

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO FACTORS RELATING TO
THE READING HABITS OF INDIAN SECONDARY
SCHOOL PUPILS IN THE PHOENIX AREA**

by

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DECLARATION

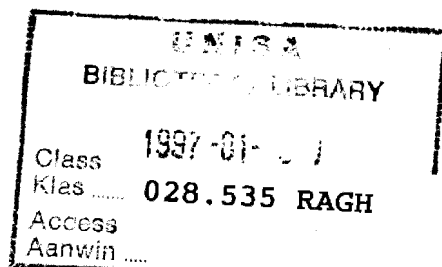
I declare that "An investigation into factors relating to the reading habits of Indian secondary school pupils in the Phoenix area" is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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1995



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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my dear children Rakhee and
Jiten, my beloved husband Heeramun and my parents.

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SUMMARY

This research is concerned with an investigation into the factors relating to the reading habits of Indian secondary school pupils in the Phoenix area.

It is important to acknowledge that among our youth there are both avid and reluctant readers during and after the period of formal education. It is the group of reluctant readers that has to be lured by the magic of reading. There is a remarkable variation in the reading habits of pupils from the same school.

A self-designed questionnaire was administered to 544 boys and girls from standards 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. The descriptive data available were then analysed and interpreted.

The study revealed that the amount of time spent on reading and the number of books read (which together determined reading habits) by pupils was influenced by such factors as home, school, social environment, socio-economic status, the influence of other media and the personal aspect.

LIST OF KEY TERMS

Title of thesis:

An investigation into factors relating to the reading habits of Indian secondary school pupils in the Phoenix area.

Key terms:

Reading habits; Indian secondary school pupils; reading as a phenomenon; reluctant readers; reading skills; factors influencing reading; ecological factors; emotional factors; physical factors; intelligence and language; reading attitude.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Reading has assumed greater significance today than ever before. The ability to read at the highest possible level is essential to the individual's growth in the modern world, to his/her capacity to benefit from the learning opportunities at school and beyond, and to his/her ability to take his/her place in society (Robertson 1991:57). Reading remains unique in its certainty, permanence, portability, mystique, history, variety and economy (Kline 1985:17). Books broaden children's experiences of words and language. Reading enables children to improve their language skills and hence their ability to think, dream, comprehend and communicate.

Books are to be valued for their power to bring fantasy and magic to children; for their positive influence on children's social, emotional and intellectual development; and for the understanding they can bring of the world and its people (Zwarenstein 1986:402). According to Fader (1966) the poorest man in the world is the man limited to his own experience, the man who does not read (Butler 1982:314).

Reading is one of the first and most important skills children learn at

school. If they do not learn to read well the rest of their education will be impaired (Thompson 1979:9). Attention must be given to both the children who fail to read at all and those who become only poor readers.

Robertson (1991:55) states that it is absurd to suggest that radio, television or film will ever put the book store or magazine stand out of business. The reason for this lies in the purposes for which people read: for information about their personal interests and enterprises; for insight into their own experiences and understanding of their behaviour; for empathy with others and the sharing of their ideas; for understanding the past, insight into the present and determining the direction of the future; for escape from a depressing world or to heighten their involvement in dynamic developments; for the enjoyment of a story; or to delight in language and structure.

According to Mellon (1990:227) the task of bringing the excitement and comfort, exploration and challenges of books to young people is a joy. Understanding what teens choose to read helps library media specialists to build effective collections and develop reading ladders to broaden readers' tastes based on the materials they naturally enjoy. In this time of increased lifespans, it is important to nurture and encourage a lifelong enjoyment of reading. Ngendane (1989:111) states that reading increases the pleasure of leisure time. He goes on to state that the value of books and libraries is in laying a foundation for the development of intelligent and mature adults.

Libraries are a powerful weapon in the struggle against ignorance, poverty and tyranny (Ngendane 1989:110). They provide information and also encourage reading for pleasure. Once pupils have developed the habit of reading for pleasure they feel comfortable reading for research or other purposes. Like Ngendane, Barbara Stripling (1985:376) also feels that reading for pleasure enables students to think and read at a higher level. They should be able to discover the main idea and subtleties of meaning; detect biases and points of view; evaluate the content and style of written material; and understand complex or controversial issues. Students should try to perfect their reading skills as this will help them to enjoy their reading.

The major psychological and developmental reasons behind encouraging children to read can be summed up by a passage from the introduction to Margaret Meek's *The Cool Web* (1979): "The worry that surrounds illiterates focuses on the fact that they become social cripples, as that aspect of their lack is easiest to define, but they are also shut out from a way of looking at the world which other people habitually use as if it were an extension of their perception. Unable to read, a child or adult is cut off from a way of entering into the experiences of other people, which would help him to understand himself and other people better" (Thorpe 1988:12).

Probably the greatest single reason for reading a book is enjoyment. The

reader who interacts honestly and with perception when he/she reads derives pure pleasure. Reading is a deeply satisfying experience.

The pleasures and benefits of reading are not instantly apparent and it is only through perseverance and the sampling of many types of books that the reader feels he/she is gaining something. A book can satisfy different psychological needs at different stages of our lives (Fricke 1977:39).

Good books can show you your heart and your values. Books can illuminate life's choices. According to Hunt and Hampton (1992:11) the wonderful thing about books is that while building strong values in us, they are a pure pleasure to read. According to Jim Trelease, author of the *Read-Aloud-Handbook* (in Hunt and Hampton 1992:15) next to being hugged, reading aloud is probably the longest lasting experience of childhood. Reading aloud together is important for the same reasons that talking together is important: inspiration, guidance, education, bonding, communication, understanding and sharing. When people read together, they give each other a piece of their mind and a piece of their time, and that says a good deal about human worth. This habit gives teenagers a common cultural heritage as well as a bond of sharing. Sharing books makes for good companionship. It opens up a whole new world for those who enter it.

The basic goal of a literature curriculum is to educate children's imaginations. Books can inform us and supply facts which we are seeking,

for example, how the sea works. Reading stretches the imagination and will transport the reader to unknown lands and introduce him/her to fascinating people (Fricke 1977:40). Felsenthal (1989) indicates that children's literature provides an ideal opportunity to develop critical reading. Children exposed to literature build up background knowledge not only about the content at hand but also about how language works and how written language differs from spoken language (Morrow 1992:251). These children usually show an early interest and enjoyment in reading and they tend to learn to read at a young age.

For people of all cultures, the parent is the first and most important educator of the child. The home must play its part in the cultural and intellectual development of each child (Ngendane 1989:109). Reading offers cultural benefits. Usually poor readers are cut off from cultural activities and feel inadequate in the presence of educated people (Robertson 1991:55).

Parents reading to their preschool-age children on a regular basis help their children realise that books and reading are sources of pleasure, even before they are ready to read (Sutherland & Arbuthnot 1991:15). By sharing quality literature with youngsters adults give children a glimpse of the excitement, the drama and the beauty that is contained in books. When adults share their enthusiasm for a good story with children, they provide a model for them to imitate (Fields 1987:84). Books may in fact be used to open the lines of communication between parents and children. Parents can

help their children to cope with the normal challenges of growing up by providing a good selection of books. Books are a form of therapy because the reader can identify with a specific character (Ngendane 1989:111).

According to Ngendane (1989:111) reading enables the reader to master the skills of independent study, reference and research as the reader, through practice, develops an ability to analyse and interpret what s/he needs. Since reading encourages effective communication it helps readers to adapt to the modern world.

Literature, through content and through activities based on content and theme, can strengthen the development of self concept and self esteem. Reading enables us not only to learn from personal experience but also to draw on the perception of others. As children hear literature which shows the skills and abilities of others, they discover that they too have many skills and abilities. Books therefore present models with which children can identify.

Books provide particular support for helping children overcome unfounded fears, both through giving information about new experiences and through providing a stimulus for the discussion of common fears (Glazer 1981:146).

Clive and McBride's (1983:95) observation is similar to Glazer's above. According to them, through literature, readers can participate indirectly in

many lives and see how characters make decisions, meet hardship and good fortune, and even face death. They further state that literature provides readers with the pleasure of transcending their problems and their own lives while they are reading. This experience allows students to involve themselves entirely in their reading, to experience the story and to identify with the characters in the story. Literature offers pupils an opportunity to know themselves and others better through an examination of the motives and actions of characters in books.

Literature provides children with information about people who differ from themselves, and by emphasising the humanity of individual members of a group, it helps children develop positive attitudes toward others and to value diversity. Literature can stimulate children to explore moral problems and ethical questions (Glazer 1981:178), and it also aids their aesthetic and creative development.

The teenager's world is a highly stimulating world. If books are to have any meaning they must be related to the young person's personal and social needs or tasks. These tasks must be accomplished if a person is to grow from a dependent child to an independent adult (Carlsen 1971:10-11).

According to Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1991:25) the focal point of the adolescent is a search for identity. Adolescents grapple with the question of who they will become as well as who they are. Literature for these readers

includes a range of realistic fiction which can give them a chance to interact with situations in which other teenagers are searching for identity. Books play an important role in helping adolescents reach maturity.

Pupils who read widely are the ones with large vocabularies and the ability to use language effectively. Their comprehension and writing skills are well developed, and they also tend to perform well in their examinations.

Carter (1987:185) states that teenagers read to escape boredom, to understand themselves and their immediate surroundings and to evaluate the larger world. In this way they keep themselves informed about current affairs.

Spiegel (1981:4) states that recreational reading helps the development of several crucial aspects of successful reading. It promotes positive attitudes toward reading, expands experiential background, enhances automaticity and fluency, provides opportunity for practice in the use of context clues and expands meaning vocabularies. It would be extremely sad if all we 'knew about the world' was based on our own experiences. Fortunately reading allows for much expansion of experiential background. Very few people have met a real pirate but reading about Long John Silver in *Treasure Island* will inform us of what pirates must have been like.

Expanding one's world through books is especially important for pupils with

restricted backgrounds. Children who have never travelled beyond their neighbourhood can expand the world in their heads by reading. With reading, unlike films and television, the pupils can select the time, the place and the kind of experience. They can control the pace of the input of information and they can interact with the information in personal ways that are not possible with films and television. According to Spiegel (1981:12) reading allows readers to grow at their own pace and in unique, individualised ways.

Reading is essential at all times as life becomes more complex and the knowledge explosion increases rapidly. According to Stripling (1985:376) television, films and radio rarely attempt to portray issues in depth and the media omits necessary information which engenders a passive, accepting attitude amongst students. Reading can counteract these dangerous omissions and errors in media coverage. It is not primarily in competition with the mass media but is rather complementary to them. One constantly needs to check the validity of statements made in the media; to expand on ideas stimulated by radio or television programmes; to find out the historical background of events reported; or to enjoy at one's leisure the novel on which a motion picture is based (Robertson 1991:55). Thus it can be seen that reading is essential.

Reading helps one to process and evaluate the information that is enveloping society. By reading pupils become aware of human nature. Teenagers learn

tolerance for others. Reading strengthens both communal spirit as well as individual interests. A teenager can read about a subject of interest at any time suitable to him/her.

It is essential that classroom teachers are familiar with children's books so that they can help children develop an interest in reading and a desire to read. In order to build a good reading programme it is necessary to capitalise on children's interests. One way to capture their interest is to read to them as part of the regular school day. In this way children are acquainted with the feelings, activities and experiences of other people. It creates a love for reading in children. Also by reading to children their listening skills are developed, vocabulary is increased and they become acquainted with various language patterns. Another way to capture interest is to provide children with the opportunity to choose and read the books in which they are interested. Thus the school library should provide picture books, story books and informational books and children should be able to come frequently to the library to make their selections.

It is essential that children read books of adventure, humour and fantasy, stories of family life, animal stories and historical fiction as this helps them in character development. L.M. Alcott and L.I. Wilder, for example, were able to convey to children the feeling of love and security found in a strong family unit. It is also vitally important that teenagers read non-fiction books, as these help teenagers to learn who they are and where they fit in society.

It is difficult to understand why not everyone likes to read. Continued instruction in reading skills may bore pupils and drive them away from pleasure reading. Nevertheless if students practice and refine their reading skills and at the same time read interesting novels of their choice they will forget their difficult task of perfecting reading skills and they will begin to enjoy reading.

On the other hand, according to Poutney (1986:31), the way reading is taught in primary schools, the way texts are used in secondary schools, the degree of formal provision for leisure reading in primary and secondary schools, the pressure of mechanistic learning for examinations and the general status of books and reading in the school, are cited as the main causes for children not reading.

Students who do not read really miss out on life. They live in a world of their own; they have difficulty in communicating; their vocabulary and experiences are limited and they develop into 'passive people'.

1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

1.2.1 Awareness of the problem

For the past seventeen years the researcher has observed and very often wondered why pupils of the same age group vary drastically in their reading habits.

The suburb of Phoenix near Durban is made up of people from different areas who were brought together because of the Group Areas Act and housing shortages. Many of the pupils come from deprived social backgrounds and are faced with a variety of social, economic, emotional and physical problems. Many of these pupils share a room with more than one member of the family. Some of the pupils are not aware of the infinite joys and pleasures presented by children's literature. Many of them were not read stories and fairy tales by their parents when they were young and show no taste for literature. Some parents do not realise that stories offer many opportunities for social and character development. Also, according to Marshall (1977:38), reading may be difficult in the sense that teenagers do not get encouragement or even the opportunity to read in the home. Teenagers may take part in other leisure or study pursuits which may result in them reading in bed late at night or not reading at all.

As a secondary school teacher, the researcher noticed some pupils were developing an aversion to reading. Many of the pupils coming into standard six could not read with confidence. In the secondary schools pupils are not taught the art of reading, as it is usually taken for granted that they can read. However, the weak readers are identified and given some help to improve their reading. Unfortunately many of these readers evade their teachers and they complete their secondary schooling without really mastering the art of reading and without developing healthy reading habits.

Unfortunately, many pupils in Phoenix do not realise that reading is a way of deriving enjoyment, relaxation, widening their experiences and developing their imagination. Through reading they are introduced to different places, to different cultures and to different ways of life which widens and builds their general knowledge and teaches them about the world at large.

Pupils should be encouraged to discuss and debate issues that are bound to affect their lives. However, the researcher has observed that there are great extremes displayed in the reading habits of pupils. The researcher has also noted that generally pupils in standard six read widely and as they move up to standards seven, eight, nine, and ten they read less and less. They do not read the books they are expected to read.

Maybe due to their varying social backgrounds, those pupils who do not read the recommended literature are unable to discuss their reading with confidence and zeal and their knowledge of the books is also limited. The writer has noticed that pupils would rather watch a film or television, read comics or indulge in sports, but seldom read a book or even the newspaper. Although Indian children speak more English than the vernacular, they do not read widely enough to build a broad vocabulary, develop good speech, help them think critically and analytically and gain a broad knowledge of English literature. Many pupils are even reluctant to use non-fiction books to broaden their knowledge in various school subjects. They are quite

content to rely on just their basic textbooks.

Although the school at which the researcher taught has a well-equipped library, for various reasons, it is not fully used by pupils. It could be that pupils are busy taking part in sports, or they prefer to spend time with their friends, or they are not interested in reading. In fact, although some pupils show a great interest in books a number of them develop an aversion to reading. There is a remarkable variation in the reading habits of pupils from the same school.

There is a wealth of information on this topic of reading, the benefits of reading and a variety of reading material is available to Indian pupils, but how much of this material are they reading? If they are not reading then why not? **This awareness of the fact that different pupils have different reading habits forms the basis of this research and gives rise to the question of what causes differences in the reading habits of pupils.**

The next step is to investigate the problem the researcher became aware of.

1.2.2 Exploration of the problem

It is very important to acknowledge that among Phoenix youth there are avid readers, both during and after the period of formal education, but that at the same time there are others who are uninterested, even hostile. It is the latter group that must be lured by the magic of reading (Ngendane

1989:110). It has been observed that poor reading habits in the secondary school are a major obstacle to later academic success in life in general. As a result of this it is crucial that each pupil develops and builds healthy reading habits as early as possible in the primary school and that these are carried through to the secondary school.

According to Neuman (1986:325) the development of reading skills and the nurturing of reading as a lifelong activity continue to be challenging goals for reading professionals. Although there have been recent national gains in functional literacy, educators are currently confronted with a new phenomenon, 'alliteracy'. Alliterate persons know how to read but they choose not to do so. Research has shown that there is a decline in the time spent in leisure reading. The California Department of Education (1980) polled 233 000 sixth graders and reported that seventy percent rarely read for pleasure (Neuman 1986:335).

Although there is widespread agreement about the importance of encouraging students to develop voluntary reading habits, a substantial number of children do not choose to read either for pleasure or for information. A study by Greaney (1980) revealed that fifth-grade students used only 5.4 percent of their leisure time reading and twenty-two percent reported not reading at all. Developmental reading programmes are often heavily skills-orientated, providing little opportunity for students to read for pleasure (Lamme 1976; Spiegel 1981). Such programmes could be one

explanation for children's infrequent voluntary reading (Morrow 1985:1).

The need for peer approval and an interest in reading may conflict when the pursuit of the interest makes the teenager who reads and uses a library the odd one out, and may bring with it the risk of being ridiculed with a nickname such as 'bookworm' or other 'derogatory' epithet (Marshall 1977:38). Teenagers always want to be part of a group. They do not like to be called names by their friends. They would avoid going to the library or reading books if this practice resulted in their being rejected by their friends.

Today's teenager is bombarded with stimuli from the various instantaneous communications media: radio, television, films, magazines, newspapers, picture stories, comics, shows and theatre, all of which alter the perceptual habits of their users. Youngsters' lives are fully organised with sporting activities, homework, clubs and other social engagements so that there is little time left for reading (Fricke 1977:39).

According to Horn (1987:22) there is even in Norway some concern about the changing reading habits of children, believed mainly to be caused by the influence of new and more easily consumed media, such as television and video. Teachers, librarians and parents are concerned about the time these media take away from childhood, turning children into passive consumers of impressions and information without stimulating their imagination and

creativity.

According to Pauline Heather (1980:132) young people's reading habits are obviously affected by their leisure interests and cannot be studied in isolation. The decline in book reading at the age of thirteen and fourteen is accompanied by a decline in television viewing (Whitehead et al 1977). Therefore television does not appear to be the main distraction from reading for young people.

According to Poutney (1986:30) an ILEA publication, *Fiction Resources for English*, gives, in an article called The Twelve who Don't, a summary of the findings of a number of small scale surveys: the average number of books read voluntarily by each child in a month falls from roughly three books at 10+ years to roughly two books at 12+ years to about 1.5 books at 14+ years. Between thirty percent and forty five percent of the children aged fourteen or older do not seem to read books of their own choice.

Poutney (1986:30), quoting *Focusing on the Young*, a study produced by the Newspaper Society, says this about book readership: the proportion of those who read books every day at home declines from forty percent at ten years to thirty-four percent at twelve years. Overall, more girls from eight years to fifteen years (thirty-eight percent) read books every day than do boys. The number of young people reading books outside school continues to decline from twenty-six percent of thirteen year olds to seventeen percent

of fifteen year olds.

Young people who cannot read at all are far outnumbered by young people who can read but will not. Motivating students' interest in reading in the schools poses a two-sided challenge: rekindling a desire to read in those who have already established a pattern of avoiding reading situations and igniting a lifelong reading interest in children learning to read (Holbrook 1983:29). According to Holbrook (1983:29) the reluctance to read could be due to poor reading skills, or else reading never attracted the pupil's attention enough for him or her to develop adequate skills. Beverly Farr (1981) suggests that emphasis on isolated skills during reading instruction precipitates reading problems (Holbrook 1983:29).

According to Brown (1982), Gorman et al (1982) and Whitehead et al (1977) girls are more likely to be voluntary readers and to read a greater quantity of books than boys (Carter 1986:3).

The younger the child, the greater the likelihood of being a voluntary reader. Heather found that people read fewer books at fifteen years old than when they were thirteen (Carter 1986:3).

According to Whitehead et al (1977) and Ingham (1981) small families in which the head of the household has a non-manual occupation are more likely to produce voluntary readers. Other conditions which are likely to

produce voluntary readers are: if one or both parents is a voluntary reader, the young person has had stories read to him/her, and the family and child owns many books (Carter 1986:4).

Carter (1986:5) states that the reasons for not reading or for disliking books are frequently associated with difficulties in reading. This is particularly true of boys and amongst younger children.

According to Morrow (1983:221) one explanation for the low level of voluntary reading may be that developmental reading programmes are often skills-orientated and provide little opportunity for students to read for enjoyment.

Morgan (1980:159) notes the interrelationships of students' reading skills and reading habits and television viewing are complex and have spawned two popular arguments. Some claim that, by bringing the entire world into the living room, television has created a brighter, more aware generation, with greater knowledge of the world and its people, and with an expanded sense of history and culture. Television may even stimulate students to read, at least about what they see on the screen. On the other hand more vocal are those who blame the medium for problems ranging from a stifling of creativity to illiteracy. In this view television has inhibited intellectual development on a broad social level; it has discouraged or even eliminated reading, and prevented the acquisition and practice of scholastic discipline.

It is sad to notice that there is such great variation in the reading habits of teenagers of similar ages in the Phoenix area. Many of them are becoming reluctant readers. The majority of these pupils have developed a 'don't care' attitude and seem to be quite content to grow up into passive beings. By not reading they are not developing their character to the fullest. Their lax attitude towards reading may affect their performance in school. This research into the factors affecting the reading habits of the pupils of Phoenix is necessary in order to find out **why some pupils are avid readers and others are reluctant readers.**

1.2.3 Statement of the problem

There is a variation in the reading habits of pupils of similar age which may lead to differing levels of academic development in pupils and hence give rise to the question of what causes the variation in reading habits. **The question at the basis of this research is why some pupils who have the ability to read shy away from reading.** It also presents the possibility of whether reading habits can be changed and improved.

1.2.4 Research methodology

This investigation will be based on a literature survey as well as on the empirical method of study.

The literature study will consist of a study of books, periodical articles, reviews by writers both from South Africa and from abroad in order to

make comparisons and to relate them to the present study on reading and reading habits/attitudes. These studies will help the researcher to isolate problems, determine the need to collect information about the problems and to find possible methods of assembling the information. This survey will assist the researcher to give validity to her investigation.

In the **empirical research** the concepts and facts derived from the literature study will be used to draw up a questionnaire on the factors relating to reading habits. The questionnaire will be applied to the secondary school pupils (standard six to ten) from the Phoenix area to test what variables cause variation in reading habits.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to determine the causes of variation in reading habits between pupils in the secondary school phase. This will be done by means of a literature study as well as an empirical investigation of the pupils in Phoenix. If the causes of these differences can be ascertained it may be possible to help the pupils to gain a greater interest in reading. Better reading habits may lead to better academic performance.

In the literature study attention will be given to the phenomenon of reading as well as to the factors that may influence it. It is necessary to understand the reading phenomenon and the reading process as this will assist the

reader to get a better perspective of reading.

A further aim of this study is to propose some guidelines and recommendations to parents and teachers in order to assist them to improve and inculcate healthy reading habits amongst pupils in the Phoenix area.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The underlying reason for this investigation is to enlighten parents and teachers on the possible factors that influence the reading habits of secondary school pupils. This will assist them in moulding and developing healthy reading habits in all pupils. Teachers as well as parents will thus be better equipped to provide guidance to pupils in their voluntary reading in order to promote the pupils' intellectual, emotional, social and cultural development.

No curriculum can cover all that is necessary or even possible for a child to learn. One of the best ways in which children expand their knowledge is by reading; therefore, it is vital that children develop this love for reading. In order for this to materialise it is essential that parents and teachers are aware of the factors that foster healthy reading habits.

The love of reading is not always spontaneous and the love for good literature is not inherent in a teenager. It has to be nurtured (Fricke

1977:40). This task can be hastened if teacher librarians, teachers and parents are aware of the reading habits of pupils. This knowledge will also assist school and public librarians to equip their libraries with the type of books that will appeal to pupils.

1.5 EXPLANATION OF TERMS

There is a need to define the terms that are essential to the study in order to give the reader a clear concept of the problem and the approach to this investigation.

1.5.1 Voluntary reading

According to the *ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science* (1983:101) voluntary reading or free reading is done by students in college or school, voluntarily, as an addition to course requirements.

In this study voluntary reading refers to leisure reading, that is, reading done of one's own free will. This excludes assignment reading.

