervention, on its own, is simply not adequate to make a difference (2008: 30). Extensive reading also needs to include explicit instruction in vocabulary. A lack of adequate vocabulary challenges the reading ability and academic achievement of a student. Therefore, it is pertinent that we review research studies that have shown positive evidence of the connection between extensive reading and reading ability.

Research has shown that learners' vocabulary can grow when they engage in pleasure reading. Feitelson et al.'s (1993) research of story-book reading in FusHa with kindergarten Arabic subjects, indicates that the subjects began to master "literary language" when they were exposed to storybook reading in formal Arabic. Their reading of story books had made them familiar with "book language", which meant their vocabulary in the formal, academic FusHa dialect, in contrast to the spoken informal Aamiyya dialect, showed significant growth (1993: 71-72). The link between vocabulary growth and extensive reading clearly exists. Pretorius and Bohlmann point out that good readers "typically have high

vocabulary levels, especially of low-frequency and academic words” and that this feat is achieved, to a large extent, through regular exposure to reading (2003: 227). It appears that extensive reading assists in the acquisition of vocabulary and in the growth of one’s repertoire of vocabulary. Hence, vocabulary testing in the current study indirectly tests the amount of reading engagement of the teacher trainees.

Roberts’ (2008) research study which was undertaken with 33 children from low socio-economic status (SES) homes, whose mean age was 52.1 months (about 4 years old), speaking English as a second language, is another informative study similar to Feitelson, et al’s (1993). The children’s first language was either Spanish or Hmong. Roberts notes the scepticism of some scholars regarding the effectiveness of story-book reading programmes as an attempt to raise vocabulary levels for preschool children (2008: 104). In spite of these challenges, Roberts embarked on this study with 33 (20 Hmong and 13 Spanish) of the learners who comprised the experimental group. The programme involved story-book reading in the L1 at home and reading of the same story in English at school. Twelve children’s books, chosen for their sequential narrative pattern, were adapted into Spanish or Hmong. A group of 11 children were not really part of the study as they were from English-speaking-only homes and these children followed the ordinary school and home reading programme. And so, there was no real control group in the study (2008: 107, 119) with the same profile as the intervention children.

The experimental children were given pre-and post-tests and vocabulary tests each week based on six words on the next book they would be reading at home, on the book they had read in the previous weekend at home and on the book they had just read in class. Other test instruments were the selection of pictures representing words from each of the stories read in the twelve-week

experimental readings, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, the Preschool IDEA Oral Language Proficiency Test and a test in Spanish. Books 1 to 6 were done and tested after the first six-week session and 7 to 12 after the second six-week session. The L1 English group only had story-book reading in class and a computer programme to develop their literacy. They also had practice in naming objects and listened to short stories with the letter-words appearing slowly on the computer screen.

The findings of the Roberts study show a significant vocabulary gain in the first six-week experiment, compared to the pre-tests. Interestingly, the children who took story-books in their L1 could identify more words in English than in their L1. The children's scores in vocabulary were significantly higher after home-reading of the books than before home-reading. There was an even better performance on vocabulary after the classroom reading than after home-reading in weeks 1 to 6 and in weeks 7 to 12. Clearly, story-book reading at home using the L1 was as good as story-book reading at home in the L2, judging from the vocabulary gains made in the 12-week experiment.

The study highlights an issue which poses serious problems in southern Africa where parental literacy levels are so low that not many parents would be able to read story books to their children in the evenings as they are labourers and workers in low-paying jobs. Furthermore, Southern Africa's socio-economic situation forces parents to leave children for long hours. Children are left in the care of grandparents and caregivers whose literacy levels are very low; some caregivers never made it beyond the seventh grade due to financial constraints. This, therefore, points to schools as the main centres that can remedy the situation. Schools could also introduce Family Literacy workshops where they could encourage and show parents how to engage in storybook reading with their children. Schools could ensure that children are given reading homework

tasks and make books accessible to the parents and children to read at home. This does not mean that those parents who can read and afford books, should ignore their role as mentors of young readers.

Further evidence of a connection between extensive reading and vocabulary acquisition with older students comes from Lao and Krashen's (2000) study (mentioned earlier in relation to reading attitudes and reading ability). Their subjects, 91 university students whose major was translation, read six books in a period of fourteen weeks. The post-test results showed a great improvement of reading rate and vocabulary in comparison with the pre-test results. In such a short period, the estimated vocabulary gain in numerical content was a remarkable 3,000 words in the semester (2000: 265), moving up one grade level. The control group's vocabulary increased with only 500 words as they had not done as much reading as the intervention participants. The overall group vocabulary estimates were really low for the controls at 12,000 words, compared with the experimental group's 20,000 words (ibid: 265). Lao and Krashen's findings in an EFL extensive reading context are encouraging, especially with regard to the vocabulary gains which are an indication of the benefits of extensive reading. Clearly, extensive reading has a connection to vocabulary growth. Pretorius and Bohlmann (2003) observe: "There is strong evidence ... that pleasure reading ... not only improves reading skill but also expands vocabulary development ..." (2003: 228).

Another study of note was conducted by Hui-Tzu Min (2008) who experimented with 50 male Chinese high school students in an English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) situation in Taiwan. The experiment was conducted in 2-hour sessions a week over a 5-week period. Two groups of 25 subjects were formed, one the experimental Reading Plus Vocabulary-Enhancement (RV) group and the other the control Narrow Reading (NR) group. The main enquiry was whether reading

plus vocabulary enhancement activities made learners acquire more vocabulary skills and if they retained the words for the next three months. In the first week both groups read authentic texts with words highlighted in bold print for the participant to take note of them. In the second week and for four consecutive weeks, the experimental group read the texts and did vocabulary exercises on the targeted words, repeating the procedure in the five weeks. The controls read the text without the vocabulary exercises. The NR group were exposed to the words two or three times in the five-week study. Measurement and assessment of vocabulary retention was achieved through the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale developed by Paribakht and Wesche (1997). Three months later, the participants were given a test on the vocabulary to which they had been exposed in the texts.

The findings showed that both groups had acquired some vocabulary. However, the experimental RV subjects had acquired more vocabulary and retained these words over the next three months whereas the NR group acquired and retained less than the experimental group, although it still did well in its own right. The RV group's unknown words in the pre-test had decreased by 54.4% in the post-test. The experimental group showed that the vocabulary enhancement instruction was more effective than the reading-only form of instruction. The NR group did not know almost 50% of the words at final testing, whereas the RV's unknown words had declined to about a third. On the question of retention, the RV group performed better than the NR group in all aspects of the acquisition and retention tests, due to the frequent exposure to target vocabulary in the reading materials. The researcher successfully showed that even in limited time settings in EFL contexts, extensive reading and vocabulary exercises can lead to significant vocabulary gains and retention of words to aid comprehension. It appears that a reading regimen combined with vocabulary instruction were effective in this context. The researcher refers to "reading- and vocabulary-

enhancement instruction" (2008: 96), claiming that students receiving this kind of instruction performed better than those who did not.

Valuable insights are provided by a study of extensive reading and vocabulary acquisition undertaken by Scheepers (2008) in a high-poverty community in Pretoria, South Africa. The intervention involved 109 Grade 7 learners in a high-poverty school in the Atteridgeville community. The teachers in this school were neither library members nor readers, and several were inadequately qualified for the job. The school had no library and no books for extensive reading. The participants used English as a LoLT from Grade 4. These participants' performance was compared to a non-intervention school's Grade 7 class in a better-resourced school in the same township. In this comparison school, English was the LoLT from the first grade; the teachers were better-qualified and more experienced than those of the intervention school and the school valued reading, providing thorough reading instruction and practice.

The researcher used a grade 7 history textbook for vocabulary test compilation of the basic 2 000 high-frequency words and 1 000 academic words compiled from the UWL, a reading test and an English language proficiency test. The participants took pre- and post-tests in April and November respectively in vocabulary knowledge which was contrasted with their academic performance.

Scheepers' findings showed that at the high-poverty intervention school, learners who were academically in the *Achieved* and *Outstanding* groups had made some consistent gains in their vocabulary acquisition. The lower *Not achieved* and *Partly achieved* groups showed little, if any, vocabulary growth, underscoring the argument that poor readers do not benefit from extensive reading, regardless of the amount of exposure to the written word. She observes that rigorous vocabulary instruction is an essential supplement for an extensive reading

regimen in order to develop a high-frequency repertoire of basic words which are necessary to facilitate the reading and comprehension of texts, in a situation where low literacy levels prevail (2008: 30). For vocabulary gains to be evident, consistent long-term exposure coupled with vocabulary instruction can make a difference for such learners (ibid: 38). In spite of the intervention, not all the learners benefited equally; even the stronger learners did not make as much progress as the controls in the independent school.

The learners' performance at the comparison school in the same township showed a remarkable improvement even without the intervention school's reading programme, due to sound pedagogic principles; they had access to books, reading formed a part of everyday classroom practice, and the quality of schooling was generally very good. There was a significant difference in the *t*-test at the  $p < 0.01$  level, indicating that the control school had outperformed the intervention school. In vocabulary, the project school had made some gains but these were below 50%. Furthermore, the two lower groups' L1 reading showed no improvement at all.

Scheepers reiterates the point that extensive reading on its own is not adequate for learners with low reading literacy levels; early school instruction in vocabulary is a necessity for them to make headway in later academic study, particularly at high school. These findings do not suggest that extensive reading is ineffective for vocabulary gains, but simply that extensive reading seems to be ineffective in contexts where "educational resources, literacy levels, instructional methods and availability of L1 texts" are serious constraints (Pretorius, 2007: 43). Also, if the learners' decoding skills are very weak, they cannot properly comprehend the texts they read and so they do not enjoy the benefits of extensive reading.

More importantly, these results reflect the differences in first and third world countries' socio-economic contexts and the effects thereof; in spite of concentrated efforts to make a difference, the benefits will take years to manifest themselves due to the conditions in third world countries. In first world countries, the literacy levels are much higher than in the third world; even low socio-economic contexts in such countries are still better than the third world's abject poverty. Hence, it may take some time before we see better results even with intervention programmes.

Scheepers' study further emphasises the need for early literacy intervention in the academic lives of learners to counter the effects that a print-poor environment inflicts on children. There is a point where the effects of such lack of resources will have been so deep that it will be difficult to overcome. This will be the point where the learners will be required to read texts for understanding, only to find that their reading ability and vocabulary knowledge are so poorly developed that the students cannot comprehend academic texts.

The current study tested the participants on their knowledge of vocabulary at five different frequency levels of difficulty in a test designed by Laufer and Nation (1995: 320-322). The 1 000-word level is made up of high-frequency words that appear as basic vocabulary, but this was not tested. The students' vocabulary test included the 2 000, 3 000, 5 000, UWL and the 10 000 word levels. The 2 000-word level consists of the second highest frequency set. The UWL contains 8.5% "coverage" of the words that are used frequently in academic texts and writing, compiled by Xue and Nation (1984, in Cooper, 2000: 20). The 3 000-word level comprises words that are common in usage; students at tertiary level should have no difficulty recognising and using these words. The 5 000-word level constitutes less frequently used vocabulary which is specialised for

academic texts. The 10 000-word level has many low-frequency words that are highly specialised in academic language.

The vocabulary assessment instrument used in the current study was developed by Laufer and Nation (1995) and it will be discussed again in § 2.7 and more fully in Chapter 3. The test was intended to triangulate the questionnaire data gathered from the participants in this study by testing subjects' ability to supply the correct word for each context in the five levels test, indirectly testing whether they are exposed to print. Nation (1993) proposes that students should learn the most frequently used 2,000 words which would then be followed by the learning of the UWL in context and then advises that students should be engaged in extensive reading (in Coady, 1997: 284) to build up vocabulary generally. Stæhr (2008) advises that mastery of the basic 2 000-3 000 word families, constituting high frequency words, gives a student 95% text coverage.

## **2.5 Reading Ability and Academic Performance**

In the current study, it is hypothesised that students whose attitude towards reading is positive and who engage in greater amounts of reading will perform better academically than students who do not. In this subsection, I shall review literature that indicates the important link between reading ability and academic performance.

The relationship between reading ability and academic achievement is hardly understood by most language practitioners. This seems to be a result of the partial understanding of reading as only the ability to decode the written word (Bouhey, 1998: 167) and this has been discussed in §2.1. Academic performance requires the reading and comprehension of textbooks and a number of other related texts. One may speculate that learners in Swaziland

generally read at the frustration level with up to 60% comprehension. Roy-Campbell & Qorro point out that reading at this level means students cannot understand a written text without the assistance of the teacher/lecturer (1997: 21). It is assumed that students at college level should be able to read at the instructional or independent level. Without sound reading skills, such comprehension remains wishful thinking for the student.

It has been acknowledged in much of the literature that there are differences between spoken and written discourse. On the one hand, spoken language is largely cognitively undemanding because it primarily deals with everyday issues. In addition, verbal communication relies heavily on contextual factors like tone, gestures and other non-verbal communication skills, as it is "context-embedded" (Collier, 1989: 516). This verbal ability is often mistaken for an advanced command of a language, whether it is an L1 or AL. When the same student who evinces such command is required to function in an academic situation, the mastery may be shown to be inadequate. Collier attributes this to the fact that the vocabulary and language structure required for verbal communication are, on the whole, generally placed within a context which assists comprehension of the discourse as explanations, back-tracking and gestures are employed in such discourse (1989: 513). This type of proficiency is what Cummins has called Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) (1984: 26).

On the other hand, "school language" as Collier (1989: 513) refers to academic discourse, tends to be cognitively demanding and context-reduced, requiring the student to rely on the internal text meaning (Pretorius, 2002a: 188). To understand this kind of discourse the student has to read the text to put meaning together, with the aid of textual reasoning (ibid: 188). Knowledge of text types, structure, technical/specialised vocabulary, textual cues and the relationships between the elements of the text will be necessary in the

comprehension of such academic texts (Just & Carpenter, 1987). Cummins (1984: 26) refers to this kind of language competence as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). The BICS/CALP distinction explains why students who appear to have remarkable verbal communication ability may not do well academically. Cooper clarifies the issue: "This [BICS] communicative ability, however, is restricted to a command of high-frequency, basic vocabulary and does not reflect proficiency at the levels of academic and advanced vocabulary" (2000: 22).

Literature indicates that academic success is achieved with the CALP kind of competence (Cummins, 1981; Cummins, 1984; Collier, 1997; Pretorius, 2002a; Cooper, 2000). In the SADC region, students, on average, are not exposed to print and to avid readership. They are disinclined to textbook and pleasure reading. It seems that cognitive language proficiency is the stumbling block on the way to success at tertiary level (Jiya, 1993; van Wyk, 2002: 30-31; Jardine, 1986: 59-60; Pretorius, 2002; Pretorius, 2005). Boughey calls for a clear understanding of "academic literacy", the "discourse of academia", as not just one type, but several types (1998: 168).

Cummins argues that ideally CALP should first be developed in the L1 for it to be transferable to the AL/L2. Thus if CALP is well developed in SiSwati, for example, it can then be transferred to the L2. And so, in a sense, the student's bilingualism would be beneficial to the student (1984: 26). However, although there are cognitive and linguistic advantages of developing CALP in the L1, CALP can be developed in any language, provided the student is exposed to contexts where CALP is required, for example in written language, and in formal lectures of various academic disciplines where academic discourse is necessary. The comprehension and interpretation of academic texts relies largely on cognitive/academic language proficiency, unlike the every day kind of

communication where the discourse contextual cues, explanations and gestures assist in comprehension of the discourse (Cummins 1984: 27). In developing countries where the L1 is often not used as a LoLT beyond Grade 4, it is doubtful whether CALP really develops to the extent that the skills can be transferred to the AL.

It is noteworthy, though, that according to Cummins, the BICS/CALP distinction is not dichotomous but is viewed as a continuum of activities within both extremes (ibid: 26-27). Hence, BICS can be cognitively demanding in a setting where one would be required to engage in an academic discussion/debate.

The neglect of reading, according to McKenna and MacLarty (1987), seems to have its basis in the traditional teacher model as a “know-it-all” demagogue, spurning the open use of a textbook in front of learners. McKenna and MacLarty point to this behaviour as something that may have been responsible for creating the idea that the textbook was not a first-rate resource, compared to the teacher being the first-rate resource (1987: 47). Hence, learners have been misled into thinking that they can do without reading and get away with it even at tertiary level. Academic discourse is learnt primarily through first hand exposure to print. This partially explains the relatedness of extensive reading and academic achievement.

Van Wyk's (2002) Career Preparation Programme (CPP) at the University of the Free State was designed to meet the challenging academic performance of students. The university started a year long programme in which students were prepared for entry to university or college (2002: 29). The course content focused on extensive reading, vocabulary growth and intensive reading (ibid: 30). In the extensive reading the students read about two 100-page books a week and kept a record of books read, writing a reaction to each book read. In

intensive reading, the students paid close attention to the mechanical accuracy of a text, studying the textual features of a passage and answering questions on it. Writing was also part of the programme. Apparently, the course is vital for the “high-risk” students who have to take it. It has assured them of success at tertiary institutions (ibid; 33), with an increased pass rate of 58.35% in 2002. The CPP has been shown to be very useful for the improvement of reading ability, language proficiency and academic performance.

The current study does not extend to an intervention programme, but the CPP programme serves as background information to justify an investigation of college trainees’ academic reading problems and also illustrates the extent of the problems faced by lecturers at university/ college level. Also, it serves to show that intervention at tertiary level can be beneficial for improving the academic performance of students.

Jiya’s (1993) findings indicate that tertiary students whose reading skills are not well developed seem to have difficulties in their academic work. Jiya investigated what black Fort Hare university first year science students’ perceptions of the English language were and whether proficiency the language was a determinant of success in the science subjects. The participants were students at the university in the years 1987, 1989 and 1991. The students had to respond to assignments and questionnaires basically requiring information on what they thought were the obstacles to science performance. The students’ responses suggested that the problems that the participants had in their academic work seemed to be aggravated by poor comprehension of texts and lectures. They felt that their understanding of the course was made more difficult by “the textbooks we use [which] were written by Americans who use fancy words that we do not understand” (ibid: 82). Clearly, the students had problems comprehending

academic language and so their academic performance was bearing the consequences.

Moyo's (1995) examples of student writing also suggest that AL users of English have serious problems in their academic work as a consequence of not mastering academic discourse. For these students, academic language is mostly "unfamiliar" and so in their academic writing it becomes evident that they cannot choose appropriate and precise words to express their ideas (1995: 168). Moyo's article discusses issues of "negotiation, presentation and argumentation" in the academic writing of students in an English as a Second Language (ESL) situation. The second part of the article offers recommendations regarding what the AL lecturer can do at the tertiary level to remedy the problems, such as increasing students' exposure to "writing modes and skills" (ibid: 169).

Pretorius (2005) conducted a large-scale assessment (1998-2001) of the reading ability and academic performance of 1,200 University of South Africa (UNISA) first-year psychology students (2005: 790). The study's findings showed that 638 of the 1,200 (53%) subjects seemed to be reading at frustration level, below 60% comprehension levels (Pretorius, 2005; Pretorius, 2002a: 171). The 60% comprehension level may sound reasonable but in reality it represents struggling reading levels. The research indicates the extent of the reading and academic inadequacy experienced by university students, not just in South Africa but in the SADC region as a whole, as UNISA's intake is international, with many students coming from the neighbouring countries.

Some of the studies have sought answers to questions of how students' reading ability, or lack of it, have affected their performance in subjects other than English, such as Science and Mathematics. The main reason for such investigation is the fact that the language of instruction in black African schools,

colleges and universities is not the native language of the learners but a European language, even after colonial rule came to an end (Pretorius, 2002b: 94). Jiya argues that it is likely that the lack of comprehension in subjects like Science is a result of instruction in a language other than the primary language, in a volatile context of educational disadvantage (1993: 80) in Southern Africa.

Corson has observed that black African learners whose primary languages do not share the Graeco-Latin consonant/vowel structure and morphological clues such as prefixes and roots are naturally disadvantaged if they do not take up extensive reading (1997: 696). Science and mathematics discourse has a Graeco-Latin background. Corson argues that the Graeco-Latin words may pose difficulties even for native English speakers as these words “have a very low frequency” (ibid: 696). It is noteworthy that Graeco-Latin words do not characterise everyday speech; they are frequent in academic texts (i.e. most of the words in the University Word List are of Graeco-Latin origin), so they are best encountered in written texts (Corson, 1997: 689). Considering these facts, overall academic performance can only be enhanced by pleasure reading and extensive study reading. It is important to find this link between academic success and reading in the local educational scene, as no similar research has been undertaken in Swaziland.

A lack of leisure reading seems to manifest itself in poor performance in academic work. Elley's (1991) study at primary school level (discussed in § 2.3) suggests that extensive reading not only improves reading skill and proficiency in the AL but can also impact on academic performance.

Some research in South Africa has focused on the connection between reading ability and academic performance. Pretorius' (1998) study included 24 Grade 4 learners whose ability to make inferences in narrative and expository texts was

tested (Pretorius, 2002b: 94). The results yielded significant outcomes. The students' overall academic scores showed that Group four, the group that had done exceptionally well in the reading tests, as the group with the best scores in all the other subjects (ibid: 95). Even at this early level, reading ability seems to have made a difference in the academic performance of the learners.

Reading ability seems to be a good predictor of academic success, also at tertiary level. Pretorius' (2002a) research examines the relationship between reading ability and academic performance in a study of the reading habits of 81 Medical University of South Africa's (Medunsa) students, studying medicine and occupational therapy (2002a: 175-176). The reading, vocabulary, proficiency and anaphoric reference test scores were compared with the academic performance of the students. It was found that students who passed their exams obtained above 60% on the reading test. Students who scored under 60% on the reading comprehension test typically failed their examinations. The researcher points out that the students' reading ability seemed to be a strong indicator of academic success or lack of it: "the better a student's reading ability..., the better his/her academic achievement" (ibid: 186). Pretorius' study contributes significantly to our understanding of the relationship between reading ability and academic achievement. Further research assists in providing more data on a phenomenon that has not been researched to a satisfactory level.

Pretorius (2000, in Pretorius, 2002b) observes some points of significance following her study of 1,200 psychology students enrolled at the University of South Africa (UNISA). The students were given reading tests developed by the researcher, as well as other tests in which the participants' study habits, motivation levels and matric performance had to be filled in. A psychology final examination also served as data for the study (2002b: 95). Her findings showed that there was a strong relationship between reading ability and academic

performance. A statistical regression analysis indicated that the reading scores were a stronger predictor of academic success than the other factors considered in the study such as study habits and matric performance. "The better the reading ability of students, the better their chances of coping academically", she concludes (ibid: 95).

Another study that sheds much light on the current investigation was conducted by Pretorius and Bohlmann (2003), specifically on a subject other than English, namely Mathematics. The 33 participants were registered for a Mathematics access module before enrolling for a full-fledged Mathematics course. The study investigated whether extensive and intensive reading would improve their reading ability and academic achievement (2003: 226). The programme consisted of training in reading skills such as anaphoric resolution (based on Mathematics texts), vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension and text-semantic relations (ibid: 227). Interviews and questionnaires were used to gather data on personal reading habits, practices, opinions and feedback on the programme (ibid: 228). Intensive and extensive reading constituted the reading programme in which the participants had to read Mathematics texts requiring mathematical reading skills. Also, the programme specifically required them to read one popular magazine each week, a novel each month, study Mathematics texts and acquire as many new words as possible. In addition, they were given instruction on the reading strategies they could use to comprehend a text such as skimming, scanning, study-reading, reviewing, questioning, reading and reflecting on content read. A questionnaire to obtain data on their attitudes to reading and their reading habits was given to the students. Their reading rate was further measured through reading comprehension tests.

The findings from this research show a very poor performance on the pre-tests. However, the post-test results indicated improved reading skills, reading rate and

better comprehension of the academic materials for some of the experimental group. As predicted before the programme's commencement, the final academic results of the access module indicated that only 11 of the 33 participants passed the Mathematics course, and they were all students who obtained above 60% in the reading comprehension (ibid: 232). Poor reading ability predicted academic failure for most of the participants in the Mathematics course. This study is relevant to the current one in which the question is whether the participants' reading ability will correlate with academic performance.

The results of this study showed that the subjects who had been very weak at the start of the programme had made gains in reading ability; their vocabulary awareness extended to word relationships like synonyms, antonyms, high- and low-frequency words (2003: 229). Their improved reading ability made the good readers stronger at reading Mathematics. However, even though some of the students made good gains, they did not do well academically as they were still reading below the 60% comprehension level. The researchers had predicted that a student who read below the 60% mark would not do well in their academic work and the findings showed this prediction to be true.

The review will now focus on whether reading ability in the first language (L1) does relate to second language reading ability and whether one affects the other.

## **2.6 Reading Ability in the First and Second Language**

Much research has sought to explore the relationship between L1 reading and reading in an additional language and academic performance. In Swaziland, the mother-tongue is the language of communication in a small kingdom, with a population of less than a million people. SiSwati is one of two official languages.

When Swazi learners start school, the siSwati language is the language of communication with teachers and peers for the first two years and this is unofficial. Officially, the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is English throughout primary level.

Research has shown that the development of reading ability in the L1 and learning through this medium seems to indicate greater advantage to learners' academic achievement (Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007). The current study will also partly seek to investigate the teacher trainees' reading skills in their native language (siSwati).

Saville-Troike's research of the development of the L2 and academic performance of 19 children, who were in their first year of learning English as a second language (1984: 202), seems to be very significant for the purposes of the current study. To some extent, the students whose L1 featured in their L2 learning seemed to do very well in terms of academic performance (ibid: 216). Saville-Troike states that there should not only be the desire to teach ESL for "grammatical/communicative competence", but also the desire to teach for learners' "academic competence" (ibid: 217). In her conclusion, she does not outline how we can get to this competence, but stresses the importance of vocabulary acquisition and ensuring that ESL benefits the learner in significant ways (ibid: 217).

Some researchers hold that L1 reading ability does predict how much reading capacity a reader has in the L2. However, the debate centres on how the transfer of L1 reading skills to L2 reading ability occurs and when it does. Ulijn and Salager-Meyer observe that L1 reading ability has a significant effect on AL/L2 reading (1998: 81). They further state that L2 reading problems could be traced back to lack of automaticity in decoding which then slows down the

reading rate of the weak reader. Ulijn and Salager-Meyer point out that there are viewpoints (e.g. Anderson, 1994; Groebel, 1980) that favour the idea that L2 reading utilizes the already learned L1 reading skills so that if a learner is unsuccessful in his/her reading in the AL, the failure may be regarded as a consequence of "poor reading ability in L1" (ibid: 82). For Carrell, the best determiner of success in AL/L2 reading ability is the L1 (in Williams 1996: 183-4). At this point, it is noteworthy that these scholars make the assumption that L1 reading develops first and then L2 reading follows.

Yamashita's (2002) research investigated how L1 reading ability and L2 proficiency contribute to L2 reading ability (2002: 81). The researcher refers to the linguistic threshold hypothesis which posits that first language reading ability has a way of transferring to the AL reading ability only if the student has achieved a threshold in the AL (Cummins, 1979, in Yamashita, 2002: 81). However, he did not test this hypothesis in his study but sought to explore whether the L1 reading ability does compensate for low L2 language proficiency and if a high L2 proficiency does compensate for a low L1 reading ability (ibid: 85). The expectation seems to be that the L1 reading ability should be well developed to the extent that it surpasses the threshold level in the L2 where the reading skills can then transfer to the L2 reading ability (ibid: 81).