1.5.2 Reading habits

According to Snyder (1981:65-66) reading habits are defined as those continuous activities performed when searching for books to read, and include such factors as book source and recommendation.

According to the *International Encyclopedia of Education Research and Studies* (1985:4207) reading habits refer to the tendency of people to voluntarily seek reading material and to devote time to reading.

For the purpose of this study reading habits refer to pupils voluntarily seeking material and wanting to read.

1.5.3 Social status

According to the *Dictionary of Sociology* (1968:180) social status is a position occupied by a person of family or kinship group in a social system relative to others. This determines rights, duties and other behaviours, including the nature and extent of the relationships with persons of other statuses.

In this study social status refers to the position occupied by the family in relation to the background in which they live.

1.5.4 Socio-economic status (SES)

Theodorson and Theodorson (1970:399) state that the term socio-economic status (SES) is used to deal with stratification in a society without the need to assume that there are distinct social classes. Social characteristics (family background, education, prestige of occupation) and economic status (income) are combined into one SES rating.

According to the *International Encyclopedia of Education Research and Studies* (1985:2421) the socio-economic status of the home has generally shown a moderate relationship to the extent of reading done. Low SES is associated with less reading, and this gap seems to increase with age. A low income would tend to deprive homes of reading resources. Socio economic status may also imply a level of commitment to reading. There is evidence that process variables, what parents do, are important in the formation of attitudes toward reading.

In this study socio-economic status refers to one's economic status in relation to the social characteristics of the parent.

1.5.5 Reluctant reader

According to Bergquist (1982:21) reluctant readers are formed and not born. He goes on to state that many students are under the influence of the reading teacher puppeteer. They read on topics and do assignments on what the teacher is interested in rather than on their own interests. This results in a reluctant reader (Bergquist 1982:17).

According to Landy (1979:5) non readers or reluctant readers are those who read two or fewer books a year.

Schell and Burns (1972:82) state that the reluctant reader is a student who is capable of reading at his/her grade and age level or above, but who does

not enjoy reading. His/her characteristics are as follows: s/he shuns reading; s/he ignores reading tasks; s/he seeks activities of all other kinds in preference to reading; s/he tries to compensate for not reading by developing other skills such as listening; and s/he intensely dislikes reading.

In this study the reluctant reader refers to the pupil who has the ability to read but s/he shies away from reading for a variety of reasons.

1.5.6 Avid reader

According to Landy (1979:5) readers or avid readers are defined as those who read two books a week or more.

In this study an avid reader refers to the pupil who reads widely of his/her own accord.

1.5.7 Alliteracy

Alliterate persons know how to read but choose not to do so. Turner (1992:50) states that alliteracy is a growing problem among young people.

Morrow (1986:159) states that alliteracy is a new threat that involves children and adults who are able to read, but have little interest in reading and therefore do not choose to read.

For the purposes of this study alliteracy is applied to secondary school

pupils who know how to read but choose not to read.

1.5.8 Adolescence

According to the *World Book Dictionary* (1987:29) adolescence is the period of growth from childhood to adulthood.

According to Clive and McBride (1983:3) adolescence may be defined in various ways. Some authorities call it the period from the first signs of puberty to sexual, physical and intellectual maturity; others say simply that it is that entire period from the pubescent growth spurt to maturity. Adolescence is referred to as a period of transition. Adolescents gradually leave the world of childhood to enter adulthood. The process may be lengthy, even traumatic; nevertheless, it is a transition from one established pattern of life to another.

Rapoport and Rapoport (1980:12) state that adolescence is taken to be roughly between the ages of thirteen to nineteen. The main preoccupation in this phase is with the search for 'identity', that is, finding out that one is a distinct individual and not just a pale reflection of one's parents.

For the purposes of this study the concept of adolescence refers to secondary school pupils between the ages of twelve and eighteen years. Adolescents are pupils in this age group who are undergoing physical, psychological and social development.

1.5.9 The suburb of Phoenix and the secondary school reader

Phoenix is a largely residential township that was developed to solve the housing shortage experienced by the Indian community in Durban. It is twenty-five kilometres north of Durban and adjacent to KwaMashu and Verulam.

Phoenix developed as a 'dormitory township' in that for most of the residents, it was almost purely a place of residence - social, economic and other activities occurred outside of Phoenix. Recently a light industrial area and several shopping complexes were developed, thus providing employment for a small proportion of the population. The majority of the people residing in Phoenix were victims of the South African Government's resettlement programme under the Group Areas Act and/or the Slums Clearance Act.

According to the *Phoenix Community Profile* (Phoenix Child Welfare 1982:2) the township of Phoenix was built to house people of the low income group. In 1976 the Umgeni River near Durban flooded its banks and created havoc among shack dwellers who had leased land from the Durban City Council. The result was that at a time of crisis people were moved to Phoenix into homes that were not fully completed, there were no schools, no transport systems and no shopping areas.

These beginnings had serious implications for the township, namely: the

community is generally of the lower socio-economic group; there is a lower standard of living; the community periodically experiences major problems such as evictions, unemployment, high rents, high transport costs and low wages.

There are fifty-four schools, both primary and secondary, within the community areas. Tertiary education is only available through institutions in the greater Durban area. A number of religious institutions such as temples, churches and mosques have been built through community initiatives. The Durban City Council operates ante- and post-natal clinics. The Phoenix Community Health Centre was opened in 1986 by the State Health Department. Several general practitioners offer medical services in the area and in 1988, a private hospital was opened. The closest provincial hospitals are in Central Durban, Chatsworth and Verulam.

In Phoenix sub-economic to economic housing caters for a range of economic classes. Income is the criteria in the allocation of homes. A small number of homes developed by private enterprise cater for higher income families. According to the study carried out by the Community Research Unit of Phoenix Child Welfare in 1986, sixty-one percent of households were below the household subsistence level and thirty-nine percent of the households were above the household subsistence level (Phoenix Community Profile 1982:3).

In the light of the above description of Phoenix the researcher will look at the secondary school reader (twelve to eighteen years) in the Phoenix area. He/she displays the following characteristics peculiar to his/her immediate surroundings: he/she has to contend with physical, social, emotional, psychological, family, and environmental problems - these are overcrowding, poverty, lack of facilities, family problems, gangs, drugs and alcohol, peer group pressure, lack of parental guidance or control; they were not read stories when they were young with the result that they have not developed this love of reading and have not realised the value of literature; they do not have ready access to public libraries as they live far away and they do not have transport to get to the library; many of them prefer to watch television rather than read a book; and several of them have not mastered the skills of reading (Phoenix Child and Family Welfare Society 1990:2-3).

1.6 PROGRAMME OF STUDY

Chapter One was designed to give a general background to the problem under investigation. It includes an analysis of the problem, aims of the study, significance of the study, an explanation of terms and programme of study.

Chapter Two deals with reading as a phenomenon - concentrating on the value of reading, the concept of reading, the reading process and reading

in the secondary school.

Chapter Three deals with the factors influencing reading habits. An attempt will be made to identify the possible factors affecting reading habits. Research studies from the available literature on each of these factors will be outlined.

Chapter Four deals with the research design - the purpose and research problem of the empirical investigation; media of investigation; justification of the method, purpose and design of the questionnaire; data collection; pilot survey; administering the questionnaire; discussing the hypotheses; selecting the sample and research method; processing and analysis of data.

Chapter Five deals with the findings and Chapter Six with conclusions and recommendations.

1.7 CONCLUSION

In the foregoing discussion an introductory orientation was given. The problem, the research methodology, the aims of the study, the definition of terms and the study were stated.

In the next chapter an intensive study on reading as a phenomenon will be done because it is essential to have a thorough knowledge of the reading

process so that one knows exactly what it entails. This information will give one a better understanding of the problem under investigation, and will assist the reader to understand why it is important for the pupil to master the skill of reading to help him/her to cultivate healthy reading habits.

CHAPTER 2

READING AS A PHENOMENON

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the phenomenon of reading will be discussed in greater detail. Attention will be given to the value, concept and process of reading, and reading in the secondary school. These aspects of reading are studied because they form a vital part in the development of specific reading habits and attitudes.

2.2 VALUE OF READING

In our present day society reading is one of the most important skills that has to be learnt; it affects every aspect of people's daily lives. According to Strang (1978:61) reading proficiency is the royal road to knowledge; it is essential to success in all academic subjects. The following statement taken from the introduction to the report of the Carnegie Conference of Reading Experts (1962:1) sums up the importance of the act of reading: Reading is the most important subject to be learned by children; a child will learn little else in today's world if he does not learn to read properly (Strang 1978:61).

The effects of good or poor reading ability can be seen in many ways. According to Brown (1982:4) the ability to read affects a student's success or failure in his/her classes. It has a profound effect on how much s/he is able to learn in his/her classes, how s/he feels about him/herself as a student, and the courses s/he will be able to take in advanced grades and secondary school. To some extent it will influence the classmates with whom an individual will be placed and the friends s/he is likely to make. It will determine whether to pursue further training or education after the completion of high school and, in fact, whether the student is even likely to finish high school. Reading ability plays a role in determining the occupations from which people may choose and, therefore, the salary they will be able to earn, who their occupational associates and friends may be and, consequently, where they may live. Reading ability influences the quantity and quality of reading materials likely to be in a person's home, and it is thus likely to have an effect on how successful his/her children will be in learning to read.

Steinbruch (1966), like Brown (1982:4), also feels that the ability to read and comprehend is an essential, if not the most important, basic qualification for mastering life in our "information society". Measurement and analysis of reading comprehension is still being debated despite the research carried out for several decades by psychologists, educators and reading specialists.

One of the major goals of teaching English at secondary school is the development of mature readers. According to Kahn (1983:357) a mature reader may be defined generally as one who independently can read many kinds of material critically, effectively and efficiently.

Reading is in fact one of the most vital weapons a learner possesses for tackling his/her academic tasks. According to Ayodele (1984:115) these skills manifest themselves in the learner's reading speed and reading comprehension. The faster one reads the more one is able to cover and the higher one's comprehension ability. More material can be absorbed and retained. It is for this reason that efforts to improve pupils' language ability need to be intensified so that pupils may cope with the vast and ever increasing quantities of learning materials.

According to Flood and Lapp (1990:495) several studies have indicated that few children or adults choose reading as a recreational activity. Potts (1976:17) states that literacy which should be the ultimate objective of the reading process is seen to be of importance at both the personal and societal level. Potts (1976:180) goes on to state that literature provides the widest and arguably the richest source of imaginative adventures and experiences, but a love of literature, an awareness of its many delights and surprises must be carefully nurtured and cultivated; it cannot be left to chance.

Dupart's idea is very similar to Potts'. According to Dupart (1985:502) the

idea of pleasure in reading comes quickly with books for small children, from the beauty of the pictures and via the parents who read such books at night before the child goes to sleep. This groundwork in pleasure in reading will last a lifetime: identification, projection of the affective fantasy and emotional experience are all things reading can do to enrich life in a unique manner.

Since reading is one of the basic tools necessary to successfully master formal learning, a lack of ability to use skilled reading effectively increases the prospect of inefficient learning in other subjects. Pupils who master the art of skilled reading are usually successful academically and in all spheres of life.

According to Morrow (1986:161) students identified as voluntary readers in elementary and middle grades tend to achieve well in general reading ability. Students who show voluntary interest in books are rated higher by teachers on school performance than are pupils with a low interest in books. These pupils score higher in tests, work habits, social and emotional maturity and language art skills. Bloom (1964) states that reading habits form early in life, and, by sixth grade, a person's characteristics as a reader have been pretty much established for life (Morrow 1986:161). Clark (1976), Durkin (1966) and Huey (1908) also observed that exposure to books and related early experiences have been associated with academic success in school since the early days of research on reading (Feitelson and

Goldstein 1986:929).

Technological know-how, intellectual stimulation and growth, leisure, emotional release, cultural identification and transfer of information are recognised advantages and uses of reading. Politically, democratic processes depend on the universal ability to read and citizens need to read widely and deeply in order to keep themselves informed of what is happening around them. Morality is an outgrowth of reading.

Functional reading is reading which is undertaken to provide information necessary to solve specific problems in the various subjects; it is of considerable importance. Potts (1976:18) states that the importance of functional reading should not relegate recreational reading to a position of secondary importance. Reading is one of the most pleasurable ways of obtaining vicarious experience, and despite television, radio and films, it still has an important role to play in providing a leisure pursuit. Its popularity is evidenced by the wide sale of paperbacks and magazines.

According to Spiegel (1985:14-15) recreational reading has three qualities that should help to ensure that children use context clues successfully to identify words. Firstly, because the reading material is self-selected, children want to understand what is read. They will be predisposed to use context clues to gain meaning because they are reading by choice, not by force. Secondly, because the reading material is self selected, chances are

that the children can actually read the material. Thirdly, recreational reading is a natural way to develop the use of context clues, because the readers choose the books themselves on topics with which they are familiar. They therefore understand what is going on and many of the context clues will be meaningful.

Learning to read is one of the earliest and foremost goals in an individual's schooling. According to Arbutnot and Sutherland (Morrow 1986:160) many early childhood educators emphasise the need for planned pleasurable experiences with literature activities that promote voluntary reading as well as aid in the development of other reading skills. According to Morrow (1986:160) there is a growing body of evidence that early exposure to literature and related activities, the kinds of experiences that lead youngsters to choose to read on their own, can help their educational growth in several ways.

Reading activities lead to quicker development of sophisticated language structure. Pupils accumulate background knowledge to supplement their own everyday experiences. Their interest in learning to read and their sense of story structure both increase. Children who have the privilege of exposure to literature early in their lives often begin to read early.

Regular use of literary activities in a youngster's instruction correlates with success in reading. There is a strong link between voluntary reading and

general achievement in reading ability. Classroom time given to activities in voluntary reading allows pupils to practice skills learned in direct instruction.

People read books and other resources in order to learn more about their occupations or hobbies. Reading, together with radio and television, tends to be the primary source of information on foreign issues, urban problems and cultural values. Reading can satisfy intellectual and political demands. Students use reading to acquire knowledge which is related to scholastic success and in many societies people view this as the primary motive for reading. Reading also provides a source of pleasure. This is so especially for children who derive a great deal of pleasure from identifying with fictional characters.

According to Fricke (1977:39) the pleasure and benefits of reading are not instantly apparent and it is only through perseverance and the sampling of many types of books that the reader feels that s/he is gaining something. The book will satisfy different psychological needs at different stages of our lives.

The written word passes on humankind's discoveries and inventions from one generation to the next. Fricke (1977:40) states that reading stretches the imagination and will transport the reader to unknown lands and introduce him/her to fascinating people. Books can provide an escape from a dull

environment, they will give authority to one's thinking, help one to understand strange situations and to formulate ideas and opinions. They can help young people in their search for character identification. The reader finds that his/her intellect is stretched and stimulated. In fact while reading, one is exercising the intellect.

Reading helps in developing different thought processes. Winfield (1984:26) states that thinking could be classified into four processes, namely: fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration. A person who responds with many ideas and solutions to a given situation is developing fluency. He or she asks many questions. Winfield (1984:26) goes further to state that when children acquire flexibility they respond in new ways and think of new uses for material. They learn to change ideas and materials into new forms. Original thinking is displayed by unique responses and a departure from the standard approach. Winfield (1984:27) states that mysteries often invite readers to think originally as they weigh evidence, discover clues and read critically.

According to Winfield (1984:27) in the elaboration process, readers add to ideas through expansion and embellishment. Books in which patterns are established invite young readers to expand on a basic idea. She further states that although books cannot teach thinking skills, they can be the vehicle for practising them. It is important to select books with a content that reinforces these skills.

Adolescents can identify with characters from books. According to Moran and Steinfirst (1985:117) adolescents are struggling to realise that they are competent human beings, capable of carrying on a life independent of their families; they are trying to determine just where they fit into this confusing world. It is, therefore not so surprising that young people may very well find comfort in the repetitious plots of the likes of the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew series and guidance from the strengths of the series characters who, despite the silliness of it all, are competent, autonomous young men and women, successfully poised on the brink of adulthood.

According to Mellon (1990:224) teenagers read in their spare time for two main reasons: entertainment and information. The entertainment derived from books is described in a variety of ways, namely: reading takes one to other places; helps one to solve problems; makes one feel better when one is sad and helps one escape from the problems and worries of the real world. Teens who read for information were interested in satisfying their curiosity.

Mellon (1990:227) found in her survey of leisure reading of teens that 98% of the eight graders surveyed...felt reading was important...to get a job, to know what's going on in the world, and to be successful in life.

According to Green and Kruger (1990:337) the adolescent girl has a deep-seated need to belong in the peer group. Reading helps with this. Realistic

teenage fiction books reflect this task in three ways. Firstly, there are the books which deal with relating to the group as a whole. Group dynamics such as the way individuals in the group are sometimes abused or rejected are reflected. Secondly, there is the loner who is not so dependent upon the peer group for emotional security. Thirdly, friendships with individuals within the group are shown. Some of the real life problems which are themes in realistic fiction are: the role of the best friend, the meaning of true friendship, the changing role of the boy who is a friend, the negative influence of close friends, the outgrowing of one friend by another and the way in which friends cope with competitiveness. Adolescent readers identify with the teenage characters and learn from their experience. In this way the books provide developmental bibliotherapy for readers engaged in the task of developing a satisfactory role within the peer group. This reading can be of bibliotherapeutic value in helping the reader cope successfully with the developmental task.

Teenage fiction helps pupils to be more aware of everyday problems. Reading can also have a therapeutic effect on antisocial behaviour. Similar to Green's and Kruger's views, Heys (1986:34) noted that it is far better for David to read of Danny walking down the street kicking and breaking bottles than for David to smash those bottles himself.

According to Harris and Smith (1980:83) our purpose in helping a child develop a taste for good literature is not to make a snob of him or her but

to enable him or her to sort the meaningful from the empty, the rich from the bland. Whatever reading one does should be put in proper perspective. This is possible only through accurate analysis and evaluation of literature. Good literature helps the reader to understand him/herself better, those around him/her and his/her surroundings.

According to Morrow (1986:161) in all these benefits - cultural, political, moral, educational - the obvious assumption is that the well-educated person will choose to read because it is socially, individually and educationally beneficial to do so. We teach youngsters to read in the belief that reading is necessary to their fullest participation in a civilised society, and that they will become readers by choice, not by coercion, in order to realise all the benefits that the ability to read brings with it. Therefore it is necessary to promote voluntary reading amongst our pupils.

2.3 DISCUSSION OF THE CONCEPT 'READING'

Derek Rowntree (1981:244) states that reading implies not merely the ability to recognise and say aloud the words printed on a page but also the ability to comprehend them and say what they mean. As the first of the three R's (reading, writing and arithmetic) reading has been the key subject in the curriculum for young children for centuries, and continues to be an area of considerable research activity and controversy.

According to Brown (1982:3) the ability to read is critical to the success of students in school and important for a satisfying life for adults. It is essential firstly to define the act of reading. Brown (1982:18) states that reading is a part of communication and a successful reader must see, perceive, recognise, comprehend and react to the author's message. Beginning readers must use their higher cognitive abilities to analyse and recognise words in print. More capable readers recognise words automatically, leaving their conscious cognitive thought free to consider the author's line of thought. The effectiveness with which a memory may be stored depends on the depth at which the word is processed, the richness of its encoding, how well it is condensed and interrelated, and the attention and arousal of the learner.

Beck and Carpenter (1986:1098) state that reading consists of a complex set of coordinated processes that include perceptual, linguistic and conceptual operations ranging from encoding letters on the printed page to determining what or who is being referred to by a particular phrase or word while following the structure of the text. These processes operate on a variety of mental structures including the representations of letters, words, phrases, clauses, sentences and entire texts. Current theories stress the evidence for functional parallelism. The fluent reader must compute in parallel many different kinds of information in a relatively short time frame.

According to Strang (1978:65) reading is more than seeing words clearly,

more than pronouncing printed words correctly, more than recognising the meaning of isolated words. Reading requires you to think, feel and imagine. Effective reading is purposeful. The use one makes of one's reading largely determines what one reads, why one reads and how one reads.

Hittleman's (1978:5) definition of reading is a verbal process interrelated with thinking and with all other communication abilities - listening, speaking and writing. Reading is the process of reconstructing an author's ideas. Learning to read essentially develops from learning to use and understand language. He goes on to state that learning to read adequately is the application of existing thinking strategies to written ideas. Therefore the cultivation and nurturing of the cognitive learning processes are integral parts of any programme to develop the reading process.

McGarry (1991:74) states that we read by phrases, words or letters according to the reader's familiarity with the text, his/her competence in reading and the difficulty of the material read. McGarry (1991:74) goes on to state that for some researchers reading is essentially the skill to decode symbols; for others, it is a means of decoding the meaning behind symbols and reconstructing the text in collaboration with the author. In this deeper view reading plays a fundamental role in promoting children's critical and imaginative thinking together with their intellectual and emotional development.

Zintz and Maggart (1984:6) state that reading is decoding written words so that they can be produced orally, understanding the language of the author of a printed passage, and the ability to anticipate meaning in lines of print so that the reader is not concerned with the mechanical details but with grasping ideas from groups of words that convey meaning.

Rumelhart (1985:722) states that reading is the process of understanding written language. It begins with a flutter of patterns on the retina and ends (when successful) with a definite idea about the author's message.

Thus reading is obviously a multifaceted process, a process that, like a chameleon, changes its nature from one developmental stage to the next. At one stage, the major performances may be visual discrimination among forms and words and the learning of sufficient common words to enable the reader to begin the true act of reading. Thereafter the process may shift to one involving a number of thinking processes, namely, recalling, interpreting, judging and evaluating. During these stages the reader's success is conditioned by such factors as his/her language development, his/her readiness for the school's objectives as determined by his/her home background and the accuracy of his/her perceptual behaviours in both visual and auditory discrimination (Spache and Spache 1977:3).

From the above discussion it can be said that reading is essentially the active process of reconstructing an author's ideas. In order to read

effectively one has to learn how to use and understand language. Reading is a way of communication. The reader must be able to see, perceive, comprehend and react to the writer's message. It is essential now to look at what the reading process entails.

2.4 THE READING PROCESS

A person who is reading generally needs a comfortable and undisturbed environment. To read is time consuming; it requires spare time. It is an antisocial activity as the reader has to withdraw from his/her fellows in order to concentrate. It takes a great deal more intellectual effort to comprehend than does a film or television show. According to Fricke (1977:39) the book is passive and the reader will have to take the initial action but s/he will be rewarded by a quiet inner satisfaction.

Caldwell and Recht (1990:561) state that reading instruction has changed dramatically in the last ten years. One hears less and less about developing skill mastery and more and more about helping students to become strategic readers.

Pearson (1985:736) describes the reading teacher of the past as a manager who provides ample opportunities for children of varying abilities to practice skills. As a result, programmes for disabled readers emphasised a 'skill and drill' format, whereby the role of the teacher was primarily that

of matching materials to the levels and skill deficits of the students, assigning specific tasks and correcting students' work. He suggests that the teacher take a more active role in which practice is augmented by teacher modelling, guided practice and substantive feedback.

Like Caldwell and Recht, Meyers (1991:259) states that research has revealed that over the past fifteen years our understanding of the reading process has changed dramatically. According to Meyers (1991:259) no longer is reading perceived as the thoughtless application of isolated skill by the reader. On the contrary, recent research reveals that reading constitutes a strategic meaning acquisition process, necessitating awareness and control of very involved reasoning processes.

Reading comprehension instruction, according to Maria (1990:3), means helping children to understand the written text. If they understand what they are reading this will lead to a feeling of success which will contribute to a positive attitude towards reading. To be able to do this it is essential to consider the nature of the reading process.

According to Rost (1989:89) it has been argued repeatedly that skilled readers have used particular sub-skills of reading comprehension so often and simultaneously over the years that originally distinct sub-skills have now, to a great extent, become amalgamated and can no longer be activated separately. Through instruction and practice of each of the sub-skills

children automatically acquire the skill of reading. According to Maria (1990:3) reading sub-skills must be integrated, and the composite skill, reading, must be practised in order to achieve fluency.