The study was conducted with 241 Japanese students in four different Japanese universities. From the tests administered in English and Japanese such as reading comprehension gap-filling, multiple choice tests and language proficiency consisting of grammar and vocabulary, the researcher concluded that both L1 reading ability and L2 proficiency contribute to L2 reading ability, although it was observed that the strongest contributor of the two was L2 proficiency (ibid: 89). Yamashita observes that still, a good L1 reading ability and L2 proficiency complement one another for the highest level of L2 reading ability. Yamashita's

conclusion is that learners should use their L1 reading asset to strengthen their L2 reading skills and strategies by reading avidly even in the L1. Even if the L1 contribution may be minimal and weak, learners can still benefit from such an interaction (ibid: 92).

The problem for AL readers in Africa could well be that they switch over to the AL medium of instruction before reasonable acquisition of reading skills in the L1 has been established. In his survey of how the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) affects learners' reading ability in Malawi and Zambia, Williams' findings indicate that "instruction in L1 reading leads to improved results in L1 with no retardation in L2 reading" (1996: 182). Another problem may be the unavailability of resources in the L2, not to mention resources in the L1. The study by Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) attests to such a lack and underscores the importance of acquiring reading resources in the first language. Machel states, "If there are limited numbers of books published in the indigenous languages which are culturally relevant then it becomes much more difficult for black children to develop and retain literacy" (2002: 7). In a state where the education system seems to be floundering economically, reading materials are often the last to be considered as a priority. In Africa, this seems to be the norm rather the exception (Williams, 1996).

Pretorius and Mampuru reiterate the relationship between L1 reading, AL/L2 reading and AL proficiency, referring to Cummins' (2000) Interdependence Hypothesis as relevant in the explanation of such a relationship (2007: 38, 40). Their three-year research study of 104 Grade 7 learners in a poorly equipped school in South Africa bears significant insights about the relationship between L1 reading, AL reading and the academic performance of Grade 7 learners. The researchers had to facilitate the school with reading materials and started a school library for the intervention project to take off. Some of the English tests

that were given were then translated into Northern Sotho and administered four weeks after the English tests were given to the participants. The researchers found that the L1 and L2 scores were very low in the pre-tests; however, in the post-tests, the L2 reading scores were higher than the L1 reading scores. The participants' reading rate was slower in their L1 than in the L2. This may suggest that the participants were not familiar with reading in the L1, perhaps due to a lack of reading resources. In their findings, the researchers note that there was a stronger correlation between L1 and L2 reading, even though there had been a low correlation in the pre-tests. The researchers' finding regarding their fourth research question is significant for the current study: on the relationship between the L1 and L2 language, L1 and L2 reading ability and academic performance, they found that the native language was not a determiner of academic achievement (ibid: 52). Second language reading, L2 proficiency and L1 reading were the strongest predictors of academic achievement (ibid: 52).

Also, the results suggest that it is L2 reading ability that predicts reading ability in the L1, since much of the reading the learners do is in the L2 rather than in the L1 (ibid: 55). Apparently, the L1 reading skills that are assumed to have taken root at primary school may not be that well developed to support AL/L2 reading ability. Instead, the learner's AL/L2 language and reading ability seem to be strong determiners of L1 reading ability (ibid: 55). Further research still needs to be done in this field.

In Swaziland, no study along these lines has been conducted at any educational level: primary, secondary or tertiary. The current study of teacher trainees' reading ability in the first language attempts to compare the trainees' reading skills in the L1 with their reading skills in the L2. It is different from the already cited studies in that it is a survey based on reading tests, and not an intervention programme. Such insight will shed much needed light regarding attitudes

towards, and practice of, reading in the first language and how these affect AL/L2 reading ability.

The next subsection brings us to the research design aspect of this review.

## **2.7 Research Design**

The current research study involves reading tests in the L1 and the AL. Studies that have investigated the role of the L1 in its contribution to AL reading ability have typically used an intervention approach to establish if extensive reading makes any difference to reading ability, proficiency in the AL and in academic performance. In contrast, the current study is a survey of teacher trainee attitudes, reading practices and reading abilities, rather than an intervention programme.

Like Mokhtari and Sheorey's (1994) study, the current study employs a survey, making use of a questionnaire to gather data on the students' "reading habits, attitudes, and interests" (p. 51). These data were triangulated with results from reading and vocabulary tests as well as the ART and MRT and students' academic performance. Similar to the current study, Mokhtari and Sheorey's data-collection instrument was piloted with a "representative sample" in the same university, prior to its implementation with the subjects (ibid: 51; Nunan, 1992: 145). In this Swazi study, the reading attitudes and practices of the students are examined in light of their reading and vocabulary performance.

Camiciottoli (2001) also conducted a study with Italian EFL tertiary students to probe into their habits and attitudes to extensive reading (2001: 135). The design of her research study is similar to the present one in its use of the questionnaire to gather the necessary data. For some aspects of the study, there

are some basic concerns: how regularly students read and what their attitudes to reading are (ibid: 137). However, Camiciottoli employs a four-point scale rather than a five-point Likert scale to avoid the non-committal middle option (Mackey & Gass, 2005), whereas this study has engaged the five-point scale where the middle point is the "Not sure" option, meriting a zero score. In his model, McKenna's three main factors, namely personal beliefs about reading experience, reading outcomes and cultural norms in the acquisition of reading attitudes, form the basis of the questionnaire's construction (2001: 139). Roy-Campbell and Qorro's study also involves questionnaires in the elicitation of data (1997: 24). Their categories of questioning have also influenced the current study's questionnaire design to some extent (ibid: 24-25).

Furthermore, the current study also involves the assessment of students' reading comprehension ability. Roy-Campbell and Qorro's (1997) investigation of Tanzanian students' reading ability in English was conducted with the aid of reading comprehension tests given in both Kiswahili and English. This was based on the understanding that L1 reading skills are acquired earlier than AL reading skills, and that these skills are transferable to the AL reading ability (ibid: 25). The Tanzanian study bears close resemblance to the current study regarding the assumptions and the use of reading tests. The difference is that the former study involves secondary school subjects, whereas the current study involves tertiary students (ibid: 26).

Another test that was used after the pilot study to ascertain subjects' response authenticity regarding their extensive reading was adapted from Stanovich and Cunningham's (1993) research to suit the local students. The study includes two tests: whether the subjects could recognize the names of popular authors and local magazines. The recognition test was adapted from Stanovich and Cunningham's study of whether college students' exposure to print could predict

individual differences in the way they acquire content knowledge (1993: 212). The purpose was to ensure that the subjects were not just giving “socially desirable responses” to the questionnaire statements (ibid: 213). In the current study, this additional tool assisted in determining whether the students were actually readers of popular novels and magazines or not. These tests contributed much to the validation of the questionnaire responses.

In addition, the vocabulary levels tests, developed by Laufer and Nation (1995), were used to collect data relating to the subjects’ vocabulary acquisition levels. Laufer and Nation’s study sets out to enquire about the lexical frequency profile as a measure of learner vocabulary size and the quality of vocabulary the learner uses.

The research studies that have dealt with attitudes to extensive reading have assisted in providing useful guidelines regarding questionnaire design and the kind of questioning to follow in a survey on reading habits and attitudes (Camiciottoli, 2001; Mokhtari & Sheorey, 1994; Mathewson, 1994; Pretorius, 2002; Pretorius & Bohlmann, 2003; Walberg & Tsai, 1995).

Methodological details of the study will be given and discussed in Chapter 3.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

This Chapter has reviewed the literature that informs, guides and provides design options for the current research. The research reviewed for this study has contributed much to the current study. However, there is a gap that the current study addresses: most of the research studies on attitudes towards extensive reading were carried out in the Western world, where home and schooling conditions are different from those in Southern Africa in general, and Swaziland,

in particular. The few studies that have been conducted in Southern Africa mainly focus on intervention programmes, attempting to explore the possibilities regarding what happens when extensive reading is introduced to AL learners. Furthermore, although research into tertiary level students' reading has been conducted, there are none that have examined primary school teacher trainees' habits and attitudes to extensive reading with an aim of exploring whether there are relationships between extensive reading and attitudes, vocabulary acquisition and academic performance. This is what the present study seeks to explore.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the research methodology that was followed in carrying out this study. Herein, I shall describe the purpose, research design, participants, research instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis techniques. After outlining the purpose and design of the study, I shall focus on the first phase of the study (i.e. the piloting of the research instruments). Thereafter, I shall discuss the second phase which was basically the modification, refining and addition of the research instruments as informed by the pilot study. The third phase of the investigation, the main study and its execution will then be discussed. In the last two subsections of the chapter, I will discuss matters relating to the reliability and validity of the data and the data collection procedures.

#### **3.1 The Purpose**

The theoretical purpose of the current investigation was to uncover and describe “possible patterns and relationships” (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989: 24) between college students’ attitudes to and perceptions of pleasure reading and their academic performance and reading ability, with a view to using these patterns to improve and establish a reading-oriented, inter-departmental curriculum for the colleges that train primary school teachers. The purpose was achieved through the collection of descriptive data as well as the testing of the given hypotheses within a partly exploratory and deductive framework. Because so little research has been done in the Swazi context, the exploratory element entailed finding out about the students’ reading attitudes, access to reading resources and reading habits. The deductive element in the descriptive type of research commenced

with hypotheses that guide the enquiry and this culminated in statistical measurement to support or disprove the given hypotheses. The data in this study were compiled and statistically analysed with a view to accepting or rejecting the research hypotheses that were posed in the study.

We now turn our attention to the design and approach of the research study, a foundational aspect of this study.

### **3.2 Research Design and Approach**

The study was mainly quantitative. This means that data were collected and subjected to methods of reducing such data to objective, hypotheses-driven analyses that culminated in a factual, replicable research outcome (Nunan, 1992: 4). The study was of a non-experimental nature, exploring various questions and hypotheses regarding teacher trainee attitudes towards extensive reading, reading habits and reading ability. The design, therefore, was descriptive, with data collected from a “naturally occurring” group of participants (two classes) “without experimental manipulation” (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989: 124) through the use of questionnaires, tests and data on students’ academic performance.

The approach was from an analytic perspective which seeks to “identify and investigate a single factor or a cluster of factors which...are constituents of one of the major systems” (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989: 27). In this study, several factors were investigated and analysed:

- a. The students’ *attitudes* towards extensive reading and their *reading ability*.
- b. The students’ *access to leisure reading resources* and their *reading ability*.
- c. The students’ *access to reading resources* and their *exposure to print*.
- d. The students’ *leisure reading habits* and their *reading ability*

- e. The students' *vocabulary knowledge* and *reading ability*.
- f. The students' *first* and *second* language reading ability.
- g. Contrasting the *vocabulary knowledge* and *reading skills* of the first and third year students.
- h. The students' overall *academic performance* and *reading ability*.

Following the factors, exploratory research questions and hypotheses were formulated to test whether there were significant relationships between these factors. These are listed in the next subsection.

### ***3.2.1 The Exploratory Research Questions***

There are three exploratory questions that were investigated in the main study, and these questions are as follows:

1. *What are the participants' attitudes to and perceptions of extensive reading?*
2. *How much access to leisure reading and resources do the participants have?*
3. *Do the participants exhibit habits that favour leisure reading?*

### ***3.2.2. The Research Questions and Hypotheses***

1. *Is there a relationship between the students' attitudes to extensive reading and their L2 reading ability?*

The hypothesis (**H1**) formulated from this question was: There is a significant relationship between the students' attitudes to extensive reading and their L2 reading ability.

2. *Is there a relationship between the students' access to leisure reading resources and their reading ability?* The corresponding hypothesis (**H2**) was formulated thus: There is a significant relationship between the students' access to leisure reading resources and their L2 reading ability.

3. *Is there a relationship between the students' exposure to print and their access to leisure reading resources?* The hypothesis (**H3**) was stated thus: There is a significant relationship between the students' exposure to print and their access to leisure reading resources.

4. *Is there a relationship between the students' leisure reading habits and their L2 reading ability?* The hypothesis (**H4**) stands as follows: There is a significant relationship between the students' leisure reading habits and their L2 reading ability.
5. *Is there a relationship between the students' vocabulary knowledge and their L2 reading ability?* The corresponding hypothesis (**H5**) was: There is a significant relationship between the students' vocabulary knowledge and their L2 reading ability.
6. *Is there a difference between PTD 1 and the PTD 3 students' vocabulary knowledge and their L2 reading ability?* The question's hypothesis (**H6**) was: There is a significant difference between the PTD 1 and PTD 3 students' vocabulary knowledge and their L2 reading ability.
7. *Is there a relationship between the students' L1 and L2 reading ability?* The hypothesis (**H7**) was: There is a significant relationship between the students' L1 and L2 reading ability.
8. *Is there a relationship between the students' academic performance and their L2 reading ability?* The relevant hypothesis (**H8**) states: There is a significant relationship between the students' academic performance and their L2 reading ability.

The pilot phase dealt with only three of the eight hypotheses: hypotheses **H1**, **H2** and **H8**. The complete set of hypotheses was tested in the main study.

In the final analysis, the findings of this study should be generalisable to the population being researched: the student teachers that graduate with a Primary Teacher's Diploma in Manzini, Swaziland. The research study was divided into three phases – the pilot study, the modification and addition of research instruments and the main study.

### ***3.2.3 Ethical Considerations***

The participants in both PTD 1 and 3 voluntarily took part in the research, in the pilot as well as the main study. They were asked officially and formally to be part of this study through their representatives, well in advance of the commencement of the study. The researcher approached their class representatives who then discussed with their classes what their response to this request would be. Their consent was communicated through the representatives. On the point of anonymity, the researcher explained to the students that it would be impossible to match the scores against each other and against the questionnaire responses, if they did not write their student numbers (in the pilot study) or names. It was important to match these scores in order to see if the attitude corresponded with reading and vocabulary mastery or lack thereof. I was aware that the writing of the participants' names on the scripts was contrary to the advice of Mouton, who feels that the participants have a right to anonymity (2001: 243). However, since I needed to match their responses on the various instruments, I could not allow them that right, but did assure them of the anonymity of their identities in the publication of the results. They were assured that their names would not feature in the written report to protect their privacy.

Permission to conduct the research was sought from the Principal of the College and her response to this request was given in writing (see Appendix A). The Head of Department of Languages was also informed about the study. The participants received feedback on their performance in the reading and vocabulary tests but showed little or no interest in the other tests (e.g. the Author and Magazine Recognition tests).

We now focus on the three phases in which the study was conducted: the pilot phase, the instrument moderation and refining phase and the main study.

### *3.2.4 The Pilot Study*

The pilot phase was conducted in December 2006, at the Nazarene Teachers' College. The academic year, as alluded to in §1.6, starts in August and ends in May of the following calendar year. Thus, December was the end of the first semester. The main reason for the pilot study was to test the research instruments that would be used in the main study for the purposes of identifying shortcomings and improve on these before the main study (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989: 195). To this end, the questionnaire and reading comprehension test were administered.

Furthermore, the reading comprehension passage had to be tested for level of difficulty for the college students. I had to be sure that the comprehension passage would neither be, on the one hand, too complex for the students nor, on the other hand, too simple.

I would have liked to test all the research instruments; however, the college's tight schedule for the semester made it impossible for me to fit in more rounds of tests before the semester ended.

#### *3.2.4.1 The Participants*

The pilot group (N=42) consisted only of first-year students, enrolled for the Primary Teacher's Diploma (PTD). The students' permission to be a part of the research was sought in advance.

Most of the students (64.3%) had D and E symbols for their college entry grades. Only 7.1% had a B grade in English and 28% held a C grade.

The participants were all Swazi nationals from mostly low-income families. The group was the B stream of the first-year cohort as the A stream was later involved in the main study. The class had 14 male and 28 female students.

Seventy-six percent (76%) of these subjects were in the 18-25 age bracket; 17% in the 26-30 age group and 7% in the 31-35 age bracket. Some of them had spent between 1 and 16 years in temporary employment after they completed their 'O' Level, according to information found in their admission files in the college. This means that many students had been in a non-academic environment for some years after leaving school, a factor which may not favour academic performance, with the potential of aggravating student disinclination for pleasure reading.

#### *3.2.4.2 Research Materials*

As mentioned above, at this point in the study, in December 2006, only two research instruments were tested in the pilot study: the reading comprehension test to assess reading ability, and the questionnaire with which to gather data pertaining to students' reading attitudes and habits. The main study, however, had more tests: an author-and-magazine recognition test, a vocabulary test and a reading comprehension test in siSwati, the students' first language (L1).

- The first instrument that was piloted was the *questionnaire* which had 30 closed questions, designed to elicit students' responses objectively in an investigation of their perceptions of and attitudes towards leisure reading, as well as their reading habits and practices. The questionnaire was designed on the basis of a Likert (1932) scale, with a five-point continuum, giving the respondent a middle option "Not sure" which implicitly represented, not a midpoint, but an equivalent to "I don't know" in this study (Mackey & Gass, 2005: 54). The other four responses were along the "Strongly agree/Strongly disagree" continuum (see Appendix B).
- A *reading comprehension* test was taken from the University of Cambridge's yearly examination paper, and in this case, the June 2006 O' Level paper which was sent to the country by Cambridge University (see

Appendix C). Its validity rests on its being an internationally recognized and administered paper. It was a narrative passage, about a boy whose mother reads him a story about a pirate king and thereafter, he has a fantasy of himself as the pirate king. As he goes shopping for his first school clothes with his mother in a large department store, he acts out his fantasy of being an independent, strong pirate who does not need his mother's attention but is forced to accept that he is just a boy when he gets lost and cannot find his mother in the department store. The test was criterion-referenced consisting of 21 questions, formed as inferential, paraphrase, literal and vocabulary questions, designed to test the school leavers' reading abilities. There were no multiple choice questions in the test. The O' level test determined students' entry for tertiary education in Swaziland at the time, serving as a university pre-entry requirement (Sargent, 1989: 24). A sample of the test is given in Appendix C.

- The other data that was used in this pilot study was the students' *Academic Performance* (AP) scores compiled from the semester scores of three subjects: Mathematics, Social Studies and Academic Communication Skills; other subject scores were not available at the time of the piloting.

The main challenge in the design of this questionnaire was to counter the possibility of the subjects giving socially desirable responses with which they sought to impress the researcher (Mackey & Gass, 2005: 114). And so, in the design of the questionnaire, some questions relating to attitudes to and perceptions of leisure reading were posed in different ways and with different wording so that the true attitude could be exposed, in an attempt to counter halo effects. The halo effect refers to the tendency of subjects to respond in a way they think the researcher expects them to (Mackey & Gass, 2005: 114). In the case of the main study, it was likely that the actual PTD 3 participants could have picked up the researcher's opinions about the importance of reading in her

classes as she was their lecturer. That was the reason for piloting with a first level group who had never been taught by the researcher.

#### *3.2.4.3 Data Collection Procedures*

In the first week of December 2006, the data collection materials were administered to the participants on two different days during their English class period. This was done to ensure that the participants would not be fatigued by the tasks. The reading comprehension was administered on the first day. It has a time limit of one hour but, knowing that the students' O' Level performance in a similar English examination had been far from good, I was prepared to stretch the time frame to one hour fifteen minutes. However, the participants finished the test within the stipulated hour. All 42 participants took the test on the first day. The scripts were collected for grading by the researcher. On the second day, the participants were given the questionnaire, and all 42 students were present. The results of this piloting were informative, as explained below.

#### *3.2.4.4 The Coding of the Research Instruments*

In the pilot study, the purpose of the questionnaire was to establish the participants' leisure reading attitudes and habits. The questionnaire presented 30 items to which the participants responded. Questions 1-3 and 6 were routine ones, dealing with the name, age and level of the subject.

Regarding the questionnaire data, the numerical coding and scoring followed the -2, -1, 0, +1, and +2 format (Mackey & Gass, 2005: 54). The -2 score was allocated to a wrong/negative response and +2 to a positive response. There were also open-ended questions which provided optional answers to the respondent and these were allocated the same score, depending on whether the answer was positive or negative.

Responses to items were quantified using the -2 to +2 point allocation for each rating. The cluster of question items 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 represented the *access to leisure reading resources* variable. The points formed raw scores adding up to **16** which were then converted to percentages which could be compared to the reading scores of individual participants. These scores were then subjected to statistical analysis, using a correlation to determine the level of significance of the relationship, to either return a null hypothesis (H0) or to support the research hypothesis.

The rest of the questionnaire data were compiled and allocated points adding up to **36** and these were also converted to percentage. This cluster of questions was designed to elicit a clear picture of the participants' *reading attitudes and habits*. At this point, these concepts, *reading attitudes and habits*, were not divided into the separate principles that are evident in the main study.

Regarding attitudes, however, it was difficult to establish just what the participants thought and felt regarding extensive reading. Very few responses were apparently authentic in the questionnaire. For example, most of the subjects would respond with *Strongly agree* to the question *Reading is a pleasant activity* (Question 25), whereas they would give the response *Reading is OK. I sometimes read a book or magazine* in question 13 (refer to Appendix B).

The reading attitudes of the participants in the pilot study could not be established with certainty due to responses that were seemingly intended to 'please' the researcher rather than state the truth regarding their leisure reading habits and attitudes.

The reading test was marked out of **25** points and these raw scores were converted to percentages.

In the pilot study, *academic performance* (AP) was operationalised as the continuous assessment mean score of only three subjects, namely Academic Communication Skills, Social Studies and Mathematics, excluding the final examination.

### 3.2.4.5 The Results of the Pilot Study

In this subsection, the results of the attitudes survey, access to leisure reading results, reading comprehension and academic performance are presented and discussed.

#### 1. Attitudes to Extensive Reading and Reading Ability

The table below presents the descriptive statistical results of three elements: the students' reading attitudes, access to leisure reading resources and reading ability.

*Table 3.1 Attitudes, Access to Leisure Reading Resources and Reading Ability*

N=42	Mean	SD	Mode	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Quartiles
<b>Attitudes to Reading</b>	39.6%	15.15	40%	3%	69%	1 <sup>st</sup> = 31% 2 <sup>nd</sup> = 40% 3 <sup>rd</sup> = 49%
<b>Access to Leisure Reading Resources</b>	58.8%	15.18	65%	12%	94%	1 <sup>st</sup> = 47% 2 <sup>nd</sup> = 59% 3 <sup>rd</sup> = 69.5%
<b>Reading Test Performance</b>	45.2%	13.57	36%	16%	70%	1 <sup>st</sup> = 36% 2 <sup>nd</sup> = 46.5% 3 <sup>rd</sup> = 54.5%

The descriptive statistics indicated slight differences in the means of the two areas of investigation: reading ability and attitudes to reading. Whereas the reading mean was 45.2%, the attitude mean was 39.6%. These means suggest very low reading levels, and generally negative reading attitudes.

The first research question was as follows: *Is there a relationship between the students' attitudes towards extensive reading and their L2 reading ability?* The hypothesis (**H1**) was stated as follows: *There is a significant relationship between the students' attitudes towards extensive reading and their L2 reading ability.*

A Pearson's Product-Moment correlation was applied to the data and it yielded  $r = 0.141$ ,  $p = 0.187$ . The coefficient was very low and was not significant, suggesting that there was no strength of relationship between the subjects' reading attitudes and reading scores. The null hypothesis was accepted.

### *Discussion*

Although research has shown that there is a link between reading ability and reading attitudes, the perceived attitudes to leisure reading in the pilot study did not show such a relationship. The statistical return of a null hypothesis in this phase of the study was unexpected. These results could be attributed to some problems encountered in this research phase. One problem that surfaced in the questionnaire data collection was the coding of the responses. The -2, -1, 0, +1, +2, coding principle created a problem as to whether the minus score was added on or subtracted from the scoring. As a result, I had difficulty calculating the scores. This could have made the scores unreflective of the reality of the data. This problem caused a change in the coding of the questionnaire in the main study to eliminate the difficulty.

A further methodological problem emerged: halo effects were evident in the questionnaire data. For example, with regard to their attitudes, the participants seemed to mask their real opinions by responding to the questions in socially desirable ways. The contradiction in the responses was obvious: they extolled pleasure reading but could provide little substance to support their apparent

preferences – how many books they had read, what books they had recently read and what they preferred to do in their leisure time. The reality was that the participants seemed to have little or no inclination for pleasure reading. This prompted the researcher to find other means of triangulating the data with more tests than just the reading test and questionnaire.

Despite these setbacks, the data from the pilot study were useful for they revealed that the participants' access to recreational reading resources was very limited, judging from their responses to questions that focused on the subjects' love of reading, library membership and books owned in the home. The results of this research phase assisted the researcher to make changes to the questionnaire.

## *2. Access to Leisure Reading Resources and Reading Ability*

As can be seen from Table 3.1, the participants' scores on this factor ranged between 12% and 94% with a mean of 58.8%. This indicates moderate access to leisure reading resources, as compiled from their responses in the questionnaire. On the reading test, the descriptive statistics above indicate a less than average performance. The mean and mode of the reading comprehension test scores all clustered around the  $\pm 40$  region, as Table 3.1 indicates. The quartiles indicate low performance levels; for example, half the group had a reading mean of 46.5% and even the top performers only had a mean of 54.5%. The standard deviation of 13.57 indicates the score variation in relation to the mean (Brown, 1988: 69).

However, measures of central tendency do not say as much to the researcher as inferential statistics do (Nunan, 1992: 28). The second research question investigated whether there was a relationship between the participants' scores regarding access to leisure reading resources and their reading ability. The

hypothesis (H2) was formulated thus: *There is a significant relationship between the students' access to leisure reading resources and L2 reading ability.*

In order to establish if there was a relationship between the students' access to leisure reading and their reading performance, a Pearson Product-Moment correlation was applied to the data. The correlation coefficient was  $r = 0.082$ ,  $p=0.608$ , suggesting that there was no correlation between the two variables (Mulder, 1986: 73). The null hypothesis was accepted.

### *Discussion*

The two factors that were discussed here were the participants' access to leisure reading materials and their reading ability. The null hypothesis had to be accepted considering the lack of strength of relationship between the participants' access to leisure reading resources and their reading ability. After rationalising about this lack of relationship, the items for the access to resources aspect had to be reconstructed after the pilot phase as they did not give satisfactory information. New questions needed to be added to broaden the data collected for the access to resources variable. Better outcomes were anticipated.

### *3. Academic Performance and Reading Ability*

The researcher's exploration of a link between academic performance and reading ability was driven by the conviction that such a link does exist, as some research has shown. Descriptive statistics on the data are shown in the following table.

Table 3.2 Pilot Group's Reading Ability and Academic Performance.

	Mean	Mode	SD	Range		Mode	Quartiles
				Min	Max		
<b>Reading Ability</b>	45.2%	36.0%	13.57	16%	70%	40%	1 <sup>st</sup> = 36% 2 <sup>nd</sup> = 46.5% 3 <sup>rd</sup> = 54.5%
<b>Academic Performance</b>	53.8%	54.0%	4.19	45.%	63.0%	54%	1 <sup>st</sup> = 51% 2 <sup>nd</sup> = 54% 3 <sup>rd</sup> = 57%

Clearly, the measures of central tendency suggest that the whole group was rather weak, with academic performance clustering in the 50s whether they were in the 25<sup>th</sup> or 75<sup>th</sup> quartile. Their academic performance is generally below expectations at a mean of 53.8%, just as their reading ability mean is, at 45.2%. But the range in academic performance is less than that of the reading test, indicating an academic performance that is clustered between 45% and 63%. The quartiles show that there is not much variation in performance, as there is in the reading test. The standard deviation indicates how close the score variation is. In such cases, clear patterns hardly emerge.

The third research question explored the relationship between the students' overall academic performance and their reading ability. The corresponding hypothesis (**H3**) was stated thus: *There is a significant relationship between the students' overall academic performance and their L2 reading ability.* To determine statistical significance, the Pearson's Product-Moment correlation was used to establish if there was a relationship between these two variables. The coefficient was very low at  $r = 0.298$ ,  $p = 0.055$ . Here, too, there was no support for this research hypothesis and the null hypothesis was accepted.

### *Discussion*

Although research has shown that there is a link between reading ability and academic performance, in this pilot study, there was no significant relationship between academic performance and reading ability. However, to rationalise this outcome, the null hypothesis could be attributed to the low reading ability in this particular research group. When reading levels and academic performance tend to be uniformly low, with a range that is not large, it is to be expected that no strong patterns will emerge. This challenge, however, did not deter continuation of the study.

It seems that the insignificant correlation coefficient was suggestive of further research along these lines to ascertain whether in the Swazi context, such a relationship could be established. The acceptance of the null hypothesis was unequivocal.

### ***3.2.5 Modifications to the Research Instruments***

The second phase of the study comprised modifications to the research instruments as well as the inclusion of new data collection instruments. The piloting of the research materials proved to be invaluable to the whole research endeavour, particularly the questionnaire. The first important loophole that was indicated by the piloted instrument was that the three-fold principles following McKenna's (2001) model needed to be more clearly evident in the design of the questionnaire. These factors were: "*the direct impact of episodes of reading*" (italics mine), one's "*beliefs about the outcomes of reading*" and one's "*beliefs about cultural norms concerning reading* (conditioned by one's desire to conform to those norms)" (2001: 139). In the pilot study, these principles had not been built explicitly into the questionnaire.

The second major problem was the questionnaire's lack of questions that would counter participants' socially desirable responses to questions regarding their

personal leisure reading perceptions, attitudes and habits (Mackey & Gass, 2005: 114). Hence, the researcher had to construct new built-in checks in the revised questionnaire (see Appendix D). Questions that were designed to control the halo effects from jeopardising the collection of authentic data were added in the revised version. For instance, the gist of Question 8 (*Fill in one author you have read next to each option*) was repeated in a different way in questions 14, 39, 40 and 41 as built-in checks to counter halo effects.

Furthermore, the participants' responses to Questions 11, 18, 23, 25, 29 and 30 (see Appendix B) seemed to suggest halo effects. Their responses on some of the items as to whether they were readers and how much they read suggested they were not really readers and had very few books in their collection. But later responses indicated the opposite. For example, 90% of the subjects responded with *A week ago* to Question 11, which enquired when last the respondent read a book, even though they had not included books in the kind of reading they do (Question 8). It is possible that the question was misread to include all reading (for example, reading for study purposes), not just leisure reading. Some respondents ticked *Strongly agree* for Question 25 ("Reading is a pleasant activity") even though they had responded with *Reading is OK, but I don't really read much. I only read when I have to read for study purposes* in Question 13. I realised that the pilot study was indeed a significant phase in the development and refining of this research instrument.

Another positive factor about piloting the questionnaire was that the participants indicated their personally preferred responses to some questions by writing down their options below the researcher's options. Those options were then incorporated into the revised version. For example, Question 18 in the pilot questionnaire did not have the option "Read a newspaper". Questions 11, 12, 14, 18, 23, and 29 in the piloted instrument had fewer options and the subjects added their own, as the revised one shows.

The revised questionnaire had more questions (41, instead of the initial 30 items). One reason for this was the realisation that very few culturally or locally influenced beliefs regarding extensive reading had been included in the first questionnaire. Thus, Questions 21, 24, 26, 28, 36, 37 and 38 represent such locally motivated beliefs in the second questionnaire.

The results of the pilot study were informative. For unknown reasons, the correlation co-efficient between the reading performance and academic performance factors was very low, implying that the relationship, if any, was not significant statistically. The cause for this discrepancy seemed to be a methodological problem rather than a theoretical one. For that reason, it had to be subjected to further enquiry in the main research study. The pilot study had returned an H0 on all three hypotheses. Therefore, the researcher had to take the investigation to the next level of the main study to find out if these hypothesised relationships would still return a null hypothesis in a larger investigation.

Another serious consideration that came out of the pilot study was the addition of tests to assist in triangulating the questionnaire data. These tests were the vocabulary test and the author-and magazine tests. The L1 (siSwati) test was administered later for the purpose of studying the reading ability of the participants in light of their L2 reading ability. I had noted that most of their questionnaire responses had been candid as they admitted to not reading much in the L1. Thus, I needed to find out if their L1 and L2 reading abilities bore any relationship at all.

Generally, the picture that emerged from the piloting of the material is that the participants were average and below-average readers. Clearly, most of them were reading at "frustration level" resulting in "60% or less comprehension"

(Lesiak & Bradley-Johnson, 1983, in Pretorius, 2002). Only three students, those who got 68% and 70% in the reading comprehension test, could be said to be reading at “the instructional level”. Furthermore, in terms of pleasure reading, the subjects seemed to read very little, if anything. The questionnaire responses indicated that most of them had less than ten books at their homes and were not members of a library in town. One wonders where they would find books if they did not get them from the local national library or buy them. The college library only has a handful of novels, thus rendering very little assistance to those who enjoy leisure reading.

Our next focus is the third phase of the study, the implementation of the main study.

### ***3.2.6 The Main Study***

The main study was conducted in 2007 with two groups of participants at four different times: February, March, May and November. The college calendar year commences in August and ends in May with final examinations for all levels. Thus, the beginning of 2007 was the second and last semester of the academic year, a busy time in the college, with a six-week teaching practice period from mid-February to the end of March for the PTD 2 and PTD 3 students. Thereafter, May is the month for final examinations. The administration of the test instruments for the research study had to compete with all these other activities.

In this main study, the focus was on the research questions that had been raised in the pilot study as well as on the new questions and additional data. The major points of enquiry centred around the participants’ reading and vocabulary performance which were designed to triangulate the questionnaire data the author and magazine recognition tests, which provided scores for the exposure to print data, a comparison of the performance of the first and third level students in the questionnaire and L1 and L2 reading performance.

In the main study, there were three exploratory questions based on the questionnaire and research questions. The exploratory questions were as follows:

1. *What are the students' attitudes to and perceptions of extensive reading?*
2. *How much access to leisure reading resources do the students have?*
3. *Do the participants exhibit habits that favour leisure reading?*

The research questions that were tested through hypotheses were as follows:

1. *Is there a relationship between the students' reading attitudes and their L2 reading ability?*
2. *Is there a relationship between the students' access to leisure reading resources and their L2 reading ability?*
3. *Is there a relationship between the students' exposure to print and their access to leisure reading resources?*
4. *Is there a relationship between the students' leisure reading habits and their L2 reading ability?*
5. *Is there a relationship between the students' vocabulary knowledge and their L2 reading ability?*
6. *Is there a difference between PTD 1 and the PTD 3 students' vocabulary knowledge and L2 reading ability?*
7. *Is there a relationship between the students' L1 and L2 reading ability?*
8. *Is there a relationship between the students' academic performance and their L2 reading ability?*

#### *3.2.6.1 Participants*

The students' permission was sought by the researcher through their class representatives, and they willingly consented to being part of the research as a class. The first group of participants were the first year students in the A stream (N=45) who voluntarily took part in the study; the B stream had been used for

the pilot study in the previous semester. The A class had 46 students; however, there was one drop-out, who left the college almost at the end of the second semester, due to charges of falsifying entry documents. There were 31 female students and 14 males. A handful of these were already married, with families of their own. Their age range was between 18 and 41. Seventy-one percent of the class were in the 18-25 age bracket, 24% in the 26-30 age bracket and only 4% in the 36-45 bracket.

These students' English entry grades were mainly D (45-49%) and E (40-45%), with only a minority with credit passes at B and C (scoring above 50%). The University of Swaziland (UNISWA) which is the certifying body for all the academic colleges in the country requires that students hold credit passes in four subjects such as Geography, History, Religious Education, Home Economics, Agriculture, Biology, Science, Mathematics and the siSwati language as core subjects in primary school education. On enrolment, the students do all these subjects and other non-core but compulsory courses such as Art & Craft, Chalkboard writing, Physical Education, Teaching Aids, Music and Academic Communication Skills.

The third-year students (N=39) were in their final year at college. In this group, the B stream of the cohort was chosen for the study, as the A stream in Year 1 had been chosen. The A and B streams in the college are not specifically different from each other as they are placed in the classes in alphabetical order. The participants' age range was 18-35. In contrast to the first year group, 15% in the 18-25 age bracket, 67% of the third year students are in the 26-30 age bracket and 4% in the 31-35 age bracket. In short, the third-year class were slightly older than the first-year class. The comparison between the classes was based on the academic seniority and experience of the one class over the inexperience of the other. The third year students had spent more time in the academic institution than the first-year participants. The researcher was curious

to find out if the time spent at the college and the experience gained had made any difference to the Year 3 participants' reading attitudes, practices and habits.

The third year B stream was made up of 23 female students and 16 males. The class normally had 41 students; however, 2 of them decided not to write two of the tests and so their data had to be left out. In the college, students begin to specialise in various cluster disciplines offered in third year. They do not do every subject but only choose and study a cluster of subjects such as: Social Studies, consisting of History, Geography and Religious Education; Applied Sciences, consisting of Agriculture and Home Economics; Sciences that include Science and Mathematics and lastly, Languages which include siSwati and English. The student who chooses Languages, for instance, will specialise in that cluster for the year, as well as the non-core courses referred to above.

Socio-economically, most of the enrolled students come from very low-income families. That some of them were aged 30 and above was mainly a consequence of seeking employment in the local industrial sites, or as unqualified temporary teachers, in an attempt to make ends meet for their families. In this temporary employment, some students were never required to read, and thus lost touch with books and, worse, lost the little love for books that they might have had at school. The financial situation for most is so desperate that they cannot afford the R8 000 annual college tuition fees and living expenses, and have to be government-sponsored for the three-year diploma.

#### *3.2.6.2 Research Materials*

In light of the feedback obtained from the pilot study, five instruments were used in the main study to collect the relevant data pertinent to the research questions, data which would assist in the triangulation of the questionnaire data.

- **A reading attitudes questionnaire** (in Appendix D).

The questionnaire was developed along the lines of McKenna's (2001) model in which he presents three principles of attitude formation. The first principle is "*the direct impact of episodes of reading*" (italics mine); the second one relates to one's "*beliefs about the outcomes of reading*", and the third factor pertains to one's "*beliefs about cultural norms concerning reading* (conditioned by one's desire to conform to those norms)" (McKenna, 2001: 139). The questionnaire structure was guided by these principles of attitude acquisition. Question items numbers 4-10, 20, 22, 25, 27, 31, 39 and 41 were guided by the first principle. Questions 18, 19, 26, 28, 30, 32 and 34 were guided by the second principle, while questions 11-17, 23, 35, 36, 37 and 38 were founded on the third principle.

The questionnaire had 41 items and most of them had to be answered by choosing the preferred option in the "Strongly agree/ Strongly disagree" continuum. In the other questions, the participants had to tick the preferred option in a four/five option list. The piloting of this instrument had assisted the researcher in adding checks against socially desirable responses and one of these was the question requiring the students to name the most recently read book or author. Without such mention, the responses were nullified (given a zero score). The scoring adopted was the 1 – 5 point allocation, depending on the given response for each question (Juffs, 2001, in Mackey & Gass, 2005: 51). The higher scores were allocated for a positive response and the lower scores for a negative response. The mid-point "Not sure" was given 3 the mid-point score. This was contrary to the scoring in the pilot questionnaire where it had been given a zero score.

- **The Author and Magazine Recognition Tests** (Appendix E).

These tests were adapted (and simplified) from Stanovich and Cunningham's (1993) study. The tests were the authors' attempt at curbing "the problem of questionnaire contamination by tendencies to produce socially desirable responses" (2001: 213). The assumption behind the tests is that the student who reads for pleasure beyond academic study requirements is more likely to recognise the names of authors and magazines than the student who does very little reading. Using the original test as a guide, I adapted it by selecting the names of locally available, well known authors of romance fiction and thrillers. This was achieved by a visit to the local library in town. The most popular novels that had been checked out more often than others in a short space of time were targeted. I also included five author names from the college library. The author list had 40 names, 23 of whom were foils. I could not have an equal number of authors as I had to choose only fairly well known names in the two libraries. The foils were popular people in world music, politics, the film industry and television. The purpose of the foils was to ensure that the participants did not just take a guess and tick names at random.

The magazine list was constructed from the news-stands at both Shoprite and Spar, two centrally-located, popular shopping areas. The magazine list had 40 titles, 14 of which were foils. The magazines were chosen for their popularity with the general public, accessibility and circulation. The participants had to tick only the magazine names they recognised from their own leisure reading. The foils were included in the lists to prevent participants from merely guessing at magazine titles, claiming they recognized them.

This test was given at the end of the May 2007 final examinations, and due to lack of time, the test was not piloted beforehand. As the built-in foils in the author list were popular celebrity names in the Southern African music and sports world, there were fears that the participants would recognise these names, not as authors but as celebrities, and thus not tick them. However, as will be seen in §4.2.3, the results tell a different story.

- **A reading comprehension test** (attached as Appendix C).

This criterion-referenced test that had been taken from the Cambridge University O' level June 2006 examination was to be used. It had been piloted and observed to be suitable for the study as it tests reading ability in terms of inferential, paraphrasing and contextual meaning questions (mentioned in § 3.2.4.2). It was a passage that was followed by 21 question items for subjects to answer in one hour: eight literal, seven inferential, five on vocabulary and one conceptual. The test had its own marking scheme provided by Cambridge.

- **A siSwati reading comprehension test** (Appendix F).

This reading comprehension test was designed for the participants by a colleague in the siSwati department. She is not only a lecturer in the department but is also an experienced examiner in the siSwati O level examinations. She offered to prepare the test and its marking scheme, mark the scripts and check for my own consistency when I marked the same scripts. The test was adapted from a siSwati novel by JSM Matsebula. The narrative is about a man of honour in the community facing a traditional court for impregnating a woman out of wed-lock and failing to follow the cultural norms thereafter of acknowledging the anomaly and paying the expected cows as a penalty. His counter-argument was that he was not aware that the woman was

pregnant, or that he was the father. The participating students had not read it but it has since become a prescribed text for the PTD 1 and the PTD 3 classes. The students had to write answers to 16 questions: three literal, two inferential, three conceptual and eight vocabulary questions.

- **A vocabulary test** (Appendix G).

The test, compiled by Laufer and Nation (1995: 320-322), was designed to test vocabulary size in terms of five levels of frequency of the words. The tests were at the 2000-, 3000-, 5000-, the University Word List and the 10,000-word levels. This measure of vocabulary size comprises a modified cloze test in which the first three or four letters of the intended word are given and the participants are required to complete the word. The purpose of this test was to examine the vocabulary skills of the participants. Vocabulary knowledge is vital for reading comprehension. The assumption underlying these tests was that the students who engaged in extensive reading would be more likely to have a wider vocabulary than the students who did not do any or only a little reading due to lack of exposure to a variety of texts (Corson 1997: 682). The student who is not exposed to much print material has a limited recognition vocabulary and is likely to miss the meaning of the material s/he might want to understand (ibid: 682).

### *3.2.6.3 Data Scoring and Analysis*

The *questionnaire* was coded according to the three principles referred to in §3.2.4.4 above. Ten questions (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14 and 40) were aimed at finding out if the subjects had access and what kind of access they had to leisure reading resources. These were operationalised as *access to leisure reading resources* because they focus on how many books the participants have at home, whether they have library membership and whether they buy leisure

reading books. The raw score coding added to a total of **42** which was converted to a percentage score.

Questions 15-19, 21, 23-24, 26-29, 35-39 and 41 were coded for the variable data on *attitudes and perceptions*. The raw score totalled **94** points which, for the purposes of statistical analysis, were converted to percentage scores. Items 20, 22, 25, 30-34 were coded as *leisure reading habits* and these totalled **31** raw score points which were also converted to percentage.

The participants' responses in this revised instrument to questions such as numbers 8 and 14 were invalidated and given a zero score if the response did not include the name of an author. I would have liked to follow the same procedure in the coding of scores of responses to questions 15, 16, 20, 22, 27, 33 and 34. If a response was negative (such as a response to question 6: *Do you enjoy reading?* was *A little*), then subsequent responses to questions of enjoyment, reading habits and attitudes would have been nullified as halo effect responses if they were contradictory to the statement *A little* love of reading. However, this would have compromised the objectivity in the scoring and so the full score was given even when seemingly contradictory responses were given.

The *Author and Magazine Recognition Tests* were marked out of a total of **17** and **26** points respectively and the scores were also converted to percentage.

I marked the L2 *reading comprehension* scripts out of **25** points which were converted to percentage. The scripts were marked twice to ensure that the marking had been done consistently according to the given marking guide. The marks obtained by the students were converted to percentage.

The *vocabulary test* was marked for a total of **87** points which were converted to percentage.

The reading and vocabulary scores were subjected to statistical analysis to find a correlation between the two phenomena. This meant that performance in the reading test was expected to correlate with performance in the vocabulary test, especially in the 5, 000-, University Word List and 10, 000-word levels. Spelling errors were not taken into account, except where a word was rendered unintelligible. The raw scores were converted to percentage for easy statistical analysis, as discussed below (in §3.2.6.4).

The *L1 reading test* was marked for **40** points and the resultant scores were converted to percentage.

*Academic performance* was compiled from the participants' end-of-year results as discussed below (§3.2.6.4).

#### *3.2.6.4 Data Collection Procedures*

This subsection reports on the procedures that were put in place, how the assessment instruments were administered and how the results were analysed for each research question and hypothesis. In all cases, the researcher administered the tests herself.

##### *The Questionnaire*

Regarding this essential data, the PTD 3 and PTD 1 students filled in the questionnaire during class time, individually in February and March 2007 respectively. The administration of this instrument took about half an hour, during which I read out the statements to ensure that students did not inadvertently leave out a question, as had been the case in the piloting phase. If a participant chose not to answer a certain question then I would know that it had been deliberate. I asked the participants to write their names on the questionnaire for the purpose of matching the responses to performance in the

tests. This may have contributed to students not being candid in their answers, but I needed to find connections between responses and reading performance.

#### *The Print Exposure Tests*

This test was administered in May 2007 to first and third year groups by the researcher. It was done in an effort to verify the participants' exposure to print as they claimed to be readers of leisure texts. This test was administered in half an hour.

#### *The Reading Comprehension Test*

The participants were required to answer, in writing, the reading comprehension questions in one hour on the first day of the tests (in February 2007 for PTD 3) and March 2007 for PTD1). The researcher asked that the participants write their names on the test scripts for the purposes of relating the performance to personal responses in the questionnaire. The researcher assured them that this measure was strictly meant for research purposes and that their names would remain anonymous in the dissertation. The completed scripts were collected for marking by the researcher.

#### *The Vocabulary Test*

The vocabulary test was administered on the second day after the reading comprehension test in February and March 2007, with the PTD 3 and PTD 1 students respectively. The test was written in one hour 30 minutes. The test scores were analysed for each group to determine the vocabulary size of the participants.

#### *The SiSwati Reading Comprehension Test*

I administered this siSwati reading comprehension test to the PTD 1 participants only in November 2007. It had to be administered in one hour. I marked the scripts and scored them. I went over the papers, checking them against the

marking guide. When I finished marking, the siSwati lecturer also cross-checked my marking and noted the differences in our scoring. This was aimed at ensuring that the scripts had been marked consistently.

Unfortunately, the third year students could not be part of this aspect of research. Due to time constraints, they could not do this test before their final exams in May. However, the results in the sample of the first year participants suffice to suggest some important insights for the study.

### *Academic Performance*

This aspect of the study seeks to establish whether the participants' performance in the reading comprehension test and final academic performance (AP) shows any connection. The overall academic performance was calculated at a weighting of 50% continuous assessment (CA) and 50% final examination (in May 2007), according to the college stipulations. For the PTD 1 students, the CA and final examination scores were processed internally by the staff and administration after the May 2007 examinations, while for the PTD 3 students, the CA and final examination outcomes were handled externally in conjunction with the UNISWA moderators and the accrediting board (Board of Affiliated Institutions – BAI) for the approval of the results. The external academic performance is a long process before the results are ready; with the first results, followed by the supplementary examinations and the final batch of results in which some students may still have to repeat some course(s) after failing the supplementary examinations. The final results were released in August 2007. The Pass/Fail and Repeat/Supplement comments made in the participants' overall academic results are summarised in the results in Chapter 4.

For the purposes of this study, only six subjects were taken into account for the CA; namely, Education, Academic Communication Skills (ACS), Mathematics, Social Studies, Science and Agriculture for year 1. For third year, I had

Education, ACS, siSwati, Mathematics, Agriculture and Social Studies. The grade given as academic performance data for this study is the average of these courses. I did not take the complete set of results because they included practical courses like Chalkboard writing, Art & Craft and Teaching Aids: these are regarded as practical skills courses rather than academic courses.

In this phase of the study, for the purposes of this research, the researcher chose representative subjects in the PTD 1 participants' curriculum from which to derive a mean score to represent Academic Performance, namely: Academic Communication Skills (ACS), Social Studies, Mathematics, Science and Agriculture. These represent Languages, Social Studies, the Sciences and Applied Sciences, respectively. For PTD 3, the academic performance final grade was made up of 50% of the assignments and tests in the individual specialisation area subjects (mentioned above) and two core subjects: ACS and Education, and 50% of the final examination score.

#### *3.2.6.5 Statistical Techniques*

Several statistical techniques were used in this study. First, descriptive statistics were applied to the data in an attempt to establish the central tendencies of the data. The analysis involved the calculation of basic descriptive measures like the arithmetic mean, mode, quartiles and the standard deviation (Mulder, 1986).

The data were further subjected to inferential statistical analysis. A Pearson's Product-Moment correlation was used to establish whether there were relationships between the key factors of the study as articulated in the research questions. Another technique used in the study was the *t*-test, with a view to determining whether there were significant differences between the first and third year students in their reading and vocabulary performance (Mackey & Gass, 2005: 272-273).

The next section reports on two important pillars on which this study was based: reliability and validity of the research materials and the procedures followed in conducting the study.

### **3.3 Reliability and Validity of the Research Data**

The reliability and validity of this study were taken into account from its inception and throughout its administration. The two concepts are discussed below.

#### ***3.3.1 Reliability***

Reliability is a serious concern related to the accuracy and consistency of the instruments and procedures of data collection the researcher employs in conducting a study (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989: 185). The reliability of the current study was determined by factors discussed as internal and external reliability. Internal reliability, on the one hand, refers to “the consistency of data collection, analysis, and interpretation” (Nunan, 1992: 14). External reliability, on the other hand, refers to the effort a researcher will exert to replicate the results of a research study. This involves greater inter-rater agreement in the coding and assessment of research instruments, interactions and quantifying of data.

##### ***3.3.1.1 Internal Reliability***

- Intra-rater reliability (Mackey & Gass, 2005: 128). The researcher sought to ensure the reliability of the test data by marking each groups’ scripts twice, for both the English and siSwati reading comprehension and vocabulary tests. The similarity of the scores between the first and second rounds of marking and the final check assured me that I had been consistent in my scoring. Seliger and Shohamy (1989: 186) advise that a researcher returns to the data and studies the patterns observed the first time with a view to confirming or refuting them. This is known as regrounding (ibid: 186).

- I ensured that each test was taken seriously by the subjects and in a favourable location (Hughes, 2003: 48).
- Objectivity in the scoring of the tests was assisted by the fact that the comprehension and vocabulary tests had memoranda in which the correct answers were clearly stated (Hughes, 2003: 48). It is true that some questionnaire data is subjective; however, the quantifying of the data ensured that there was objectivity in the scoring.
- I ensured that questions and instructions were unambiguous and were written in clear language. This was mainly achieved through the piloting of some of the research materials (Hughes, 2003: 46-7). I also used oral explanations during test times when it was deemed necessary if students had difficulty understanding a test item.
- The tests were not different from others they had done in the past, in terms of passage and question format.

### *3.3.1.2 External Reliability*

- Inter-rater reliability (Mackey & Gass, 2005: 128; Hughes, 2003: 50). The English reading comprehension and vocabulary tests were further rated by a colleague in the English department. She marked all the 84 participants' scripts. She was lecturer to the 2006/7 first level class, just as the researcher was lecturer for the 2006/7 third level class. Her scoring proved to be, on the whole, consistent with the researcher's. Another colleague in the siSwati department did the same for the siSwati comprehension test.
- Instrument reliability. The research materials were quantified to ensure that the data from such instruments was reliable and objective.
- The number of participants ensured that the data provided adequate samples of behaviour. Mulder recommends that a reasonable representative sample be taken (1986: 190-191). For the study, one group of participants would have been too few for the emerging patterns

of behaviour to be taken as meaningful (Mulder, 1986: 190-191). Hence, I had two groups.

- The participants were attentive throughout the administration of the tests. The researcher ensured that elements such as fatigue, irritation and hunger were brought down to a minimum, if any, by asking the subjects to take the tests on three different days. The duration of the tests was not taxing and the tests were not administered during lunch breaks or in the late afternoon.
- I ensured that the goal of the study was not divulged to the test-takers, so that the data collection would not be pre-empted, in that way compromising the data collected (Mackey & Gass, 2005: 117). Mouton advises that participants should be told what the research is about (2001: 244); however, this was done in such a way that it did not reveal the core of the study in a way that might bias them towards a certain viewpoint.

### ***3.3.2 Validity***

Validity refers to whether a test measures exactly what it purports to be measuring (Hughes, 2003: 26). Seliger and Shohamy point out that validity can never be “proven” but evidence of its having been considered must be provided (1989: 188). Two forms of validity are reported in this context: internal and external validity. Several factors support the current study’s validity.

#### ***3.3.2.1 Internal Validity***

Internal validity refers to whether a researcher has controlled for all other factors to which test results could be attributed. If there are differences in the results, the researcher has to be sure that there were no other interfering factors that compromised the data (Mackey & Gass, 109).

- The scoring of the tests related only to the content and constructs being tested. For example, spelling and language accuracy were not taken into

- account in the reading comprehension and vocabulary tests, except where a word or phrase was rendered unintelligible by the scorer (Hughes, 2003: 34). Only reading ability and its concomitant skills of guessing the meaning of words from the context, making inferences and paraphrasing were taken into account in the tests.
- A 'construct' is the "underlying ability... that is hypothesised in a theory of language ability" (Hughes, 2003: 31, 34). The tests measured the following constructs namely, reading ability, vocabulary skills, and also the constructs in the questionnaire (viz. reading attitudes, access and habits) and these were tested directly (ibid: 31, 34).
  - The drop-out rate was minimal. The students took the tests on different days. One or two would be absent from the tests. This did not compromise the results as the students who did not take a particular test were left out of the study.
  - Halo effects had to be controlled for in the questionnaire data in an attempt to validate the data by including the Author and Magazine recognition test in the research. The triangulation of the questionnaire data with the author and magazine recognition tests, reading tests and vocabulary test were invaluable in this aspect.
  - The questionnaire items were piloted first before the instrument was administered to the larger group.
  - I was careful that my position as lecturer to some of the participants did not affect or influence the research (Mackey & Gass, 2005: 115).

### *3.3.2.2 External Validity*

External validity has to take into account internal validity. For a research study to claim to have external validity, its findings/results should be generalisable to the larger population being studied (Mackey & Gass, 2005:119).