Cognitive psychology has brought about a change in our view of the comprehension process. According to Whitehead (1986:59) prior to 1970 comprehension was defined in terms of building a mental model of the text - a passive receptive view. Today we realise that the text never provides the reader with all the information required for comprehension; readers actively construct meaning using prior knowledge and comprehending strategies to achieve their purpose. Therefore, comprehension today is regarded as an active, constructive and reader-based process.

Thus as a result of the great deal of research on reading that has taken place over the past twenty years, the reading process can now be viewed as one which involves comprehension and decoding as integrally related. This process in which the reader persistently searches for meaning is characterised as an interactive, constructive, holistic and language process (Maria 1990:4).

2.4.1 Reading as an interactive process

Rumelhart's (1985) interactive model assumes that different processing levels mutually affect one another and that outcomes from both lower and higher level analyses are combined to determine the best interpretation of

the input (Schwantes 1991:336).

The interactive model is a model of the reading process as it takes place in the mature reader. According to Maria (1990:4-5) in Rumelhart's model, the reader processes factors like letter features and sounds (referred to as bottom-up factors) at the same time as factors like his or her knowledge of the topic of the text and the situation in which it is read (referred to as top-down factors). This interactive model explains that reading involves simultaneous parallel processing of both bottom-up and top-down factors. According to this model the credit given to certain factors whether top-down or bottom-up will be determined by the characteristics of the reader (decoding ability), the text (familiarity of the topic) and the context of the environment in which the reading takes place. Therefore the importance of top-down and bottom-up factors will differ from reader to reader, text to text and situation to situation.

Kamil (1978:76) states that the interactive nature of the reading process is illustrated by what Rumelhart suggests are the foundations of his model. He believes:

- Perception of letters often depends on the surrounding letters.
- Perception of words depends on the syntactic and semantic environments in which they are encountered.
- Perception of syntax depends on the semantic context in which word strings are encountered.

- Interpretation of meaning of what is read depends on the general context in which the text is encountered.

Rumelhart sees reading as both a perceptual and a cognitive process which bridges and blurs these traditional processes. Syntactic, semantic and pragmatic processes interact in complex ways during the process of reading (Rumelhart 1985:722).

The "bottom-up" model of Gough (1972) states reading proceeds letter by letter to word formation and then to phonemic representations. Most of Gough's discussion focuses on word recognition and subsequent lexical interpretation. Higher-level comprehension processes are not discussed at length. Gough specifically rejects "top-down" processing as he does not believe that readers can use guessing strategies to facilitate reading (Kamil 1978:70).

The "top-down" model of Goodman (1967) consists of three "proficiency levels" roughly corresponding to the skill level of readers. Goodman maintains that at the highest level of proficiency the focus is always on meaning, decoding is 'automatic' and reading is structured by oral language (Kamil 1978:73). In "top-down" models the reader's prior knowledge, his/her inherent understanding of language and how it operates plays a vital role in the extraction of meaning. The graphic inputs provide the reader with the opportunity to formulate hypotheses about what the meaning of the

printed material might be.

Beck and Carpenter (1986:1098) state that Goodman's (1967) theory of skilled reading proposes that fluent readers are good because they use their linguistic skills and general knowledge to guess words that are coming up in the text. The idea is that such readers read quickly because they minimise the processing of visual information by sampling the text to confirm their guesses.

While the above models discussed have focused on reading as a word recognition process several theorists have attempted to explain the interaction of comprehension and decoding factors.

The first reading model to use the concept of automaticity is that of La Berge and Samuels. One of the prime issues of La Berge and Samuel's (1985:689) study of reading was "to determine how the processing of component sub-skills become automatic". Automaticity theory assumes that reading is divided into two general skills, namely, word recognition of decoding and comprehension (Kamil 1978:70). Attention is required to perform either skill. A fixed amount of attention is available for these processes. Until decoding is "automated", that is, until it requires little or no attention, comprehension suffers. As decoding comes to require less attention, more attention can be diverted to comprehension processes. There are three stages that are strictly relevant to reading in this model. These are

visual features, detectors and recognisers, phonological interpreters and semantic interpreters (Kamil 1987).

This model has undergone several developments since its first publication. It provides enough information on the comprehension process and hence it helps us to understand better what happens in semantic memory. Semantic memory is involved in the recall of general knowledge. According to Samuels and Kamil (1984:205) in a reading situation, semantic memory is used when we apply our knowledge of letter sound correspondences and sound blending to decode unusual words or when we read and understand what we have read.

Stanovich (1980) offers a more formal model of the reading process and he integrates concepts from a variety of sources. His model is called the interactive compensatory model. Stanovich (1980:32) states that interactive models of reading appear to provide a more accurate conceptualisation of reading performance than do strictly top-down and bottom-up models. He has tried to include information on skilled and unskilled reading in his model. The central idea of his theory is that a process at any level can compensate for deficiencies at any other level so that a deficit in any knowledge source results in a heavier reliance on other knowledge sources, regardless of their level in the processing hierarchy (Maria 1990:6).

According to Samuel and Kamil (1984:213) the Stanovich model is

interactive in the sense that any stage, regardless of its position in the system, may communicate with any other stage, and it is compensatory in the sense that any reader may rely on better developed knowledge sources when particular, and usually more commonly used, knowledge sources are temporarily weak.

Although all the models discussed thus far recognise comprehension as an integral part of the reading process they do not explain how comprehension occurs. Kintsch (Samuels & Kamil 1984:216) and his colleagues and students have developed a reading model which focuses strictly on comprehension processes. This model assumes that comprehension is composed of several complex processes that can operate either in serial or parallel.

Kintsch (Maria 1990:7) stresses the importance of both top-down and bottom-up processes. Kintsch specifies top-down factors in greater detail and distinguishes between comprehension as recall and as learning from text. Kintsch suggests that one aspect of top-down processing involves the establishment of a coherent representation of the meaning of the text both at the local and global levels. This text base is sufficient for recall and is necessary but not sufficient for learning. Inferences are made when the text is integrated with the reader's knowledge system. This integration is influenced by factors such as the reader's goals for reading and world knowledge about text structure.

2.4.2 Reading as a constructive process

Reading is viewed as a constructive process in which inference by the reader and the reader's prior knowledge play a central role. In the case of reading as a constructive process the reader is no longer passive and receptive but active and constructive in the communication process between the reader and the writer. When the reader reads he/she reconstructs the writer's message based on his/her own ability and prior knowledge.

According to Tierney (1990:370) in the 1970s a kind of cognitive revolution occurred which brought to prominence what has been termed a constructivist view of reading comprehension. This view was that readers used background knowledge to construct meaning and comprehend text.

According to Flood and Lapp (1990:491) good readers are strategic readers who actively construct meaning as they read; they are self-motivated and self-directed; they monitor their own comprehension by questioning, reviewing, revising and rereading to enhance their overall comprehension. Able readers have realised that it is the reader in the reading process who creates meaning, not the text or the author of the text.

Although each reader's plan varies for every task and text, Flood and Lapp (1990:491) present the following generalised plan that competent readers use. Before reading the strategic reader:

- **previews** the text by looking at the title, the pictures, and the print

in order to evoke relevant thoughts and memories.

- **builds background** by activating appropriate prior knowledge through self-questioning about what he/she already knows about the topic (or story), the vocabulary and the form in which the topic (or story) is presented.
- **sets purposes** for reading by asking questions about what he/she wants to learn (know) during the reading episode.

During reading the strategic reader:

- **checks understanding** of the text by paraphrasing the author's words.
- **monitors comprehension** by using context clues to figure out unknown words and by imagining, inferencing and predicting.
- **integrates** new concepts with existing knowledge, continually revising the purposes of reading.

What is also very important in this view is that after reading the strategic reader:

- **summarises** what has been read by retelling the plot of the story or the main idea of the text.
- **evaluates** the ideas in the text.
- **applies** the ideas in the text to unique situations, extending these ideas to broader perspectives.

Comprehension always involves inference. Since inference is based on the reader's experience and since each reader's experience is unique, each person's understanding of a particular text will also be unique (Maria 1990:8).

2.4.3 Reading as a holistic process

By referring to reading as an interactive process one is also implying that it is a holistic process. According to Conlan (1990:21-22) reading requires one's active participation. Reading comprehension is not just a single verbal skill but many skills which cannot be separated. Readers bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the task of interpreting a text. Reading relies on the active participation of the reader whose task it is to construct meaning.

Rost (1989:89) also notes from various research studies that reading comprehension is a holistic indivisible concept which cannot be split into different sub-skills (Drahozal and Hannah 1978; Andrich and Godfrey 1978/1979; Lyons 1974).

Cummings (1983:1) advocates the holistic concept, that is, early reading consists of separate interrelated sub-skills, but skilled reading is holistic (Rost 1989:90). According to Rost (1989:90) reading specialists argue that the child who is learning to read presents a different case, where separate sub-skills of comprehension in reading should first be induced and

developed in order to fuse them later into integrated and holistic reading comprehension.

Breaking down reading into its parts is not really reading. Maria (1990:9) states that any teacher who has taught phonics, for example, knows there is a giant leap between learning the phonic elements and using them effectively in fluent reading.

Recognising the complex, interactive, constructive, holistic nature of the reading process poses problems for teachers.

Maria (1990:9) states that although recently the language movement has attacked the idea of breaking down the reading process, most teachers today still view reading as a series of discrete skills. These teachers also recognise that comprehension instruction is an integral part of reading instruction because the basal readers also adhere to this point of view. Basal readers have their own lists of "specific" comprehension skills, namely, recognising cause and effect and picking out the main idea. Comprehension instruction organised in this manner centres on individual skills rather than on the holistic process. Comprehension instruction is usually more difficult than teaching a set of discrete skills.

2.4.4 Reading as a language process

It has always been recognised that reading is a language process. Previously

theorists placed much emphasis on the differences between the oral and written language process. The obvious difference between reading and oral language is the visual nature of reading. Goodman (1970:22) states that reading is a psycholinguistic process by which the reader (a language user) reconstructs, as best s/he can, a message which has been encoded by the writer as a graphic display (Smith 1973:22).

Recently, investigations have provided convincing evidence that reading skill is a manifestation of linguistic competence in general. According to Jordan (1988:358) although visual processes must be considered in a theoretical model of reading, a growing body of studies has demonstrated that reading abilities are more often associated with linguistic factors than with visual factors.

One notable difference between reading and oral language is that reading requires linguistic awareness. Oral language is used by children as a means of communication without them thinking about language and how it works (Maria 1990:10).

According to Jordan (1988:258) within the language domain an explosion of research has linked the awareness and use of phonetic structure to early reading ability. For example, skill in phonemic segmentation, sound blending, phonological coding and rapid letter naming all differentiate good readers from poor readers. Maria (1990:10) also noted from various studies

that early reading phonemic awareness is particularly important. In order to read children need to be aware of the phonemes as separate entities, that is, they need to know what phonemes are in a word and where they occur. This phonemic awareness is difficult to acquire because contrary to common belief, we do not hear individual phonemes in a word.

Reading is a naturally occurring process and children should learn how to read in the same way they learn to talk. Cambourne (Maria 1990:11) describes seven conditions under which children learn to talk and suggests that these same conditions affect children's ability to read:

- **Immersion** - young children learning to talk are immersed in oral language. Children learning how to read should be surrounded by print in the same way. Classrooms should be literate environments.
- **Demonstration** - just as adults provide models of good oral language for children learning to talk, adults should provide good models of reading through activities like reading aloud and sustained silent reading.
- **Expectation** - except in special cases, children are expected to be successful in learning to talk. That same expectation of success should be conveyed to children who are learning to read. Too often reading is treated as a difficult, mysterious process.
- **Responsibility** - although children's early words and sentences encode the same sorts of meaning, children who are learning to talk

do not all learn in the same way. Children learning to read should not be expected to learn in the same way, mastering the same skills at the same time.

- **Approximation** - young children learning to talk are praised not reprimanded for approximations like 'Gamma' for 'Grandma'. Miscues or approximations in reading should be evaluated in terms of their approximation to meaning.
- **Employment** - young children learning to talk use language often even though they are not totally competent in it. Children learning to read should read often with each other, with the teacher and with tapes.
- **Feedback** - adults correct the meaning but not the form of young children's oral language. Adults model the correct form. Teachers should focus on meaning in reading while providing corrective feedback with regard to form.

Communication is the chief function of both oral and written language. Reading is essentially a language process similar to listening, speaking and writing.

Thus reading comprehension is essentially a process of constructing meaning from written text through the interaction of the knowledge the reader brings to the text, the reader's interpretation of the language that the author has used and the situation in which the text is read. Reading comprehension

basically implies an interaction of the reader, the text and the situation in which the text is read (Maria 1990:14).

The above discussion on the reading process is essential as it helps one to put reading in the correct perspective. It is essential to understand what the reading process entails. The different reading models inform us about the varying views on the reading process. This information will enlighten the researcher as well as the reader on the reading process and at the same time will help the reader and the researcher to get a better understanding of why pupils may or may not develop as reluctant readers or alliterate persons. This information also points out how important it is for pupils to master the art of reading and become skilled readers in order to develop healthy reading habits.

2.5 READING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

According to Hunt (1970:27) the key responsibility for secondary school teachers of reading is that of defining skills previously introduced at the elementary level. Littlefair (1991:69) is of the opinion that the secondary school has an active part to play in continuing pupils' reading development. It is ironic to find that little time is actually spent on reading instruction in the secondary school, although difficulty in reading subject textbooks is quite common amongst many secondary school pupils (Littlefair 1991:69).

Potts (1976:42) states that by the time children have reached the age of transfer to the middle school most should be reading with a reasonable degree of fluency. At this stage of schooling able readers should be ready to appreciate that one can read at different levels in different ways.

Potts (1976:43) goes on further to state that the task of the middle school teacher is to ensure that the children develop effective reading habits, strategies and techniques. In order to do this they have to learn a new range of skills, sometimes termed higher order reading skills to distinguish them from the basic skills of initial reading.

It is necessary to encourage the development of critical reading amongst secondary pupils rather than just teaching them to interpret the literal sense of a text. The written word is very powerful and one must have the ability to recreate the meaning for ourselves rather than taking the opinion as given by the writer. Pupils are helped to become critical readers by teaching them how writers achieve meaning in a variety of genres (Littlefair 1991:69). Attention will be given to how essential it is to develop flexible readers and the role of teachers in developing reading skills in the secondary school.

2.5.1 Reading flexibility

According to Schachter (1978:150) flexible reading habits should be taught systematically from kindergarten through to high school. Flexibility in reading refers to the ability of an individual to adjust his/her reading rate

according to the difficulty of the material and the purpose (Samuels 1975:38). It is extremely important that the pupils develop and learn this ability to practise flexible reading. According to McWhorter (1987:v) the rapid expansion of knowledge and the exponential increase of information in print over the past decade have made efficient and flexible reading an essential skill in all walks of life. No longer does the student have the time or energy to read everything in a leisurely manner, thoroughly and completely. Instead, in order to keep abreast of the advances in his/her field he or she must learn to read selectively, to identify quickly the most important ideas in the material and to process and retain these ideas in the most efficient manner.

According to Patberg and Lang (1981:211) two problems exist in secondary classrooms warrant the teaching of reading flexibility. The first is the problem of students being required to read extensively in many of their classes. They must accomplish their reading assignments efficiently in these subject areas. This demands that they be flexible readers who can read rapidly when such speed is appropriate and slowly and carefully when a slow and careful rate is demanded. Secondly, there is also the problem of continually being forced to play the game of finding the proverbial 'needle'. Students are given reading assignments in various subject areas with no specific purpose in mind. Not knowing what to expect, they read all materials at the same rate, always looking for the information the teacher expects them to find.

Harris (1970), Otto and Smith (1970) and Stauffer (1975) state that a flexible reader is one who has the ability to successfully set his/her speed by integrating two important variables in the reading act, namely, the nature and difficulty of the material being read and the purpose of reading (Patberg and Lang 1981:212).

According to McWhorter (1987:5) reading flexibility is the ability to adjust one's reading rate and methods to suit the type of material one is reading and one's purpose in reading. For example, a flexible reader reads poetry more slowly and in a different manner than a magazine article. This is so because the reader's purpose is different for each. Thus, it is extremely important to define one's purpose for reading any article or book as this will determine how one reads it.

Teaching flexible reading skills is not the sole task of English teachers. Subject teachers should also guide pupils in their reading.

2.5.2 How subject teachers can help pupils become better readers

Subject specialist teachers in particular have the responsibility to develop flexible reading skills in secondary school pupils as they are familiar with the language of their subject. They can explain the linguistic complexities of the language of their subject and in this way can play a constructive role in developing pupils' reading (Littlefair 1991:69).

Davis(1970:4) also states there are two basic approaches to helping high school and college students to improve their reading skill. These are, firstly, having a reading specialist in charge or, secondly, providing guidance in reading improvement by instructors in the various subject matter classes.

Davis (1970:5-7) mentions six things the subject matter instructor has to do in order to help readers improve their reading skill:

- Give attention to students' readiness to read the assigned material.
- Give attention to the readability of assigned textbooks and supplementary reading material.
- Show students how to preview reading material.
- Help students realise the importance of varying their style of reading to fit the material and purpose.
- Help students to locate supplementary reading material on the subject.
- Help students improve their knowledge of the vocabulary of the subject.

Reading should always be a purposeful activity; developing guide questions will direct one's reading and focus one's attention. Many people have experienced the problem of reading a book; when trying to recall what one has read, one cannot do so. According to McWhorter (1987:37) there is a very important and useful skill to overcome these problems. It is known as cognitive monitoring which means keeping track or being aware of what is

happening mentally as you read. He explains that in cognitive monitoring one maintains an awareness of one's level of understanding by picking up clues or signals that indicate whether one is understanding what one is reading.

McWhorter (1987:40) suggests that the following steps should be followed when reading material which is not easy to comprehend:

- Analyse the time and place in which one is reading. If one has been reading or studying for several hours mental fatigue may be the source of the problem. If one is reading in a place with numerous distractions or interruptions, lack of concentration may contribute to comprehension loss.
- Rephrase each paragraph in one's own words. With extremely complicated material, one might approach it sentence-by-sentence, expressing it in one's own words.
- Read aloud sentences or sections that are particularly difficult. Oral reading aids comprehension.
- Write a brief outline of the major points of the article. This will help one to see the overall organisation and progression of ideas in the material.
- Do not hesitate to reread difficult or complicated sections.
- Underline key ideas.
- Slow down one's reading rate if one feels one is beginning to lose comprehension.

If none of the above steps are effective, then the reader may be lacking the necessary background knowledge that a particular writer assumes the reader will have. In order to be successful the reader will have to accomplish the necessary background reading.

Skimming is another valuable reading skill. This skill entails reading selectively in order to get a general idea of what an article is about. Skimming is practised when complete information is not required. Skimming is used when the reader needs only the most important ideas or the gist of the article. The disadvantage of skimming is that one's comprehension is restricted to the larger, more important ideas since it involves skipping large portions of the material.

Scanning is another valuable reading skill. Aukerman (1972:81) states that one scans in order to find an answer within a body of reading material. According to McWhorter (1987:85) when one scans one is looking for a particular piece of information and one's only purpose in looking through the material is to locate that information. The key to effective scanning is to approach the material in a systematic manner.

According to Raygor and Raygor (1985:ix) reading is really a set of skills.

The efficient reader must be able to do the following:

- Understand the author's main ideas.
- Recognise how the material is organised.

- Recognise and use the detailed, factual information given.
- Retain the information gained in reading.
- Recognise the author's purpose and tone.
- Locate needed information in reference materials.
- Distinguish between reliable, valid information based on good authority and unreliable opinions.
- Apply different concepts and skills, depending on the area of study.
- Skim over unimportant or unnecessary material when total comprehension is not necessary.
- Vary the reading speed and approach, depending on the purpose for reading and the difficulty of the material.
- Draw inferences and conclusions from the author's presentation.
- Have a broad knowledge of the meaning of words.

Therefore, according to Patberg and Lang (1981:219), because of the extensive reading that needs to be done, and the need to have students read with a purpose in mind, secondary school teachers should diagnose students' flexibility needs. Integrating the teaching of flexibility with the teaching of content can be accomplished. Flexible readers can select appropriate rates and strategies. Those who are inflexible can be taught to apply particular rates and strategies. In this way students will be able to accomplish whatever reading is required of them.

It is essential to have a knowledge of the reading process and how reading

skills can be improved in the secondary school as this will contribute to instilling positive reading habits in pupils.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapter the researcher gave an introduction to reading, followed by the value of reading, a discussion of the reading concept, the reading process and reading in secondary schools. In the next chapter the researcher will look into the factors relating to reading habits. She will also look at research studies on factors relating to reading habits.

CHAPTER 3

FACTORS INFLUENCING READING HABITS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on reading as a phenomenon. In this chapter the researcher will outline the factors that may affect or influence a child's attitude towards reading. Literature studies on factors relating to reading habits will be surveyed. Attention will first be given to the development of attitudes to reading; thereafter, different groups of factors like ecological, emotional, physical, intellectual and language-related factors will be highlighted.

3.2 DEVELOPING POSITIVE ATTITUDES TO READING

Reading for pleasure and the gaining of information are the primary goals of reading instruction. A large number of students are not developing lifelong reading habits and are also devoting less time to leisure reading. This lack of motivation is not limited to poor readers; both good and poor readers are reluctant to engage in recreational and independent reading. According to Turner (1992:50) students at all ability levels are at risk of becoming non-readers. Many students perceive reading as being only school or work-related because of how it is taught and practised in the classroom.

The comment made by most parents is that teenagers are just not interested in reading. According to Mellon (1987:27) this is a media generation, seemingly uncomfortable with silence. Television and tape players, boom boxes and walkmen provide background music for the leisure activities of most young adults. Video games are readily available at teenage gathering places, as is inexpensive software for home computers. The printed word cannot compete with the above leisure activities.

Alliteracy, which implies an ability to read but an unwillingness to do so, has become a serious problem amongst the youth. If this problem persists there will be a continued decline in students' language skills, a reduction in newspaper readers, a simplification of text books, an increase in the presence and influence of television and, subsequently, an uninformed populace (Turner 1992:50).

Attitudes toward reading play an important role in the reading process. Teachers need to develop and maintain young children's positive reading attitudes, especially during initial reading instruction. Preschool children's reading experiences tend to shape their reading attitudes (Saracho 1987:23). Ransbury (1973) found that children with positive reading attitudes were good readers, whereas those children with negative reading attitudes were poor readers (Saracho 1987:23).

Saracho (1987:24) states that positive attitudes toward reading can be

developed in young children by building on their interests and providing a variety of opportunities for children to hear, write, read and speak the language within a balanced language arts programme. Turner (1992:51) also found that students' interests are the most important influence on their attitude towards both reading and learning. Children who are interested in books and reading are different from those who lack this motivation. Johns and Davis (1990:47) observed that many reading educators believe that if middle school students read books that interested them, their reading comprehension as well as attitudes toward reading would improve.

According to Stahlschmidt and Johnson (1984:147) reading aloud to children generally has a positive effect on their attitude to reading which in turn results in an increase in the amount of voluntary reading done by the students. They further state that many teachers and librarians have observed that reading aloud can produce the following outcomes:

- a desire to read.
- a wider acquaintance with books.
- an awareness of the richness of language.
- a stimulant for growing minds and emotions.
- a shared experience.
- a role model (Stahlschmidt & Johnson 1984:147-8).

Picture books play an important part in developing a positive attitude to reading. Norsworthy (1982:56) states that through the reading of a wide

variety of carefully selected picture books, children can begin to develop the lifelong habit of reading as well as make progress towards the development of excellence in literary taste.

According to Morrow (1992:251) children exposed to literature accumulate background knowledge not only about the content at hand but also about how language works and how the written word differs from the spoken word. These children often show an early interest in reading, they develop positive attitudes to reading and they tend to learn to read early and enjoy it.

According to Fricke (1977:39) many factors such as age, ability, home circumstance and local influences will affect pupils' reading; therefore, these pupils must be provided with a wide range of books to meet their needs.

Richek, List and Lerner (1983:28) mention factors that are related to a student's ability to read: ecological factors (the various environments in which the student operates); emotional factors (the social and psychological factors that affect learning); physical factors (vision, hearing, age, sex and other health factors); intelligence and language.

3.3 FACTORS AFFECTING READING

Factors affecting reading can be categorised as ecological, emotional, physical, intellectual and language-related. These factors will be discussed below.