- The reading comprehension and vocabulary tests have face validity. A test has to demonstrate that it is testing what it claims to be testing. Hughes points out that face validity means the test “looks as if it measures what it is supposed to measure” (2003: 33). For example, if it tests vocabulary knowledge, it should appear to be testing just that construct. Thus, the tests were acceptable at face value to the students and colleagues as really testing the constructs indicated.
- The researcher ensured that the questionnaire and tests were piloted with a smaller sample before administration to a larger population.
- The sampling of the participants may be considered as representative of the population being investigated: students who enrol as trainee teachers for the PTD. Therefore, the findings, I believe, may be cautiously generalisable to the population. Secondly, the sample forms approximately 1/3 (one third) of the college enrolment, a reasonable representation. The sample of participants was randomly chosen and large enough to be representative of the College students’ population being studied (Mackey & Gass, 2005: 119).

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The chapter reported on the two phases of the research study, relating the details of the pilot and main study, participants, design and approach of the study, the research materials and the procedures followed in the administration of the tests and data collection. The pilot study results are presented and discussed in this chapter, whereas the results of the main study are presented and discussed in much more detail in Chapter 4. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the reliability and validity of the study. These are discussed in the subtopics of internal and external reliability and validity concerns.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter reports on the research study results and discusses the findings. The first strand of the findings is based on the questionnaire's exploratory questions which emanate from the three themes of the questionnaire data: *attitudes and perceptions of extensive reading, access to leisure reading resources* and the students' *leisure reading habits and practices*.

The second strand of the report focuses on the results of the hypotheses based on the students' reading attitudes, access to leisure reading resources, exposure to print, reading habits in relation to their reading and vocabulary ability. Also, an enquiry regarding the reading ability of the participants in the additional language (AL) in relation to their first language (L1) reading is presented. The third strand reports on the participants' academic performance in relation to their reading and vocabulary ability. The results are expressed in statistical terms.

The discussion section will highlight the main trends to emerge from the study and will also focus on the challenges encountered with questionnaire data for information relating to affective factors. Finally, the conclusion ties the strands of the study together in light of the findings.

#### 4.1 The Questionnaire

The participants' reading behaviour was captured from their responses to the questionnaire which had been designed to gather data on the participants' *attitudes to and perceptions of extensive reading, their habits and practices* regarding leisure

reading and their *access to extensive reading resources*, (as described in §3.2.6.2). To this end, there were 41 questionnaire items, three of which were routine questions. In all, 22 question items related to the subjects' *attitudes to and perceptions of extensive reading*, 9 questions sought responses to the participants' *access to leisure reading resources* and 7 questions related to the participants' *leisure reading habits and practices*.

Each of the questionnaire's three areas of focus, as mentioned above, had an exploratory question. The research questions that were explored related to the students' attitudes to and perceptions of reading, their access to leisure resources and their reading habits. The questions stand as follows:

1. *What are the participants' perceptions of and attitudes to extensive reading?*
2. *How much access to leisure reading resources do the participants have?*
3. *Do the participants exhibit habits that favour leisure reading?*

The following subsection discusses the results, providing some answers to the three exploratory research questions.

#### ***4.1.1 Exploring Reading Attitudes, Access to Resources and Reading Habits***

The research questions explored in this subsection related to the students' attitudes to and perceptions of leisure reading, their access to leisure resources and their reading habits. (The participants' response percentages were presented in Appendix H).

##### ***Reading Attitudes***

The data were collected from questions 15-19, 21, 23-24, 26-29, 35-39 and 41 in the questionnaire. The results were compiled by converting the scores to percentage points (as indicated in §3.2.6.3). The overall mean attitude score was 71.9% (cf. Table 4.1 below) which suggests a generally favourable attitude to reading.

*Table 4.1 Reading Attitudes, Access to Leisure Resources and Reading Habits*

	PTD 1 Mean (N=45)	PTD 1 STD	PTD 3 Mean (N=39)	PTD 3 STD	Overall Mean (N=84)	Overall STD
<b>Attitudes &amp; Perceptions</b>	71.9%	9.79	71.9%	8.75	71.9%	8.75
<b>Access to Reading Resources</b>	41.7%	10.52	43.6%	8.73	42.6%	9.72
<b>Reading Habits</b>	79.0%	9.99	77.9%	9.72	78.5%	9.83

The questions sought the participants' own reflections on their attitudes to leisure reading, if they valued reading for pleasure and if they believed it is important to develop a culture of reading with young learners. It appears that the answer to the first exploratory research question, judging from the descriptive statistics above (Table 4.1), is that the participants' reading attitudes seem to be positive. It seems that most of the students felt that reading was a pleasant activity that had made a difference to their reading ability.

*Table 4.2 Some Questionnaire Responses*

<b>4. Do you enjoy reading?</b>	<b>PTD 1 (N=45)</b>	<b>PTD 3 N=39)</b>	<b>OVERALL(N=84)</b>
Not at all	4%	0%	2%
A little	33%	36%	34.5%
Quite a lot	49%	26%	38%
Very much	14%	38%	25.5%
<b>18. Reading for pleasure has had a positive effect on my proficiency in English.</b>			
Strongly Disagree	0%	13%	6.5%
Disagree	3%	18%	10.5%
Not Sure	15%	13%	14%
Agree	58%	46%	52%
Strongly Agree	24%	10%	17%
<b>27. Reading novels is a pleasant activity for me.</b>			
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%
Disagree	11%	15%	13%
Not Sure	8%	3%	5.5%
Agree	68%	77%	72.5%
Strongly Agree	13%	5%	9%

However, about a third of the participants claimed to have little, if not none at all, enjoyment of reading, as shown by the responses to question 4 in Table 4.2 above.

On the question of culturally-ingrained attitudes, most (about two thirds) students' responses were not typical to Swazi thinking; they responded in ways that suggests a move away from such commonly-held cultural perspectives, as shown by the data below (Table 4.3). Perhaps, these are the first steps in the quest for change in the cultural beliefs of a largely oral-oriented nation. With time and concerted effort on the part of language practitioners, these beliefs may be translated into reading behaviour. Still, one cannot ignore the fact that, in all, 33% responded with 'Not sure'/Agree/Strongly agree with regard to the statement that it was unacceptable to read in public places and about 27% still felt that too much reading was hazardous to one's mental health. In other words almost a third of the students still seem to harbour rather negative cultural views of reading.

*Table 4.3 Cultural Perspectives*

<b>21. Reading novels and magazines is a 'woman thing', not for men.</b>	<b>PTD 1 (N=45)</b>	<b>PTD 3 (N=39)</b>	<b>Overall (N=84)</b>
Strongly Disagree	58%	56%	57%
Disagree	31%	28%	29.5%
Not Sure	0%	3%	1.5%
Agree	7%	5%	6%
Strongly Agree	4%	8%	6%
<b>24. Reading in public places, like in buses and parks, is not 'cool'.</b>			
Strongly Disagree	24%	21%	22.5%
Disagree	40%	49%	44.5%
Not Sure	11%	10%	10.5%
Agree	22%	15%	18.5%
Strongly Agree	3%	5%	4%
<b>37. Too much reading can be dangerous as it can lead to mental disturbance.</b>			
Strongly Disagree	49%	36%	42.5%
Disagree	29%	31%	30%
Not Sure	13%	21%	17%
Agree	9%	8%	8.5%
Strongly Agree	0%	4%	2%

### *Access to Leisure Reading Resources*

The data for this aspect of the study were gathered using question items 4-11, 14 and 40. The responses to the questions were coded (given marks) and these raw scores were converted to percentage. These items focused on whether students had a collection of books at home and, if they had some, how many they had. Library membership was also another point of focus and, lastly, students were asked if they did buy leisure reading materials. These three foci were operationalised as *access to leisure reading resources*.

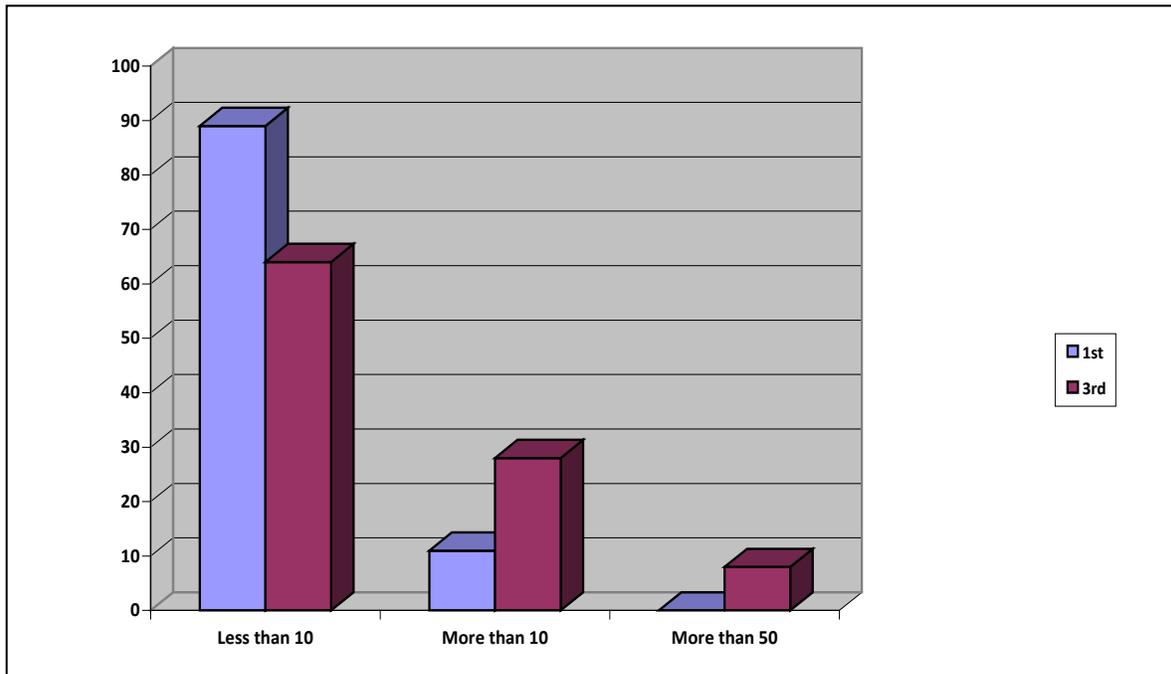
The exploratory question was: *How much access to leisure reading resources do the participants have?* Generally, the responses indicate that most of the participants have very few novels in their personal collection nor do they buy leisure books. As can be seen in Table 4.1, the mean for access to resources stands at 42.6%; the minimum and maximum score figures are at 21% and 67% respectively, with the standard deviation indicating a clustering around the mean. These figures indicate that the subjects do not have much access to extensive reading resources.

Interestingly, most of them had not even read all the books that they personally owned. A further setback seems to be that they generally do not buy leisure reading books/material. In addition, 48% of the sample admitted to not being members of the local national library. They were verbally informed in the course of filling in their questionnaires that membership in the college library did not count, as that was compulsory and, moreover, there was very little leisure reading material in it. The college library cannot meet even the academic needs of the students hence they use the University of Swaziland (UNISWA) campus library for assignment research and academic reading, and the National Library for leisure reading resources. Thus, students' membership in the local national library is necessary if they wish to do leisure reading yet almost half of them are not library member. It is interesting to note that more PTD 3 participants indicated membership (Table 4.4) in the local national library (21) than PTD 1 participants (10). On the surface this may seem an encouraging figure.

However, when the researcher later asked the participants (both groups) to show their library membership cards, none of the participants could bring these. It is true that third year students have to make use of outside libraries at this point in their academic study in order to do research assigned for the two projects they have to complete as part of the PTD requirements. However, they do not have to be card-carrying members to make use of the national library resources, except when they want to check out some books. For most of the students, it seems that the library is a physical research/study centre for project/assignment research rather than a leisure reading resource area.

Figure 4.1 clearly shows a scenario that seems to be all too familiar in Southern Africa: the socio-economic problem of living in a print-poor environment. Table 4.4 informs the reader that over half the participants have less than ten leisure books at home, 89% in PTD 1 and 64% in PTD 3. A collection of ten books or more was a luxury most of the participants did not have.

*Figure 4.1 Books Owned in the Home*



This is a poignantly familiar picture of print deprivation, especially in this case, for these are teacher trainees who have to make a difference in primary schools regarding a rather entrenched culture of non-reading. It may be that students get used to such a setting and may inadvertently perpetuate the same habits they have been brought up in, even when they can afford to do better for themselves and their children.

*Table 4.4: Books Owned in the Home (and Library Membership\*)*

<b>Amount</b>	<b>YEAR 1 N=45</b>	<b>YEAR 3 N=39</b>
Less than 10	89% (8)*	67% (15)
More than 10	11% (2)	28% (5)
50 or more	0%	5% (1)

\*The numbers in brackets represent participants who claimed library membership, in each of the categories.

The data gathered from the questionnaire adequately answer the research question on how much access to leisure reading materials the subjects have. From the descriptive statistics, it is clear that the participants do not have much access to leisure reading materials, nor do they have many novels in their homes and, even though some of them claim library membership, it appears that the membership is not for purposes of consistent leisure reading. The findings regarding the second exploratory question, as quantified from their responses, seem to be that the participants have little access to pleasure reading resources both within and outside their formal learning context.

### ***The Students' Reading Habits***

Data collected for this aspect of the research study were based on question items 20, 22, 25 and 30-34. These questions investigated the participants' reading habits and the exploratory question was: *Do the participants exhibit habits that favour leisure reading?* Table 4.5 presents some of the questions and overall response data. The percentages below show that, generally, the students' habits seem to favour leisure reading.

The descriptive statistics in Table 4.1 show a mean of 78.9% on the participants' extensive reading habits. Apparently, their responses lead one to believe that their habits favour leisure reading.

*Table 4.5 Sample Items on Students' Reading Habits*

	PTD 1(N=45)	PTD 3 (N=39)
<b>20. You have an appointment at the dentist's. You have to wait your turn. What do you do to pass the time?</b>		
Read a newspaper	40%	56%
Close my eyes and listen to the sounds around me.	2%	3%
Make small talk with the person sitting next to me.	23%	5%
Continue with the novel I am currently reading.	27%	31%
Grab a magazine from the stack on the reception table.	8%	5%
Other (Specify).....	0%	0%
<b>22. I would rather read academic texts than novels during my leisure time.</b>		
Strongly Disagree	13%	16%
Disagree	62%	69%
Not Sure	4%	5%
Agree	21%	10%
Strongly Agree	0%	0%

Of interest, though not the focus of this study, is the fact that there was some correlation between reading attitudes and reading habits, with a coefficient of  $r = 0.330$ ,  $p = 0.002$ , and a correlation of  $r = 0.288$ ,  $p=0.008$ .

#### ***4.1.2 Discussion of Questionnaire Analysis***

The questionnaire results, on the whole, show an apparently motivating and attractive picture of the students' attitudes to reading and reading habits, except for their access to leisure reading resources variable. This was somewhat surprising to me in that as an insider, I have been at the College for more than 10 years, and in this period my observations have led me to believe that the students are not really avid readers;

reading and books do not seem to play an integral part of their daily lives at the College. Still, it is important that more than half the students indicate that they read newspapers, even if this might be selective reading (i.e. the main stories and the sports pages). However, the entire set of results, (i.e. the testing of the hypotheses) needs to be presented before one can fairly understand and interpret the results that emerge from the questionnaire.

At this point, though, it is important to note Mathewson's (2004) argument that positive attitudes, in themselves, do not necessarily mean much without a person's *intention to read or continue reading*. His observation seems to be apt: the intention to read needs to act on the student's attitude so that then reading behaviour can be the outcome. The low index on the access to leisure reading aspect of the study suggests that the participants have little, if any, access to leisure reading resources. They also do not seem to readily avail themselves the opportunity to read in the national library. It appears that they may not have a strong enough intention to read and therefore will hardly make the effort to find reading material even in a free resource centre like the national library.

## **4.2 Results of the Hypotheses**

The second strand of the enquiry involved the testing of the seven hypotheses stated in the Chapters 1 and 3 by means of inferential statistics. This section of the report presents the results of these hypotheses. A breakdown of the students' performance in the reading and vocabulary tests is shown in Table 4.6 below. As can be seen from this table, overall performance in these tests was not high.

### ***4.2.1 Reading Attitudes and Reading Ability***

The data that were used for this subsection were the participants' questionnaire responses to questions 15-19, 21, 23-24, 26-29, 35-39 and 41 and the reading test scores.

*Table 4.6 Reading Attitudes, Reading Ability and Vocabulary Knowledge*

Class	Reading Attitudes	Reading Attitudes STD	Reading Mean	Reading STD	Vocabulary	Vocabulary STD
PTD 1 (N=45)	71.9%	9.79	54.7%	14.06	51.3%	9.73
PTD 3 (N=39)	71.9%	8.75	50.9%	13.00	50.6%	10.31
Overall (N=84)	71.9%	8.75	53.0%	13.63	51.0%	9.95

\* STD – means Standard Deviation.

The table demonstrates a marked difference between the participants' means in the attitude to reading scores and their reading and vocabulary test scores. The attitude mean is in the 70s, a sharp contrast to the reading and vocabulary tests' means hovering in the 50s, as Table 4.6 shows. The low standard deviations for reading and vocabulary tests denote that the participants' scores were wholly clustered around the means. The reading attitudes means are much higher than the reading scores. According to these results, there is a discrepancy between the participants' reading attitudes and their reading ability. However, these descriptive statistics must be complemented by inferential statistics. Thus, the first research question was: *Is there a relationship between the participants' attitudes to extensive reading and their L2 reading ability?* The **H1** hypothesis holds that there is a significant relationship between the participants' reading attitudes and their L2 reading ability.

A Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was performed on the two sets of data to test the relationship. The results of the correlation were as follows:  $r = 0.0801$ ,  $p = 0.469$ . The results indicate that there is no correlation between reading ability and reading attitudes in this study. (Interestingly, though not the focus at this point, there was a low, albeit significant, relationship between reading attitudes and vocabulary skills:  $r = 0.279$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ). The null hypothesis for **H1** was accepted on the strength of the correlation coefficient statistic: in this study *no* significant relationship was found between the participants' attitudes to extensive reading and their reading ability.

#### 4.2.2 Access to Leisure Reading Resources and Reading Ability

Another important element in this study was the access to reading resources, designed to find out if the participants had books in their homes, were library members or bought leisure reading material, and if this factor is significantly related to their reading ability.

This section reports on the **H2** hypothesis and research question. The responses showed that most of the participants did not have many books in their homes. The descriptive statistics in Table 4.6 shows the reader that the students' access to leisure resources was limited, with a low mean of 42.6 % for the whole group. The reading comprehension test results have to be brought to bear on the testing of the **H2** hypothesis.

Table 4.7 Access to Reading Resources

	PTD 1 Access to Resources (N=45)	PTD 3 Access to Resources (N=39)	Overall Access Scores (N=84)
Mean	41.7%	43.6%	42.6%
Standard Deviation	10.52	8.73	9.72

The research question was framed thus: *Is there a relationship between the participants' access to leisure reading resources and their L2 reading ability?* The hypothesis (**H2**) was stated thus: There is a significant relationship between the participants' access to leisure reading resources and their L2 reading ability.

A Pearson's Product-Moment correlation was applied to the data to test the relationship. A low coefficient of  $r = 0.261$ ,  $p = 0.017$  was obtained. The results suggest that there is a low, albeit significant, correlation between access to leisure reading resources and reading ability. This result permits the rejection of the null hypothesis at the 5% significance level. In other words, students who had better access to reading resources tended to perform better on the reading test.

### 4.2.3 Exposure to Print and Access to Leisure Reading Resources

The Author Recognition Test (ART) and Magazine Recognition Test (MRT) were intended to assist in triangulating the data obtained from the questionnaire. The point was to investigate just how much exposure to print the participants had by enquiring how many authors and magazines offered in the local market they could recognise. The instrument was discussed in detail in §3.2.6.2. Table 4.8 below presents the descriptive statistics of the subjects' exposure to leisure reading print, in contrast to their access to leisure reading resources.

*Table 4.8 Exposure to Leisure Reading Print and Access to Resources*

N= 84	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	SCORES	
			MIN	MAX
Exposure to Leisure Print ART	16.3%	9.41	0%	45%
MRT	37.2%	13.78	8%	75%
Access to Leisure Resources	42.6%	9.72	21%	67%

In the above table, it is apparent that the participants' exposure to leisure print is really limited. The ART and MRT means are the lowest of the three means. A breakdown of the descriptive statistics on the Author Recognition Test (ART) and the Magazine Recognition Test (MRT) which constitute actual exposure to print is shown in Table 4.9 below.

*Table 4.9 Descriptive Statistics: Exposure to Leisure Print*

	PTD 1 ART	PTD 1 MRT	PTD 3 ART	PTD 3 MRT
<b>N</b>	45	45	39	39
<b>Mean</b>	20.1%	39.1%	11.9%	35.1%
<b>Mode</b>	20.0%	46.0%	10.0%	29.0%
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	9.50	14.52	7.22	12.72

The Author Recognition Test (ART) registered a lower mean and mode for the third year students. Still, both groups' scores for the ART reveal extremely low percentages, suggesting very poor familiarity with popular literature. Most of the participants could not recognise the authors; the names of the authors were not familiar to them. If one has seen a name before, during the time that it takes for one to read a novel, one would have very little difficulty recognising such a name. But the inability to recognise popular authors suggests that the participants engage in very little leisure reading. An interesting fact about the ART was that students recognised famous names like those of Will Smith, Winston Churchill, Richard Nixon, Shaun Pollock and others and incorrectly ticked these as authors. Appendix E shows the frequency with which each entry in the test was ticked as author. There was a significant correlation between the participants' performance on the ART and MRT with a coefficient of  $r = 0.471$ ,  $p = 0.000$ , suggesting that the two tests complemented one another and therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

The performance of the participants in the Magazine Recognition Test (MRT) was slightly higher than in the ART with the percentages ranging in the 30s. Still, they did not perform up to the researcher's expectations. Some of the magazine titles are common and have been in the local market for a long time, some for almost 30 years. Magazines like *True Love*, *You*, *Your Family*, *Bona*, *Drum*, *Farmer's Weekly* and others have been on the local newsstands for decades. These were the magazines that were mostly recognised by the students (see frequency table in Appendix E). The results illustrate just how little reading the participants do, even with the magazines they claimed they read. It seems that they read only a few magazines rather than a wider spectrum of magazines. The highest score in this test was achieved by a subject in the first year group (75%). Only 19 participants obtained 50% and above in the whole sample of 84 participants.

The research question that was examined and tested in hypothesis **H3** was framed as follows: *Is there a relationship between the participants' exposure to print and their*

*access to leisure reading resources?* To test this relationship, a Pearson's Product-Moment correlation was used to determine whether there was any statistically significant relationship between the participants' exposure to print (ART/MRT) scores and their access to leisure reading resources scores. The correlation coefficient for the ART and access to reading resources was  $r = 0.048$ ,  $p = 0.536$ . The MRT statistic was  $r = 0.132$ ,  $p = 0.230$ . It appears that there is no correlation between the two research phenomena: exposure to print and access to leisure resources.

#### ***4.2.4 Reading Habits and Reading Ability***

The questionnaire data gathered from question items 20, 22, 25 and 30-34 focused on the leisure reading habits of the subjects in this investigation. The descriptive statistics show a mean of 78.9% on the participants' extensive reading habits. In contrast, their reading ability mean stands at 52.9% (cf. Table 4.6).

The research question was: *Is there a relationship between the participants' leisure reading habits and their L2 reading ability?* The **H4** hypothesis was stated as: *There is a significant relationship between the participants' leisure reading habits and their L2 reading ability.* A Pearson's Product-Moment correlation only endorsed what was by now a trend, namely: that there was no correlation between the subjects' claims about their reading habits and their reading ability. The coefficient  $r = 0.137$ ,  $p = 0.215$  clearly rules out a relationship between the variables in this study. Thus, the null hypothesis was accepted.

The table below captures some of the correlations between the variables discussed in this section.

**Table 4.10 Correlations between Questionnaire Data, Reading Ability and Vocabulary Skills**

N=84	L2 Reading Ability	Attitudes & Perceptions	Habits	Access to Reading Resources	Author Recognition	Magazine Recognition	Vocabulary
L2 Reading Abil. Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	0.080 0.469	0.137 0.215	0.261* 0.017	0.058 0.602	0.137 0.213	0.482** 0.000
Attitudes & P. Sig. (2-tailed)		1.000	0.330** 0.002	0.225* 0.040	0.108 0.329	0.048 0.662	0.279* 0.010
Habits			1.000	0.288** 0.008	-0.029 0.793	0.023 0.837	0.091 0.410
Access to Read. Res.				1.000	0.068 0.536	0.132 0.230	0.229* 0.036
Author Rec. Sig. (2-tailed)					1.000	0.471** 0.000	0.041 0.710
Magaz. Rec. Sig. (2-tailed)						1.000	0.236* 0.030
Vocabulary Sig. (2-tailed)							1.000

**\*\* Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

**\* Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**

#### **4.2.5 Vocabulary Skills and Reading Ability**

The results of the reading and vocabulary tests assisted the researcher in triangulating the data and cross-checking the attitudes and perceptions of the participants in relation to extensive reading. The reading test results were placed alongside those of the vocabulary test to determine the ability of the subjects in these two areas of proficiency.

The researcher sought to compare test scores for similarities in the reading and vocabulary skills: Is there a relationship between the reading and vocabulary skills of the participants? The reading test results for the two groups of participants indicate similar performance ability; the range of the scores was 20-80% for first-year subjects and 20-96% for the third-year group, both with a mean in the lower fifties (as Table 4.6 shows). Still, an even more objective picture of vocabulary mastery emerges from the quartiles in Table 4.11 below. The quartiles in the 2 000 and 3 000 word level indicate that the middle 50% and upper 25% of the participants can be said to have reached

mastery (85%) of the 2 000 word level. However, on the whole, the students appear not to have obtained mastery of the 3 000 word level or any of the other higher levels. The upper 25% of the class achieved 72% mastery at the 3 000 word level; in other words, even the high performing students had not yet achieved mastery levels (85%) at the 3 000 word level. None of the quartile groups had achieved mastery levels of academic words.

*Table 4.11 Word Levels Performance and Quartiles*

<b>Word Level</b>	<b>PTD 1 (N=45)</b>	<b>PTD 3 (N=39)</b>	<b>Overall (N=84)</b>	<b>OVERALL QUARTILES (N=84)</b>
<b>2 000</b>	83.1%	83.0%	83.1%	1 <sup>st</sup> = 76% 2 <sup>nd</sup> = 85% 3 <sup>rd</sup> = 94%
<b>3 000</b>	62.1%	64.7%	63.3%	1 <sup>st</sup> = 56% 2 <sup>nd</sup> = 67% 3 <sup>rd</sup> = 72%
<b>5 000</b>	37.2%	38.5%	37.8%	1 <sup>st</sup> = 25% 2 <sup>nd</sup> = 38% 3 <sup>rd</sup> = 50%
<b>UWL</b>	58.9%	54.7%	56.9%	1 <sup>st</sup> = 50% 2 <sup>nd</sup> = 56% 3 <sup>rd</sup> = 67%
<b>10 000</b>	13.7%	11.4%	12.6%	1 <sup>st</sup> = 6% 2 <sup>nd</sup> = 11% 3 <sup>rd</sup> = 17%

As in the reading test, the participants' vocabulary skills indicate rather low achievement (Tables 4.6 and 4.11 above). The performance of the participants in the vocabulary test is interesting in the sense that on scrutinising the performance at all the word levels, one encounters a remarkable pattern of uniform achievement. The 3 000, 5 000, UWL and 10 000 word levels appear to be a serious challenge to the college students, with

most of them scoring up to half the total score on each word level and only 1 student scoring 89% in the UWL. Given that these are L2 students of English, the 10,000 word level was, not surprisingly, beyond their capability. None of the participants scored above 50%, in this category, with 89% of the Year 1 and 82% of the Year 3 scores clustering between 0 and 22%.

The hypothesis **H5** was stated as follows: *There is a significant relationship between the participants' vocabulary knowledge and their L2 reading ability.* A Pearson's Product-Moment correlation was applied and the outcome was:  $r = 0.482, p < 0.000$ . The coefficient was moderate but highly significant signalling the rejection of the null hypothesis. In other words, there was a clear relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading ability

#### 4.2.6 A Comparison of Year 1 and 3 Students

One pertinent question I asked myself in this project is whether the three-year study period at the training college makes a difference in the performance of the third level students, in terms of their reading ability and vocabulary skills. It was vital for the current study to explore whether the students' performance in third year differs from that of the students in first year; it is generally assumed that the more senior and academically experienced students should do better than first-year students.

Table 4.12 Descriptive Statistics: Year 1 & 3

	PTD 1 Reading (N=45)	PTD1 Vocabulary (N=45)	PTD3 Reading (N=39)	PTD3 Vocabulary (N=39)
Mean Age	18 – 25		26 – 30	
Range				
Mean	54.7 %	51.3%	50.9%	50.6%
Mode	52.0%	57.0%	40.0	56.0%
STD	14.06	9.73	13.00	10.31

The two groups' performance in the reading and vocabulary tests, as displayed in the descriptive statistics in Table 4.12, shows homogeneity rather than difference,

regardless of the fact that one was a completing class and the other a beginner class. Although these results were displayed in the previous subsection, they are repeated here for the reader's convenience. The descriptive results of the participants' scores indicate that their reading and vocabulary abilities are especially similar.

The descriptive statistics shown in Table 4.12 above give some indication of the differences between the two student groups. A study of the quartiles column in Table 4.11 shows that only the students at the 50<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> quartiles (i.e. students in the middle and upper ranges) have attained mastery of the 2 000 word level (i.e. scores of 85% or above, cf. P.62 in §2.4). However, neither of the two groups seems to have attained mastery of the 3 000, 5 000 and 10 000 word levels, except for only one student in PTD 3 who had attained mastery of the UWL with a score of 89%.

The bulk of the participants' correct vocabulary scores were attained from the high frequency 2 000 word level of the exercise. The highest student in PTD 1 scored 71% and in PTD 3 the highest score was 78%. Judging from the results presented above, the third year participants' vocabulary knowledge appears to be no better than that of the first year participants.

The research question was formulated thus: *Is there a difference between the PTD 1 and PTD 3 participants' vocabulary knowledge and L2 reading ability?* This research question sought to compare the abilities of the two groups of subjects. The **H6** hypothesis states that there is a significant difference between the PTD 1 and PTD 3 participants' reading ability and vocabulary knowledge. A *t*-test for independent groups was applied to test for significant differences between the groups. The results were  $t = 1.243$ ,  $df = 82$ ,  $p = 0.218$  for the reading test and  $t = 0.306$ ,  $df=82$ ,  $p = 0.760$  for the vocabulary test. The study found no significant difference between the first and third year participants' performance in the two tests. The null hypothesis was accepted for **H6**.

#### 4.2.7 First and Second Language Reading Ability

Another aspect in the second strand was to find out if the students' reading skills in their first language (L1) would be related to their reading skills in the second language (L2). Are the good readers in the L1 also good readers in the L2? Only the PTD 1 students took this test. Still, the results from the first year (N= 45) sample seem to serve the purpose adequately. Table 4.13 below shows the results.

Table 4.13 PTD 1 Reading Performance in the L1 and L2:

	L1 Reading (N= 45)	L2 Reading (N= 45)	L1 Reading Quartiles	L2 Reading Quartiles
Mean	65.2%	54.7%	1 <sup>st</sup> = 53.5% 2 <sup>nd</sup> = 65.0% 3 <sup>rd</sup> = 75.0%	1 <sup>st</sup> = 44.0% 2 <sup>nd</sup> = 52.0% 3 <sup>rd</sup> = 60.0%
Mode	65%	52%		
Median	68%	52%		
Range	45 – 98%	20 – 80%		
Standard Deviation	13.36	14.06		

The measures of central tendency in the table above indicate two means that are almost ten percentage points apart, with the L1 reading mean being the higher of the two at 65.2%. The participants performed relatively well in the siSwati reading test, better than in the English reading test, with ten participants getting scores of 75% and above – the highest score at 98%. The quartiles are informative in that the upper 25% of the students score below 80% in both tests. It appears that they performed below expectations; scores of 80% and above in the siSwati test and above 75% in the English test would have been more reassuring. In fact, seven participants had scores that were below 50% in the siSwati reading test.

The research question that was investigated was: *Is there a relationship between the participants' L1 and L2 reading ability?* The hypothesis (**H7**) that was tested in this enquiry was stated thus: *There is a significant relationship between the participants' L1 and L2 reading ability.* A Pearson's Product-Moment correlation was obtained and it was  $r = 0.108$ ,  $p = 0.478$ , which indicates that there was no strength of relationship

between the L1 and L2 reading ability of the participants in this study. The good readers in the L1 are not, as one would expect, necessarily good readers in the L2. Students' reading abilities in the L1 did not match their reading abilities in the L2. Likewise, weak readers in the L1 were not necessarily weak readers in the L2. The null hypothesis was accepted.

#### ***4.2.8 Discussion of the Results***

With regard to the attitudes to and perceptions of leisure reading, the results indicate that the students' attitudes are positive, suggesting that they enjoy extensive reading. However, when these data were placed alongside reading and vocabulary ability and statistically analysed, a discrepancy between them began to show. The students' attitudes were supposedly positive, yet their reading ability, especially in English, did not appear to authenticate the effects of such a positive input. The reader should bear in mind that these results are all based on the personal assessment and opinions of the students. It appears that the participants' opinions of their habits and attitudes are more positive than their actual reading abilities. Thus, the questionnaire results do not tally with their reading test performances. The discrepancy may be explained by Mathewson's (2004) model, namely that although a student's attitude may be positive, the student's *intention to read* may be lacking. This point will be taken up again and discussed in Chapter 5.

The questionnaire results seemed to exhibit halo effects, with participants giving what appeared to be socially desirable responses. Due to space constraints, the overall picture of the responses is not given here but is depicted in Appendix H. If the attitudes were as positive as the results suggest, why would these not be reflected in the extensive reading behaviour of the subjects? One of the factors that may have contributed to this is the inclusion of personal identities in the questionnaire, thus giving the respondents no room for anonymity.

The significant relationship between the students' access to leisure reading and their reading ability was an important result. The students, it seems, who tended to have better access to leisure print tended to evince a better reading ability; similarly, the students who had very little access to leisure print tended to have a lower reading ability. The coefficient, in spite of being low, is statistically significant and this result confirms that there is a link between the amount of reading or access to extensive reading material and reading ability.

The ART and MRT results (in §4.2.3) were expected to depict a picture of participants who are exposed to leisure print-based material. However, the opposite was evident in these results. The ART results, in particular, show that participants simply could not recognise many authors in an attempt to prove their exposure to print. The 16.3% mean for their ART is very low. This says much about their exposure to leisure reading since some could not recognise even one author, even though these authors' names were taken from the local national library and a few from the college library. The sample had 7 zero scores in the ART (i.e. the participants could not recognise a single well-known author). The MRT showed slightly higher percentage scores than the ART scores, with a mean of 37.2%. This could be a consequence of the fact that most of the recognised magazines have been around in local bookshops, news-stands and news agencies for years. So even if one never read them, one would recognise the titles as familiar. The results also suggest that while there is little evidence of a strong culture of reading among the students, the preferred type of leisure reading material is magazines rather than fiction books.

The statistically significant relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading ability indicates that students who tended to do poorly on the reading test also showed a similar tendency on the vocabulary test; similarly, students who scored relatively better on the reading also did relatively better on the vocabulary test. This result confirms other research findings on this aspect of enquiry.

The next set of results reports on the third strand of the study, namely whether there is a relationship between the students' academic performance and their reading ability.

### 4.3 Academic Performance and Reading Ability

The third strand of the study examines the relationship between the participants' academic performance and reading ability. The data gathered for this enquiry was taken from representative courses/subjects in the academic performance record of the participants and the reading test they did as part of the research. Their continuous assessment features tests and assignments which make up 50% of the final grade. The final examination makes up the other 50% in each subject. Therefore, the marks presented for each subject include the examination scores. Students need to obtain 50% in order to pass each subject.

As explained in Chapter 3, for the purposes of this research, the researcher chose representative subjects in the PTD 1 participants' curriculum from which to derive a mean score to represent Academic Performance (AP) namely: Academic Communication Skills (ACS), Social Studies, Mathematics, Science and Agriculture. These represent Languages, Social Studies, the Sciences and Applied Sciences, respectively. For PTD 3, the academic performance final grade was made up of 50% of the assignments and tests in the individual specialisation subjects and two core subjects: ACS and Education, and 50% of the final examination score.

*Table 4.14: PTD 1 and 3's Academic Performance and Reading Ability*

	PTD 1 (N= 45) Reading Test	PTD 1 AP (N=45)	PTD 3 (N=39) Reading Test	PTD 3 AP (N=39)	OVERALL AP (N=84)	OVERALL AP QUARTILES
<b>Mean</b>	54.7%	61.1%	50.9%	56.7%	59.1%	1 <sup>ST</sup> = 55.3%
<b>Range</b>	20 – 80%	50 – 70%	20-96%	45 – 68%	45-70%	2 <sup>ND</sup> = 60.0%
<b>STD</b>	14.06	4.61	13.00	5.05	5.20	3 <sup>RD</sup> = 63.0%

Table 4.14 reflects the mean score and standard deviation in the academic performance (AP) of the two classes, as well as the overall means. As can be seen, the standard deviation of the reading test shows a wider dispersion of scores in comparison to the closer clustering of the AP scores around the mean.

It is worth mentioning that of the 45 PTD 1 participants, only 26 (58%) passed. The passes were in the 56 – 70% aggregate range. One participant had to supplement five courses; three had to supplement two subjects; eleven had to supplement one course. Two students had to repeat the level. The course that was failed by most participants was Academic Communication Skills, which involves among other skills, report and composition writing, reading comprehension, summary writing, grammar and literature. Other courses that were failed were Science, Mathematics, Home Economics, siSwati and English. In the B stream which had served as the pilot group in December 2006, there were only 22 passes in a class of 46, with 20 supplementing some courses and 4 repeating the level.

In the third year class, 12 of the 39 participants had to supplement some courses. Two had to repeat the level. The passes were in the 58 – 68% range. There were no distinction passes in the class (70% and above). Note that an aggregate above 50% does not necessarily mean the student passes – it is the score in each course that determines whether one gets a pass/supplement/repeat outcome. A student can get an aggregate of 64% and still supplement or repeat if s/he fails one subject with a score below 50%. And so, it is not the aggregate per se that determines one's passing but individual subjects.

In order to explore the relationship between academic performance and reading ability, Hypothesis **H8** was formulated thus: *There is a significant relationship between the students' academic performance and their L2 reading ability.* The null hypothesis was rejected as a Pearson's Product-Moment correlation coefficient indicates some relationship, even though a low one, at  $r = 0.294$ ,  $p = 0.007$ . The correlation indicates

a modest yet significant relationship between the subjects' academic performance and reading ability.

*Table 4.15 First and Third Year Reading and Vocabulary Statistics*

<b>PTD 1 (N= 45)</b>	<b>AT RISK (N= 17)</b>	<b>PASS (N=28)</b>
<b>Reading Comprehension Test Performance</b>		
Mean	44.5%	60.9%
Mode	52	64, 72
Standard Deviation	11.39	11.84
Range	20 – 64	36 – 80
<b>Vocabulary Test Performance</b>		
Mean	46.4%	54.3%
Mode	41,49	57
Standard Deviation	10.97	7.63
Range	22 – 60%	34 – 66%
<b>PTD 3 (N= 39)</b>	<b>AT RISK (N= 15)</b>	<b>PASS (N=24)</b>
<b>Reading Comprehension Test Performance</b>		
Mean	46.4%	53.8%
Mode	44	48
Standard Deviation	10.45	13.81
Range	20 – 60%	40 – 96%
<b>Vocabulary Test Performance</b>		
Mean	47.5%	52.6%
Mode	56	56
Standard Deviation	7.89	11.27
Range	34 – 61%	34 – 77%

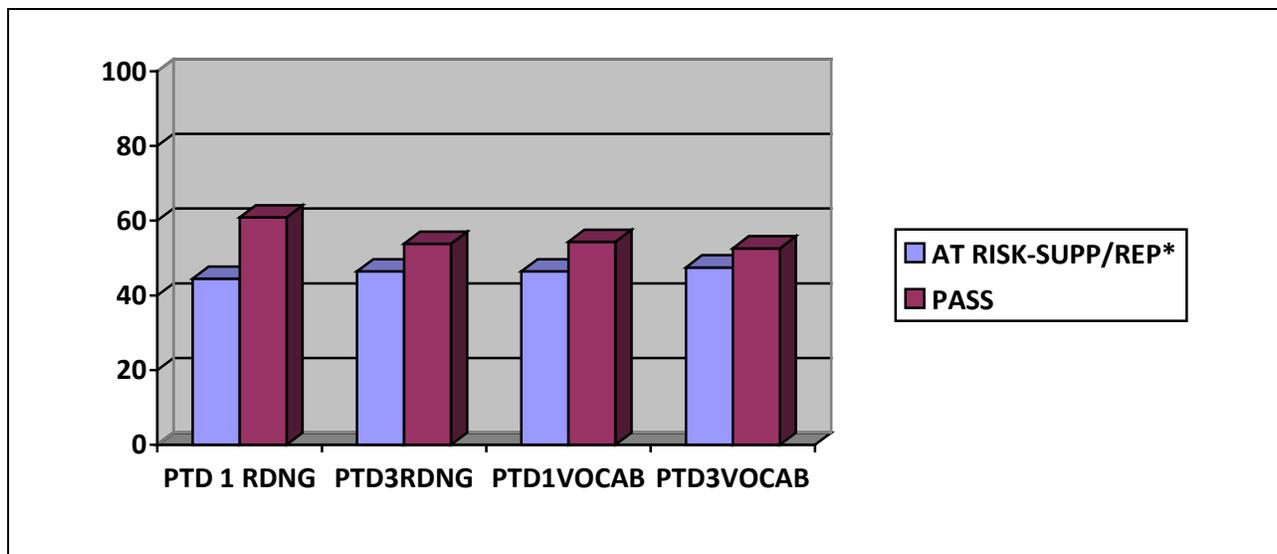
In order to examine the relationship between reading vocabulary and academic performance more closely, I categorised the participants according to their overall academic performance: those who failed completely and had to repeat a course or more, attaining a mark of 30% in a subject or more, and those who wrote a supplementary examination, attaining 40% – 49% in a subject or more, were placed in the “At Risk” category. The students who passed *all subjects* in the programme with 50% and more fall in the “Pass” category. With this categorization, a clearer pattern emerges, as can be seen in Table 4.15. The “At Risk” subjects' reading and vocabulary

means for PTD 1 and 3 are lower than the reading and vocabulary means of their “Pass” peers. It is also interesting to note that in the “Pass” group the first-year reading average at 60.9% is higher than the third-year reading average of 53.8%.

However, it appears that there are some significant differences between the PTD 1 “At Risk” and “Pass” groups, in both the L2 reading test and vocabulary test ( $t=-4.564$ ,  $df=43$ ,  $p=0.000$  and  $t=-2.873$ ,  $df=37$ ,  $p=0.006$ , respectively). The PTD 3 class appears to be a homogenous group; both the “At Risk” and “Pass” categories do not show significant differences in the reading and vocabulary tests ( $t = -1.786$ ,  $df=37$ ,  $p = 0.082$  and  $t = -1.548$ ,  $df = 37$ ,  $p = 0.130$ , respectively).

Figure 4.2 reflects a ‘levelling of the ground’ effect between the “At Risk” students across the two age cohorts. In other words, the academic vulnerability of these students is mirrored in their low reading and vocabulary performance. In contrast, the graph shows the “Pass” group across the two age cohorts performing at a slightly higher level, giving them an academic edge over their weaker peers.

*Figure 4.2 Reading and Vocabulary Performance*



\* SUPP/REP – represents SUPPLEMENTING and REPEATING students.

### ***4.3.1 Discussion of Academic Performance and Reading Ability***

Reading ability does not necessarily mean that every student will achieve success in academic performance, but being unable to read well usually means that a student will not achieve academic success. It seems that good reading ability tends to work positively for those who are good readers. Academic performance has been shown by research to be linked to reading ability. In the current study this link was confirmed: the reading ability of the participants was related to their academic performance.

It is apparent that the participants, as a sample, seem to just get by in their academic work. One could argue that their mediocre academic performance is attributable to their socio-economic status, educational background and a host of other factors. These may be relevant factors, a discussion of which would be beyond the scope of this study. Still, as Corson (1997) rightly observes and states, academic performance hinges greatly on reading skills. The student who intends to be a scholar cannot shun books and hope to rely only on a lecturer's simplified explanation of textbook information. The student has to read and comprehend the textbook. However, students who have not been steeped in "book language" cannot hope to understand the language of books (Lipson and Wixson, 1991). The academic scores have means that are below 60% in a class. Clearly, the reading ability seems to match, to a certain extent, the academic achievement of the participants.

To conclude this subsection, the reading comprehension, vocabulary test and academic performance findings have given a rather distressing picture of the reading, vocabulary and academic ability of the participants.

## **4.4 Trends and Patterns in the Findings**

Contrary to expectations, this study did not find a significant relationship between the participants' attitudes to extensive reading and their reading ability. Although the questionnaire scores indicated that the subjects' attitudes to leisure reading were

generally positive and they seemed to have positive reading habits, their performance in the reading and vocabulary tests painted another picture. When they had to demonstrate reading ability to match their attitudes and habits, they fell short of expectations. There are several factors that could account for this discrepancy in outcomes. Firstly, there seemed to be a clear tendency by the respondents to give socially desirable responses, thereby creating a halo effect, namely an artificially high positive attitude to reading than was the case in reality. The tendency to respond in a socially desirable way may have been prompted by the fact that the students needed to put their names on the questionnaire. Secondly, although attempts were made, after the pilot study, to modify and extend the questionnaire items in order to reduce possible halo effects, the questionnaire may not have been nuanced or detailed enough to capture the reality of the students' attitudes towards and perceptions of extensive reading. A third reason for the discrepancy in outcomes could be the generally low reading abilities of the participants. It could be that when a fairly 'flat' profile obtains in a cohort of students (i.e. there are very few skilled readers and the majority of students are reading at frustration level, below their maturational level) then the expected relationships between reading attitudes and ability do not emerge.

Nevertheless, rigour in the design of questionnaires and the triangulation of data (Denzin, 1970, in Mathewson, 2004: 1453) are very important, as this study has shown. For future studies that seek to examine affective responses to a research issue through the use of questionnaires, it may be necessary to anticipate socially desirable responses that may distort the research outcomes and to counter their effect by piloting the instrument on a larger scale and giving it more testing time. Research studies must also not rely on questionnaire data alone. The test instruments tended to give a more realistic and objective picture of the research foci than the questionnaire responses. Without the tests (viz. the reading test, vocabulary test, the ART and MRT) one would have had to rely on the questionnaire data; but through the tests it was possible to uncover a very different and more complex picture regarding the participants' attitudes, access to leisure resources, and leisure reading habits in relation to reading ability.

It appears that some Swazi students like reading, in the sense of the essential reading in everyday life, as in reading for information and academic purposes, but they are neither skilled readers nor are they leisure readers. I have noticed that when people in Swaziland read newspapers, it may be for the specific purpose of acquiring quick information about national/international events like crime, business and sporting activities. Generally most people seem to scan the paper. They hardly read through a story, let alone the long commentaries and editorials on political and social issues. A similar pattern seems to be reflected in the students' reading profiles in this study: limited access to print material, a fleeting acquaintance with books and magazines, superficial perusal of texts and poor reading skills.

The core of the study emanated from the need to explore the college students' perceptions of and attitudes towards extensive reading. By way of rationalising the reading attitudes – reading ability concern, one has to point out that the participants' socio-economic status, educational background and lack of access and exposure to print materials seem to be very serious challenges that have the potential of perpetuating a culture of not reading for leisure purposes in schools. As the new PTD-holders join the teaching profession, they may be uninformed about the joys and benefits of extensive reading and lacking in the practice of positive reading behaviour. As such, they cannot be mentors and role models of leisure reading at the most crucial stage in the development of children's reading behaviour.

Clearly, a love of reading should ideally be cultivated early in a child's educational life. It is true that the love of books can be developed later, even at college level, but in such cases there has to be a willingness on the students' part to begin the process. In the current state of affairs, one would expect that the students would take full advantage of the free resources offered by the national library, within reach of every student, but without a love of reading developed over time from primary school or the recognition of the importance of reading in the academic context, this is not feasible. In addition,

without an *intention to read* or continue reading, a positive attitude alone will not be effective.

Regarding access to pleasure reading resources, the performance of the students appeared to be uniform. The results suggest that the participants' access to extensive reading materials has a similar pattern, namely that they do not have much, if any, access to leisure reading. However, there were some gaps in data collection process. For example, the questionnaire items were not designed to find out what library membership meant for the participants. For some, it could have meant just using the space in the library for studying. Clearly, the detail needed to elicit whether membership meant using the library or taking out leisure texts was not included in the questionnaire items. In the questionnaire, perhaps one should also have enquired just how many leisure reading books they take out in a month and then found a way of corroborating their responses (e.g. by checking the library loan records).

There was no correlation between the access to leisure reading resources and exposure to print, perhaps on account of the very low scores in the ART and MRT. This incongruity between these aspects suggests that the students are not readers as their responses in the questionnaire led one to believe, and that their local library membership, if they did have it, was mainly for project research rather than for leisure reading. The results reveal that the participants could not recognise the given authors, despite the fact that they are popular authors of novels in the local national library and college library. The students' responses indicate that although they may like the idea of reading (i.e. reading in theory), they, in fact, hardly ever read.

The ART/MRT test was fair in that the participants were given the names of authors to simply recognize rather than ask them to write the author names from memory. Some of those who appear to have recognised more names than others seem to have actually taken a guess, ticking authors and non-authors indiscriminately. Even though the questionnaire revealed generally low access to leisure resources, the lack of a

significant relationship between exposure to leisure reading print and access to resources could be attributed to the very low scores in the ART and MRT. I expected that there would be a significant relationship between the low means of the access to leisure reading resources and the exposure to print tests. Nevertheless, the study yielded some valuable insights into the students' reading patterns and the implications for the college programme of study and these will be discussed in Chapter 5.

On the issue of the students' leisure *reading attitudes* and *leisure reading habits*, the triangulation of the questionnaire data with the exposure to print and reading comprehension and vocabulary tests assisted in giving one a more balanced view of the students' reading habits and overall exposure to leisure print. Clearly, there are discrepancies between the participants' opinions regarding reading attitudes, leisure reading habits and their actual exposure to print. The students' responses indicated very positive attitudes and habits to match, whereas when it came to a test of these claims, the students' actual extent of exposure to leisure print fell far short of expectations. Perhaps, the desire to please and to look good in the researcher's eyes was stronger than the need to be critically self-reflective. It could be that the students had a good idea of what a good reader should be and they answered accordingly, instead of providing a realistic assessment of their own reading situation.

Furthermore, the subjects' performance in the *reading and vocabulary tests* shows a level of reading and vocabulary skills which is below what one would expect of tertiary level students, soon-to-be-teachers who are tasked with the literacy development of young learners. Their best performance seems to be confined to the 2 000 high frequency word level with an overall mean score of 83.1%. Sadly, their performance in the 3 000 word level shows that most subjects are struggling. They have only reached mastery in the 2 000 word level, but not in the 3 000 word level. It is rather daunting that the majority of participants appear not to have attained mastery of the basic high frequency words (the 2 000-3 000 word levels), despite 12 years of schooling in English as a LoLT.

The statistical significance of the relationship between reading and vocabulary skills was established, even if it is a moderate one. In other words, the participants who performed poorly in reading comprehension tended to perform rather poorly in the vocabulary test too. Similarly, students who performed better in the reading test also tended to know more words. Consequently, it can be expected that the student whose vocabulary skills are limited will tend to have a limited ability to comprehend or produce a text that is characterised by technical lexical items or advanced vocabulary, thus suggesting that increased leisure reading may mean more exposure to words and an increase in the acquisition of vocabulary. More depressing is the realisation that their lack of high frequency words suggests that even fairly straightforward texts of a non-technical nature may be challenging for them to read. Students' vocabulary repertoire could increase if they engage in reading both academic and leisure texts to acquire "book language" (Feitelson, et al, 1993; Elley, 1991). Research seems to suggest that greater exposure to text through constant reading could lead to better chances of vocabulary gain.

Another interesting but rather distressing outcome of this study was the return of a null hypothesis (**H0**) in the comparison of first and third level participants' reading ability and vocabulary skills (**H7**). The results suggest that the third year students' vocabulary and reading skills have not developed much in the three years. It is likely that after their college years, their vocabulary and reading abilities may deteriorate. Firstly, one would have expected a significantly better performance from the third year class, by virtue of their having been in the college longer than the freshmen in first year. Secondly, one would assume that the demands of the scholarly requirements would have made the third year students engage in more extensive reading to improve their otherwise mediocre performance. Thirdly, following Hattie's (1999) benchmarks used in judging effect sizes, i.e. the "family of indices that measure the magnitude of a treatment effect", the PTD 3 students should have made a better showing than the PTD 1 students in the reading and vocabulary tests simply on the basis of, at least, maturational factors alone (Hattie, 1999).

Hattie's first benchmark, the maturational factor, stipulates that there should be an annual educational/academic improvement on the basis of a student's natural growth or development even without the benefit of having a teacher in the classroom. The effect size for this factor alone should mean that scores increase by about 10%. In addition to that, Hattie's second benchmark (attendance of classes each year, regardless of quality of lecturer instruction), should have made the PTD 3 still be at a greater advantage of having had lecturers in three years of study in the College, irrespective of the quality of the teaching. Hattie's benchmark places this factor at 0.25 which should have added an increase in PTD 3 achievement over the PTD 1 students. But none of these factors seems to have made a difference to the PTD 3 class. There is the possibility that the PTD 3 class was an outlier (i.e. they may have been a particularly weak class), or the PTD 1 class was a relatively stronger class. Even so, it is clear that members of staff at the College need to reflect on this outcome and discuss possible reasons for this and put measures in place to counteract this backsliding in student performance.

On reading in the first language, one of the questionnaire items in the data gathered from the participants in this study sought data regarding reading patterns in the L1. However, most of the students admitted to disliking reading in siSwati, and to not being avid readers in siSwati. Their slightly better performance in the L1 reading comprehension compared to the English reading test suggests that their knowledge of siSwati gives them an edge when reading in siSwati. However, I also feel that the reason for their advantage in the L1 test could be that the test was too easy (i.e. less challenging than the L2 test), and therefore it did not effectively discriminate between good and poor reading ability. But then, if it was too easy, their performance should have been higher. Apparently, from this study, good readers in the L1 are not necessarily good readers in the L2 and vice-versa. Clearly, more research is needed in this domain.

The *siSwati reading performance* may also suggest that the participants have reading ability that can be brought to bear on L2 reading ability, if they would realise the potential skills that the L1 reading ability bestows on them. Cummins (1979) poses the interdependence hypothesis, which asserts that reading ability in the first language transfers to the additional language (Yamashita, 2002: 81). However, Verhoeven (1994: 387-388) argues that Cummins' hypothesis does not accommodate social factors, such as "language exposure and motivation" that may have more of a bearing on second language proficiency than the L1. As Yamashita observes, following this latter hypothesis, one would expect that the participants who appear to be performing at a better level in L1 reading should do well in AL reading (2002: 81). However, Verhoeven posits that the transfer may be more on literacy skills like word decoding and comprehension skills, rather than on linguistic skills such as "lexical and morphosyntactic" acquisition skills, and that this transfer may be at the "metalinguistic level of awareness" (1994: 409).