3.3.1 Ecological factors

The varying environments in which pupils live and grow have a strong influence on their desire and ability to learn and hence read. Ecological factors are the home, the school, the social group, socio economic status and the influence of other media and leisure activities.

3.3.1.1 The home environment

According to Richek et al (1983:28) the home environment is the child's first ecological system. Early formative years in the home are the foundations for tremendous growth and development. Environmental experiences during these crucial first five or six years are a powerful influence on cognitive growth and intelligence. Language development is greatly influenced by the child's home experiences with a parent.

A child's home background is extremely important in influencing him/her to read. This is clearly illustrated by the various empirical investigations. Families who do not value reading usually pass this on to their children and teachers have a difficult time convincing such students to read for pleasure

(Turner 1992:52). Parents are the driving forces in the child's development.

According to Morrow (1985:1) in addition to literature experiences fostering positive attitudes toward books, research has shown that children who are exposed to literature at an early age tend to develop sophisticated language structures and a high rate of reading success.

According to Fasick (1984) children who have books read to them usually develop language which is richer and more complex than that of children who do not have books read to them (Zwarenstein 1986:403). In the home a child's outlook toward reading is continually being moulded by parental and sibling role models (Storey 1986:40). Greaney and Hegarty (1987:15) found that the amount of leisure reading is related to the existence of a positive educational home environment and in particular to the value placed on reading in the home.

Wade (1990:5) states that children mature at different rates and the reading process is an individual one, but the child who has an encouraging environment with considerable opportunity for spontaneous learning will have a head start. Parents play a crucial part in the development of their children's reading.

Research has shown that a rich literary home environment contributes to children's voluntary interest in literature. According to the results of an

investigation by Morrow (1983) parents with children who showed an early voluntary interest in books were reading models for their children since they often read in their leisure time. They read novels, magazines, newspapers and work related materials. Parents with children who are not interested in books tended to read only newspapers and work related materials, if they read at all (Morrow 1985:2).

According to Morrow (1985:2) other characteristics of homes where children were voluntary readers are as follows: there are many books in these homes, placed in many rooms, such as the child's bedroom, the playroom and the kitchen; parents of voluntary readers take their children to the library often and read to them daily as well; these homes also enforce television rules, that is, television viewing is restricted and selective.

Parents provide their children with emotional security as well as intellectual stimulation. According to Richek et al (1983:29) studies that compare good and poor readers show that the good readers are more likely to have had a favourable home environment. He goes further to state that experiences with a parent are a very important factor in stimulating good reading and a love for reading. Fields (1987:84) states the intimacy of enjoying a story with a parent adds to a child's pleasurable feelings about reading. Attitudes toward reading can begin in infancy and be enhanced throughout childhood. Parents should be the first and foremost influence with teachers coming to assist and extend what has begun.

According to Carson and Fortune (1984:29) as parents continue to demonstrate that reading is fun, their children will continue to experience success and enjoyment with reading. By making books important in their daily lives, parents can establish a positive attitude towards reading while insuring a lifetime of reading enjoyment for their children.

According to Morrow (1985:3) young children who demonstrate a voluntary interest in books spend their play-time at home writing and drawing with paper and crayons, whereas children who show a low interest prefer playing outdoors and with toys and trucks. Children with a high interest tend to look at books more frequently than those with a low interest. Most high-interest children watched no more than two hours of television a day, whereas most low interest children watched more than two hours a day. This finding presents conflicting results about television viewing and its relationship to amount of recreational reading. According to Whitehead, Capey and Maddren (1975), in a study of elementary school children, some heavy television viewers read a little and some read a lot. Thus the relationship between television viewing and recreational reading is not conclusive (Morrow 1985:3).

Daniel Fader (1985:7) states that parents must model the act of literacy for their child. The best way to do this is to read in front of their children. Although a large number of parents read to their children, only a small percentage of them read in their children's presence. Children must see their

parents picking up a book and reading.

Morrow (1985:2) noted, from various studies, that families of children who show a voluntary interest in books are more likely to be small and have parents with a college education. A rich literary environment is the most significant contribution to children's voluntary reading behaviour (Morrow 1985:2).

Clay (1979:17) states that the reason why children may not have the skills that are necessary for good progress in reading when they enter school is that they have not had adequate experience in their pre-school years. Their homes may not have provided a good range of interesting experiences appropriate to their developmental needs. The child who has not had many opportunities to converse with adults will have limited language skills and will have difficulty in reading.

According to Carter (1986:3) voluntary readers are likely to be young persons who present few problems of discipline, either at home or at school. Ingham (1981:229) also found a marked difference in discipline levels between avid and infrequent readers.

Whitehead et al (1977) and Taylor (1973) observed that voluntary readers and one parent or both parents are more likely to be members of a public library (Carter 1986:4). Ingham (1981:229) also observed the above.

Whitehead et al (1977), Ingham (1981), Heather (1981) and Clark (1976) observed that small families in which the head of the household has a non-manual occupation and in which one or both parents is a voluntary reader, the young person has had stories read to him/her, and the family and/or child owns many books, are more likely to produce voluntary and avid young readers (Carter 1986:4).

Ingham (1981:230-31) found that the parents of avid readers had left school later, and talked and listened to their children more than parents of infrequent readers. Avid readers are more likely than infrequent readers to have a room of their own, and parents who can provide desks, bookshelves, adequate heating and lighting. They respect their children's individuality and they show consideration for their needs. Parents of avid readers talk to their children and give them ample opportunity for conversation with adults once they are able to converse. The respect accorded to their opinions make verbal communication a rewarding activity for these children. The parents of infrequent readers have little time for listening to, or conversation with, their children and in some cases they rarely see their children.

Margaret Clark (1976) studied fluent readers to determine why it is that some children develop higher-order reading skills early on. Her results suggest that the process does not depend so much on intelligence as upon such factors as the quality of language interaction between parents and children; whether books are brought to the children's attention, discussed

with them and whether they have pictures and print pointed out; whether they have older brothers and sisters who can and do read in the home (Wade 1990:6).

These studies indicate that children who learn to read early enjoy the pleasures of reading and have early access to the world of information. On the other hand, those children who are given little or no encouragement to put experiences into words and for whom books are not part of their world, find it very difficult at school.

According to Drummond and Wignell (1979:15) researchers have found that children who read early come from families where the parents have a high regard for reading; the children have been read to regularly at home from an early age; someone in the family took the time not only to read, but also to answer questions about reading. A child who does not have books in his/her home will miss experiences with bookish kinds of language, with concepts that are found only in books, and with picture exploration, and he/she will lack practice in coordinating language and visual perception in a way that facilitates progress with reading after entry into school.

Clay (1979:20) noted that the most valuable preschool preparation for school learning is to love books, and to know that there is a world of interesting ideas in them. Parents who love to share books with children transmit their feelings, their understanding and their language patterns to

their offspring. The plots, ideas or language of some books enrich children's thinking.

According to Burmeister (1974:19) attitudes toward reading itself are often a reflection of the student's background. Children whose parents rarely read are likely to read little themselves and such limited reading experience leads to a limited background of experiences and information and possibly to limited aspirations.

An over-anxious parent can also affect the child's reading habit. According to Clay (1979:22) just as too much attention to the correction of efforts to talk can be very detrimental to language development, so the child's early attempts to read can be inhibited by over-correction and an urge to 'put him right'. Parents who respond with enthusiasm to the child's attempts to discover things about print for him/herself are providing a richer foundation for schooling than those parents who generate tension and stress as they instruct the child.

Jaga (1983:69), in her investigation into the reading habits of some Indian high school pupils on the East Rand, found that pupils in the high school do not read sufficiently during their leisure time. She found that the home literary environment plays an important part in the development of good reading habits. There was very little evidence of any literary material in pupils' homes, and parents did not purchase books for themselves or their

children regularly. She found most fathers read the newspaper only; mothers also do not read regularly except the few who read popular women's magazines.

Gardner (1989:252) found that parental influence plays a large role in the development of reading habits. Reading to children in infancy has a strong influence. Frequent readers are usually pupils whose parents are also frequent readers.

According to Richek et al (1983:30) parents can do much to help their children improve in reading without actually teaching reading. He suggests the following:

- Share in the child's success: children enjoy the experience of reading material that they have mastered to the parent. The parent should be an enthusiastic listener.
- Provide a reading model in the home: parents can surround their children with books in the home and demonstrate the value of reading. They can also take trips to the library and bring home materials that the child selects.
- Read to the child: it is important to read stories aloud from the time the child is a toddler. This activity promotes language learning, stresses the value of the printed word and encourages a close relationship between parent and child.
- Accept the child as he or she is: it is often difficult to admit that

one's own child has a problem. When parents deny that a problem exists or hold unrealistic expectations, children are sensitive to their parent's disappointment. This situation may trigger a poor parent-child relationship.

- Help the child to feel secure and confident: look for ways in which the child can succeed and encourage those activities. Help the child to be happy and healthy in the home environment.
- Share in the excitement of reading success: every bit of reading acquisition is an important step for the child. Parents and teachers should emphasise and enhance successful learning experiences.

A summary of the main points on the influence of home environment on the cultivation of healthy reading habits is found in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Home environment

*	The early formative years in the home - affect cognitive growth and intelligence.
*	Children's home background -important in influencing children to read.
*	Parents are the driving force in the child's development.
*	Children exposed to literature at an early age experience greater reading success and also develop sophisticated language structures.
*	Children who have books read to them develop richer and more complex language structures than those who do not have stories read to them.
*	A rich literary home environment helps children's voluntary interest in reading.
*	Parents must read in front of their children.
*	Children who show a voluntary interest in reading usually come from small families; they have a rich literary environment; parents usually have a college or university degree or diploma; parents consider reading as important; the children have been read to regularly; and someone was at hand to answer their questions.
*	Children who do not value reading come from homes where the parents do not read; the parents are not well-educated and they have unskilled jobs; the discipline is either too strict or too lax; there are no organised television viewing times; the parents do not listen to the children's conversation; an over-anxious parent may stifle the child's interest in reading.
*	Frequent readers are usually pupils whose parents are frequent readers.
*	The intimacy of enjoying a story with a parent gives a child a great deal of pleasure and this makes him/her want to read.

3.3.1.2 The school environment and poor methods of teaching reading

A school's literacy environment is significant in fostering its students' interest in reading. Children and adolescents spend a great deal of their time

in school. Their relationships and experiences in this environment can profoundly affect their lives.

According to Forgan (1979:ix) reading - which should be a pleasurable way of gathering information - has become a detailed list of minute skills to be mastered. Teachers are concerned about getting children ready for 'the test' rather than helping children develop a love for reading, the most important attribute of a mature reader. In order for children to develop positive attitudes to reading they must enjoy reading. Forgan (1979:ix) goes further to state that if we want children to become excellent readers, they must read, read and read! Reading is a skill, and like other skills, it can be lost if not practised.

According to Fields (1987:235) most children eventually learn to read regardless of how they are taught. Loving, caring teachers enrich children's lives regardless of how they teach reading. It is this attitude that makes children want to read.

Motivation to read is fuelled by successful experiences. When children do not read well, they develop a self-defeatist attitude, a negative outlook and are viewed as failures.

According to Richek et al (1983:30) social unpopularity has been found to accompany school failure. Turner (1992:51) also noted that students who

have difficulty reading are less likely to engage in future reading activities. Johnston and Winograd (1985) have observed that many times teachers' reactions to students' passive behaviour actually reinforces it (Turner 1992:51). Thus teachers' behaviour and expectations are critical to the students' academic performances. Students usually do not do very much reading if it is not expected of them.

Burmeister (1974:16) states that excellent teaching and the use of materials appropriate to the needs and interests of a student, as well as extraordinary interest and effort on the part of the student, might result in a higher reading score than expected. Sometimes instruction is not geared to the needs of the pupil. In other instances teachers unintentionally provide insufficient instruction because of the difficulty they have in meeting the needs of thirty-five or more students.

Richek et al (1983:31) state that in many cases the reading problem is related to poor or inadequate instruction; sometimes immature children are given formal reading instruction before they can profit from it. As a result the child is frustrated, achieves poorly and eventually lags substantially behind classmates.

According to Tansley (1981:63) poor and inappropriate teaching which has resulted from inadequate teacher training is responsible for poor reading. All teacher trainees, even those preferring to teach in secondary schools,

should be trained to teach all aspects of reading. Even if they never have to teach a child to read, they will derive benefit from learning about the application of developmental psychology and programmed learning to the acquisition of reading skills.

Brown (1982:49) also states that a primary cause of reading difficulties is poor instruction. This may arise from various sources: improperly initiated instruction, inappropriately paced instruction, instruction that is not sequenced or programmed in areas in which students have difficulty, and instruction conducted under adverse circumstances.

Inadequate instructional materials are almost as serious as inadequacy in instruction. The classroom must be well-equipped with a variety of books, magazines and other materials. According to Tansley (1981:67) many children who do not read have had little contact with books, periodicals, magazines or newspapers. The school must therefore remedy the deficiency by surrounding the children with these media. Looking at well-illustrated books will do much to stimulate a desire to communicate, to become curious and interested in things, and to seek and exchange information and ideas. The teacher must create an atmosphere in class that encourages children to read. S/he must impress on pupils the importance of books and reading.

According to Turner (1992:51) reading instruction should focus on the

learner's achievement level, experiential background and maturation level as well as promote the desire to continue learning. When reading instruction focuses on the subskills and mechanics of reading without promoting reading as a global act or value, interest in reading and motivation suffer. Decker (1986), Samuel (1986) and Winograd and Paris (1988) state that reading instruction which focuses on producing students who can pass minimum skills tests instead of stressing overall comprehension and critical thinking is a major contributor to illiteracy (Turner 1992:51).

According to Holbrook (1983:29) somewhere along the educational path, the reluctant reader was left behind. Such a student's reluctance to read is either a disguise for poor reading skills or an indication that reading never attracted the student's attention enough for him or her to develop adequate skills.

When a child is decoding aloud, he or she makes incorrect responses, often does not know what is expected, what is correct or incorrect, and thus exposes these inadequacies to peers and teachers. Repeated experiences of this kind of failure result in frustration and eventually anxiety over reading itself (Holbrook 1983:29).

Overcrowded classrooms may also lead to children developing problems in reading, because the teacher may have difficulty following the sequential development of each child's reading skills. A child may falter undetected

until s/he falls too far behind to catch up without special instruction. Although particularly damaging in the primary grades where the development of reading skills follows a closer sequence than in the later elementary years, the failure to provide basic skill development may cause difficulty during any period in the remainder of the child's schooling. Thus, as a child starts slipping behind, procedures must be available to assist him/her before he/she is lost (Wilson 1972:85). If this is not done the child loses interest and begins to hate reading.

Beverly Farr (1981) suggests that emphasis on isolated skills during reading instruction precipitates reading problems. It is also stated that reading reluctance may be attributed to a lack of sufficient background information to enable a child to deal with the concepts, situations or events included in the reading materials (Holbrook 1983:24).

Morrow (1985:6) surveyed parents, principals and teachers to determine their attitudes toward the development of voluntary reading at school. When ranked against other reading skills such as comprehension, word recognition and study skills teachers, principals and parents placed the promotion of voluntary reading as least important. Skill development is still seen as the key to literacy.

Southgate, Arnold and Johnson (1977:168) state that the school factors affecting a child's reading habits are the extent to which his/her teachers

have promoted his/her interest in books; the total supply of books from which he/she can choose and their arrangement; the opportunities available to him/her to examine these books; the training he/she has received in locating books of interest to him/her; the help he/she has given in selecting books appropriate to his/her interests, needs and reading abilities; and the time set aside in which he/she can read his/her chosen books.

Drummond and Wignell (1979:21) state that it is most important that the child has a secure and predictable environment during the first year at school so that teacher observation and child progress are uninterrupted. Poor attendance means haphazard contact with various skills and little reinforcement. This can increase the child's uncertainty and confusion, indicating a poor start to learning to read.

According to Harris and Smith (1980:69) just as the parent's attitude toward reading is instrumental in moulding the child's disposition toward reading, the teacher's attitude is also a significant factor. Perez (1986) states that teachers who serve as reading role models demonstrate the importance and priority of reading in their own lives can greatly influence students' attitudes toward reading. Those who do not read or communicate its value have trouble convincing students that reading is important (Turner 1992:51).

The classroom climate may be unsuited to learning. The teacher may be so permissive that the entire class lacks appropriate discipline or structure. This

environment can be extremely disconcerting to an anxious child. On the other hand the classroom situation may be so inflexible that a child becomes tense from the strain. If the teaching is inappropriate, it can adversely affect reading ability (Roswell & Natchez 1964:12). The classroom environment must make it easy to read and the classroom atmosphere must make it important to read. Loughlin and Martin (1987) state that the physical arrangement of materials, the learning atmosphere and the stimulation that students receive during school can positively or negatively affect participation in reading activities (Turner 1992:52).

According to Turner (1992:52) the traditional environment which uses ability grouping for reading and focuses on competition and social stratification has been found to be detrimental to promoting reading enjoyment. This method offers preferential treatment for good readers and social stigmatisation for poor readers.

Reed (1990:15) states that the essential elements of teachers' intentions for teaching reading seem to be three-fold: to help children value reading as an activity; to help them become keen readers; and to help them see that reading could offer both knowledge and enjoyment.

Morrow (1987:267) noted that immediate access to books increases independent reading by children at home and at school. Lamme (1976) and Spiegel (1981) found that one of the reasons for the low level of voluntary

reading among the young is that most school-based reading programmes are skills orientated and provide little opportunity for students to read for enjoyment (Morrow and Weinstein 1986:332).

Wade (1990:6) states that schools can play a valuable role in enlisting parents' aid by giving parents the confidence to help as well as more specific directions about what to do. Awareness of this partnership in responsibility is likely to lead to changes in attitudes to teaching reading and to the system accommodating itself to individual differences.

Thus it can be seen that the school plays an important part in the cultivation of healthy reading habits in pupils. If the pupil experiences something painful at school that is likely to cause a great deal of unhappiness for him/her, for example, negative attitudes of teachers, poor teaching methods or an unhappy classroom atmosphere, the pupil is likely to develop a negative attitude towards reading.

A summary of how school environment and poor methods of teaching reading influence reading is found in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 The school environment

*	School environment plays an important role in fostering pupils' interest in reading.
*	Today teaching of reading is more skills-oriented than helping children develop a love for reading - an attribute of the mature reader.
*	Children must practise the art of reading in order to perfect it as reading is a skill.
*	The loving, caring attitude of teachers make children want to read.
*	A child who has difficulty in reading will avoid reading activities.
*	Teachers' expectations and behaviour influence pupils' academic performances. Therefore pupils will do very little reading if not much reading is not expected from them.
*	Reading instruction must be geared to the needs of the pupils. If this is not done pupils develop negative attitudes towards reading.
*	Inadequate teacher training may be responsible for poor reading.
*	Poor instruction is a primary cause of reading difficulties.
*	The classroom must be well-equipped with a variety of books, magazines and other materials as some children do not come into contact with these at home.
*	The teacher must create an atmosphere in class that encourages pupils to want to read.
*	Overcrowded classrooms may lead to children developing reading problems as teachers are not able to supervise the reading of all children.
*	The teacher's attitude to reading plays an important part in influencing and encouraging children to read.
*	The classroom climate must encourage learning. Discipline must not be too strict or too lax.
*	Ability grouping for reading has been found to be detrimental to promoting reading enjoyment.
*	The school should enlist parents' help in guiding children to read and develop a love for reading.

3.3.1.3 Social environment

According to Marshall (1977:20) social environment moulds the child from birth, physically and mentally. S/he is conditioned by his/her social upbringing, by class, parental attitudes and life styles, peer group activities, and by the vital fourteen or so years of physical care, verbal and visual stimuli, opportunities for the development of mind, body and spirit. S/he is a product of his/her community and is likely to remain at the level common to that community when s/he reaches the transition age unless s/he goes on to further education.

Richek et al (1983:31) state that social relationships and interactions with friends and peers provide an environment in which students grow and develop socially, emotionally and cognitively. This successful interaction with peers provides opportunities to gain confidence.

The social sphere is another area of dismal failure for students who have reading problems. According to Richek et al (1983:32) research studies on social environment show that students with reading and learning disabilities tend to have poor social skills.

According to Quandt (1977:251) researchers have substantiated the fact that poor readers tend to have poor a self-concept. Being a poor reader is difficult. Parents and teachers sometimes make derogatory remarks and demonstrate anxiety. Peers tend to make negative comments and may even

show discrimination against poor readers. Reading ability is a very important part of school and society. It is not unusual for children with reading difficulties to feel stupid and frustrated.

A summary of how the social environment influences reading is found in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Social environment

*	The social environment moulds the child physically and mentally from birth - that is, s/he is conditioned by social upbringing, class, parental attitudes, lifestyles and peer group activities.
*	S/he is a product of his/her community.
*	His/her successful interaction with peers provides opportunities to gain confidence.
*	Students with reading and learning disabilities usually have poor social skills.
*	These poor readers tend to have a poor self-concept.
*	These poor readers are usually deeply affected by adverse remarks made by parents, teachers or peers and they thus develop negative attitudes towards reading.

3.3.1.4 Socio-economic status

Socio-economic status is an individual's position in a given society, as determined by wealth, social class and occupation. According to Dechant and Smith (1977:102) students from lower economic homes are at a distinct disadvantage in learning to read because they have spoken and heard language patterns that interfere with the comprehension of both oral and written materials. It is important to point out that the socially deprived do

not lack the capacity to develop the cognitive functions upon which advanced learning is based; they simply have not had the opportunity to do so. Thus, generally, low socio-economic status is associated with less reading and this gap seems to increase with age. A low income generally deprives homes of reading resources.

According to Drummond and Wignall (1979:135) research work carried out over the past eighteen years at the Centre for the Study of Human Development at London University's Institute of Education has confirmed the findings of other studies related to the socio-economic environment of early childhood. By the time the child from a professional or semi-professional home reaches school age s/he already has, on average, an IQ score twenty-five points above that of a child from a home in which the father is an unskilled or semi-skilled worker. Some of the factors found to influence intelligence and verbal ability include: books and educational experiences provided by the parents, the emotional atmosphere in the home and the child's emotional adjustment.

Drummond et al (1979:136) go further to state that large differences observed in IQ and verbal ability between children from contrasting social classes do not diminish during the school years. The Centre urges steps to be taken to increase the level of intellectual stimulation in early life for children in the lower socio-economic groups.

Poverty and its effects contribute to the development of poor reading habits. From various research studies, Brown (1982:89) observed that students from homes of severely limited economic means tend to eat little and are less healthy; are less likely to have a place to study alone; have fewer educational toys when they are very young and fewer reading materials when they are older; are more likely to have uncorrected physical defects; tend not to have adult models in the home who read to them; are more orientated towards survival needs than long-range goals; tend to see a less optimistic future for themselves in education and career opportunities; usually have more family members and therefore less individual time with adults in the home; and tend to find that their teachers expect less of them than of children who come from homes above the poverty level.

According to Vernon (1973:50) it does seem clear that homes in different socio-economic classes show marked cultural differences which are likely to affect the children's linguistic ability, and this in turn is related to reading achievement (Potts 1976:74). There exists a relationship between parental attitude to achievement and the academic success of the child and encouragement in this respect is more likely to be found in the homes of the higher social classes rather than in the lower social classes.

Potts (1976:74) states that with regard to reading, children from a lower socio-economic environment are not only less well prepared to tackle the early stages of reading, but they get less support at home even if they do

successfully master the basic skills.

Parents who are concerned about their children's success are more likely to ensure that there is a good supply of reading matter in the home and that their children use the library services regularly when they are sufficiently proficient at reading. Children from lower working-class homes are less likely to receive help from their parents. When a child seldom or never sees books at home s/he will not understand the necessity of reading and is unlikely to see the long-term value of literacy.

In Ayodele's study (1984:120) of British and Nigerian subjects it was found that subjects who have higher family/socio-economic backgrounds perform better; hence, one could say that a richer background seems to significantly help subjects' reading capability. Poor environmental background tends to negatively affect the motivation and achievement of children.

A summary of how socio-economic status influences reading is found in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Socio-economic status

*	Students from lower economic homes are at a distinct disadvantage in learning to read as they lack experiential knowledge and they are exposed to language patterns that are strange to them.
*	A low income generally deprives homes of reading resources and this stifles reading.
*	Children from low income homes do not lack the ability to learn and read but rather they do not have the opportunity to do so.
*	Poverty and its effects contribute to the development of poor reading habits.
*	Children from lower working class homes are less likely to receive help from parents.