In spite of this observation, it is still interesting that the reading mean in the siSwati test falls below general expectations. The participants seemed to be, by and large, reading below the "instructional level" even in their mother tongue (Lesiak & Bradley-Johnson, 1983). On the whole, their reading performance in siSwati was far from satisfactory.

Last but not least, this study has shown that there is a link between academic performance and reading ability. The link suggests that the students who tend to do well in their academic work also tend to have relatively stronger reading skills than their academically weaker peers. However, the non-reader generally seems to have a difficult time trying to make it through the PTD. It has become a trend in the College that some students take six years to complete a three-year diploma, and even then, they just narrowly scrape through with scores averaging 50% in almost all the subjects. Such low academic scores signal disaster for one intending to follow a teaching career.

## 4.5 Conclusion

The current research study sought answers to three exploratory questions relating to PTD students' reading attitudes, access and habits as future teachers of English to primary school children. These were dealt with and the results were presented. Thereafter, the researcher reported on the results of testing several hypotheses, which basically explored relationships between the PTD participants' attitudes towards extensive reading, their access to leisure reading resources, their leisure reading habits on the one hand, and their vocabulary knowledge, reading ability and academic performance, on the other.

The researcher gathered pertinent insights from the questionnaire responses and tests. The results of this enquiry suggest that there is no significant relationship between participants' attitudes to extensive reading and their reading ability. The indication is that the participants' attitudes to leisure reading in this investigation are positive; yet, their reading ability is not as developed as one would expect. In reality, most of them are reading at the frustrational level. The results further show the relevance and usefulness of data triangulation in research as it assisted in giving a more impartial and detailed analysis of the population being studied than a study based on questionnaire data alone could have done. Also, the study has underscored a grave challenge for Swazi learners and their teachers/lecturers: even students at college level have very little access to print-based leisure material.

The final Chapter summarises the study and its main findings and then discusses the contribution that this study has made to AL reading research, the limitations of the study and recommendations that the researcher proposes after the enquiry. Finally, the report proposes areas of further research in the local context (Swaziland).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This final chapter in the study first briefly summarises the study and its main findings and then discusses the contributions of the current investigation to additional language (AL) learning and teaching in the local context. Thereafter, I identify the limitations of the study in terms of challenges and generalisations. The chapter then makes suggestions regarding practical implications for the training of teachers in Swaziland and the general AL learning context in developing countries. The final focus regards suggestions for further research.

#### 5.1 Summary of the Study and its Main Findings

The current research study was set up for the purpose of exploring if there were significant relationships between Swazi students' reading attitudes, access to leisure reading resources, exposure to leisure print, leisure reading habits, reading ability, reading ability vocabulary skills, and academic performance. The study relied largely on quantitative data in the form of a fairly comprehensive 41-item questionnaire as well as a battery of assessment instruments, namely: the ART and MRT to measure exposure to print, L1 and L2 reading tests, an L2 vocabulary test and data pertaining to the students' academic performance. This task was carried out in three phases: the pilot study, the modification and addition of research instruments, and the main study. Three exploratory research questions were investigated and eight hypotheses were tested in the study.

The questionnaire presented some challenges in the analysis of the results. One major challenge was that some of the subjects' responses showed halo effects, a

conclusion based on the contradictory responses they gave. For example, on being asked when they had last read a book in Question 13, the participants' responses mainly fell on the responses: "A week ago" and "A month ago". Surprisingly though, most of them could not remember the author and title of the book they had read *so recently*. This kind of vacuous response is uncommon amongst avid readers, who are usually well acquainted with book titles and author names. Some of those who responded with "Yesterday" to this question wrote college textbook titles in question 14; in other words, the books they had read were their college textbooks. Apparently, they had overlooked the leisure reading aspect of the question. Perhaps, in this case, the questionnaire item was not as explicitly phrased as it should have been, despite the piloting of the instrument. Most subjects (83%) left a blank or wrote non-existent titles in response to that question. In this way, it appears that some of the questionnaire items failed to counter socially desirable responses that the participants were prone to offer.

Furthermore, if the response to question 5 indicated that the participant had very few books, and the response to question 40 indicated that the participant would not go out of his/her way to buy a novel, and was not a member of a library, the response to question 6 (Do you enjoy reading?): "Quite a lot" and "Very much" was viewed as a halo effect response (Appendix D). Still, these kinds of discrepancies serve as a reminder of the importance of designing questions in such a way that the same idea is phrased in two or three different ways; this was useful as a strategy to expose contradictions in the students' responses. While it is true that leisure resources are inaccessible in the learning centres – schools and colleges – it could be argued that an avid reader would go out of his/her way to find leisure resources, even in situations where these are scarce. The national library adequately serves this purpose.

Moreover, some responses in the questionnaire did not appear to be well-thought out before the participants ticked their choices in the questionnaire, and so there

were inconsistencies. For instance, respondents would tick *novels* in Question 8 whereas they had not ticked *books* in Question 7; instead of *books*, respondents would tick *newspapers, magazines, religious tracts* and/or *comics*.

However, the triangulation of the study's data gave a fuller and more sober picture to the researcher. The questionnaire data depicted a rather glowing picture of the students' reading attitudes and habits, with the mean scores ranging in the 70s. If one took these indices at face value, one could readily assume that the students were seasoned and skilled readers who were familiar with the world of books and magazines. However, the picture painted by other research instruments (i.e. the exposure to print ART and MRT, reading and vocabulary tests) was a very different one altogether, exposing a different side of the participants' situation regarding their reading attitudes, habits, access, exposure to leisure print, reading and vocabulary ability. To a great extent, this outcome seemed to corroborate Mathewson's (2004) insight that a positive attitude per se is not adequate to produce actual reading behaviour; one has to have the *intention to read/continue reading*. It appears that the students had positive attitudes, but needed the intention to act on the attitudes so that reading behaviour could be realised.

Of poignant significance in the findings was the homogeneity shown by the results in the comparison of first and third year students' reading and vocabulary performance. This was not expected, given that the third-year students had had more years of study and experienced more scholarly demands in their college work, a fact which should have worked in their favour in terms of improving reading ability and vocabulary skills. However, it seems that such expectations were unrealistic. It is noteworthy that in terms of age, all the participants ranged mainly in the 18 – 30 years age bracket, despite being at different academic levels. Simply being slightly older, having spent more years in a tertiary classroom, regardless of the instruction competence of the lecturers, should have set the PTD 3 students at a greater advantage than the PTD 1 participants (Hattie, 1999).

Another finding that was further distressing to the researcher was that the participants had not reached mastery of the basic high frequency words (the 2 000 – 3 000 word levels) and they had poor knowledge of common academic words. Stæhr (2008: 145) observes that a student's mastery of a word level should be evidenced by a score in the region of 85% and above, a standard set up by Schmitt, Schmitt and Clapham (2001, in Stæhr 2008). If students are supposed to read with about 95% text coverage, they should at least master the basic high frequency 2 000 – 3 000 word families in English. It is no wonder that these students cannot read most English texts without difficulty, considering their low vocabulary repertoire. And, surprisingly, these subjects were not ESL beginner students but tertiary level students in a country where English is the LoLT from Grade 1. Furthermore, they are teachers in training, soon to take on the serious task of influencing the reading and academic abilities of thousands of Swazi children.

Although the students performed somewhat better on the L1 reading test than in the L2 one, the return of a null hypothesis to Hypothesis H7 investigating whether there was a significant relationship between L1 and L2 reading ability was an unexpected outcome. However, it obviously means that more research needs to be conducted in this area.

Another important finding was that the students' reading ability was significantly related to their academic performance. The significant correlation between academic performance and reading ability was one of the key findings of the study and has grave implications for the College, the Swazi education system and Southern Africa in general. Corson points out that higher education requires academically-specialised word knowledge, unlike the language demands that lower levels of education require (1997: 702). Greater exposure to academic and leisure texts would undoubtedly increase students' reading skills as well as their

specialised vocabulary knowledge, an achievement that would greatly facilitate the reading and comprehension of academic texts.

Although this was a small scale study, this research has made significant theoretical, pedagogical and methodological contributions in the context of Africa's developing countries, of which Swaziland is a part. These contributions are discussed in the next subsection.

## **5.2 Contributions of the Study to the Teaching/Learning Context**

Each of the areas of focus in this research study makes an important contribution to the AL learning classroom in developing countries generally and to the local Swazi context in particular.

Research on reading attitudes has proliferated in first world countries (viz. Canada, USA, England and others). This research has been very informative regarding our understanding of the development of reading attitudes. Some findings indicate that attitudes to reading decline with age (McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth, 1995, Sainsbury & Schagen, 2004). Still others argue that there are several factors that affect reading attitude development (McKenna, 2001) especially among children. Research has further indicated that attitudes tend to remain stable even in the higher grades (Parker & Paradis, 1986). Walberg & Tsai's (1995) large scale research study contributed much by identifying some of the main factors that affect reading attitudes (cf. §2.2.1). Camiciottoli's (2001) enquiry on reading habits and attitudes was conducted with Italian university students. Campbell & Qorro's (1997) study investigated reading attitudes of secondary school learners in Tanzania, a third world country like Swaziland.

From a slightly different angle, the current study was conducted in a developing country, in Southern Africa, in a socio-economic and cultural context that has been

shown to be unfavourable to the development of a reading culture. The study is breaking ground in a new research area in Swaziland: reading attitudes among PTD teacher trainees. In this context, the study sheds light on the poignancy of the situation where the attitudes of teacher trainees appear to be barriers in the development, improvement and sustenance of positive attitudes toward reading; yet these teachers will wield much reading influence on the children they are tasked with teaching as mentors and role-models of reading. I believe this is a significant contribution.

The study has further explored, in the local context, the relationship between reading attitudes and reading ability, among other things. Its findings have added some input to other research findings that have suggested that, while there is a relationship between reading attitudes and reading ability, this relationship is by no means simple and straightforward. That the current study returned a null hypothesis on this relationship is not really surprising. In fact, this finding resonates with Mathewson's (2004) argument that measuring attitudes only is not a relevant enquiry for research as students have to have *the intention to read* or continue reading. It seems that this is the aspect that is vital in backing up positive reading attitudes in our students, so that reading behaviour can be the consequence.

McKenna (2001) warns that culturally-entrenched attitudes are influential to those who value the approval of people who hold such beliefs. The local context has some culturally rooted and motivated beliefs about reading which I believe act as barriers to the development of a reading culture. Beliefs like the idea that reading extensively culminates in mental disturbance were shown in this study to be still harboured by a third of the participant student teachers. Some participants believe reading novels and magazines is too feminine an activity for a man to engage in. These beliefs are aggravated by student teachers' misconceptions or lack of

knowledge about extensive reading and literacy, as Camiciottoli (2001: 136) observes in her own study of Italian tertiary level students.

In this regard, therefore, the current study has enriched research in this country regarding the potential stumbling blocks in our cultural system of beliefs and in our educational system and points to the need to reconstruct such systems for a better academic outlook than presently evident. The human capital that is being trained and developed to take over second language instruction in the local schools generally claim to love reading but their reading beliefs, behaviour and habits hardly corroborate their positive perceptions of and attitudes towards extensive reading. Their reading behaviour and ability seem instead to match indifferent or negative perceptions and attitudes prevalent in Swazi culture. Clearly though, this is a research issue that still needs to be rigorously investigated further in the local context.

The findings from the study serve to remind us of the importance of inculcating positive attitudes and habits in the lives of children before negative attitudes and practices are entrenched in their lives, which is what seems to have happened to the majority of the current study's participants. Research suggests that the affective domain is an aspect not to be neglected in the home, community and in language instruction at school as it has such close links to vital skills, language and academic achievement. College instructors in the Languages departments as well as other academic departments within the college setting need to be aware of such findings.

The study further made significant contributions relating to the literacy levels among PTD teacher trainee students, a cadre who will shortly be joining the professional world as primary school teachers. Their literacy levels are very low, too low for tertiary level. The tertiary students who participated in this study are products of an educational system that has not been up to date with current

research and innovations in AL learning and teaching. The research has shown that the teacher trainees are reading mostly at frustrational level, which means that they have difficulty reading to learn. The few who scored between 60% and 75% seem to be reading at instructional level, with less than a handful reading at the independent level. It appears that with the new Free Primary Education (FPE) commitment by government, effective in January 2010, the country can expect an influx of new learners in schools that are ill-equipped to cope with existing numbers of learners. Considering the fact that financing the project seems to be causing all kinds of problems for a cash-strapped government even before it commences, one can well predict what dire effects this will have on future literacy levels. The education authorities have promised to provide mobile libraries, but this seems impossible in a situation where the government has been coerced to provide FPE, despite financial constraints.

Moreover, research has shown that for learners to develop a culture of reading, the school context has to be inundated with reading material (Elley, 1991; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983); students and teachers need to have easy access to leisure reading resources. Poignantly, the current study provides a sharp focus on learners' lack of access to leisure reading materials in this country. Swazi learners' socio-economic situation is getting worse each year, with ever-rising poverty levels and HIV/AIDS prevalence. In such dire straits, one cannot expect the lack of reading resources to change in more than 80% of Swazi households. It appears that Swazi children will continue to have little or no access to leisure reading material and, consequently, will never be exposed to the benefits of reading extensively, if the status quo remains unchallenged and unchanged. The development of a culture of reading and reading habits among learners in Swaziland gravely hinges on government's provision of reading resources in schools. If parents cannot afford to buy such books, then the logical step is for government to provide reading resources within the schooling context in order to invest in the future of the Swazi child. Swaziland does have finances; the problem

seems to be in prioritising in expenditure. Resources are not channelled where they are needed most. Clearly, at present, a sound educational system is not government's top priority, judging from its failure to plan for and fund it.

The study findings indicate that, generally, student teachers at the teacher training college do not have access to extensive reading materials and this cripples their reading ability. This is a significant finding that the study contributes to the local AL/L2 teaching context. It has exposed the fact that the college needs to rethink its priorities. The provision of a few hundred leisure books (300 titles at least) would help to address the problem of lack of access to these materials.

Another contribution of this study lies in the finding that Swazi students generally do not seem to understand the importance of leisure reading for improving reading ability, language proficiency and academic performance. Even if they do, no effort appears to be exerted in a quest for reading materials. To some students, the general understanding seems to be that reading one or two books a year is enough for leisure reading. There is a need to find innovative ways to get them to love reading so much that they stay hooked on it and retain the *intention to read/continue reading* (Mathewson, 2004). It has to become a way of life. For students to understand book language they need to be immersed in book language (Feitelson, et al, 1993; Elley, 1991; Lipson & Wixson, 1997) otherwise, Matthew effects will set in (Stanovich, 1986).

Much research has sought to investigate the relationship between reading ability and academic achievement (Pretorius, 2002; Pretorius & Bohlmann, 2003; Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007). The present study has contributed to this repertoire of research and adds its voice to the call for Southern Africa's educational stakeholders to stand up and take action on the basis of these findings. The low academic achievement of the college students is a case in point. This could well mean that most of the current population in the teacher training colleges cannot,

on the whole, further their education beyond the diploma. This means they may have reached a ceiling limit in that it seems they are not equipped for further study beyond obtaining the PTD. The situation can be corrected through raising students' reading levels, provided there is concerted commitment from all education stakeholders.

Many studies have investigated the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading ability (Feitelson, et al., 1993; Roberts, 2008; Hui-Tzu Min, 2008). Although the current study was not an intervention programme, it has added its own voice to ongoing research regarding the significant relationship between vocabulary skills and reading ability. The study has corroborated other research, but in a new context, the Swazi context by establishing that there is a significant relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading ability. Notably, there was a moderate yet significant correlation between reading ability and vocabulary skills. The research context is new, though it shares the same conditions that other developing countries in Africa generally experience. This is a very important contribution of the current study, in the sense that it is expected to open up the Swazi field to research along these lines, sparking new insights among all relevant stakeholders in the educational arena.

The study suggests that vocabulary knowledge at the college seems to be far below expected levels and size among the students. If College students have only mastered the basic 2 000 word level and have not reached mastery in the 3 000 word level consisting of high frequency words, then we, as language practitioners, have much to worry about. Deliberate vocabulary instruction and the development of a culture of reading seem to be vital if this picture is to change in the near future. It seems that the AL teaching classroom, especially at college level, could benefit from this finding. Vocabulary knowledge has been shown in this study to be intertwined with reading ability in the local context. This concept is no longer

simply a hypothesis that is posed by other researchers removed from the local context, but is now a local research finding.

The enquiry further raises awareness regarding reading ability in the L1 in Swaziland. Research in L1 reading seems to confirm that an improved reading ability in the L1 enhances both L2 reading ability and academic performance (Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007). The current study has established that there may be some neglect of the first language (siSwati). The common local perspective is that the L1 is only good enough for verbal communication, a view that has made the L1 lose its status of importance, especially in the written mode. The result is that most young Swazi people will not read in siSwati for leisure purposes; they only read a prescribed school textbook. Attitudes towards siSwati reading are not as positive as one would expect. Yet, reading ability in the first language is vital and has to be developed too.

### **5.3 Limitations of the Study**

As is the case with all research studies the current study, undoubtedly, has its limitations. A major limitation for this study was time. The College calendar of events is always filled with activities that the students have to participate in, not to mention the fourteen subjects that they have to study in the academic year. It took much manoeuvring with lecturers of other subjects to find suitable test times, especially for the PTD 1 group which was not taught by the researcher. Lack of time further meant that the other research instruments could not be piloted, especially the ART, MRT and the vocabulary tests in 2006, before the main study commenced between January and May 2007. With the PTD 3 class, the researcher had to use her own class times. Thus, the time limitation meant that the third year group could not take the L1 test after their six-week teaching practice.

Secondly, despite the piloting of the questionnaire and modifying it, there still seemed to be a high incidence of socially desirable responses. However, this is an inherent problem with questionnaire data in general. To obtain a fairly balanced view of the students' reading attitudes, it was imperative that other test data be included; hence, the inclusion of the ART, MRT, vocabulary and reading ability tests. The study's requirement of identity disclosure by participants may also have raised the occurrence of halo effects. The participants may have felt compelled to give socially desirable responses, thinking that the outcomes of the questionnaire responses would affect their internal assessment in one way or another, despite assurances to the contrary by the researcher, or that they simply wanted to look good in the eyes of the researcher.

In addition, the limitations also relate to the potential unreliability of questionnaire data. Questionnaires are limited in the sense that, unlike in an interview, one cannot ask a follow-up question if an inadequate answer is given by the respondent. Consequently, the responses that are given may not provide the necessary data if the researcher did not anticipate beforehand that the question might not elicit a proper response. In addition, a respondent may inadvertently or deliberately give a misleading response in the questionnaire and the researcher would be none the wiser. The researcher's conclusions depend on the respondents' written opinions and feelings, whether sincere or not.

Another limitation in this study was the lack of equivalence between the two reading tests in the L1 and L2, making it difficult to make fair comparisons in the reading abilities of the students. There were no other tests standardised for tertiary level in the siSwati (African Languages) Department that could have been used. The L1 reading test had a higher number of literal questions than the L2 reading test. As an avid reader of both siSwati and English literature, my own impression was that the level of the test seemed to be unsuitable for tertiary students. Even though the students performed better in the siSwati test, one

cannot claim that they did well, for their reading levels in this home language bordered on frustration level reading.

The findings of the current study are limited to the teacher training institution where it was conducted; they are only generalisable to the population that was investigated. Tentatively, the results could be extended to a sister college which offers the same course, entry requirements and curriculum as the present college. Also, the study findings relate particularly to students studying for the Primary Teacher's Diploma (PTD). The findings of the study can be generalisable to the college population as the sample was taken from two groups that actually formed a third of the college enrolment at the time. They may extend to student teachers studying for the Secondary Teacher's Diploma or to student teachers at university, in Swaziland or in the SADC region where similar socio-cultural conditions prevail. The results of the study may not be directly generalised to ESL learning and teaching in the primary and secondary schools, although they might be indirectly linked to these language learning contexts. Finally, the findings are not generalisable to an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, but are confined to the local ESL context.

#### **5.4 Practical Implications for AL Teaching and Learning in Swaziland**

As a result of this fairly comprehensive investigation of relationships between reading attitudes, reading ability and academic performance, it seems that there are very practical implications and recommendations for research, teacher education and ESL learning and teaching in Swaziland and Southern Africa, where similar conditions obtain. The next subsections identify and briefly discuss these implications.

#### ***5.4.1 Research Implications***

The current study has some implications for research. One of these implications is that this study has underscored the importance and relevance of triangulating data, especially when a researcher deals with questionnaire data (Denzin, 1970, in Mathewson, 2004). This point cannot be over-emphasised.

Another important implication for research is that this study has raised some issues that have yielded inconclusive results, such as the relationship between L1 and L2 reading abilities. Further research on such issues is needed in the local setting so that we can better understand the nature and extent of possible transfer of reading skills across the languages. In addition, the lack of suitable and readily available standardised test instruments in siSwati points to the need to design and test instruments with which to measure literacy development more accurately in siSwati.

#### ***5.4.2. Teacher Education Implications***

The current research study has indicated that the population that was investigated can be described as mostly “high-risk” students whose academic experience seems to get by on mediocre scholarly reading abilities, as observed by Radebaugh and Kazemek (1989: 414) in their discussion of the necessity for college/university reading/study skills course. Although the students generally had positive attitudes to reading, their reading levels were low. In short, they seemed to lack what Mathewson calls the *intention to read* (cf. Figure 2.2 in § 2.2). According to Mathewson’s model, this intention is acted upon by other vital components in the model which are external motivators and internal states. This seems to be a viable option for the College to adopt.

The current study’s theoretical framework firmly holds to the vitality and dynamism of extensive reading for developing sound reading ability, vocabulary growth, language proficiency and academic achievement (Elley, 1991; Mason & Krashen,

1997; Gee, 1999; Pretorius 2002; Pretorius & Bohlmann, 2003). Extensive reading acts as an external motivator on students' intention to read and it also nourishes students' internal states that help to engage in reading.

- In light of these studies and the current study, it is imperative that, as language learning and teaching practitioners, we make that clarion call alongside Bakka: **"Back to books!"** instead of putting up with "mechanistic literacy" which is superficial literacy that is aimed at simply attaining jobs (2000: 83). In this direction, we need to raise awareness about research in general as well as the current study's findings and their implications, within the College community, and involve the other two sister colleges also offering the PTD in setting clear literacy purposes and introducing new literacy norms in the colleges.
  
- McKenna points out that "if we are to be successful in changing children's attitudes toward reading, **we must target the factors that affect those attitudes**" (2001: 139); one such factor that must be targeted is the child's belief about the outcomes of reading such as feeling self-confident and stimulated to continue reading. If students can be made to appreciate the value of reading extensively, then they will be self-driven to engage in more reading. Mathewson suggests that there is a need for the teacher/lecturer to get to know the students' motivations, "values, goals and self-concepts" in relation to reading, through personal discussions, interviews, their writing, their choices of books and through close observation (2004: 1455). He further advises that internal emotional states are positively influenced by feedback in the form of "ideas and feelings" received from the act of reading (ibid: 1448-9).
  
- An obvious implication arising from this observation is that the PTD students need **to get hooked on leisure reading** so that they can become real

readers and in turn influence the younger generation to acquire a culture of reading. Leisure reading must become a norm amongst teacher trainees.

- Thus, the domain on which lecturers and society need to work to get students to read is that of external motivators in the form of **incentives, purposes, norms, settings**; these are vital as they play a major role in strengthening students' resolve to read or continue reading (Mathewson, 2004: 1436-7).
- New purposes and norms need to be put in place. The **PTD needs to be reviewed and restructured to promote reading ability**. The restructuring has to be particularly incorporated into the Academic Communication Skills (ACS), siSwati and English courses. The ACS course, as it stands, involves students in the practicality of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in English. The ACS course which features throughout the three-year curriculum should have reading as an integral part of teacher training for academic and literacy preparedness in general. This course does not prepare the students adequately for reading and academic competences. An attempt has been made in this direction to get the students to engage in reading activities in the ACS course. Furthermore, a reading period has been incorporated into the weekly class schedule during which an ACS lecturer brings her own book to read silently with the students or reads short stories to them with some discussion and attention to vocabulary thereafter.
- Another practical implication of the study is that the PTD curriculum in the English and ACS departments should be **strengthened with an extensive reading intervention programme** that can effectively engage the students in a regular reading schedule, preferably a fixed reading period or two in the weekly schedule during which students can do

some guided individual silent reading (Bakka, 2000: 86). A collection of books, particularly books for children and adolescents, from local book publishers like Macmillan can get this programme off the ground. Our student teachers should be introduced to the genre of children's and adolescent literature via a structured reading programme. In this way they can be immersed in reading children's storybooks which they can relate to and derive pleasure from, and perhaps through such books they will begin to enjoy reading. Furthermore, for the students whose vocabulary is limited, children's literature offers a good introduction to reading as they can read and make sense of these texts. These books could also be used as a basis for getting students to think and talk about how to teach aspects of language through stories, or how to use stories to teach and practice reading or writing skills.

- Reading also needs to be assessed and be integrated into the PTD course and not be treated as an add-on or stand-alone component. My experience at the College has taught me that if a component is not assessed, it tends not to be taken seriously by students.
  
- The **siSwati and English courses should also be restructured** to incorporate methodology in reading that will prepare the students for the teaching of reading, particularly at the Foundation Phase. In the current state of affairs, there is some methodology on reading readiness, emergent literacy, reading methods (e.g. phonics, alphabet, whole-word and whole-sentence methods). However, this appears to be a barren presentation of theory on reading, failing to impact on the lecturers and students as a real and practical hands-on methodology. Fortunately, the PTD course will undergo major restructuring in January 2010, bringing in fresh perspectives, research findings and new regulations to be implemented in August 2010.

In the new registration requirements and regulations, some stipulations will be made.

- This means that the PTD programme should have a **set of norms and purposes such as a reading and vocabulary test on admission into the course**. At this point, their reading and vocabulary levels can be identified and subsequently the students can be encouraged to improve on them. Thereafter, yearly assessment should measure this improvement or lack thereof, with the concomitant result that if students do not meet the minimum standards of reading fluency, comprehension and vocabulary knowledge in the final year of assessment, they do not graduate as qualified teachers. These minimum standards can be set by the College itself, with UNISWA's approval. From this study, it appears that the PTD students like the idea of leisure reading, but not the reading itself. Clearly, the PTD requirements and demands so far have made it easy for the students to attain just sufficient grades to qualify as primary school teachers, thereby enabling a culture of non-reading. This needs to change with the inception of new norms and the explicit setting of standards.
- This effectively means that College leadership should be well informed about these findings and implications, and be ready and willing to **finance** these endeavours. Furthermore, College leaders need to take a firm stand regarding decisions on the direction that lecturers and students need to take. In such cases, it helps to have a top-down approach and support in the drive to achieve these goals.
- The College has sent the Language lecturers to a workshop for them to be **exposed to the methodology of teaching reading** in the lower grades. This workshop was facilitated and sponsored by the American Embassy in conjunction with Macmillan Swaziland. The lecturers' exposure to the

teaching of reading was an overwhelming experience because, in their own words, they had never been prepared for this at college/university. These types of workshops should be held regularly.

- On another point of external incentives and settings, in spite of the socio-economic situation in the country, lecturers (and teachers) should ask **each student to buy or bring a book to college/school** and these can form the beginnings of a class library. Spires, Huffman, Honeycutt and Barrow (1995) suggest that an academic institution could start a book club so that the students can develop “their own voice within the academic classroom” (1995:341). The club could be run by the students, even though lecturer involvement would be necessary, initially. Also, lecturers should encourage students to buy a book every time the students receive their allowances. This could help supplement the reading resources in the college library and also inculcate in the students an awareness that books are an important part of a nation’s intellectual capital.
- From the study’s findings, it is clear that the College’s ESL and Education classrooms should **emphasize the importance of the affective domain in language teaching and learning**. The current research and other research studies have suggested that perceptions and attitudes influence extensive reading behaviour (Cho & Krashen, 1994; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Feitelson, et al, 1993). Ingrained attitudes to leisure reading are difficult to uproot later on in the student’s life as they were entrenched in childhood, as the researcher’s insider experience at the college has shown. Lecturers need to find ways to persuade student teachers to read, using “affect-oriented persuasion techniques” (ibid: 1452); to achieve this we need to get to know our students through interviews, conversations, their writings, their choices when they select books and also keen observation of students’ preferences in texts. Students can be encouraged to read

materials that evoke feelings of satisfaction to create positive feedback in the internal emotional states of a student, thus influencing their *intention to continue* reading.

- For practical reasons, **extensive reading in all genres should be made to cut across the curriculum**, involving, ideally, all departments in the institution, not only the English department. To this end, I think collateral (additional) reading on content subjects should be a requirement in every subject/course. This should have a percentage allocated to it that counts towards the final grade and such reading should have a written report at the end of each semester.
- As already alluded to above, student **exposure to a wider range of different genres is vital at the beginning of a reading regimen**, to assist the beginner reader in choosing the kind of books that appeal to him/her (McKenna (2001:141). When the choice is left to the teacher/lecturer, the students might get a genre that does not appeal to them with the result that they might conclude that reading is not interesting.
- On the level of methodology and learning settings, the College ESL classroom can benefit from what Radebaugh and Kazemek (1989) refer to as '**cooperative learning**' for the improvement of reading skills and the development of a love for extensive reading. Cooperative learning is based on the view that "literacy is a social construct, a social process" (1989: 415). Thus, it engages the learners in group work, collaborating in literacy activities such as exploring books together, learning to like books and how to stimulate children's love of reading storybooks; this in turn strengthens relationships within the group so that students are not self-conscious and are able to support each other in reading and group discussions. The

advantage is that cooperative learning encourages an atmosphere of risk-taking and being of assistance to others in the classroom (ibid: 418). However, the AL lecturer/teacher should be wary of students developing over-dependence on other students and entrenching only superficial skills in the students' approach to their reading ability work. Bertram's (2003) research in a Southern African tertiary context warns against the effects of informal study groups; her study suggests that instead of the informal groups assisting in developing student ability to understand, relate and apply what has been read to everyday life experiences, they encourage students' memorisation and use of content just to pass examinations; this results in students generally failing to read, reflect on and apply written information (2003: 223-224).

- Another implication is that lecturers need to assist **students to develop their metacognitive skills**. This study has highlighted the college students' need for the development of metacognitive skills in order to "adapt their limited cognitive resources to the increased demands of ...college" (Peverly, Brobst & Morris, 2002). Metacognition involves knowledge of what the reading process entails, the ability to monitor one's understanding and the kinds of reading strategies one can engage if comprehension is impaired, and the ability to assess one's success rate at the reading task (Lipson & Wixson, 1997: 43). Such knowledge can be increased through explicit strategy instruction. Many of the students were unable to assess their own reading ability and academic performance accurately. The problem of overrating their reading ability in the questionnaire showed that most of the participants' self-knowledge and metacognitive skills is not well developed. It appears that their metacognitive awareness in relation to their comprehension ability and vocabulary knowledge in particular are not well developed. This is a

common characteristic of weak students. Similarly, Mokhtari and Sheorey observed the same problem in their own research (1994: 56-57).

#### ***5.4.3 Implications for AL Instruction in the Country***

While the preceding section dealt with implications for the administrators, lecturers and students in the teacher training college, in this section, our focus extends beyond the College and considers implications for the schools and classrooms to which the newly trained teachers will be deployed.

- In the school situation, the **administration and teachers could require parents** to come together to assist in inculcating positive attitudes to reading by engaging in literacy programmes with their children (Kelly-Vance & Schreck, 2002; Pretorius & Machet, 2004; Machet, 2002). In the homes where parents are illiterate, children can be “adopted” even by neighbours who can read and also desire to make a difference by developing positive attitudes early in a child’s life (Lituanas, et al. 2001: 224). The home literacy environment has been shown to be especially effective for the development of good attitudes to reading (Conlon, et al. 2006) and, in most cases in Southern Africa, it will have to be the school that approaches parents with innovative ideas such as this one. It is time that teachers and parents come together and become proactive regarding the academic success of their learners and children, with schools providing guidance and motivation to parents.
- Another pertinent implication of this study pertains to the teachers of English who are already serving in the schools. It appears that there is a need to undertake some **in-service** ‘damage-control’ measures to raise awareness and perhaps make these teachers aware of the benefits of extensive reading in the ESL classroom (Lituanas, Jacobs & Renandya, 2001; Buchorn-Stoll, 2002). Lituanas et al. suggest “teacher development

workshops and follow-up coaching” and other related measures to assist teachers already in the profession (2001: 224). Tyner (2009) suggests that a model of reading called Differentiated Reading Instruction (DRI) is worth adopting in the in-service training of teachers. This programme seems to have been effective in assisting primary school teachers to engage in some form of intervention in their schools. It involves teacher modification of reading instruction on the basis of learner reading ability. The model divides reading instruction into five stages: the “emergent reader, beginning reader, fledgling reader, transitional reader, and independent reader”, engaging the learners in reading for fluency, vocabulary, decoding and comprehension (2009: 7). Given the uneven and varied levels of literacy development in our primary schools, this model will be able to address the different literacy needs of the learners.

- The programme can be adapted to the Swazi context in order to get **teachers started on strategically planned reading instruction** in the schools. I am aware of the financial implications this activity might entail; however, there is a need for commitment from all education stakeholders, especially the Ministry of Education, to make a difference in this country’s deteriorating reading and academic standards. Paying lip-service to improving the rapidly falling educational standards will only worsen the situation.
- The professional cadre can help, after the in-service training, to educate and train their **communities on how to engage in home-based story-book reading**. Roberts’ (2008) study indicated that it is a viable option. Roberts’ study involved the provision of storybooks to preschool children by the school in a low-socioeconomic context to read with either their parents or caregivers, in both the home language and English. The reading was also done in the classroom with the teachers. The study indicates that this was a

successful exercise which brought gains to the learners in vocabulary knowledge and word recognition.

- A teacher who understands his/her role in the language classroom as that of a **facilitator, mentor and motivator** has to exhibit a motivated positive attitude toward extensive reading (Dornyei, 2004: 26). McKenna advises that early introduction to extensive reading and subsequent success may be just what children need to be confident that they can read and read well (2001: 141). In an experiment with adult university students in South Africa, a lecturer challenged students to read stories aloud to a teddy-bear named Fluffy. This gave the learners valuable self-confidence and immeasurable enjoyment of storybook reading. In addition, teachers should be familiar with children's genre of literature, identify appropriate and interesting books for them and encourage them to read. Teachers' enthusiasm for reading should show. That is what primary school teachers can achieve.
- Noteworthy is the fact that currently the **reading period in the primary school** grades is used for teaching learners how to decode words. Once they have accomplished that task, the work of the teacher is deemed complete, notwithstanding that the learners may have *learned to read* but cannot *read to learn* thereafter, to the detriment of the learner's ability to attain textual meaning (Christy, 1989: 1). The reading period is then used for language and remedial work instead of reading, a practice that seems to be common even in other African countries like Uganda (Izizinga, 2000: 67-68). As many researchers have stated, reading involves more than decoding skills and pronouncing words out aloud; it also involves comprehension skills and these have been shown to interact rapidly and simultaneously (Grabe, 1991:378-9; Pretorius, 2002: 170). This study has shown but a fraction of the extent of the teacher trainees' misinformation or lack of

knowledge on the issue, as their responses showed. Intensive reading instruction (e.g. explicit strategy instruction, vocabulary development) needs to be implemented and complement an extensive reading programme.

- In addition, by implication, the ESL classrooms in this country would benefit from **an injection of leisure reading resources**. It is true that “the quality of an education system depends vitally on access to books” (Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007: 56). Studies have reiterated that novels are a welcome relief to schools where extensive reading is introduced (Roy-Campbell, 1997: 134; Izizinga, 2000; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Elley, 1991). A “book flood” of interesting and age appropriate books for children and adolescents is what is needed at this crucial moment in the country’s education (Elley, 1991: 383). However, the ailing economy of this land and misdirected government spending might not accommodate this requirement to provide extensive readers in the school and college libraries.
  
- In some schools, libraries are characterized by empty shelves and very few books while in others there is an unused box of old Ladybird readers in a corner of the head teacher’s office. In most schools, there is nothing resembling a library and there are no hopes of having one built. **School libraries, fully stocked with up-to-date reading resources**, are a necessity, rather than a luxury in third-world countries (Bakka, 2000: 84) like Swaziland. Partial commitment to raising the downward-spiralling standards in this country can only aggravate the problem, whereas decisive and prompt action is bound to improve the situation.
  
- Finally, there is so much the ESL teacher needs to know and, as the dictum goes, **knowledge is power**. Further research on extensive reading will enlighten practitioners in the local context and empower them for service in

the language teaching area (Smith, 2004: 422). Research cannot only remove lack of knowledge and misconceptions about extensive reading and the reading process that seem to be held locally (Christy, 1989: 1-2) but can also inform practitioners of the “fundamental role that reading plays in the mediation of knowledge and learning” (Pretorius, 2002b: 98). Teachers need to become professional in their teaching posts; they need to increase their professional knowledge base and keep abreast with developments in their field.

### 5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

There is a paucity of research into the relationships between extensive reading, reading attitudes, reading ability, academic performance and L1 and L2 reading abilities in this country and in other developing countries. It seems that research has proliferated on a host of other issues but not reading research. Pretorius laments the same state of affairs in South Africa (2002: 97-98), which, in my opinion, is relatively better than this country. The following paragraphs reflect the areas which, I feel, merit research in Swaziland.

- Further research on the complex relationship between **reading attitudes and reading ability** still needs to be conducted. While the present study did not find a direct relationship, it helped to identify important variables that impact on this relationship.
- Moreover, more research should be done in this country and the SADC region regarding a possible **relationship between first and second language reading**. Although the current study did not find a relationship between these variables, research has suggested that there is a relationship between L1 and L2 reading ability (e.g. Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007). The Nguni languages, with their conjunctive orthography which is known for

fairly dense text with long strings of words or linguistic units, provide ample grounds for future avenues of reading research in agglutinating languages.

- There is need for further research in the area of college students' **reading rate**, not only in the L2 but also in the L1. As an insider, I am aware that, on the whole, the students are slow readers, but there is a need to explore this further and have empirical data on their actual reading rate.
  
- Another area of interest is that of **longitudinal reading research**. For example, it would be interesting to track the effectiveness of the PTD 1 participants who graduated in October 2009, in teaching English, particularly reading in the schools to which they have been assigned. Valuable feedback could be gained by observing the long-term impact on students who took part in the current study.
  
- Further research should focus on **intervention programmes** aimed at investigating what extensive reading can achieve with regard to reading ability, language proficiency and academic performance of college students. For example, one such study could involve a long-term intervention project that would require revamping the present library with leisure reading material (Macalister, 2008). However, the researcher would do well to heed Green's (2005) advice that a programme like this cannot be "a stand-alone' component" in the ESL classroom (p. 308). He advocates a task-based reading scheme as this provides purposeful reading such as seeking information for a project. One example of such an intervention programme is Macalister's (2008) English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programme in which he incorporated a leisure reading component in a pre-university entry course in New Zealand, featuring intensive and extensive reading of different genres, sparing 20 minutes for silent reading at the end of each morning teaching session.

- Research on the **effects of gender** on reading could be enlightening for the language teacher in an ESL context. Does one's gender make a difference to one's inclination to read among the local Swazi population? From personal observation in the current study, it seemed that male participants were the worst in reading attitudes, access to leisure resources, exposure to print-based resources and reading habits. Although this factor was not pursued as it was beyond the scope of the current study, it points the way to future opportunities for research.
  
- The area of **vocabulary size** of the ESL college students is another area of concern. Some studies have investigated the discrepancies regarding L1 student vocabulary size research findings, taking into account what word knowledge entails and the assumptions made on what a word is. In the local Swazi scene, it would be very important to study the vocabulary size of accomplished ESL college/university student and unaccomplished college/university student. Also of interest would be studies of siSwati vocabulary development among students.
  
- Finally, the importance of **data triangulation** in research, a point that has already been stated earlier, cannot be over-emphasized. This study has shown the need to have other data alongside questionnaire data, to corroborate the respondents' personal opinions and feelings regarding the issue being researched. And so for further research, meticulous attention to detail in questionnaires and the triangulation of data gathered seem to be of prime importance.

## 5.6 Conclusion

The essence of this research study was to explore and examine whether relationships existed between reading attitudes, access to leisure reading resources, exposure to print-based materials, reading habits, vocabulary knowledge, L1 and L2 reading, academic performance and reading ability. The study established that there are significant relationships between access to leisure reading resources, vocabulary knowledge, academic performance and reading ability; it returned null hypotheses on the relationship between reading attitudes, exposure to print, L1 and L2 reading, reading habits and reading ability. It further returned a null hypothesis on the difference between the PTD 1 and 3 vocabulary and reading skills.

However, the study also indicated that there are statistically significant relationships between vocabulary skills, academic performance and reading ability. Another important outcome was that there was a significant difference in the reading skill and vocabulary knowledge between "At Risk" and "Pass" students in the PTD cohort. These findings signal the beginning of much work in the areas of attitude, access to reading resources, reading ability, vocabulary instruction and academic performance.

The gist and tenor of the study was its provision of empirical evidence that not all is well regarding reading attitudes, academic performance and reading ability, in this country. Armed with this research evidence, as indicated by the statistical results of this study, Swazi stakeholders in the educational system can embark on a definite course of action and a new direction in the grave business of educating young Swazi people as recommended above. To that end, there is a need to work together to create a culture of reading and a nation of readers.

It is imperative that the common Swazi expression, "There is no hurry in Swaziland!", intended to quell inclination to haste, is abrogated and, instead, swift measures are taken to make a difference in these deteriorating educational standards. In this context, Pretorius' (2002) question, "Are we fiddling while Rome is burning?" is highly relevant. It is now a common belief and an unpleasant joke that Swazi people are always the last to embrace change and innovation.

Bakka (2000) admonishes "those who know how to read and write, but do not do so in their daily lives" to start reading, referring to them as "functional illiterates". He advises that the so-called educated elite [in Africa] should be models of reading, pointing out that, "... if we, who claim to be well educated, do not read ourselves", whatever advice we give to our young learners will be unproductive (2000:87). Bakka's final parting shot (and by extension, the current researcher's) is: "The fight against illiteracy cannot succeed, then, without a collateral fight against functional illiteracy. We have to struggle together to make reading and writing part of our general culture and individual behaviour" (2000: 83-84).

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# **APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A: PRINCIPAL'S LETTER OF PERMISSION TO RESEARCHER**

01 December, 2006

The Academic Registrar  
Post-Graduate Studies  
University of South Africa

Dear Sir/Madam

**PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH STUDY AT NTTC MANZINI – SWAZILAND**

Permission is hereby granted to Beatrice Betty S. Lukhele, a lecturer at this college, to do some research among the PTD 1 and 3 students, enrolled in this college.

The college administration pledges support for the researcher in this important work, as it seems this endeavour will be of great benefit to the college community and education in the country as a whole. Hopefully, the University will assist her to achieve her goal – research on reading attitudes and abilities of our students.

Thank you.

Yours Faithfully

.....

SL Mbingo  
**PRINCIPAL**

**APPENDIX B:**

**T.T.C. STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE – PILOT STUDY**

Allocated Number: .....

- Tick the relevant option below:

1. Age: 18-25      26-30      31-35      36-40      41-45

2. Sex: Female                      male

3. Year of study: PTD 1..... PTDII..... PTD III.....

4. Do you read short stories and novel in siSwati for fun, not for subject purposes?  
No..... No, but wish I could.....Just a few..... Yes I read everything I can find.....

5. How would you rate yourself as a reader?  
Poor..... Struggling ..... Average..... Good..... Very Good.....

6. In which language do you do most of your leisure reading?  
SiSwati .....English.....

7. Do you enjoy reading?  
Very much.....Quite a lot.....A little.....Not at all.....

8. What exactly do you read? (Tick as many as are applicable to you)

Newspapers.....	Books (e.g. novels).....
Magazines .....	Internet web sites.....
Comics .....	Religious tracts .....

9. Which books do you enjoy reading?

Non-fiction.....	Plays.....
Science fiction .....	Spy fiction/thrillers.....
Religious books.....	Academic books.....
Biographies.....	Others (specify).....

10. Are you a member of the local library? Yes.....No.....

11. When did you last read a book:  
A week ago.....A month ago.....  
A year ago..... More than a year ago.....

12. How many books do you have in your home? (Make an estimation)

More than 100.....About 10.....None.....

More than 50..... More than 20 .....

13. What is your attitude to reading in general?

.....I really enjoy reading and I read a lot

.....Reading is OK. I sometimes read a book or magazine.

..... Reading is OK, but I don't really read much. I only read when I have to, for study purpose.

..... Reading is a problem for me and I don't enjoy reading at all.

14. How would you classify yourself as a reader, generally?

..... I am a fast, highly skilled reader and seldom have problems understanding what I read.

.....I am an average reader – I understand most of what I read.

.....I read quite slowly and I often have problems understanding what I read.

15. I think reading has a positive effect on my proficiency in English (Tick your opinion).

Strongly agree.... Agree..... Not sure..... Disagree..... Strongly disagree.....

16. The most important thing for second language learners to master English is having a good teacher of English.

Strongly Agree.....Agree.....Not sure..... Disagree..... Strongly disagree.....

17. There is really no connection between reading, proficiency and academic success.

Strongly agree..... Agree..... Not sure.....Disagree..... Strongly disagree.....

18. You have an appointment with the dentist. When you arrive, you have to wait your turn. What do you do to pass the time?

.....Make small talk with stranger sitting to next to you.

..... Close you eyes and listen to the sounds around you.

..... Grab a magazine from the stack on the reception table

..... Continue with the novel you are currently reading

19. Reading novels and magazines is a “woman thing”, not for men.  
Strongly agree.....Agree..... Not sure..... Disagree..... Strongly disagree.....
20. Reading academic texts even during one’s leisure time is much more important than reading novels for fun.  
Strongly agree..... Agree..... Not sure..... Disagree..... Strongly disagree.....
21. The ability to read is all about recognizing and identifying words written on a page.  
Strongly agree..... Agree..... Not sure..... Disagree..... Strongly disagree.....
22. Reading in public place, like in buses and parks, is not “cool.”  
Strongly agree..... Agree..... Not sure..... Disagree..... Strongly disagree.....
23. When you have read an interesting or stimulating book, what do you do?  
.....I discuss it with my friends or colleagues.  
.....I share the enjoyment with my family (partner, spouse, parents, siblings)  
.....I discuss it with my classmates.  
.....I belong to a book club and discuss books with the book-club members.
24. I will make a difference in the academic lives of the learners I will teach even though I am not much of a reader.  
Strongly agree..... Agree..... Not sure..... Disagree.....Strongly disagree.....
25. Reading novels is a pleasant activity.  
Strongly agree..... Agree..... Not sure..... Disagree..... Strongly disagree.....
26. I know many academically successful people who are also proficient in English but have no time for reading novels of any kind.  
Strongly agree..... Agree..... Not sure..... Disagree..... Strongly disagree.....
27. Even if an English teacher is not good, second language learners can still develop proficiency through reading a lot of novels in English.  
Strongly agree..... Agree..... Not sure..... Disagree..... Strongly disagree.....
28. Reading has a positive effect on my academic performance.  
Strongly agree..... Agree..... Not sure..... Disagree..... Strongly disagree.....
29. You are at home in the evening everyone is relaxing after the evening meal, watching television and chatting. The programme on TV is rather boring.



## APPENDIX C READING COMPREHENSION TEXT

**Read the following passage carefully and then answer the questions that follow in a separate answer sheet.**

The pirate king, wearing a fancy white shirt, a scarlet velvet jacket and long black boots, had an aggressive expression on his face and a sharp, shiny sword in his hand. Enchanted, Joseph studied the picture in his story book. The letters danced before his eyes as he tried to recall the words of the story his mother had read to him the previous night, before she had tucked him into bed and kissed him goodnight.

'Joseph!' his mother exclaimed, bustling impatiently into the room. 'It's time to go into town to buy you new clothes for starting school. Are you pleased?' Without waiting for an answer, she hurriedly pushed him out of the front door in the direction of the bus stop. Reluctantly, Joseph trailed along behind her. He was the pirate king. He had a mission: adventures to complete and enemies to confront. He brightened a little as the bus came bumping and rattling over the hill, because this was his pirate ship dipping and rising with the turbulence of the ocean. His mother clasped his hand tightly and directed him to a seat. On the journey she counted the contents of her purse, anxious in case her own mission might not be successful. When the bus reached the shopping centre, Joseph found himself propelled onto the pavement and led into a store.

With a practiced eye, Joseph's mother scanned the rails of children's clothes, checking sizes and prices, and picked out trousers, shirts and a jacket. Hiding her irritation at his indifference to the shopping trip, she coaxed him to co-operate with her by promising a reward at the end of it – a small toy, perhaps, or some fruit. 'Please be a good boy, Joseph. I don't know what's got into you today!' she complained, as her son's aggressive face stared back at her from the mirror in the changing room. Joseph's young conscience was stirred by this, and he decided to try looking on the bright side. Maybe the jacket wasn't scarlet or velvet, but at least the shirts were white, if rather plain, and black trousers were probably acceptable for pirate kings. Before long, the transaction was complete, and his new school clothes were put into plastic bags.

'Kim! It's so long since I saw you! How are you?' Joseph recognised the former neighbour who greeted his mother at the store counter. He shuffled from foot to foot as the two women gave their respective accounts of the past two years, until his attention was seized by a picture which he had until now failed to notice on the wall of the children's section of the store. He could hardly believe his eyes – there, complete with mast and white sails, was the pirate ship of his story book.

As if under a magnetic force, he slipped his hand free of his mother's and moved towards the picture. He stared at it, wondering whether the pirate king was in his cabin or had gone ashore. He wandered through into the next section of the store and

discovered that this was the toy department. He gazed at the furry bears, model cars and plastic dinosaurs piled up in a delightful display; best of all on a huge table two miniature trains ran round on a track, passing under bridges and past toy stations. Joseph stared longingly at these for several minutes, but being an inquisitive child, and still thinking of himself as the pirate king ashore, he set off for further exploration. Downstairs, he strolled through the section of the store which sold household goods. A fascinated crowd had gathered to listen to a salesman demonstrating the efficiency of a kitchen knife which resembled a sharp, shiny sword. As the salesman talked, peelings from various fruit fell to the floor in unbroken loops. Had the demonstration been less enthralling, someone might have noticed a small boy slipping through the front door and out into the busy street.

A band of amateur musicians had congregated outside the store and Joseph studied them with interest. Two women in colourful dresses played wind instruments, while their equally colourful male companions beat drums and moved through the audience, collecting coins as donations. Joseph squeezed through the crowd and moved further down the street. He came across a beggar sitting by the side of the road. A small can with some coins in it was placed near his feet, but there the similarity with the musicians ended. His clothes were dull, drab and tattered, and Joseph looked at him warily before hurrying on. He loitered at a roadside stall selling snacks to passing shoppers and listened to friendly exchanges between the young cook – a boy wearing an alarmingly grubby apron – and his customers. Nearby, at a small shop selling bales of cotton piled to the ceiling, Joseph stared at the fabrics which were in almost every colour imaginable – reds, blues, yellows, purples. Emerging from the tiny doorway of the shop was a young boy accompanied by his mother, who held his hand tightly. At once, a panic clutched at Joseph's heart, making him breathless with fear: where was his own mother? His pirate king adventures forgotten, he turned round and round in the street, looking for her, but with no success. All that met his gaze were strange buildings, strange people, strange shops. The brave pirate king started to cry, tears spouting from his eyes, his sobs so loud and uncontrollable that they soon produced a flurry of interest from passers-by.

Meanwhile, Kim had enjoyed her chat with her former neighbour and they parted amicably, having made an arrangement to meet up at a later date. 'Goodbye, I'll see you soon,' cried Kim, turning round to take her son home. But where was he? Suppressing the urge to panic, she tried to be rational. Why would a five year-old wander away from his mother? Why would he want to go far? She retraced her steps to the rails of children's clothes, trying to remain calm. He must be playing or hiding in the changing area, she thought, and checked out that theory. At this point her thinly disguised terror caused her to be noticed by a store assistant, who escorted her to an office. 'Please wait here until I find the manager,' was the instruction. Kim paced the small office impatiently, filled with guilt and fear.

After what seemed an eternity the manager arrived, trying to reassure Kim that all would be well. 'Already I have sent several members of staff out into the street to look for Joseph; in any case, a small boy cannot go far in a matter of minutes. Nevertheless, I have telephoned the police.' And so, at the same time as Joseph, Kim began to cry, but not for long. Realizing that practicality was preferable to hysteria, she accompanied the manager to the store entrance. How long it seemed since she had brought Joseph through that door! As she stood helplessly looking up and down the street, she suddenly noticed two young women wearing the store's uniform approaching her and, to her great joy and relief, each was holding the hand of a small boy... Joseph! Kim ran towards him, scooping him up into her arms, and the pirate king allowed himself to be embraced.

On the bus back to their village, Joseph stayed close by his mother. Once inside the house again, Kim and Joseph carefully hung up the new clothes in the cupboard. Over dinner, Joseph was uncharacteristically withdrawn. Noting the change in her son, Kim offered to read to him from one of his story books.

'What about this one?' she asked, holding up the story of the pirate king.

'No, another one,' replied Joseph firmly, taking the book from his mother and placing it face downwards on the shelf.

## **QUESTIONS**

**Answer each question neatly and legibly.**

1. How does the writer suggest that Joseph has not yet learnt to read? (1)
2. a) Joseph's mother pushed him hurriedly out of the front door. In what two ways did her behaviour suggest she was in a hurry? (2)  
b) Joseph's mother was 'anxious in case her own mission might not be successful'. What exactly was she worried about? (1)
3. Pick out and write down the single word in paragraph 3 which shows that Joseph's mother was treating him very tactfully. (1)
4. Explain **in your own words** what Joseph's mother and her former neighbour were doing as Joseph 'shuffled from foot to foot'. (1)
5. a) What does the word 'magnetic' tell us about the effect of the pictures on Joseph? (1)  
b) Of all the toys for sale, which did Joseph find most attractive? (1)  
c) Joseph, we are told, was 'an inquisitive child'. What other reason is suggested for his decision to 'set off for further exploration'? (1)  
d) Why did nobody in the household goods section notice Joseph leaving the store? (1)
6. a) What did the beggar and the musicians have in common? (1)  
b) Why should it be 'alarming' that the boy was wearing a grubby apron? (1)
7. a) Explain **in your own words** why Joseph's mother was noticed by the store assistant. (2)  
b) Joseph's mother was afraid for his safety. Why do you think she was also 'filled with guilt'? (1)
8. Because he was glad to see his mother again, 'the pirate king allowed himself to be embraced'. What else do you think the writer is suggesting about Joseph's feelings at this point? (1)
9. a) Explain **in your own words** the change which Kim noticed in her son. (2)

b) Why did Joseph place the book 'face downwards on the shelf'? (1)

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

a) enchanted (line )

b) reluctantly (line )

c) with a practiced eye (line )

d) efficiency (line )

e) congregated (line)

f) suppressing (line)

g) rational (line )

h) firmly (line)

**APPENDIX D ATTITUDES TO EXTENSIVE READING QUESTIONNAIRE**  
**T.T.C. STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name:.....