3.3.1.5 The influence of other media and leisure activities

Electronic media such as television, radio, and computer games fall under this heading. There are varying views on how these influence reading. Some researchers are of the opinion that these electronic media do not stifle reading but instead encourage children to read more. There are others who believe these media - especially television - take up a great deal of children's time and it have an adverse effect on the amount of reading done.

According to Zill and Winglee (1990:69) television watching is often cited as an activity that competes with reading and as a major reason why people do not read more literature. On the other hand it can be a spur to purchasing books and reading; for example, when an author appears on a talk show, or when a book is made into a television programme or movie,

or is advertised on television or mentioned or reviewed on a cultural programme.

According to Morrow and Weinstein (1986:332) the attraction of electronic entertainment is undoubtedly one reason for the low level of voluntary reading among the young.

Morgan (1980:159) states that the interrelationship between students' reading skills and reading habits and television viewing are complex and have resulted in two popular arguments. Some claim that by bringing the entire world into the living room, television has created a brighter, more aware generation, with greater knowledge of the world and its people, and with an expanded sense of history and culture. Television may even stimulate students to read, at least about what they see on the screen. On the other hand, there are those who blame the medium for problems ranging from a stifling of creativity to illiteracy. According to this view television has inhibited intellectual development on a broad social level; it has discouraged or even eliminated reading and prevented the acquisition and practice of scholastic discipline.

Research has supported the common assumption that children spend a considerable portion of their leisure time watching television. This can be supported by Lyle's (1972) study of children's television viewing. He found that the majority of children spend more time viewing television than they

spend engaged in any other activity except sleeping (Pardon 1992:3). Telfer and Kann (1984:536) also found that young people's reading has declined because students spend too much time watching television.

Horn (1987:22) found that the influence of new and more easily consumed media such as television and video had an adverse effect on the reading habits of children in Norway. Teachers, librarians and parents are concerned about the time these media take away from childhood, turning children into passive consumers of impressions and information, without stimulating their imagination and creativity. In universities and high schools, there has been observed a growing incapacity to cope with language, even with the mother tongue. 'Functional illiteracy' is beginning to be regarded as a real threat. Potts (1976:38) found that television viewing had a tremendous influence on reading habits. It is vital that teachers convince children that other media including television can never wholly replace literature as a means of communication or as a source of knowledge.

On the other hand another group of researchers found that television viewing or participation in other leisure time activities does not affect reading habits; in fact, it increases reading. Ingham (1981:229) found book readers were considerably the most active people in terms of their participation in a great number of leisure time activities. She also found that avid readers watched a good deal more television than did infrequent readers. They had learnt to accommodate television, to integrate it into their

lives and had developed mental strategies that would allow them both to read and to watch television. In some cases avid readers had found stimulation for creative writing in television. Infrequent readers expressed very little interest in television, whereas avid readers often knew a great deal about particular programmes and demonstrated the ability to select and discriminate.

Gardner (1989:259) also found that school sport does not threaten the amount of book reading done in secondary school. He found that avid readers usually watch less television than infrequent readers do, although a few avid readers are heavy television viewers. His study disputes the notion that television viewing displaces reading.

According to Potts (1976:38-39) developments in communication media, especially the considerable increase in television broadcasting in recent years, has probably had more influence on reading habits and attitudes than any other single factor. It is necessary and essential that teachers convince children that other media including television can never wholly replace literature as a means of communication or as a source of knowledge. He also states what cannot be disputed is that television viewing seems to have replaced other kinds of activities in which children developed their imaginative powers.

A summary of how the influence of other media and leisure activities affects

reading is found in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Influence of other media and leisure activities

*	There are varying views on how this factor influences reading.
*	Some researchers feel that these electronic media do not stifle reading but instead encourage children to read.
*	On the other hand there is the group that believes these media, especially television, take up a great deal of children's time and have an adverse effect on reading.
*	Some researchers found that sport did not threaten the amount of book reading done in secondary school.

3.3.2 Emotional factors

Emotional well-being, social adjustment and an inquiring attitude may support an atmosphere for concentration which may help improve reading achievement. Emotional stability is one of the prime requirements for successful reading. A child must be completely relaxed. S/he must be completely free from emotional stress as reading instruction is given or else s/he could develop negative attitudes towards reading, but many parents and teachers fail to recognise this need.

Painful emotional events during early efforts at reading may turn the young learner against reading (Dechant & Smith 1977:193-194). Other emotional problems could be difficulties in adjusting to a new environment; poor parent-child relationships; sibling rivalry; unfair comparisons with a neighbourhood prodigy; lack of encouragement from the home; and negative

attitudes of parents to learning.

The school may also bring about emotional instability in a child if s/he is pushed into reading when s/he is not ready for it. S/he becomes confused when confronted with many new words before having time to assimilate what has already been taught. According to Harris (1970:270) a child who is faced with failure develops a strong feeling of frustration. S/he generally builds up a strong dislike for reading and takes every opportunity to avoid it.

An embarrassing experience or a series of them, being held up to ridicule, for example, or being compared unfavourably to a brother or sister, may affect an individual's perspective about his/her own abilities or about the learning activities which confront him/her. The child who is in the poorest group year after year must certainly develop negative feelings toward reading. Continued failure to read well may so dominate an individual's background that s/he faces each reading lesson with dread (Schell & Burns 1972:94). S/he tends to hate reading and s/he develops a negative attitude towards it.

It is usually difficult to ascertain whether reading disorders result from an emotional problem or whether the emotional problem develops because of reading failure. According to Richek et al (1983:38) there are two points of view. The first is the psychological approach to remediation which focuses

on the student's emotional health. According to this viewpoint reading failure is the result of a primary or existing emotional disturbance. The primary concern of the psychological perspective is the elimination of the emotional problems that impede learning to read. The second viewpoint is the direct teaching approach. This assumes that emotional problems result from the primary reading difficulty which brings about a negative reading attitude.

According to Clay (1977:17) emotional disturbance influences reading. Every child must feel that s/he is important, that s/he is wanted and that s/he can accomplish things. These feelings are acquired in the process of growing up. Feelings of security and adequacy play an important role in achievement. Learning to read requires a great deal of personal initiative and a willingness to take risks which the insecure child is unwilling to take.

A summary of how emotional factors influence reading is found in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 Emotional factors

*	Emotional stability is one of the most important requirements for successful reading.
*	A child must be completely relaxed when reading instruction is given to the child or else s/he will develop negative attitudes toward reading.
*	Many parents and teachers fail to recognise that the child must be free from emotional stress.
*	Painful emotional events during early efforts at reading may turn the young learner against reading.
*	The school may also bring about emotional instability in a child if s/he is pushed into reading when s/he is not ready for it.
*	The child who is in the poorest group year after year often develops negative feelings toward reading.
*	Emotional disturbances have negative influences on reading.
*	Every child must feel that s/he is important, that s/he is wanted and that s/he can accomplish things.
*	Feelings of security and adequacy play an important role in achievement.
*	Learning to read requires a great deal of personal initiative which the insecure child is unwilling to take.

3.3.3 Physical factors

Many physical factors affect students' ability to learn reading skills. These include hearing problems, visual problems, age, sex and speech disorders. Generally good health is conducive to good reading and poor health may be the cause of reading deficiency (Dechant & Smith 1977:148).

3.3.3.1 Hearing impairment

According to Richek et al (1983:46) even moderate loss of the ability to hear may substantially affect the ability to learn reading. A hearing loss impedes effective communication with teachers and peers. It also places a burden on students because they have difficulty hearing certain sounds.

Burmeister (1974:20) states that poor hearing may be a contributing factor to reading disability for several reasons. First, children normally learn to speak through listening; hence, both the vocabulary and sentence patterns of a person who hears poorly are likely to be inadequate. Second, children may be taught to read through an oral approach. Those who cannot hear well cannot perceive differences in sound and therefore may not learn to read well. Third, students of any age who cannot hear well cannot benefit from class discussions, nor can they follow directions given orally by the teacher.

An inability to read as a result of hearing impairment may contribute to a negative attitude to reading because the reader does not experience success.

A summary of how hearing impairment may affect reading is found in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7 Hearing impairment

*	Hearing inability may substantially affect the ability to learn to read.
*	A hearing loss impedes effective communication with teachers and peers.
*	Hearing loss places a burden on students when phonic methods are used because they have difficulty hearing certain sounds.
*	These pupils who suffer from hearing loss cannot benefit from class discussions and cannot follow directions given orally by the teacher.
*	An inability to read as a result of hearing impairment may contribute to a negative attitude to reading because the reader does not experience success.

3.3.3.2 Visual impairment

The inability to see is critical to the reading process. Both good and poor readers have been found to have visual defects, although a greater proportion of poor readers have certain types of defects.

According to Burmeister (1974:19) present research seems to suggest that visual defects alone may not cause severe reading disability, but that when certain visual defects appear along with other inhibiting factors, reading disability may be present. A visual defect may handicap the good reader but s/he is able to compensate for it.

Defects that may affect reading achievement are hyperopia, extreme myopia, poor binocular coordination and poor vision. Burmeister (1974:20) states a person who is hyperopic (far-sighted) has poor near-point acuity and

therefore will find it difficult to see sharp images when reading a book. A person with extreme myopia (near-sightedness) may have to hold a book too close to his/her eyes for physical comfort and will have difficulty reading the board. All these problems can be corrected by wearing glasses.

These visual defects bring about eye strain and fatigue to the pupils during reading which has a negative effect on developing reading attitudes, and the pupils may lose interest in reading if these visual defects are not attended to.

A summary of how visual impairment may influence reading is found in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8 Visual impairment

*	The ability to see is critical to the reading process.
*	Both good and poor readers experience visual defects but a greater proportion of poor readers often have certain types of defects.
*	Defects that may affect reading achievement are hyperopia (far-sighted), extreme myopia (near-sightedness), poor binocular coordination and poor vision.
*	These visual defects bring about eye strain and fatigue to the pupils during reading and this has a negative effect on developing reading attitudes especially if these visual defects are not attended to.

3.3.3.3 Sex

According to Richek et al (1983:50) for reasons that are not entirely clear, more boys than girls in American schools exhibit reading problems. Two reasons have been given, namely, maturation and the school environment:

- **maturation:** since boys are less physically mature than girls when reading instruction is begun, they may not have developed certain skills that aid in reading.
- **school environment:** the school environment may affect boys and girls differently. The primary classroom is traditionally female-oriented, employing female teachers and rewarding behaviour such as neatness and quietness. It is essential to make boys feel welcome and happy in the reading environment.

According to Zill and Winglee (1990:41) both cultural and biological factors are responsible for the gender differences in literary participation. Girls get more encouragement from their parents to read. Studies of standardised reading tests given to elementary school children have found that, on the average, girls read earlier, better, and more than boys do. Zill and Winglee (1990:41) further say that women may be drawn to literature because of a greater interest in human character development and social interaction patterns.

Dechant (1964:74) states that girls as a group are better achievers in reading than boys. They learn to read earlier and fewer of them are significantly

retarded in reading. They generally seem to perform better than boys in English usage, spelling and handwriting. He goes further to state that the incidence of stuttering is substantially greater among boys. Boys also tend to lisp and lall more. Girls tend to be better than boys in auditory and visual discrimination.

Brown (1982), Gorman et al (1983) and Whitehead et al (1977) found that girls are more likely to be voluntary readers and to read a greater quantity of books than boys (Carter 1986:3). According to Vernon (1957:112) researchers generally have found that intelligence is more variable among boys than among girls. It may be that the reading ability of boys is more variable, giving rise to a large number of boys who are poor readers.

In Ayodele's study (1984:118) of British and Nigerian subjects he found that in Nigeria, females have only a minor and significant edge over the males, but they have a significantly higher performance among the British.

Gardner (1989:252) also found boys read less than girls. Boys show greater interest in practical skills than girls but older girls seem to explore more realism earnestly than older boys. Girls also appear to be clearer in their minds as to what they like and dislike in books. Hincks and Balding (1985:42) also found that at all ages more girls than boys read for pleasure.

A summary of how sex/gender influences reading is found in Table 3.9.

Table 3.9 Sex

*	Research has shown that generally more boys than girls exhibit reading problems.
*	Generally girls read more than boys.
*	Both cultural and biological factors are responsible for the gender differences in literary participation.
*	Girls get more encouragement to read from their parents than boys.
*	Girls generally develop earlier than boys and they are generally more mature than boys when reading instruction starts.
*	The school environment may affect boys and girls differently. The primary classroom is traditionally female-oriented - behaviour such as being neat and quiet is rewarded.
*	Research has shown that boys read less than girls. Boys generally show a greater interest in practical skills than girls.

3.3.3.4 Age

It is generally found that children experience the 'reading craze' at the end of primary school and as they get older there is a marked decrease in leisure reading.

Carter (1986:3) noted that the younger the child the greater the likelihood of being a voluntary reader. Heather (1981) found that people read fewer books at age fifteen than when they were thirteen years old. Gorman et al (1982) show quite clearly that at fifteen young people read less than when they were eleven years old (Carter 1986:3). Whitehead et al (1977:272) also found a 'marked decline' in the number of books read by the over fourteen year olds as compared to the over ten year olds.

Gardner (1989:251), in his study of the reading interests and reading habits of English secondary pupils in South Africa with particular reference to the province of Natal, found that in secondary schools book-reading declines most strikingly between standard six and standard eight. Hincks and Balding (1985:42) found that both boys and girls display a steady decrease in book reading with increasing age.

A summary of how age influences reading is found in Table 3.10.

Table 3.10 Age

*	It has been found that children experience the 'reading craze' at the end of primary school and as they get older there is a marked decrease in leisure reading.
*	Research has shown that in the secondary school book reading declines strikingly between standard six and standard eight.

3.3.3.5 Speech disorders

According to Spache and Spache (1977:19) retarded speech development does appear to create problems in the early stages. These articulatory disorders, namely, baby talk, substitutions and lack of certain letter sounds are usually eliminated with maturity.

Richek et al (1983:72) refers to three kinds of speech problems, namely, articulation problems, voice disorders and stuttering. Although there is a higher incidence of speech defects among poor readers, these do not

necessarily lead to reading failure.

Ekwall (1976:7) draws the following conclusions from the various research studies: speech problems could be considered as probable causes of reading failure; emotional reactions to speech difficulties may impair reading; and oral reading is more difficult for a person with a speech defect.

It can be said that students with speech defects normally shun reading and develop negative attitudes toward it. The fact that they may be ridiculed by their classmates during oral reading makes reading painful for them and they tend to neglect it.

A summary of how speech defects influences reading is found in Table 3.11.

Table 3.11 Speech disorders

*	Research studies have shown that speech problems could be considered as probable causes of reading failure.
*	Emotional reactions to speech difficulties may impair reading.
*	Oral reading is more difficult for a person with a speech defect.
*	Students with speech defects normally shun reading and develop negative attitudes toward it.

3.3.4 Intelligence and language

3.3.4.1 Intelligence

Intelligence plays a major part in determining what students will read. Generally, the areas of interest of more intelligent students are on a slightly higher level than are those of less intelligent students. Students with high IQ's read books that are more difficult and more mature (Dechant and Smith 1977:181).

Richek et al (1983:56) define intelligence as an individual's potential ability to learn. They also state that intelligence plays an important role in the reading diagnosis because it gives the teacher an idea of whether students have the capability to read better than they do at the present.

According to Wilson (1972:42) intelligence as a cause of reading disabilities is suspect. In fact, intelligence is related to causes of reading problems only in relation to the ability of the school to adjust its educational programme to the abilities of various types of children.

From various studies Carter (1986:4) found that the amount of voluntary reading undertaken by a young person is positively associated with his/her intellectual ability.

Fricke (1977:39) states that there is a high correlation between the intellect

as measured by IQ tests and reading achievement. The intellectually gifted child reads at an earlier age and tends to read more than duller children.

According to Dechant (1964:36) experience alone does not guarantee success in reading. The child needs certain intellectual skills. S/he must be able to give identity and meaning to objects, events and symbols, and to categorise or to associate the particular object or experience with the appropriate class or category.

Richek et al (1983:57) state that the issue of whether intelligence is determined by heredity (the result of biological make-up) or the environment (the result of personal experiences) has been researched by the scientific community for many years. In general the teaching profession assumes that the environment, including teaching, can make a difference.

Gardner (1989:252) found that high intelligence is related to a predilection for book reading and low intelligence is associated with infrequent reading. Children with low intelligence in most cases develop negative attitudes towards reading since they may not achieve success in reading.

A summary of how intelligence influences reading is found in Table 3.12.

Table 3.12 Intelligence

*	Intelligence plays a major part in determining what students will read.
*	Students with high IQ's usually read books that are more difficult and more adult.
*	Research has shown that the amount of voluntary reading undertaken by a young person is positively associated with his/her intellectual ability.

3.3.4.2 Language

Reading is language expressed in written form. The ability to express and receive thoughts through language is, therefore, fundamental to being able to read (Richek et al 1983:68). The individual's underlying language structures profoundly affect his/her ability to acquire reading skills, and it is therefore not surprising that many disabled readers have language difficulties. Problems with language can affect the ability to read. Dechant and Smith (1977:181) also noted that language development plays a significant and unique role in reading readiness. A common cause of poor reading is inadequate language development.

According to Moffett and Wagner (1976:126) experiential background is another cause of poor reading, that is, the book may refer to things with which a given reader is not familiar. These may be physical objects, concepts, ideas or a whole knowledge framework. For example, a layperson reading about black holes in a journal of astronomy will probably have trouble comprehending.

Zintz and Maggart (1984:73) also found that much of the difficulty with reading in school is caused by the fact that the typical child is required to accept an inflexible, stereotypic use of language that is often quite different from the language he or she has internalised in life outside the school. As a result of these language deficits the child's cognitive ability, his/her skill in thinking with words, is underdeveloped (Spache & Spache 1977:18). All these differences have a serious effect on reading success.

Moffett et al (1976:126) state that films and television can help enlarge experience and supply vocabulary. The practice of taking classes on field trips is well justified in this respect. Playing games with picture cards will also extend visual acquaintance with objects and living creatures.

According to Stahlschmidt and Johnson (1984:147) reading literature aloud to children has had tremendous effects on vocabulary enrichment and language development. Young children especially benefit from a systematic reading of stories since it is through hearing language that they begin to make connections between spoken and written language.

Children from economically disadvantaged homes benefit from reading aloud programmes because the language provided by the literature read is in greater contrast to their daily linguistic environment than it would be for children from middle class homes (Stahlschmidt & Johnson 1984:147).

According to Burmeister (1974:19) the linguistic range of a student is to a great extent dependent on both sociological and educational factors. Many culturally different children get a poor start in school because their home or community language differs from that used in the school.

It can be seen that language development has an important influence on the development of reading habits. If the child has not developed the various language structures s/he will encounter problems when reading which can lead to the development of negative reading attitudes if the child does not attain success in reading.

A summary of how language influences reading is found in Table 3.13.

Table 3.13 Language

*	Language plays an important part in determining the child's ability to read.
*	Problems with language can affect the ability to read.
*	Lack of experiential background is another cause of poor reading.
*	Films and television can help to widen the child's experience and supply vocabulary.
*	Reading literature aloud to children helps in vocabulary enrichment and language development.
*	Children from economically disadvantaged homes benefit from reading aloud programmes.
*	Language deficits affect the child's cognitive ability.

3.4 CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion on factors affecting reading is essential as it gives the reader an insight into what influences the child to read. This information is essential to enlighten the reader as to why some children are avid readers and others are not. Therefore, information such as the factors affecting reading habits in children can be used by teachers and parents to provide an incentive for children to read. This information can also be used to make sure that teachers and parents do not use methods that are detrimental to children's cultivation of healthy reading habits.

In the next chapter the researcher will outline the research method used for this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Four deals with the design of the empirical study. It elaborates on the purpose and research problem of the empirical investigation, media of investigation, the hypotheses, selection of research sample, research method, the processing and analysis of data.

In this empirical study the researcher made use of a questionnaire survey to tap information on the factors relating to the reading habits of pupils. This survey was conducted at a school in Phoenix, a suburb north of Durban.

4.2 THE PURPOSE AND RESEARCH PROBLEM OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

The impetus for this study was provided by the writer's experience as Teacher Librarian and then Head of Department: Resource Centre Management at various schools under the control of the Department of Education and Culture, Ex-House of Delegates. The researcher was much perturbed by the great variation in the reading habits of pupils of similar age groups (see 1.2.2). These pupils were able to read but they tended to ignore

reading.

The researcher's preliminary reading revealed that this trend was by no means unique to schools in the Department of Education and Culture, Ex-House of Delegates or to schools in the Republic of South Africa. Several studies abroad have highlighted this problem of variation in reading habits as well as the problem of alliteracy (see 1.2.2).

The problem gives rise to the question of what causes the differences in the reading habits of pupils of similar age groups (see 1.2.3). If it is possible to identify the causes for reading reluctance, the librarian, teachers and parents can develop means for children to overcome their reluctance. Turner (1992:50) states that educators are faced with two difficult tasks: firstly, understanding why students are reluctant to read and, secondly, trying to motivate them to become lifelong readers. The first task can be accomplished by examining the causes of reluctance in reading and the second by implementing quality and effective practices that foster a love for reading.

The purpose of the empirical investigation is to verify the different hypotheses which were formulated to get an answer to the stated problem. This will aid in determining which factors contribute to the reading reluctance of secondary school pupils.

On the basis of the findings, another purpose is to make recommendations to the teachers, parents and pupils about the inculcation of healthy reading habits.

4.3 MEDIA OF INVESTIGATION

Attention will be given to the justification of the method, the purpose and design of the questionnaire, data collection, the pilot survey and the administration of the questionnaire.

4.3.1 Justification of the method

Since this study is concerned with investigating the factors relating to the reading habits of pupils it is essential to elicit information from the pupils themselves; for this reason the questionnaire is the most applicable method. Furthermore, questionnaires represent a relatively easy and economical means of obtaining information and also allow the researcher to obtain information from relatively large numbers of pupils simultaneously (Manheim and Simon 1977:215).

Also, questionnaires reduce biasing errors that might result from the personal characteristics of interviewers and from differences in their skills (Nachmias and Nachmias 1987:228). Another advantage of using questionnaires as a means of collecting data is that it allows for greater anonymity. This is especially helpful with questions on personal and

sensitive issues. The respondents readily answer these questions if they do not have to give their names.

The questionnaire is time-saving as it can be administered to a large number of pupils simultaneously rather than individually. This method is ideal for the present study as the researcher needs information from pupils in standards six, seven, eight, nine and ten.

Although the questionnaire method is commonly used because of its economy and convenience, it does limit the kind of questions that can be posed and the kind of answers that can be obtained, especially if the questions that need probing are of an indirect or non-specific nature (Tuckman 1978:211). Despite this drawback, however, the questionnaire is a valuable tool and it has therefore been used in this study.

4.3.2 Purpose and design of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was compiled to determine the research sample's personal details, home environment, school environment, emotional development, physical development, language and intellectual development.

According to Nachmias and Nachmias (1987:253) the questionnaire must translate the research objectives into specific questions, and answers to such questions will provide the data for hypotheses testing. The researcher made use of a self-designed questionnaire.

From the literature study the researcher was able to identify the likely factors related to reading reluctance. These are ecological factors (home environment, the school, social group, socio-economic status and the influence of other media and leisure activities), emotional factors, physical factors (hearing impairment, visual impairment, sex, age and speech disorders), intelligence and language (see Chapter Three). A questionnaire was designed according to these factors. The major considerations involved in formulating the questions were its content, structure, format and sequence. In general, factual questions are designed to draw from the respondents objective information regarding their home background, their environment, their schooling, their reading habits, and their emotional and physical background.

The questionnaire consists of closed-ended questions as these are easy to ask and quick to answer; they require little writing by the respondent and the interviewer and their analysis with the aid of a computer is straight forward (Nachmias and Nachmias 1987:257). Babbie (1992:147) states that closed-ended questions are very popular because they provide a greater uniformity of responses and are more easily processed.

Questions must be selected to obtain all the needed data and each question must justify its inclusion in the schedule by making a direct contribution to the hypotheses or research problem (Manheim and Simon 1977:219).