Please tick the relevant option for each statement/ question below:

1. Age: 18-25 [ ]            26 – 30 [ ]    31 – 35 [ ]    36 – 40 [ ]

2. Sex:    Female [ ]        Male [ ]

3. Year :        I [ ]            II [ ]            III [ ]

4. How many novels do you have in your home? (Make estimation).

Less than 5[ ]                      About 10 [ ]

More than 10[ ]                      More than 50 [ ]

More than 100 [ ]                      None [ ]

5. How many of these novels have you read? .....

6. Do you enjoy reading?

Not at all [ ]    A little [ ]    Quite a lot [ ]    Very much [ ]

7. What exactly do you read (if you do)? (Leave blank if you don't read.)

Newspapers [ ]                      Books (novels) [ ]

Magazines [ ]                      Religious tracts [ ]

Comics [ ]                      Internet websites [ ]

8. Which books do you enjoy reading? Fill in one author you have read, next to each option. (Leave blank if you do not read any of these.)

Romance fiction [ ] ..... Detective stories [ ].....

Non-fiction [ ] ..... Spy fiction thrillers [ ].....

Science fiction [ ]..... Biographies [ ].....

Other (specify) .....

9. Are you a member of the local library? Yes [ ] No [ ]

10. Do you read short stories and novels in siSwati, apart from prescribed school /college texts?

No [ ] No. Dislike reading in siSwati [ ] Just a few [ ]

Yes, I read everything I can find [ ].

11. How would you rate yourself as a reader in siSwati?

Poor [ ] Struggling [ ] Average [ ] Good [ ] Very Good [ ]

12. How would you rate yourself as a reader in English?

Poor [ ] Struggling [ ] Average [ ] Good [ ] Very Good [ ]

13. When did you last read a book?

Yesterday [ ] Currently reading one [ ] A week ago [ ]

A month ago [ ] A year ago [ ] More than a year ago [ ]

14. Write the author's name and title of your last/ current book.

.....

15. What is your attitude to reading in general?

[ ] I really enjoy reading and I read a lot.

[ ] I really enjoy reading when I do read, but do not have the time for it.

[ ] Reading is OK. I sometimes read a book or magazine.

Reading is OK but I do not really read much. I only read for study purposes.

Reading is a problem for me and I don't enjoy reading at all.

16. How would you classify yourself as a reader, generally?

I am a fast, highly-skilled reader and seldom have problems understanding what I read.

I am a good reader – I understand most of what I read.

I am an average reader – I understand what I read if it is not so complex.

I read quite slowly but usually understand what I read.

I read quite slowly and often have problems understanding what I read.

17. The *most* important thing for second language learners to master English is to have a good teacher of English.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Not sure  Agree  Strongly agree .

18. Reading for pleasure has had a significant effect on my proficiency in English.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Not sure  Agree  Strongly agree .

19. I do not think there is a connection between reading, proficiency and academic success.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Not sure  Agree  Strongly agree .

20. You have an appointment at the dentist's. When you arrive, you have to wait your turn. What do you do to pass the time?

Read a newspaper.

Close my eyes and listen to the sounds around me.

Make small talk with the person sitting next to me.

Grab a magazine from the stack on the reception table.

Continue with the novel I'm currently reading.

Other (specify).....

21. Reading novels and magazines is a 'woman thing' not for men.

Strongly disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Not sure [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly agree [ ]

22. I would rather read academic texts than novels during my leisure time.

Strongly disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Not sure [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly agree [ ]

23. The ability to read is all about recognizing and identifying words written on a page.

Strongly disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Not sure [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly agree [ ]

24. Reading in public places, like in buses and parks, is not 'cool'.

Strongly disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Not sure [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly agree [ ]

25. When you have read an interesting book, what do you do?

I discuss it with my friends or colleagues.

I share the enjoyment with my family (partner, spouse, parents, siblings).

I belong to a book club and discuss it with the book-club members.

Nothing. I do not read much, so I do not have much to discuss on books.

Other (specify).....

26. One can make a very good teacher of English, even though one is not a reader.

Strongly disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Not sure [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly agree [ ]

27. Reading novels is a very pleasant activity, for me.

Strongly disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Not sure [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly agree [ ]

28. Mastering English is a matter of learning and studying grammar, not reading novels.

Strongly disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Not sure [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly agree [ ]

29. Even if a teacher of English is not good, second language learners can still develop proficiency through reading a lot of novels in English.

Strongly disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Not sure [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly agree [ ]

30. I read because I believe reading has a positive effect on my academic performance.

Strongly disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Not sure [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly agree [ ]

31. You are at home in the evening; everyone is relaxing after the evening meal, watching television and chatting. The TV programme is rather boring. What do you prefer to do?

I just enjoy the easy atmosphere with the family.

Excuse myself and go to my room to read the novel I am currently reading.

Leave the room to browse through my texts even though there is no assignment.

Stay on in the living room, but page through a magazine.

32. I read because my lecturers expect me to.

Strongly disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Not sure [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly agree [ ]

33. A friend has given you an interesting novel. Which option below best describes your thoughts as you prepare to start reading the novel?

Ah, this is a daunting task. I wish I did not have to read it.

I really should be doing something better than just reading this book.

I will read it just to please my friend. I will just read a few pages.

It is such a thick book I will never be able to finish it.

I cannot wait to start reading the book.

34. I do not do much reading for leisure purposes because it is time consuming; it takes away my free time.

Strongly disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Not sure [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly agree [ ]

35. If one has never had a good grasp of English at primary and secondary school, very little, if anything, can be done to rectify the problem.

Strongly disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Not sure [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly agree [ ]

36. One can never be good at both language and the sciences. It's either one or the other.

Strongly disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Not sure [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly agree [ ]

37. Too much reading can be dangerous as it can lead to mental disturbance.

Strongly disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Not sure [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly agree [ ]

38. If you really wanted to hide anything from me, tuck it into a novel.

Strongly disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Not sure [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly agree [ ]

39. You are stranded on a desert island for two days. A rescue team has been informed of your plight. What ONE thing would you wish to have with you, apart from food, water, shelter and bedding?

[ ] Your cell phone

[ ] A novel

[ ] Television

40. Did you use some of your allowance to buy a novel?

[ ] Yes, I could not wait to buy one by .....

[ ] No, but I wished I could but one by .....

[ ] No, there were just too many things I had to do with the money.

[ ] No, I never thought about it.

41. Which set of presents for your birthday would you regard as the best among the following:

[ ] Some music videos, a cell phone, some fashionable clothes, and a bicycle.

[ ] Some music videos, a cell phone, a set of ear-rings, and some fashionable clothes.

[ ] Some music videos, a cell phone and two novels by two of your favourite authors.

[ ] A R2, 000 cheque to spend at Jet Stores.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION!

## APPENDIX E AUTHOR AND MAGAZINE RECOGNITION TEST FREQUENCY OF TICKS

AUTHOR NAME	PTD 1 (N=45)	PTD 3 (N=39)
1. SYDNEY SHELDON*	28	13
2. BARBARA CARTLAND*	4	3
3. HALLE BERRY	3	1
4. JOAN COLLINS	17	17
5. DANIELLE STEEL*	27	31
6. SALLY WENTWORTH*	5	5
7. BERTRAM STUART	4	1
8. DAVID CRYSTAL*	0	0
9. ESKIA MPHAHLELE*	10	0
10. TONY BLAIR	0	3
11. ROBERT LUDLUM*	6	4
12. BORIS YELTSIN	8	3
13. WILBUR SMITH*	24	15
14. IRVING WALLACE*	4	3
15. PENNY JORDAN*	9	3
16. ZK MATHEWS*	5	0
17. MENAN DU PLESSIS*	2	1
18. ELTON JOHN	1	1
19. THABO NKOSINATHI MASEMOLA*	0	0
20. JOHN BLACK	0	0
21. LEWIS CARROLL*	6	5
22. BARBARA TAYLOR BRADFORD*	15	7
23. KEVIN KOSTNER	3	2
24. BRAD PITT	1	0
25. VANESSA JAMES*	1	2
26. WILL SMITH	11	11
27. VIOLET WINSPEAR*	8	0
28. WINSTON CHURCHILL	8	9
29. ANNE MATHER*	6	4
30. RICHARD NIXON	7	5
31. DICK FRANCIS*	0	0
32. SHAUN POLLOCK	10	5
33. HAROLD ROBBINS*	0	0
34. JAMES BLUNT	4	4
35. JENNIFER LOPEZ	0	4
36. DEREK WALES	0	1
37. CANDY LITCHFIELD	6	3
38. COLIN FORBES*	0	0
39. BRUCE WILLIS	6	3
40. JACK SMYTHE	0	1

\*The asterisk marks the author names.

TITLE OF MAGAZINE	PTD 1	PTD 3
1. <i>Your Pregnancy</i>	16	7
2. <i>Your Family*</i>	16	15
3. <i>The Voice</i>	18	14
4. <i>Living and Loving*</i>	24	19
5. <i>Trader*</i>	3	1
6. <i>Swazi Motoring</i>	5	4
7. <i>Weighmore</i>	2	1
8. <i>Men and Women</i>	7	7
9. <i>Woman and Home*</i>	17	17
10. <i>Business and Leisure*</i>	14	20
11. <i>Tap into Life</i>	11	3
12. <i>Farmer's Weekly*</i>	23	11
13. <i>You*</i>	30	37
14. <i>Bona*</i>	45	37
15. <i>True Love*</i>	45	37
16. <i>Me</i>	5	5
17. <i>In Style</i>	10	7
18. <i>People*</i>	30	19
19. <i>Scandal</i>	1	0
20. <i>Y mag*</i>	8	3
21. <i>Drum*</i>	31	30
22. <i>Nation*</i>	19	14
23. <i>Woman's Own*</i>	2	3
24. <i>Jet*</i>	15	14
25. <i>Days of Our Lives</i>	7	3
26. <i>Today*</i>	1	3
27. <i>Femina*</i>	4	1
28. <i>Gossip</i>	4	5
29. <i>Kick Off*</i>	35	30
30. <i>Rugby Scene*</i>	7	6
31. <i>You and Your Spouse</i>	2	3
32. <i>Newsweek*</i>	17	5
33. <i>Men's Health*</i>	28	17
34. <i>TIME*</i>	8	1
35. <i>Seventeen*</i>	7	0
36. <i>Reader's Digest*</i>	11	4
37. <i>Feminine</i>	7	2
38. <i>Amakhosi*</i>	14	11
39. <i>House &amp; Leisure*</i>	4	7
40. <i>National Express</i>	2	2

\*The asterisk marks the magazine titles

## APPENDIX F SiSWATI READING COMPREHENSION TEST

Fundzisisa lendzatja ngentasi, bese uphendvula imibuto lelandzelako. **(Read the short story below and then answer the questions that follow.)**

“Wena wekunene, nelibandla. Sivumelene sonkhe tsine Bandlancane. Ute licala Bhevula,” yasho ihlala phasi.

Labindza libandla dvu. Wabindza umoya. Lashisa lilanga. Afoma emadvodza, abonwa asesula titfukutfuku. Wabindza Zembe watsi dvu, wasikitelisa emadzevu laphotsiwe. Kwabate nalotsintsa sikwehlela. Emadvodza akhana ngemehlo. Wasukuma Zembe watsi:

“Sukuma Silulu.” Wasukuma.

“Bengitsi uyindvodza. Usho ngembhebhenene. Kantsi lesilevu tjani. Kute enhloko. Ubutse lelibandla lenkhosi ulibutsele kuganga ngalo. Yebo ngiyakuvela, Masilela. Kutala akuphengulwa. Linyenti letfu latsi liyatala kantsi litala tibungu. Umntfwana yinja yona ikuvusela luhohodvo lwemamba-lukhonkhotsi. Sonkhe silapha nje sitele. Linceba lendvodza alihlekwa. Ngiyakulilela. Yebo utente wena silima. Siyeva kutsi umntfwanakho wakufihlela wangete wakubikela ngesikhatsi lesifanele. Kepha sewuvile wenta liphutsa lelibi. Wangete wamatisa lofanele umatise. Wase wetfwala simakahla senhloko utawubikela lelibandla. Lelilibandla lenkhosi alisilo lekudlala tiphukuphuku letilele etikwemehlo. Lomntfwana wakaLubhedze wamshuncisela ngatiphi tinyamatane? Wamkhipha ngaliphi lisiko? Wate wambulala ke ahamba umntfwane-mntfwanakho! Uyawungibuta ngingasenakuphendvula, ngimfunge Somhlolo alele eMbilaneni. Utakubuva buhlungu lapho lomntfwana asagila imikhuba eveni; asadla titselo langafanele kutidla. Geza lenkhundla ngenkhomo nembuti. Hlala phasi.”

Labonga libandla. Wahlala phasi Silulu Masilela. Wachubeka Zembe.

“Sukuma Bhevula Lubhedze. Awusekho kulelibanga. Licala lotentele lona sewuyalati. Yebo licala lingumklwebho wona uwunyatsela endleleni. Licoco litsi ute licala lolibekwe bakaMasilela. Litsi licala lotibeke wena ngekwakho unalo. Vimba lomntfwanaMasilela ubuye umhlawule ngenhlawulo lefunwa bakaMasilela. Bese ulobola umfati wakho; uyamtsatsa uyawumgidzisa. Hlala phasi.”

Labonga libandla. Wahlala phasi Bhevula.

Lachitseka libandla. Seliyakubuya ngemuso litekudla inkunzi yalo. Tagcwala tindlela. NaBhevula Lubhedze nemnganakhe Matata Hedzane basukuma babamba lebheka kaNgwane.

Wenele wefika ekhaya Bhevula watsengisa ematfodlana akhe. Wetama kutsi ayekutsenga inkhomo eNtalasifali. Nembala wayitsenga esigodzini seGalini. Watfuma umuntfu kutsi ayimikise kaMasilela. Watsi afulatsela umchubi wayo yawiswa.

Imibuto/Questions:

1. Yini bandlancane? [3]
2. Ngabe lamadvodza ahlanganele ini? [4]
3. Ngubani ummangali kulelicalalitekwako? [2]
4. Lalamangalele uhlobene njani naye? [3]
5. Khipha imisho lemibili lekhomba kutsi lesigwebo sabandlancane lesibhekiswa kummangali sabaphatsa njani lababekhona. [3]
6. Yini letinyamatane lekukhulunywa ngato kulenzaba? [3]
7. Silulu uvetwa angumuntfu longakahlakaniphi. Khipha emagama lakulenkulumo yaZembe lasho bulima. [3]
8. Chaza loku lokulandzelako:
  - a) "kwabate nalotsintsa sikhwehlela" [2]
  - b) "kute inhloko" [2]
  - c) "linceba lendvodza alihlekwa" [2]
  - d) "emadvodza akhana ngemehlo" [2]
  - e) "licala lingumklwebho wona uwunyatsela endleleni" [2]
  - f) "tagcwala tindlela" [2]
  - g) "yawiswa" [2]
  - h) "vimba lomntfwana" [2]
10. Niketa lendzatjana sihloko. [3]

**(Total marks: 40)**

## APPENDIX G VOCABULARY LEVELS TEST

(Laufer & Nation, 1995)

Marks: 87

**Complete the underlined words. The first one has been done for you.**

### **A: The 2,000-word level.**

1. He was riding a bicycle.
2. They will restore the house to its orig.....state.
3. Each room has its own priv.....bath and WC.
4. The tot.....number of students at the university of 12,347.
5. They met to ele.....a new president.
6. Many companies were manuf.....computers.
7. The lakes become ice-free and the snow mel..... .
8. They managed to steal and hi..... some knives.
9. I asked the group to inv..... her to the party.
10. She shouted at him for spoi.....the lovely evening.
11. You must spend less until your deb.....are paid.
12. His mother looked at him with love and pri..... .
13. The wind roa.....through the forest.
14. There was fle..... and blood everywhere.
15. She earns a high sal..... as a lawyer.
16. The sick child had a very high tempe..... .
17. The bir..... of her first child was a difficult time.
18. In A.D. 636 an Arab army won a famous vic.....over another army.

### **B: The 3,000-word level.**

1. They need to spend less on adminis..... and more on production.
2. He saw an ang..... from Heaven.
3. The entire he.....of goats was killed.
4. Two old men were sitting on a park ben..... and talking.
5. She always showed char.....toward those who needed help.

6. He has a big house in the Cape Prov.....
7. Oh, Harold dar....., I am sorry. I did not mean to upset you.
8. Judy found herself listening to the last ec.....of her shoes on the hard floor.
9. He cut three large sli.....of bread.
- 10.He sat in the shade beneath the pa.....trees.
- 11.He had a crazy sch.....for perfecting the world.
- 12.They get a big thr.....out of car-racing.
- 13.At the beginning of their journey they encou.....an English couple.
14. Nothing illus.....his selfishness more clearly than his behaviour to his wife.
- 15.He took the bag and tos.....it into the bushes.
- 16.Every year she looked forward to her ann.....holiday.
- 17.There is a defi.....date for the wedding.
- 18.His voice was loud and sav..... and shocked them all to silence.

**C: The 5,000-word level.**

1. Some people find it difficult to become independent. Instead they prefer to be tied their mother's ap.....strings.
2. After finishing his degree, he entered upon a new ph.....in his career.
3. The workmen cleaned up the me.....before they left.
4. On Sunday, in his last se.....in Church, the priest spoke against child abuse.
5. Her favourite musical instrument was a tru.....
6. The building is heated by a modern heating appa.....
7. He received many com.....on his dancing skill.
8. People manage to buy houses by raising a mor.....from a bank.
9. At the bottom of a blackboard there is a le..... for chalk.
- 10.After falling off his bicycle, the boy was covered with bru.....
- 11.The child was holding a doll in her arms and hu.....it.
- 12.We'll have to be inventive and de.....a scheme for earning more money.
- 13.The picture looks nice, the colours bl.....really well.
- 14.Nuts and vegetables are considered who .....food.

15. The garden was full of fra.....flowers.

16. Many people feel depressed and gl..... about the future of mankind.

### **D: The University Word List level**

1. The afflu.....of the western world contrasts with the poverty in other parts.
2. The book covers a series of isolated epis.....from history.
3. Farmers are introducing innova.....that increase the productivity per worker.
4. They are suffering from a vitamin defic.....
5. There is a short term oscill.....of the share index.
6. They had other means of acquiring wealth, pres....., and power.
7. The parts were arranged in an arrow-head configu.....
8. The learners were studying a long piece of written disco.....
9. People have proposed all kinds of hypo.....about what these things are.
10. The giver prefers to remain anony.....
11. The elephant is indig.....to India.
12. You'll need a mini.....deposit of \$20,000.
13. Most towns have taken some elemen.....civil defence precautions.
14. The presentation was a series of sta.....images.
15. The action was necessary for the ulti.....success of the revolution.
16. He had been expe.....from school for stealing.
17. The lack of money depressed and frust.....him.
18. The money from fruit-picking was a suppl.....

### **E: The 10,000-word level.**

1. He wasn't serious about art. He just da.....in it.
2. Her parents will never acq.....to such an unsuitable marriage.
3. Pack the dresses so that they won't cre.....
4. Traditionally, men were expected to nu.....women and children.

5. Religious people would never bl.....against God.
6. The car sk.....on the wet road.
7. The politician delivered an arrogant and pom.....speech.
8. The Romans used to hire au.....troops to help them in their battles.
9. At the funeral, the family felt depressed and mo.....
10. His pu.....little arms and legs looked pathetic.
11. A vo.....person will change moods easily.
12. The debate was so long and tedious that it seemed int.....
13. Drink it all and leave the dre.....
14. A hungry dog will sa.....at the smell of food.
15. The girl's clothes and shoes were piled up in a ju.....on the floor.
16. Some monks live apart from society in total sec.....
17. The enemy suffered heavy cas.....in the battle.
18. When the Xmas celebrations and rev.....ended, there were plenty of drunk people everywhere.

*Thank you for your cooperation!*

## APPENDIX H: QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

	PTD 1	PTD 3
<b>4. How many novels do you have in your home?</b>		
Less than five	56%	40%
About 10	33%	31%
More than 10	11%	28%
More than 50	0%	5%
More than 100	0%	0%
<b>6. Do you enjoy reading?</b>		
Not at all	4%	0%
A little	33%	36%
Quite a lot	49%	26%
Very much	14%	38%
<b>9. Are you a member of the local library?</b>		
Yes	22%	54%
No	78%	46%
<b>10. Do you read short stories and novels in SiSwati?</b>		
Not at all	13%	18%
No, dislike reading in siSwati.	18%	11%
Just a few	33%	33%
Yes, I read everything I can find	36%	38%
<b>11. How would you rate yourself as a reader in siSwati?</b>		
Poor	2%	3%
Struggling	8%	15%
Average	47%	31%
Good	33%	33%
Very good	10%	18%
<b>12 How would you rate yourself as a reader in English?</b>		
Poor	0%	0%
Struggling	0%	8%
Average	55%	59%
Good	40%	30%
Very good	5%	3%
<b>13. When did you last read a book?</b>		
Recently	49%	56%
A month or more ago	51%	44%
<b>15. What is your attitude to reading in general?</b>		
I really enjoy reading and I read a lot.	24%	5%
I really enjoy reading when I do read but do not have the time for it.	33%	46%
Reading is OK. I sometimes read a book or magazine	33%	31%

Reading is OK, but I do not really read much. I only read for study purposes.	10%	8%
Reading is a problem for me and I don't enjoy reading at all.	0%	10%
<b>16. How would you classify yourself as a reader, generally?</b>		
I am a fast, highly-skilled reader and seldom have problems understanding what I read.	0%	0%
I am a good reader - I understand most of what I read.	12%	13%
I am an average reader - I understand what I read if it is not so complex.	80%	79%
I read quite slowly but usually understand what I read.	8%	8%
I read quite slowly and often have problems understanding what I read.	0%	0%
<b>20. You have an appointment at the dentist. When you arrive</b>		
<b>you have to wait your turn. What do you do to pass the time?</b>		
Read a newspaper.	40%	56%
Close my eyes and listen to the sounds around me.	12%	3%
Make small talk with the person sitting next to me.	13%	5%
Continue with the novel I'm currently reading.	27%	31%
Grab a magazine from the stack on the reception table.	8%	5%
Other (specify).....	0%	0%
<b>25. When you have an interesting book, what do you do?</b>		
I discuss it with my friends or colleagues.	71%	59%
I share the enjoyment with my family (partner, spouse, siblings).	16%	36%
I belong to a book club and discuss it with the club members.	0%	0%
Nothing. I do not read much, so I do not have much to discuss on books.	13%	5%
Other (specify).....	0%	0%
<b>31. You are at home in the evening; everyone is relaxing after the evening meal, watching television and chatting. What do you prefer to do?</b>		
I just enjoy the easy atmosphere with the family.	22%	20%
I excuse myself and go to my room to read the novel I'm currently reading.	31%	26%
I leave the room to browse through my texts even though there is no assignment.	13%	18%
I Stay on in the living room but pager through a magazine.	34%	36%

<b>33. A friend has given you an interesting novel. Which option below best describes your thoughts as you prepare to start reading the novel?</b>		
Ah, this is a daunting task. I wish I did not have to read it.	6%	3%
I really should be doing something better than just reading this book.	9%	12%
I will read it just to please my friend. I will just read a few pages.	6%	13%
It is such a thick book I will never be able to finish it.	17%	10%
I cannot wait to start reading the book.	62%	64%
<b>39. You are stranded on a desert island for two days. A rescue team has been informed of your plight. What ONE thing would you wish to have with you apart from food, water, shelter and bedding?</b>		
Your cell phone	36%	39%
A novel.	53%	44%
Television	11%	17%
<b>40. Did you use some of your allowance to buy a novel?</b>		
Yes I could not wait to buy one by.....	17%	28%
No, but I wished I could buy one by .....	31%	28%
No, there were just too many things I had to do with the money.	30%	18%
No, I never thought about it.	22%	26%
<b>41. Which set of presents for your birthday would you regard as best among the following?</b>		
Some music videos, a cell phone, some clothes and a bicycle.	13%	10%
Some music videos, a cell phone, some clothes and a set of ear-rings.	22%	21%
Some music videos, a cell phone and two novels by two of your favourite authors.	53%	64%
A R2, 000 cheque to spend at Jet Stores.	12%	5%

Attitude Questionnaire Responses of the two groups of Participants:  
 Questions fitting the Strongly Agree - Strongly Disagree Pattern.

Questions	PTD ONE					PTD THREE				
	SD	D	N	A	S A	S D	D	N	A	S A
17. The most important thing for second language learners to master English is to have a good teacher of English.	2%	22%	6%	44%	26%	5%	15%	0%	49%	31%
18. Reading for pleasure has had a significant effect on my proficiency in English.	0%	3%	15%	58%	24%	13%	18%	13%	46%	10%
19. I do not think there is a connection between reading, proficiency and academic success.	36%	33%	20%	7%	4%	41%	39%	11%	6%	3%
21. Reading novels and magazines is a 'woman thing', not for men.	58%	31%	0%	6%	5%	56%	28%	3%	5%	8%
22. I would rather read academic texts than novels during my leisure time.	13%	62%	4%	21%	0%	16%	69%	5%	10%	0%
23. The ability to read is all about recognising and identifying words written on a page	13%	36%	15%	29%	7%	21%	46%	5%	18%	8%
24. Reading in public places, like in buses and parks, is not 'cool'.	24%	40%	12%	22%	2%	21%	49%	10%	15%	5%
26. One can make a very good teacher, even though one is not a reader.	31%	33%	15%	13%	8%	38%	47%	5%	10%	0%
27. Reading novels is a pleasant activity, for me.	0%	11%	8%	68%	13%	0%	15%	3%	77%	5%
28. Mastering English is a matter of learning and studying grammar, not reading novels.										
	31%	38%	8%	20%	3%	18%	72%	2%	5%	3%
29. Even if a teacher is not good, second language learners can still develop proficiency through reading a lot of novels in English.	9%	6%	9%	47%	29%	0%	3%	0%	72%	25%
30. I read because I believe reading has a positive effect on my academic performance.	3%	0%	15%	51%	31%	0%	0%	6%	54%	40%
32. I read because my lecturers expect me to.	31%	55%	10%	4%	0%	38%	49%	0%	5%	8%
34. I do not do much reading for leisure purposes because it is time consuming; it takes away my free time.	24%	62%	2%	8%	4%	28%	62%	0%	5%	5%
35. If one has never had a good grasp of English at primary or secondary school, very little, if anything, can be done to rectify the problem	6%	44%	15%	27%	8%	15%	54%	10%	15%	6%
36. One can never be good at both language and the sciences. It's one or the other.	11%	40%	11%	38%	0%	15%	33%	23%	18%	11%
37. Too much reading can be dangerous as it can lead to mental disturbance	49%	29%	13%	6%	6%	36%	31%	22%	8%	3%
38. If you really wanted to hide anything from me, tuck it into a novel.	20%	60%	2%	13%	5%	33%	38%	8%	13%	8%

Key: SD – Strongly disagree    D – Disagree    N – Not Sure    A – Agree  
 SA – Strongly Agree.