A brief breakdown of the compiled questionnaire is given in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Analysis of compiled questionnaire

Factors/Variables	Question numbers
Personal detail	2 - 13
Home environment	14 - 18, 29 - 42
Socio-economic status	19 - 22, 24 - 28, 63, 70-71
School environment	23, 43-48, 50-53, 61
Influence of other media and leisure activities	49, 54 - 60
Personal aspects	62, 64 -69, 72 - 97

A copy of the questionnaire is found in Annexure 1.

4.3.3 Data collection

Once the questionnaire has been constructed the next step is to distribute them to the respondents to be completed so that the desired data can be collected.

Before this was carried out arrangements to carry out this research were made with the Chief Executive Director of Education, Department of Education and Culture, Administration Ex-House of Delegates as well as the Principal of the chosen school. A copy of the questionnaire was sent with the letter seeking permission from the Director.

Once permission had been granted by the Director, the researcher had to inform the Principal of the chosen school about her intended study. The letter granting permission from the Director as well as a copy of the questionnaire was given to the Principal. A copy of the letter from the Director is found in Annexure 2. Thereafter the researcher had to make several visits to the Principal to discuss the procedure she would follow in order to collect her data.

The questionnaire was administered to standard six, seven, eight, nine and ten pupils. A sample was chosen from each standard (see 4.5).

4.3.4 Pilot survey

Before the questionnaires were administered to the pupils, a pilot survey was conducted amongst a group of twenty-five pupils chosen at random. This was done in order to ascertain the validity of the items in the proposed questionnaire. The draft questionnaire was modified in the light of the responses of the twenty-five pupils surveyed.

4.3.5 Administering the questionnaire

According to Warwick and Lininger (1975:129) completion rates on mail questionnaires are notoriously low. In order to obviate this problem of low returns of completed questionnaires the researcher chose to administer the questionnaires to the pupils herself. This also gave her a chance to establish rapport, to explain the purpose of the study, to explain the meaning of items

that may not have been clear to the pupils, and also collect the forms herself (Best 1981:67). By arousing the pupils' initial interest the researcher increased the chances that the pupils would participate in the study. The researcher administered the questionnaires to the different standards on separate days.

The pupils were free to ask the researcher to explain if they did not understand any of the questions. Once the pupils answered all the questions they handed their forms to the researcher. Thereafter the researcher checked the forms to see that all the questions were answered. Once the forms were in order the pupils were dismissed.

4.4. DISCUSSING THE HYPOTHESES

4.4.1 Factors relating to reading reluctance

The following factors relating to reading reluctance were identified from the literature study: home environment, socio-economic status, school environment, influence of other media and leisure activities, social environment, emotional factors, physical factors, language development and intellectual development.

Reading aloud to children generally has a positive effect on attitude to reading. From the literature survey it was found that the home environment played a very important part in developing reading habits. Those children

who had stories read to them when they were young developed positive attitudes toward reading (see 3.3.1.1).

Children with well-educated parents tend to read a great deal and they consider reading to be important. Research has shown that a rich literary home environment contributes to children's voluntary interest in literature. Gardner (1989:234) found parental influence plays a large role in the development of

reading habits. Reading to children in infancy has a strong influence on developing healthy reading habits. Frequent readers are usually pupils whose parents are also frequent readers (see 3.3.1.1). Thus it can be seen that home environment may encourage the development of healthy reading habits or it may not affect the development of reading habits at all.

Socio-economic status also influences reading. Usually low socio-economic status is associated with less reading. A home is deprived of reading resources if the income is low (see 3.3.1.4). Children from lower economic homes are at a distinct disadvantage in learning to read and developing a love for reading as a lack of resources does not afford them the opportunity to do so. They do not have the opportunity to go out on outings with parents in order to develop their experiential knowledge. Poverty usually contributes to the development of poor reading habits. Thus socio-economic status may have a positive or negative effect on the development of healthy reading habits.

The school environment also plays a significant role in fostering students' interest in reading (see 3.3.1.2). Loving and caring teachers enrich children's lives irrespective of how they teach reading. It is this caring, loving attitude that makes children want to read. If the teacher is unduly harsh and vindictive when teaching pupils to read these pupils are likely to develop negative attitudes towards reading and thus will not develop healthy reading habits.

According to Greene (1992:28) reading aloud can improve reading skills, improve listening skills and also foster a positive attitude toward reading.

The classroom environment must make it easy to read and the classroom atmosphere must make it important to read. Teachers must encourage children to read and they must follow up on children's reading activities. The physical arrangement of materials, the learning atmosphere and the stimulation that students receive during school can positively or negatively affect participation in reading activities (Turner 1992:52). The school environment may positively or negatively affect the development of healthy reading habits.

There are varying views on how electronic media such as television, radio, computer games and other forms of sport influence reading (see 3.3.1.5). Some researchers believe that electronic media do not stifle reading but instead encourage children to read more. On the other hand there is a group

that believes these media, and especially television, take up a great deal of children's time and have an adverse effect on the amount of reading done. Therefore the influence of other media and leisure activities may have a positive or negative effect on the development of healthy reading habits.

The social sphere is another area of dismal failure for students who have reading problems. The social environment plays an important part in the cultivation of healthy reading habits (see 3.3.1.1). The social environment of the child is extremely important as it moulds the child from birth both physically and mentally. If reading is not considered an important activity in their lives by the people living around them then children tend to ignore reading as well. Peers also have an important influence on children's reading. Thus, the social environment may have a negative or positive effect on the development of healthy reading habits.

Emotional stability is one of the most important prerequisites for successful reading (see 3.3.2). A child must be completely free from emotional stress when reading instruction is given or else he or she will develop negative attitudes toward reading. Many teachers and parents fail to recognise this need. Therefore, emotional factors may have a negative or positive effect on the development of healthy reading habits.

Physical factors such as poor eyesight, poor hearing or speech defects can also affect the student's ability to learn reading skills (see 3.3.3.1, 3.3.3.2,

3.3.3.5). This can affect the pupil's ability to develop healthy reading habits. Thus, physical factors may also have a negative or positive influence on the development of healthy reading habits.

Language difficulties may also affect reading (see 3.3.4.2). The pupil's underlying language structures profoundly affect his/her ability to acquire reading skills. Problems with language can affect the ability to read and thus language may have a positive or negative effect on the development of healthy reading habits.

Intelligence plays an important part in determining whether students will read or not (see 3.3.4.1). Gardner (1989:252) found that high intelligence is related to high reading and low intelligence is associated with infrequent reading. Thus intelligence may have a negative or positive effect on the development of healthy reading habits.

4.4.2 Statement of hypotheses

There is a variation in the reading habits of different pupils of similar age. There is great concern as to why there is this variation in reading habits. From the literature study it was found that factors like the home environment, socio-economic status, school environment, influence of other media and leisure activities, social environment, emotional factors, physical factors, language and intelligence may contribute to reading reluctance. For

the purposes of this study emotional factors, physical factors, language and intelligence were combined and dealt with under the heading "Personal aspects". This was done to facilitate the analysis of results.

A number of hypotheses are stated on the causes of reading reluctance:

4.4.2.1 Hypothesis 1

The average achievement of pupils who spend little time per week reading differs from those pupils who spend much time per week reading.

4.4.2.2 Hypothesis 2

The average home environment of pupils who spend little time per week reading differs from that of those pupils who spend much time per week reading.

4.4.2.3 Hypothesis 3

The average socio-economic status of pupils who spend little time per week reading differs from that of those pupils who spend much time per week reading.

4.4.2.4 Hypothesis 4

The average school environment of pupils who spend little time per week reading differs from that of those pupils who spend much time per week reading.

4.4.2.5 Hypothesis 5

The average influence of other media and leisure activities of pupils who spend little time per week reading differs from that of those pupils who spend much time per week reading.

4.4.2.6 Hypothesis 6

The average social environment of pupils who spend little time per week reading differs from that of those pupils who spend much time per week reading.

4.4.2.7 Hypothesis 7

The personal aspects (taken as an average) of pupils who spend little time per week reading differ from those of those pupils who spend much time per week reading.

4.4.2.8 Hypothesis 8

There is a significant difference in the average time spent on reading between standard six, seven, eight, nine, and ten pupils.

4.4.2.9 Hypothesis 9

There is a significant difference in the average time spent on reading between boys and girls.

4.4.2.10 Hypothesis 10

The average achievement of pupils who read few or no books per week differs from that of those pupils who read many books per week.

4.4.2.11 Hypothesis 11

The average home environment of pupils who read few or no books per week differs from that of those pupils who read many books per week.

4.4.2.12 Hypothesis 12

The average socio-economic status of pupils who read few or no books per week differs from that of those pupils who read many books per week.

4.4.2.13 Hypothesis 13

The average school environment of pupils who read few or no books per week differs from that of those pupils who read many books per week.

4.4.2.14 Hypothesis 14

The average influence of other media and leisure activities of pupils who read few or no books per week differs from that of those pupils who read many books per week.

4.4.2.15 Hypothesis 15

The average social environment of pupils who read few or no books per week differs from that of those pupils who read many books per week.

4.4.2.16 Hypothesis 16

The average personal aspects of pupils who read few or no books per week differ from those of those pupils who read many books per week.

4.4.2.17 Hypothesis 17

There is a significant difference in the average number of books read per week between standard six, seven, eight, nine, and ten pupils.

4.4.2.18 Hypothesis 18

There is a significant difference in the average number of books read per week by boys and girls.

4.5 SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE

The investigation was done in the Phoenix area where there are twenty secondary schools. One school was chosen through random selection and thereafter approximately one hundred pupils will be picked by random selection from each standard. The sample consists of 544 standard six, seven, eight, nine and ten pupils attending a school under the Administration: Ex-House of Delegates, Department of Education and Culture, in the Phoenix area.

All these pupils come from varying backgrounds and their ages range from thirteen and eighteen years. This sample includes pupils of average, below

average and above average intelligence. Boys and girls were more or less equally distributed, namely, approximately fifty boys and fifty girls from each standard. The research sample is illustrated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 **Compilation of sample**

Standard	Boys	Girls	Total
6	63	63	126
7	54	56	110
8	51	53	104
9	51	51	102
10	51	51	102
TOTAL	270	274	544

4.6 RESEARCH METHOD

There are two major approaches to empirical research: the idiographic and the nomothetic approach.

According to Babbie (1992:83) the idiographic model of explanation aims at a complete understanding of a particular phenomenon, using the relevant causal factors. It refers to an intensive study of an individual case or instance.

On the other hand, the nomothetic model of explanation aims at a general understanding - not necessarily complete - of a class of phenomena, using the smallest number of most relevant causal factors (Babbie 1992:83). According to the *International Dictionary of Education* (Page and Thomas 1979:242) the nomothetic approach is the scientific approach to educational research in which underlying laws or generalisations of human behaviour are hypothesised and tested. Nomothetic research aims to use a hypothetic-deductive method in contrast to the intuitive interpretations of the idiographic approach.

The nomothetic approach was used for this study. The purpose was to determine general ideas about research, namely, to try and determine the factors relating to the reading habits of Indian pupils in the Phoenix area.

In this study the survey research method, namely, the questionnaire will be used because the research population is confined to Phoenix and it consists of pupils. The researcher will use a self-designed questionnaire, and a sample of 544 pupils consisting of approximately one hundred pupils each of standards six, seven, eight, nine and ten. These pupils will be chosen from one school from Phoenix at random. The researcher will administer these questionnaires to the pupils who will duly complete them. These questionnaires will be collected by the researcher who will then check them and have them ready for computer analysis using the System Analysis Statistic Program.

4.7 PROCESSING OF DATA

The data obtained from the questionnaire was checked and made ready for computer analysis. Computer processing and analysis was done at Unisa using the Systems Analysis Statistics Program (SAS).

4.8 ANALYSIS OF DATA

T-tests will be used to test hypotheses 1 - 7 and 9 - 16 and 18. Analysis of variance (F-test) will be used to determine whether hypotheses 8 and 17 should be accepted or rejected and thereafter t-tests will be done to ascertain which groups, if any, displayed significant differences.

4.9 CONCLUSION

The research design is outlined to help the reader to understand the approach used in investigating the factors relating to the reading habits of Indian secondary pupils in the Phoenix area.

In the next chapter the researcher will discuss the findings and results obtained from the questionnaire survey.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to table, analyse and interpret data obtained from the questionnaire survey.

The researcher will cover the following aspects: item analysis of the questionnaire, reliability of the questionnaire, determination of the norms (stanine) of the questionnaire, and testing the hypotheses and conclusion.

An item analysis was done for each section of the questionnaire. Reliability testing was done in order to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Norms were determined with regard to two sections of the questionnaire, namely, the amount of time spent reading per week and the number of books read per week. These norms were calculated in order to interpret the data. The items in the questionnaire were recoded in such a way that the higher the score, the more positive was the aspect (refer to Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Recoding of items in the questionnaire

Recoding	Items
For the following items a '2' was changed to '1' and '1' was changed to '0'	21, 48-49, 54-55, 57-59, 63, 65-68, 75, 78, 81, 83, 87-89, 91-95
For the following items a '2' was changed to '0' and '1' remained as '1'	14-20, 22-47, 50-53, 56, 60-62, 64, 69-74, 76, 79-80, 82, 84-86, 90, 96, 97

5.2 ITEM ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire consists of seven sections, namely, home environment, socio-economic status, school environment, influence of other media and leisure activities, social environment and personal aspects. Personal aspects incorporate emotional, physical, language and intellectual factors.

An item analysis was done for each section in order to ascertain whether the items contributed to that particular section. In the case where an item did not contribute, or contributed negatively to the total, that item was left out.

Another aspect of the item analysis is the alpha reliability coefficient. This is calculated for each section of the questionnaire if all the items are retained. The reliability coefficient is also calculated for the case where a specific item is left out.

On the basis of the item-total correlation and the reliability coefficient, a

decision was made on whether a specific item should be retained or left out.

Tables 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7 indicate that all items show a positive correlation with the total. Secondly, they indicate that the reliability coefficient of the particular section is not necessarily higher if any are left out and, therefore, all the items in the particular sections were retained.

Table 5.2 Item analysis of home environment

No. of subjects : 541		
No. of items : 19		
Alpha reliability coefficient : 0,74		
Item	Correlation with total	Alpha if item is left out
14	0,179	0,743
15	0,328	0,729
16	0,321	0,729
17	0,293	0,732
18	0,266	0,733
29	0,306	0,730
30	0,428	0,720
31	0,387	0,723
32	0,432	0,719
33	0,344	0,729
34	0,340	0,727
35	0,159	0,740
36	0,356	0,726
37	0,302	0,732
38	0,206	0,737
39	0,318	0,729
40	0,345	0,728
41	0,272	0,733
42	0,315	0,730

Table 5.3 Item analysis of the section: socio-economic status

No. of subjects : 540		
No. of items : 12		
Alpha reliability coefficient : 0,648		
Item	Correlation with total	Alpha if item is left out
19	0,352	0,616
20	0,182	0,649
21	0,354	0,618
22	0,357	0,614
24	0,201	0,645
25	0,313	0,623
26	0,298	0,626
27	0,454	0,593
28	0,219	0,642
63	0,066	0,658
70	0,283	0,630
71	0,406	0,604

Table 5.4 Item analysis of the section: school environment

No. of subjects : 534		
No. of items : 12		
Alpha reliability coefficient : 0,650		
Item	Correlation with total	Alpha if item is left out
23	0,070	0,667
43	0,365	0,617
44	0,384	0,620
45	0,273	0,634
46	0,039	0,667
47	0,169	0,647
48	0,248	0,640
50	0,430	0,604
51	0,399	0,611
52	0,379	0,613
53	0,375	0,613
61	0,388	0,611

Table 5.5 Item analysis of the section: influence of other media and leisure activities

No. of subjects : 543		
No. of items : 8		
Alpha reliability coefficient : 0,654		
Item	Correlation with total	Alpha if item is left out
49	0,439	0,597
54	0,090	0,667
55	0,498	0,584
56	0,133	0,678
57	0,521	0,573
58	0,436	0,598
59	0,426	0,601
60	0,207	0,661

Table 5.6 Item analysis of the section: social environment

No. of subjects : 544		
No. of items : 10		
Alpha reliability coefficient : 0,640		
Item	Correlation with total	Alpha if item is left out
62	0,221	0,634
64	0,282	0,622
65	0,242	0,627
66	0,240	0,628
67	0,220	0,631
68	0,226	0,631
69	0,337	0,608
72	0,352	0,604
73	0,468	0,574
74	0,446	0,580

Table 5.7 Item analysis of the section: personal aspect

No. of subjects : 543		
No. of items : 23		
Alpha reliability coefficient : 0,703		
Item	Correlation with total	Alpha if item is left out
75	0,350	0,684
76	0,176	0,704
77	0,077	0,713
78	0,164	0,702
79	0,221	0,697
80	0,282	0,694
81	0,198	0,698
82	0,318	0,688
83	0,352	0,684
84	0,207	0,698
85	0,229	0,696
86	0,066	0,711
87	0,353	0,686
88	0,328	0,690
89	0,173	0,700
90	0,277	0,692
91	0,247	0,695
92	0,389	0,685
93	0,462	0,679
94	0,443	0,682
95	0,354	0,685
96	0,146	0,701
97	0,304	0,689

5.3 RELIABILITY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Mulder (1989:209) states that no standardised test is complete unless there is an indication of its reliability. According to Anastasi (1990:109) reliability refers to the consistency of scores by persons re-examined with the same test on different occasions.

The closer the reliability of a measuring instrument is to 1, the lesser the

difference is between the variance of the actual score and the observed score. When an instrument is developed every attempt is made to bring the reliability of the instrument as close to 1 as possible.

Since the questionnaire could only be administered once for practical reasons (testing a second time would influence the spontaneous responses of the pupils, and there was insufficient time at school for retesting), the test-retest method for determining the reliability of the questionnaire could not be used. Reliability was arrived at by calculating the alpha coefficient for each of the sections. This is depicted in Table 5.8 which shows that the reliability coefficient ranges from 0,64 to 0,7. The questionnaire can be considered a fairly reliable measuring instrument.

Table 5.8 Reliability of the questionnaire

Section	Alpha coefficient	Number of items
Home environment	0,741	19
Socio-economic status	0,648	12
School environment	0,650	12
Influence of other media and leisure activities	0,654	8
Social environment	0,640	10
Personal	0,703	23

5.4 Determining the norms - stanines

A norm is an objective standard which a researcher could use to interpret the scores obtained by testees in a test administered at a later stage in terms of the results obtained by the standardisation group.

Stanines (standard scores divided into nine categories as shown in Table 5.8) were used to determine the norms.

Table 5.9 Limits and areas of stanines (Mulder 1989:205)

Stanine	Limits	% of Area
9	+ ∞ to +1,75z	4
8	+1,75z to +1,25z	7
7	+1,25z to +0,75z	12
6	+0,75z to +0,25z	17
5	+0,25z to -0,25z	20
4	-0,25z to -0,75z	17
3	-0,75z to -1,25z	12
2	-1,25z to -1,75z	7
1	-1,75z to - ∞	4

In order to calculate the stanines the cumulative percent had to be worked out. The stanines obtained are set out in Tables 5.10 and 5.11.

Table 5.10 Transformation of raw scores into stanines - amount of time spent on reading per week

Amount of time spent on reading	Frequency	Cumulative freq.	Cumulative percent	Stanine
0	13	13	2,4	} 1 - 3
1	49	62	11,4	
2	76	138	25,4	
3	55	193	35,5	} 4 - 6
4	59	252	46,3	
5	49	301	55,3	
6	27	328	60,3	
7	55	383	70,4	
8	28	411	75,6	
9	23	434	79,8	} 7 - 9
10	39	473	86,9	
11	4	477	87,7	
12	10	487	89,5	
13	1	488	89,7	
14	13	501	92,1	
15	5	506	93,0	
16	4	510	93,8	
18	1	511	93,9	
19	2	513	94,3	
20	8	521	95,8	
21	5	526	96,7	
24	2	528	97,1	
25	2	530	97,4	
26	1	531	97,6	
27	1	532	97,8	
28	3	535	98,3	
29	1	536	98,5	
30	3	539	99,1	
32	1	540	99,3	
33	1	541	99,4	
34	1	542	99,6	
35	1	543	99,8	
36	1	544	100	

Table 5.11 Transformation of raw scores into stanines - number of books read per week

No. of books read	Freq- uency	Cumula- tive freq.	Cumula- tive percent	Stanine
0	107	107	19,7	} 1 - 3
1	252	359	66,0	
2	98	457	84,0	
3	46	503	92,5	} 4 - 6
4	18	521	95,8	
5	9	530	97,4	
6	4	534	98,2	
7	3	537	98,7	
9	3	540	99,3	
10	2	542	99,6	} 7 - 9
11	1	543	99,8	
12	1	544	100	

According to Mulder (1989:205) as a general rule, the bottom three stanines (1,2 and 3) are regarded as below average, the next three stanines (4,5 and 6) as average and the top three stanines (7,8 and 9) as above average.

In the case of Table 5.10 'less than 2 hours reading' is below average, '2 to 8 hours reading' is average and 'more than 8 hours reading' is above average. In the case of Table 5.11 'less than 1 book per week' is below average, '1 book per week' is average and 'more than 1 book per week' is above average.

5.5 TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

In order to test hypotheses 1 - 7 (refer to chapter 4.4.2.1 to 4.4.2.7) two groups were created with regard to the amount of time spent on reading per week. These two groups were created from the stanines as shown in Table 5.10. The first group (below average) and the last group (above average) were used. Group A is below average, that is, the pupils who spend less than two hours a week reading. Group B is above average, that is, pupils who spend more than eight hours a week reading.

5.5.1 Hypothesis 1

With regard to hypothesis 1 in paragraph 4.4.2.1, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference between the average achievement of pupils who spend little time per week reading (Group A) and those who spend much time per week reading (Group B).

In order to test the hypothesis the t-test was used. The information appears in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12 T-test analysis of the variable achievement

Group	No.	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value	df	Significance
A	62	57,71	10,21	3,45	193	p < 0,01
B	133	63,70	11,76			

According to Table 5.12 the null hypothesis can be rejected at the one percent level of significance. There is a significant difference between the average achievement of pupils who spend little time per week reading and those who spend much time per week reading. Group B has a higher mean (63,70) than Group A (57,71). This indicates that those pupils who spend more time reading are able to achieve higher levels compared to those pupils who spend less time reading. This is in accordance with Strang's view (1978:61) that reading is essential to the success in all academic subjects (refer to paragraph 2.2). Robertson (1991:57), Zwarenstein (1986:402) and Thompson (1979:9) concur with these views (refer to paragraph 1.1).

5.5.2 Hypothesis 2

With regard to hypothesis 2 stated in paragraph 4.4.2.2, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference in the average home environment of pupils who spend little time per week reading (Group A) and those who spend much time per week reading (Group B).

In order to test the hypothesis a t-test was used. The information appears in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13 T-test analysis of variable home environment

Group	No.	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value	df	Significance
A	62	9,85	3,46	5,23	193	p < 0,01
B	133	12,49	3,19			

According to Table 5.13 the null hypothesis can be rejected at the one percent level of significance. There is a significant difference between the average home environment of pupils who spend little time per week reading (Group A) and those pupils who spend much time per week reading (Group B). Group B has a higher mean (12,49) than Group A (9.85). Those pupils who spend much time reading have a more encouraging and enriched home environment as compared to those who spend less time reading.

These findings are in accordance with the views of Turner (1992:52) who found that the home environment is significant in fostering students' interests in reading. Daniel Fader (1985:7) also states that parents must model the act of literacy for their children. Wade (1990:5), Morrow (1985:2), Carson & Fortune (1984:29), Ingham (1981:230-31) and Gardner (1989:252) also found that a rich literary home environment is the most significant contribution to children's voluntary reading behaviour (refer to paragraph 3.3.1.1).

5.5.3 Hypotheses 3

With regard to hypothesis 3 stated in paragraph 4.4.2.3, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference in the average socio-economic status of pupils who spend little time per week reading (Group A) and those who spend much time per week reading (Group B).

In order to test the hypothesis a t-test was used. The information appears in Table 5.14.

Table 5.14 T-test analysis of variable socio-economic status

Group	No.	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value	df	Significance
A	62	7,39	2,32	3,16	193	p < 0,01
B	133	8,53	2,38			

According to Table 5.14 the null hypothesis can be rejected at the one percent level of significance. It can be stated that there is a significant difference between the average socio-economic status of pupils who spend little time per week reading (Group A) and those who spend much time per week reading (Group B). Group B has a higher mean (8,53) than Group A (7,39). This indicates that socio-economic status might have a negative effect on the time spent on reading by students in Group A.

These results seem to confirm the ideas of other researchers such as

Dechant & Smith (1977:102), Drummond & Wignall (1979:135), Potts (1976:74) and Brown (1982:89). They all found that generally low socio-economic status is associated with less reading and a low income deprives homes of reading resources (refer to paragraph 3.3.1.4).

5.5.4 Hypothesis 4

With regard to hypothesis 4 stated in paragraph 4.4.2.4, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference in the average school environment of pupils who spend little time per week reading (Group A) and those who spend much time per week reading (Group B).

In order to test the hypothesis a t-test was used. The information appears in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15 T-test analysis of variable school environment

Group	No.	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value	df	Significance
A	62	8,13	2,53	2,90	193	p < 0,01
B	133	9,15	2,17			

According to Table 5.15 the null hypothesis can be rejected at the one percent level of significance. There is a significant difference between the average school environment of pupils who spend little time per week reading (Group A) and those who spend much per week reading (Group B).

Group B has a higher mean (9,15) than Group A (8,13). It seems that the group which spends much time reading may experience a more encouraging school environment than the group which spends less time reading.

These results seem to confirm the ideas of other researchers such as Harris and Smith (1980:69), Southgate, Arnold and Johnson (1977:168), Turner (1992:51), Burmeister (1974:16), and Loughlin and Martin (1987). These researchers also state that the physical arrangement of materials, the learning atmosphere, the teaching methods and stimulation that students receive during school can positively or negatively affect participation in reading activities (refer to paragraph 3.3.1.2).

5.5.5 Hypothesis 5

With regard to hypothesis 5 stated in paragraph 4.4.2.5, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference in the average influence of other media and leisure activities of pupils who spend little time per week reading (Group A) and those who spend much time per week reading (Group B).

In order to test the hypothesis a t-test was used. The information appears in Table 5.16.

Table 5.16 T-test analysis of variable: influence of other media and leisure activities

Group	No.	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value	df	Significance
A	62	2,26	1,90	} 5,48	193	p < 0,01
B	133	3,90	1,96			

According to Table 5.16 the null hypothesis can be rejected at the one percent level of significance. There is a significant difference between the average influence of other media and leisure activities of pupils who spend little time per week reading (Group A) and those who spend much time per week reading (Group B). Group B has a higher mean (3,90) than Group A (2,26). This indicates that the group which engages in less reading also seems to spend less time on other media and leisure activities than the group which spends more time on reading.

These findings are in accordance with Ingham (1981:229) who found that pupils who spend more time on reading also spend more time on other activities. Gardner also disputed the notion that television viewing displaced reading. Other researchers obtained conflicting results, namely, Pardon (1992:3), Telfer and Kann (1984:536) and Horn (1987:22). They found that the influence of new and more easily consumed media such as television and video had an adverse effect on the time spent reading (refer to paragraph 3.3.1.5).

5.5.6 Hypothesis 6

With regard to hypothesis 6 stated in paragraph 4.4.2.6, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is significant difference in the average social environment of pupils who spend little time per week reading (Group A) and those who spend much time per week reading (Group B).

In order to test the hypothesis a t-test was used. The information appears in Table 5.17.

Table 5.17 T-test analysis of variable: social environment

Group	No.	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value	df	Significance
A	62	5,63	2,29	} 5,50	193	p < 0,01
B	133	7,33	1,87			

According to Table 5.17 the null hypothesis can be rejected at the one percent level of significance. It can be stated that there is a significant difference between the average social environment of pupils who spend little time per week reading (Group A) and those who spend much time per week reading (Group B). Group B has a higher mean (7,33) than Group A (5,61). It seems the group which spends much time reading experienced a more encouraging social environment than the group which spends little time reading.

This is in accordance with Marshall's (1977:20) findings that the social environment moulds the child physically and mentally from birth and that the child is a product of his/her community. Quandt (1977:251) also found that poor readers are affected by adverse remarks made by parents, teachers or peers. This causes them to develop negative attitudes toward reading (refer to paragraph 3.3.1.3).

5.5.7 Hypothesis 7

With regard to hypothesis 7 stated in paragraph 4.4.2.7, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference in the average personal aspects of pupils who spend little time per week reading (Group A) and those who spend much time per week reading (Group B).

In order to test the hypothesis a t-test was used. The information appears in Table 5.18.

Table 5.18 T-test analysis of variable: personal aspect

Group	No.	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value	df	Significance
A	62	17,95	3,05	3,92	193	p < 0,01
B	133	19,85	3,19			

According to Table 5.18 the null hypothesis can be rejected at the one percent level of significance. It can be stated that there is a significant

difference between the average personal aspects of pupils who spend little time per week reading (Group A) and those who spend much time per week reading (Group B). Group B has a higher mean (19,85) than Group A (17,95). It seems those pupils who spend more time reading experience fewer personal problems than those pupils who spend less time reading.

This is in accordance with the views of Dechant and Smith (1977:193-194), Harris (1970:270) and Schell and Burns (1972:94), who state that painful emotional events during early efforts at reading may turn the young learner against reading (refer to paragraph 3.3.2). Dechant and Smith (1977:148) also noted that poor health may affect reading (refer to paragraph 3.3.3). Carter (1986:4) and Fricke (1977:39) found that the amount of voluntary reading undertaken by a young person is positively associated with his or her intellectual ability (refer to 3.3.4.1). Zintz and Maggart (1984:73) and Dechant and Smith (1977:181) also noted that language plays a significant and unique role in reading readiness (refer to paragraph 3.3.4.2).

5.5.8 Hypothesis 8

With regard to hypothesis 8 stated in paragraph 4.4.2.8, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference in the average time spent on reading between standard six, seven, eight, nine and ten pupils.

The F-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference

in the average time spent on reading by the pupils in the various standards.

The information appears in Table 5.19.

Table 5.19 F-test analysis of time spent on reading by standard six to standard ten pupils

Group	Number	Mean	Standard deviation
6	126	6,47	5,16
7	110	7,25	9,15
8	104	6,47	6,07
9	102	7,47	7,31
10	102	6,21	9,91

$$F (4 ; 539) = 0,55 \quad p > 0,05$$

On the basis of the above information the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. There is no significant difference in the average time spent on reading by standard six, seven, eight, nine and ten pupils.

Previous research in this area has yielded conflicting results (refer to paragraph 3.3.3.4). Heather (1981) and Gorman et al (1982) found that young fifteen year olds read less than eleven year olds.

5.5.9 Hypothesis 9

With regard to hypothesis 9 stated in paragraph 4.4.2.9, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference in the average time spent on reading between boys and girls.

In order to test the hypothesis the t-test was used. The information appears in Table 5.20.

Table 5.20 T-test analysis variable: gender

Group	No.	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value	df	Significance
Boys	270	6,17	8,30	1,80	542	p > 0,05
Girls	274	7,35	6,89			

On the basis of the above information in Table 5.20 the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. There is no significant difference in the average time spent on reading between boys and girls.

Previous research in this area has yielded conflicting results (refer to paragraph 3.3.3.3). Zill and Winglee (1990:41), Brown (1982), Gorman et al, and Gardner (1989:252) found girls spend more time on reading than boys.

5.5.10 Testing of hypotheses 10 - 16

In order to test hypotheses 10 - 16 a further two groups were created with regard to the number of books read per week. These two groups were created from the stanines as shown in Table 5.11. The first group (below average) and the last group (above average) were used. The two groups were called C and D. Group C is below average, that is, less than one or no books are read and Group D is above average, that is, more than one

book is read.

5.5.11 Hypothesis 10

With regard to hypothesis 10 stated in paragraph 4.4.2.10, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference in the average achievement of pupils who read no books per week (Group C) and those who read more than one book per week (Group D).

In order to test the hypothesis a t-test was used. The information appears in Table 5.21.

Table 5.21 T-test analysis of variable: achievement with regard to number of books read per week

Group	No.	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value	df	Significance
C	107	55,33	10,18	} 7,73	290	p < 0,01
D	185	66,08	12,12			

According to Table 5.21 the null hypothesis can be rejected at the one percent level of significance. There is a significant difference between the average achievement of pupils who read no books per week (Group C) and those who read more than one book per week (Group D). Group D has a higher mean (66,08) than Group C (55,33). This indicates that pupils who read more than the average number of books per week have a greater

chance of achieving better academic results.

These results seem to confirm the ideas of other researchers such as Morrow (1986:161) and Feitelson and Goldstein (1986:929) who found that students who show voluntary interest in books are rated higher by teachers on school performance than are pupils with a low interest in books (refer to paragraph 2.2).

5.5.12 Hypothesis 11

With regard to hypothesis 11 stated in paragraph 4.4.2.11, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference in the average home environment of pupils who read no books per week (Group C) and those who read more than one book per week (Group D).

In order to test the hypothesis a t-test was used. The information appears in Table 5.22.

Table 5.22 T-test analysis of variable: home environment with regard to number of books read

Group	No.	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value	df	Significance
C	107	9,87	3,96	5,29	290	p < 0,01
D	185	12,09	3,12			

According to Table 5.22 the null hypothesis can be rejected at the one percent level of significance. There is a significant difference between the average home environment of those who read less than one or no books per week (Group C) and those who read more than one book per week (Group D). Group D has a higher mean (12,09) than Group C (9,87). The group which reads more than the average number of books per week has a more encouraging and enriched home environment than the group that reads no books per week.

These findings are in accordance with the views of Morrow (1992:251) who found that children exposed to literature accumulate knowledge and tend to read more books (refer to paragraph 3.2). Storey (1986:40) found that children's reading is moulded by parental and sibling role models. Greaney and Hegarty (1987:15) also found that the amount of leisure reading is related to the existence of a positive educational home environment (refer to paragraph 3.3.1.1).

5.5.13 Hypothesis 12

With regard to hypothesis 12 stated in paragraph 4.4.2.12, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference in the average socio-economic status of pupils who read no books per week (Group C) and those who read more than one book per week (Group D).

In order to test the hypothesis a t-test was used. The information appears in Table 5.23.

Table 5.23 T-test analysis of variable: socio-economic status with regard to number of books read

Group	No.	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value	df	Significance
C	107	7,65	2,20	1,85	290	p > 0,05
D	185	8,17	2,37			

According to Table 5.23 the null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent level of significance. There is no significant difference between the average socio-economic status of pupils who read less than one or no books per week (Group C) and those who read more than the average number of books per week (Group D).

Previous research in this area has yielded conflicting results in this area (refer to paragraph 3.3.1.4). Brown (1982:89) found poverty and its effects contribute to the development of poor reading habits. Potts (1976:74) noted that children from a lower socio-economic environment tend to get little support in reading at home.

5.5.14 Hypothesis 13

With regard to hypothesis 13 stated in paragraph 4.4.2.13, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference in the average school environment of pupils who read no books per week (Group C) and those who read more than one book per week (Group D).

In order to test the hypothesis a t-test was used. The information appears in Table 5.24.

Table 5.24 T-test analysis of variable: school environment with regard to number of books read per week

Group	No.	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value	df	Significance
C	107	7,93	2,02	6,23	290	p < 0,01
D	185	9,54	2,17			

According to Table 5.24 the null hypothesis can be rejected at the one percent level of significance. There is a significant difference between the average school environment of pupils who read no books per week (Group C) and those who read more than one book per week (Group D). Group D has a higher mean (9,54) than Group C (7,93). This means that the group which reads more than the average number of books per week experiences a more stimulating school environment than those pupils who do not read at all.

This is in accordance with the views of Turner (1992:5) who noted that students who have difficulty reading are less likely to engage in future

reading activities. Burmeister (1974:16) states that excellent teaching and the use of materials appropriate to the needs and interests of a student results in greater reading (refer to paragraph 3.3.1.2).

5.5.15 Hypothesis 14

With regard to hypothesis 14 stated in paragraph 4.4.2.14, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference in the average influence of other media and leisure activities of pupils who read no books per week (Group C) and those who read more than 1 book per week (Group D).

In order to test the hypothesis a t-test was used. The information appears in Table 5.25.

Table 5.25 T-test analysis of variable: influence of other media and leisure activities with regard to number of books read per week

Group	No.	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value	df	Significance
C	107	2,09	1,78	9,20	290	p < 0,01
D	185	4,14	1,85			

According to Table 5.25 the null hypothesis can be rejected at the one percent level of significance. There is a significant

difference between the average influence of other media and leisure activities of pupils who read no books per week (Group C) and those who read more than one book per week (Group D).

Group D has a higher mean (4,14) than Group C (2,09). This indicates that pupils who do not read at all are also less influenced by other media and leisure activities than the group who reads more than the average number of books per week.

These findings are in accordance with Ingham's and Gardener's. Ingham (1981:229) found that book readers were the most active people in terms of their participation in a great number of leisure time activities. Gardner (1989:259) also found that school sport did not threaten the amount of book reading done in the secondary school (refer to paragraph 3.3.1.5).

Previous research in this area also yielded conflicting results (refer to paragraph 3.3.1.5). Morrow and Weinstein (1986:332) state that the attraction of electronic entertainment is undoubtedly one reason for low level voluntary reading among the young.

5.5.16 Hypothesis 15

With regard to hypothesis 15 stated in paragraph 4.4.2.15, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference between the average social

environment of pupils who read no books per week (Group C) and those who read more than one book per week (Group D).

In order to test the hypothesis the t-test was used. The information appears in Table 5.26.

Table 5.26 T-test analysis of variable: social environment with regard to number of books read per week

Group	No.	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value	df	Significance
C	107	5,91	1,87	6,23	290	p < 0,01
D	185	7,36	1,95			

According to Table 5.26 the null hypothesis can be rejected at the one percent level of significance. It can be stated that there is a significant difference between the average social environment of pupils who read no books per week (Group C) and those who read more than the average number of books per week (Group D).

Group D has a higher mean (7,36) than Group C (5,91). This indicates that pupils in Group C may not experience as encouraging a social environment as those in Group D.

These findings are in accordance with the views of Marshall (1977:38), who found that the need for peer approval and an interest in reading may conflict

when the pursuit of the interest makes the teenager who reads and uses a library the odd one out, and may bring with it the risk of ridicule by a nickname such as 'bookworm' or another 'derogatory' epithet (refer to paragraph 1.2.2). Ayodele (1984:120) also found that poor environmental background tends to negatively affect the motivation and achievement of children (refer to paragraph 3.3.1.4).

5.5.17 Hypothesis 16

With regard to hypothesis 16 stated in paragraph 4.4.2.16, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference in the average personal aspects of pupils who read no books per week (Group C) and those who read more than one book per week (Group D).

In order to test the hypothesis a t-test was used. The information appears in Table 5.27.

Table 5.27 T-test analysis of variable: personal aspect with regard to number of books read per week

Group	No.	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value	df	Significance
C	107	18,34	3,42	4,00	290	p < 0,01
D	185	19,87	2,99			

According to Table 5.27 the null hypothesis can be rejected at the one

percent level of significance. It can be stated that there is a significant difference between the average personal aspects of pupils who read less than one or no books per week (Group C) and those who read more than the average number book per week (Group D). Group D has a higher mean (19,87) than Group C (18,34). It seems that personal aspects, such as emotional factors, physical factors, intelligence and language (taken as an average), seem to be less amongst pupils who read more than the average number of books per week, indicating that these pupils experience less personal problems than those pupils who do not read at all.

These findings are in accordance with other researchers. Dechant and Smith (1977:193-194) found that emotional problems could influence the pupil's attitude towards reading (refer to paragraph 3.3.2). Burmeister (1974:20) found poor hearing may be a contributing factor in reading disability (refer to paragraph 3.3.3.1). Ekwall (1976:7) found that speech problems could be considered as a probable cause of reading failure (refer to paragraph 3.3.3.5), and Gardner (1989:252) investigated how high intelligence is related to a predilection for book reading and low intelligence with infrequent reading (refer to paragraph 3.3.4.1). Spache and Spache (1977:18) note that language deficiency could affect a child's reading (refer to paragraph 3.3.4.2).

5.5.18 Hypothesis 17

With regard to hypothesis 17 stated in paragraph 4.4.2.17, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference in the average number of books read between standard six, seven, eight, nine and ten pupils.

The F-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference in the average number of books read by the pupils in the various standards.

The information appears in Table 5.28.

Table 5.28 F-test: analysis of number of books read by standard 6 - 10 pupils

Group	Number	Mean	Standard deviation
6	126	2,29	1,98
7	110	1,79	1,21
8	104	1,63	1,66
9	102	0,95	0,69
10	102	0,63	1,26

$$F(4 ; 539) = 23,25$$

$$p < 0,01$$

On the basis of the information contained in Table 5.28 the null hypothesis can be rejected at the one percent level of significance. There is a significant difference in the number of books read between the various standards.

In order to determine between which standards a difference may exist the

t-values were calculated. These appear in Table 5.29.

Table 5.29 T-test analysis of variable: number of books read

Groups	Difference bet. the means	T-value	Significance
6 - 7	0,5	t < 2,8	p > 0,05
6 - 8	0,66	t > 2,8	p < 0,05
6 - 9	1,34	t > 2,8	p < 0,05
6 - 10	1,66	t > 2,8	p < 0,05
7 - 8	0,16	t < 2,8	p > 0,05
7 - 9	0,84	t > 2,8	p < 0,05
7 - 10	1,15	t > 2,8	p < 0,05
8 - 9	0,68	t > 2,8	p < 0,05
8 - 10	1,00	t > 2,8	p < 0,05
9 - 10	0,31	t < 2,8	p > 0,05

According to Table 5.29 there is a significant difference in the number of books read between standard six and eight, six and nine, six and ten, seven and nine, seven and ten, eight and nine, and eight and ten. Standard six has a higher mean than standards eight, nine and ten, thereby indicating that the standard sixes read more books than standards eight, nine and ten. Standard seven has a higher mean than standards nine and ten, thereby indicating that the standard sevens read more books than standards nine and ten. Standard eight has a higher mean than standards nine and ten, thereby indicating that standard eights read more books than standards nine and ten. There is no significant difference in the number of books read between standard six and seven, seven and eight, and nine and ten. The higher the standard the less books they seem to read.

These findings are in accordance with other researchers. Carter (1986:3) and Hincks and Balding (1985:42) noted that the younger the child the greater the likelihood of him/her being a voluntary reader. Whitehead et al (1977:272) also found a 'marked decline' in the number of books read by over fourteen year olds. Gardner (1989:251) found book reading declines most strikingly between standard six and standard eight (refer to paragraph 3.3.3.4).

5.5.19 Hypothesis 18

With regard to hypothesis 18 stated in paragraph 4.4.2.18, the following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference in the average number of books read per week between boys and girls.

In order to test the hypothesis the t-test was used. The information appears in Table 5.30.

Table 5.30 T-test analysis of variable: gender

Group	No.	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value	df	Significance
Boys	270	1,11	1,18	6,03	542	p < 0,01
Girls	274	1,89	1,80			

On the basis of the above information in Table 5.30 the null hypothesis can be rejected at the one percent level of significance. There is a significant

difference in the average number of books read per week by girls and boys. Girls have a higher mean (1,89) than boys (1,11). From the above information it can be concluded that girls tend to read more than boys.

These findings are in accordance with other researchers. Gardner (1989:252) and Hincks and Balding (1985:42) also found that boys read less than girls (refer to paragraph 3.3.3.3).

5.6 CONCLUSION

An item analysis was carried out for each section of the questionnaire. No items were left out from the questionnaire.

The reliability of the questionnaire was determined by calculating the alpha coefficient for each section. It ranges from 0,64 to 0,7.

Norms for the questionnaire were established by converting the raw scores to stanines. In this way the following groups were created: those who are below average being 'less than 2 hours reading' and 'less than 1 book read per week'; those who are above average being 'more than 8 hours reading' and 'more than 1 book read per week'.

The following conclusions were arrived at after the testing of the hypotheses:

- There is a significant difference between the average achievement of pupils who spend little time per week reading and those who spend much time per week reading. This proves that pupils who spend more time reading are better achievers than those who spend less time reading. Also, there is a significant difference between the average achievement of pupils who read no books and those who read more than one book. This proves that pupils who read one or more books are better achievers than those who read no books.
- There is a significant difference in the average home environments of pupils who spend little time per week reading and those who spend much time per week reading. This indicates that pupils who spend more time reading probably have a more encouraging and enriched home environment than those who spend less time reading. Also, there is a significant difference between the average home environment of those who read no books per week and those who read more than one book per week. This indicates that pupils who read more than one book per week probably have a more enriched literary home environment than those who read no books per week.
- It can be stated that there is a significant difference between the average socio-economic status of pupils who spend little time per week reading and those who spend much time per week reading. It seems that those pupils with a poor socio-economic status tend to spend less time reading compared to those with a higher socio-economic status. On the other hand the study also reveals that there

is no significant difference between the average socio-economic status of pupils who read no books per week and those who read more than one book per week.

- There is a significant difference between the average school environment of pupils who spend little time per week reading and those who spend much time per week reading. This shows that those pupils who have an encouraging, happy school environment tend to spend more time reading compared to those who have an unhappy school environment. Also, there is a significant difference between the average school environment of pupils who read no books per week and those who read more than one book per week. This indicates that pupils who have an encouraging school environment tend to read more books than those who have an unhappy school environment.
- There is significant difference between the average influence of other media and leisure activities of pupils who spend little time per week reading and those who spend much time per week reading. It was found that those pupils who spend much time per week reading are also influenced much more by other media and leisure activities than those who spend less time per week reading.
- Also, there is a significant difference between the average influence of other media and leisure activities of pupils who read no books per week and those who read more than one book per week. This study reveals that those pupils who spend more time viewing other media

tend also to read more than one book per week.

- There is a significant difference between the average social environment of pupils who spend little time per week reading and those who spend much time per week reading. This study reveals that those pupils who have an encouraging social environment tend to spend more time per week reading compared to those pupils who do not have an encouraging social environment. Also, there is a significant difference between the average social environment of pupils who read no books per week and those who read more than one book per week. This indicates that those pupils who have an encouraging social climate tend to read more books per week than those pupils who have a stifling social environment.
- There is a significant difference between the average personal aspects of pupils who spend little time per week reading and those who spend much time per week reading. It seems that those pupils who spend more time per week reading experience fewer personal problems as compared to those pupils who spend less time per week reading. Also, there is a significant difference between the average personal aspects of pupils who read no books per week and those who read more than one book per week. This study reveals that those pupils who read more than one book per week experience fewer personal problems than those pupils who read no books per week.
- There is no significant difference in the average time spent on

reading by standards six, seven, eight, nine and ten pupils. On the other hand this study reveals that there is a significant difference in the average number of books read between the various standards. Pupils in standard six tend to read more books than pupils in standards eight, nine and ten. Standard seven pupils tend to read more books than standards nine and ten. Standard eight pupils tend to read more books than standards nine and ten. There is no significant difference in the number of books read between standards six and seven, seven and eight, and nine and ten.

- There is no significant difference in the average time spent on reading between boys and girls. On the other hand this study reveals that there is a significant difference in the average number of books read per week between boys and girls. Girls tend to read more books than boys.

In Chapter Six a summary of the main findings from both the literature survey and the present study as well as suggestions and recommendations are presented.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The main focus of this study was an investigation into factors relating to reading habits of Indian secondary school pupils in the Phoenix area. In order to achieve this a literature survey as well as an empirical study were undertaken. A summary of the main findings from both the literature survey and the actual empirical survey carried out at a school in Phoenix under the control of the Ex-House of Delegates, Department of Education and Culture is presented hereunder. Also included here are suggestions and recommendations that may help in developing healthy reading habits.

6.2 MAIN FINDINGS: LITERATURE SURVEY

6.2.1 Reading as a phenomenon

The literature survey in Chapter Two on reading as a phenomenon revealed the following:

- The ability to read and comprehend is essential for mastering life in society.
- Pupils who master the art of skilled reading are usually academically successful; in fact, they are successful in all spheres of life.

- Children who have the privilege of being exposed to literature early in their lives often begin to read early.
- Reading helps in developing different thinking processes, namely, fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration.
- Reading can also have a therapeutic effect on anti-social behaviour.
- Reading is a multifaceted process which changes its nature from one developmental stage to the next.
- Reading is essentially an active process of reconstructing an author's ideas. In order to read effectively one has to learn how to use and understand language.
- Reading comprehension instruction helps children to understand the written text.
- The reading process is characterised as interactive, constructive, holistic and as a language process.
- The interactive process is a model of the reading process as it takes place in the mature reader. This model explains that reading involves simultaneous parallel processing of both bottom-up and top-down factors.
- Reading is viewed as a constructive process in which inference by the reader and the reader's prior knowledge play a central role. The reader is no longer passive and receptive but active and constructive in the communication process between him/herself and the writer. When the reader reads he/she reconstructs the writer's message based on his/her own ability and prior knowledge.

- Reading is also a holistic process. Reading comprehension is not just a single verbal skill but many skills which cannot be separated from one another. Reading relies on the active participation of the reader whose task is to construct meaning. Early reading consists of separate interrelated sub-skills but skilled reading is holistic.
- Reading is essentially a language process. Recent investigations have provided convincing evidence that reading skill is a manifestation of linguistic competence in general. The awareness and use of phonetic structure in early reading is important. Skill in phonemic segmentation, sound blending, phonological coding and rapid letter naming all differentiate good readers from poor readers. Reading is a naturally occurring process and children should learn how to read in the same way they learn to talk.
- Reading comprehension is essentially a process of interpreting the written text through the interaction of the knowledge the reader brings to the text, the reader's interpretation of the language that the author has used and the situation in which the text is read.
- It is ironic that little time is spent on reading instruction in the secondary school, because it is essential that pupils in secondary school should practice and develop critical reading. Pupils should also endeavour to become flexible readers. Reading flexibility is the ability to adjust one's reading rate and methods to suit the type of material one is reading and one's purpose in reading.
- Skimming and scanning are valuable reading skills.

6.2.2 Factors relating to reading habits

The literature survey (on factors relating to reading habits) which was undertaken in Section 1.2.2 and Chapter Three revealed the following:

- Among our youth today there are both avid and reluctant readers.
- It has been observed that poor reading habits in the secondary school could be a major obstacle to later academic success in life in general.
- The development of reading skills and the nurturing of reading as a lifelong activity continue to be challenging goals for reading professionals.
- Educators are confronted with a new phenomenon: 'alliteracy'.

A number of factors which can be attributed to the reading attitude of the pupils have been identified. The researcher will now look at the findings for each factor individually.

6.2.2.1 Ecological factors

6.2.2.1.1 Home environment

- Children's home background is extremely important in influencing children to read.
- Parents are the driving forces in the child's development.
- Families who do not value reading pass these values onto their children.
- Children who have books read to them usually develop richer and

more complex language structures than those who do not have stories read to them.

- Research has shown that children who show a voluntary interest in books usually come from small families; there is a rich literary environment; their parents have a college or university diploma or degree; and their parents consider reading as important.
- Children who value reading have been read to regularly at home from an early age; someone was at hand to answer all their questions.
- Research has shown that those children who do not value reading come from homes where parents do not read; the parents are not well-educated and they have unskilled jobs; the discipline is either too strict or too lax; there are no organised television viewing times; the parents do not listen to their children's conversation; or an over-anxious parent may stifle the child's interest in reading.
- Frequent readers are usually pupils whose parents are also frequent readers.

6.2.2.1.2 The school environment

- The school environment plays an important role in fostering pupils' interest in reading.
- Today the teaching of reading is more skills oriented. Skilled oriented reading programmes could be one of the causes for children's infrequent reading; also, this type of reading programme

provides little opportunity for students to read for enjoyment.

- A loving, caring attitude by teachers makes children want to read.
- Poor instruction is a primary cause of reading difficulties.
- Inadequate teacher training may be responsible for poor reading.
- A child who has difficulty in reading will avoid reading activities.
- Teachers' expectations and behaviour influence pupils' academic performances - that is, pupils will do very little reading if much reading is not expected from them.
- Reading instruction must be geared to the needs of the pupils. If this is not done the pupils develop negative attitudes towards reading.
- The teacher must create an atmosphere in class that encourages pupils to read.
- Overcrowded classrooms may lead to children developing reading problems as teachers are not able to supervise the reading programmes of all children.
- The classroom climate must encourage learning. The discipline must not be too strict or too lax.
- Ability grouping for reading has been found to be detrimental to promoting reading enjoyment. This method offers preferential treatment for good readers and social stigmatisation for poor readers.

6.2.2.1.3 Social environment

- The social environment moulds the child from birth physically and

mentally, that is, he or she is influenced by his or her social upbringing, class, parental attitudes, life styles and peer group activities.

- The need for peer approval could be one of the causes of infrequent reading if reading results in their being rejected by their friends.
- Research studies on social environment show that students with reading and learning disabilities usually have poor social skills.
- These poor readers are usually affected by adverse remarks made by parents, teachers, peers and they tend to develop negative attitudes toward reading.

6.2.2.1.4 Socio-economic status

- Pupils from lower economic homes are at a disadvantage in learning to read as they lack experiential knowledge and they are exposed to language patterns that are strange to them.
- A low income generally deprives homes of reading resources; this stifles reading.
- Children from low income homes do not necessarily lack the ability to learn and read but rather they do not have the opportunity to do so.
- Poverty and its effects usually contribute to the development of poor reading habits.

6.2.2.1.5 The influence of other media and leisure activities

- There are varying views on how this factor influences reading.
- Firstly, some researchers feel that these electronic media do not stifle reading but instead encourage children to read more.
- Secondly, other researchers feel that these media especially television, take up a great deal of children's time and it have an adverse effect on reading.

6.2.2.2 **Emotional factors**

- Emotional stability is one of the most important requirements for successful reading.
- Painful emotional events during early efforts at reading may turn the young learner against reading.
- The school may also bring about emotional instability in a child if he/she is pushed into reading when he/she is not ready for it.
- Emotional disturbances influence reading.
- Learning to read requires a great deal of personal initiative which the insecure child is unwilling to take and this leads to a negative attitude to reading.

6.2.2.3 **Physical factors**

6.2.2.3.1 Hearing impairment

- Hearing inability may substantially affect the ability to learn to read.
- Hearing loss places a burden on students when phonic methods are

used because they have difficulty hearing certain sounds.

- An inability to read as a result of hearing impairment may contribute to a negative attitude to reading because the reader does not experience success.

6.2.2.3.2 Visual impairment

- The ability to see is critical to the reading process.
- Both good and poor readers experience visual defects but a greater proportion of poor readers often have certain types of defects.
- Defects that may affect reading achievement are hyperopia, extreme myopia, poor binocular coordination and poor vision.
- These visual defects cause the affected pupils eye strain during reading and they generally develop negative attitudes towards reading if these defects are not attended to.

6.2.2.3.3 Sex/Gender

- Research has shown that boys read less than girls. Boys generally show a greater interest in practical skills than girls do.
- Both cultural and biological factors are responsible for the gender differences in literary participation.
- Girls generally develop earlier than boys and they are generally more mature than boys when reading instruction starts.
- The school environment may affect boys and girls differently. The primary classroom is traditionally female-oriented, employing female

teachers who reward behaviour such as being neat and quiet.

6.2.2.3.4 Age

- Children usually experience the 'reading craze' at the end of primary school and as they get older there is a marked decrease in leisure reading.
- Research has shown that in the secondary school book reading declines strikingly between standard six and standard eight.

6.2.2.3.5 Speech disorders

- Research studies have shown that speech problems could be considered as probable causes of reading failure.
- Emotional reactions to speech may impair reading.
- Students with speech defects normally shun reading and they develop negative attitudes towards it.

6.2.2.4 **Intelligence and language**

6.2.2.4.1 Intelligence

- Intelligence plays an important part in determining what students will read.
- Research has shown that the amount of voluntary reading undertaken by a young person is positively associated with his/her intellectual ability.

6.2.2.4.2 Language

- Language also plays an important part in determining the child's ability to read.
- Language deficits affect the child's cognitive ability.
- Problems with language can affect the ability to read.
- Reading literature aloud to children helps in vocabulary enrichment and language development.

6.3 MAIN FINDINGS: QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

This survey was primarily concerned with investigating the factors relating to the reading habits of Indian secondary school pupils in the Phoenix area. The researcher looked at the influence of the possible factors in relation to the average time spent on reading per week and the average number of books read per week. The findings will now be listed.

6.3.1 Achievement

There is a significant difference between the average achievement of pupils who spend little time per week reading and those who spend much time per week reading. Also, there is a significant difference in the average achievement of pupils who read no books per week and those who read more than one book per week. It seems that the more time pupils spend on reading and the greater the number of books they read enables them to achieve higher levels. This will help them to excel in their academic work

as well as to obtain an all-round education; that is, developing morally, socially, physically, emotionally and intellectually.

Those pupils who spent less time per week reading and those who read less than one or no books per week do not achieve good marks.

6.3.2 Home environment

There is a significant difference between the average home environments of pupils who spend little time per week reading and those who spend much time per week reading. Also, there is a significant difference between the average home environment of those who read no books per week and those who read more than one book per week.

The pupils' home background is extremely important in influencing pupils to read. Those pupils who have an encouraging and enriched home environment, who have parents who regard reading as important and spend time reading (see 3.3.1.1), definitely spend more time reading and they tend to read more books. On the other hand, those pupils who do not have a home environment which values reading, tend to develop poor reading habits as they spend less time reading and they read fewer or no books at all.

6.3.3 Socio-economic status

There is a significant difference between the average socio-economic status of pupils who spend little time per week reading and those who spend much time per week reading. It seems that those pupils with a poor socio-economic status tend to spend less time reading. Many of the pupils in this area experience economic problems. Thus, generally low socio-economic status is associated with less reading (see 3.3.1.4). On the other hand, the study revealed that there is no significant difference between the average socio-economic status of pupils who read no books per week and those who read more than one book per week.

6.3.4 School environment

There is a significant difference between the average school environment of pupils who spend little time per week reading and those who spend much time per week reading. Also, there is a significant difference between the average school environment of pupils who read no books per week and those who read more than one book per week.

The school environment plays an important part in fostering students' interest in reading. It is the loving and caring attitude of teachers that makes children want to read (see 3.3.1.2).

The study has revealed that those pupils who have an encouraging, happy school environment tend to spend more time reading and also read a greater

number of books. On the other hand, those pupils who have an unhappy, stifling school environment tend to spend less time per week reading and also read fewer or no books at all.

6.3.5 Influence of other media and leisure activities

There is a significant difference between the average influence of other media and leisure activities of pupils who spend little time per week reading and those who spend much time per week reading. Also, there is a significant difference between the average influence of other media and leisure activities of pupils who read no books per week and those who read more than one book per week.

From the study it can be seen that those pupils who spend more time viewing other media tend to spend more time reading and they also tend to read more than one book per week.

There are varying views on how this factor influences reading (see 3.3.1.5).

6.3.6 Social environment

There is a significant difference between the average social environment of pupils who spend little time per week reading and those who spend much time per week reading. Also, there is a significant difference between the average social environment of pupils who read no books per week and those who read more than one book per week.

This shows that pupils who have an encouraging social environment tend to read more books and they also spend more time reading. On the other hand, pupils who do not have an ideal social environment tend to spend less time reading or they read no books at all. Pupils are really products of their community (see 3.3.1.3). The social environment moulds the child from birth physically and mentally. He/she is therefore conditioned by his/her social upbringing.

6.3.7 Personal aspects (emotional, physical, language, and intelligence)

There is a significant difference between the average personal aspects of pupils who spend little time per week reading and those who spend much time per week reading. Also, there is a significant difference between the average personal aspects of

pupils who read no books per week and those who read more than one book per week.

Pupils who experience emotional, physical or intellectual problems tend to spend less time reading or they tend to read no books at all per week. On the other hand, pupils who do not experience any personal problems spend more time reading and they read more than one book per week.

6.3.8 Standard

There is no significant difference in the average time spent on reading by standard six, seven, eight, nine, and ten pupils. There is a significant

difference in the average number of books read by the various standards. There is a significant difference in the number of books read per week by standard six pupils and standard eight pupils, standard six pupils and standard nine pupils, standard six pupils and standard ten pupils, standard seven pupils and standard nine pupils, standard seven pupils and standard ten pupils, standard eight pupils and standard nine pupils, and standard eight pupils and standard ten pupils. There is no significant difference in the number of books read per week between standard six pupils and standard seven pupils, standard seven pupils and standard eight pupils, and standard nine pupils and standard ten pupils.

6.3.9 Gender/Sex

There is no significant difference in the average time spent reading per week by boys and girls. On the other hand, there is a significant difference in the average number of books read per week by boys and girls. Girls tend to read more books per week than boys. This was also found in most of the other studies (see 3.3.3.3).

6.4 SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings listed above and the literature survey, the researcher offers the following suggestions and recommendations regarding the development of healthy reading habits.

6.4.1 Developing healthy reading habits among pupils

6.4.1.1 The role of the school

It is recommended that every school should develop a policy to vigorously promote the reading habit among pupils as reading plays an important part in their academic achievement as well as in life in general. The following aspects could be incorporated into such a policy:

- The involvement of the entire staff in the promotion of the reading habit.
- Students should be provided with fifteen to twenty minutes per day to read silently. The teacher, as a role model, should also read during this time.
- The acquisition of 'high quality' books and other types of resources, namely, audio or video recordings, newspaper cuttings, periodicals, and so on to meet the needs of the pupils. In this regard (book selection) teachers must work closely with the school librarian. Pupils must inform the librarian about the type of books they would like in the library.
- Teachers must provide reading role models for students. In order to serve as a reading role model, the teacher needs to share a favourite book or story, select a regular time to read aloud to students, and communicate how favourite selections have provided personal pleasure and knowledge (Turner 1992:52).
- School book clubs could be formed and could meet when time permits (for example, during lunch breaks) to discuss books read, to

watch films based on books, go on excursions to publishing and printing firms, book stores, public libraries, university libraries, and other related activities.

- **Book donations:** students could donate books they have read from home or books they have ordered from book clubs. Parents could donate old or new books, or subscriptions to magazines. Teachers could also donate books or magazines that they have purchased and read.
- **Author visitations:** local or visiting international authors could be invited to speak to students in order to promote reading.
- **Constant liaison with the local public library** to exchange ideas about the promotion of reading is essential.
- A "book week" or "book fair" could be held to promote reading and to make pupils aware of the value of books, especially the latest acquisitions.
- The expertise of professional theatre companies like Napac and others could be called on to present dramatic readings from fiction and plays.
- Book talks could be given at the school assembly.

6.4.1.2 The role of the school librarian

The library is supposed to be the hub of activity in a school. The librarian should play a key role in the development of healthy reading habits amongst the pupils. The following are some suggestions:

- The school librarian should have a thorough knowledge of children's and adolescents' contemporary literature. He/she must provide the library services and materials that today's adolescents need. This could be done by carrying out surveys amongst pupils from time to time.
- The library must be open at all times (mornings, breaks and after school).
- An open, receptive, friendly, aesthetically appealing atmosphere should be created in the library.
- There must be close liaison between the school librarian and the teachers so that they are aware of what is in the library.
- The school librarian must allocate some time to read aloud to his/her junior pupils. He/she must choose books that will be of interest to the pupils. In addition to being fun, there are many educational benefits to reading aloud, namely, improved reading skills, improved listening skills and the fostering of a positive attitude toward reading (Green 1992:28).
- Displays of books, dust jacket covers or author posters can be mounted on bulletin boards in the library. Books or subjects featured on popular television programmes can be chosen.

6.4.1.3 The role of the parent

It is recommended that every attempt should be made to involve parents actively in cultivating a reading habit among their children. Some ways in

which this may be done are:

- The school should arrange meetings with parents to plan a reading programme which is practical.
- The school should hold workshops for parents to provide specific guidance on the role they are expected to play in promoting the reading habit.
- Parents must create a home environment that is most favourable to building positive and habitual reading habits. This can be done by reading to children constantly and also reading in front of their children.
- Parents should give children books as gifts.
- Parents should make frequent trips to the library or book store with their children and they must allow their children to select their own books.
- A positive attitude towards reading can be established by parents who give books an important place in their own daily lives as well as in the lives of their children. Fathers and mothers who sit down regularly to read magazines, newspapers and books communicate to their children that reading is valuable and valued (Greene 1992:28).
- Parents must listen and talk to their children. They should encourage their children to discuss what they do and how they feel. Children have a sense of belonging when their parents listen to them. A child will be more likely to talk if he or she knows that someone is paying attention (Hirschman 1985:490).

- Parents must praise, encourage and love their children. Self-confidence will come naturally to the child who has received praise and encouragement. Parents must love and accept their children for what they are. In this way children will want to read.
- Parents must curtail children's television viewing time so that they have more time to indulge in pleasure reading.
- In order for parents to nurture the reading habit it is crucial they know the interests of their children so that they can guide their children in the selection of books. Parents must show an interest in their children's reading and work.
- Parents can liaise with the school teachers with regard to their children's development of reading skills. They can assist their children to perfect these skills.

6.5 CONCLUSION

An attempt was made to carry out an investigation into factors relating to the reading habits of Indian secondary school pupils in the Phoenix area.

The aims of the study were met. These were, firstly, to determine the causes of variation in reading habits between pupils in secondary school in the Phoenix area. This was achieved through an empirical investigation. The study revealed that the time spent on reading and the number of books read (which together determined the reading habits) by pupils were influenced by

such factors as home environment, school environment, social environment, socio-economic status, influence of other media and leisure activities, and personal aspects (emotional problems, physical factors, intelligence and language). Secondly, a literature study highlighting the phenomenon of reading as well as the factors that may influence reading was accomplished. Lastly, some guidelines and recommendations were formulated to assist teachers and parents to improve and inculcate healthy reading habits amongst pupils in the Phoenix area.

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ANNEXURE 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

This is not a test but a questionnaire on factors affecting reading habits. There is no right or wrong answers so please do not look at friend's answers. YOUR answer is the right answer.

1. Read the questions carefully.
 2. Fill in your responses in the spaces provided.
 3. Answer all the questions truthfully.
 4. Please ensure that you answer all the questions.
 5. Thank you for your help.
-

1. Date : ___/___/ 94.
2. Age in completed years as at 31 July 1994. c1+2
3. Sex (1 = boy, 2 = girl). c3
4. Standard (eg 06,07,08,09,10). c4+5
5. What was your total aggregate % in your examination at the end of last year? c6+7
6. Do you use the school library often?
(yes = 1, no = 2) c8
7. Are you a member of the public library?
(yes = 1, no = 2) c9
8. Do you use the public library often?
(yes = 1, no = 2) c10
9. How many hours in the week do you spend watching television? c11+12
10. How many hours in the week do you spend reading? c13+14
11. How many hours in the week do you spend listening to the radio? c15+16
12. How many times do you visit the cinema per month? c17+18



2.

- 13. How many books do you read a week? c19+20
- * Note for the rest of the questions
yes = 1, no = 2.
- 14. Do you have a bedroom of your own? c21
- 15. Did your father pass matric? c22
- 16. Did your father complete a degree
or diploma? c23
- 17. Did your mother pass matric? c24
- 18. Did your mother complete a degree or
diploma? c25
- 19. Does your father do a skilled job? c26
- 20. Does your mother do a skilled job? c27
- 21. Does your family receive a welfare grant? c28
- 22. Do your parents take you on regular trips
to places of interest? c29
- 23. Did you attend preschool? c30
- 24. Do you have a television set at home? c31
- 25. Is there a video recorder at home? c32
- 26. Does your family own a M-Net decoder? c33
- 27. Do your parents own a car? c34
- 28. Do you have a radio at home? c35
- 29. Are your parents members of the public
library? c36
- 30. Do your parents read during their
leisure time? c37
- 31. Did anyone read bedtime stories and
fairy tales to you when you were young? c38
- 32. Did they often read stories to you when
you were a child? c39
- 33. Do your parents encourage you to read? c40



3.

- 34. Do your parents discuss their reading with you? c41
- 35. Do your brothers and sisters read? c42
- 36. Do you receive books as gifts? c43
- 37. Do your parents regard reading as extremely important? c44
- 38. Do you have magazines at home? c45
- 39. Do your parents buy the daily newspaper? c46
- 40. Do your parents talk to you regularly about the news? c47
- 41. Do your parents talk to you regularly about current affairs? c48
- 42. Does your home situation encourage you to read? c49
- 43. Does the school situation encourage you to read? c50
- 44. Do your teachers encourage you to read? c51
- 45. Do your teachers discuss their reading with you? c52
- 46. Can you read fluently? c53
- 47. Did you enjoy your initial reading lessons at primary school? c54
- 48. Do you get too much of homework and therefore you do not find the time to read? c55
- 49. Would you rather read a comic than a book? c56
- 50. Is your school library well equipped with books? c57
- 51. Is your school library well equipped with other reference material? c58
- 52. Do your language teachers guide you with the type of books you should borrow? c59



4.

53. Does the school librarian guide you with the type of books you should borrow? c60
54. Do you like watching television? c61
55. Do you prefer watching television to reading? c62
56. Does watching television programmes encourage your reading? c63
57. Do you prefer playing TV / computer games to reading? c64
58. Do you prefer listening to the radio to reading in your spare time? c65
59. Do you prefer playing sports to reading? c66
60. Do you have hobbies which stimulate your reading? c67
61. Is the atmosphere friendly in the school library? c68
62. Is the atmosphere friendly in the public library? c69
63. Do you have transport problems in getting to the public library? c70
64. Do your friends encourage you to read? c71
65. Do your friends ridicule you if you read? c72
66. Do your friends ridicule you if you visit the library? c73
67. Are you afraid of been rejected by your friends if you read? c74
68. Do you spend too much of time with your friends and therefore do not find the time to read? c75
69. Do you enjoy talking to your friends and family about the books you read? c76
70. Do your parents buy you books? c77
71. Do your parents buy you any other educational aids? c78



5.

72. Do the conditions of your neighbourhood encourage you to read? c79
73. Do your neighbours feel it is important to read? c80
74. Do your neighbours feel books play an important part in one's life? c1
75. Are you afraid of making mistakes when you have to read aloud in the classroom? c2
76. Did you like to be put into reading level groups for example A, B, C, in the primary school? c3
77. Did this method of putting you into groups affect your reading for pleasure in any way? c4
78. Do you have any problems in getting on with your brothers and sisters? c5
79. Do you get on with your parents? c6
80. Do you get on with your friends? c7
81. Do you have any emotional / family problems that may affect your wanting to read? c8
82. Are your achievements recognized by your parents and teachers? c9
83. Are you always belittled and made to feel silly and stupid when you make mistakes while reading? c10
84. Do you receive support and encouragement for reading from your parents? c11
85. Do you receive support and encouragement for reading from your teachers? c12
86. Is your eyesight good? c13
87. Do you have any speech problems? c14
88. Does this speech problem affect your reading? c15

6.

- 89. Do you have any hearing problems? c16
- 90. Do you have a thorough knowledge of the proper use of the english language? c17
- 91. Does the language used at home differ greatly from that used in books? c18
- 92. Do you have difficulty in understanding the language used in books? c19
- 93. Does this difficulty in understanding the language used in books affect your comprehension? c20
- 94. Do you have difficulty in reading? c21
- 95. Do you experience difficulty in recalling things read? c22
- 96. Do you agree that reading helps you develop sophisticated language structures? c23
- 97. Are you a flexible reader, (that is, you can skim through a passage quickly and also practice analytical reading). c27


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Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN DEPARTMENTAL SCHOOLS

Your letter dated 94-07-25 has reference

1. Permission is hereby granted to you to conduct your research at the Phoenix Secondary School provided that :
 - 1.1 prior arrangements are made with the principal concerned;
 - 1.2 participation in the research by pupils is on a voluntary basis;
 - 1.3 completion of questionnaires is done outside normal teaching time; and
 - 1.4 all information pertaining to pupils is treated confidentially and used for academic purposes only.
2. Kindly produce a copy of this letter when visiting the school.
3. The Department wishes you every success in your research and looks forward to receiving a copy of the findings.

Yours faithfully


EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

survey/ned/lp