THE IMPACT OF AN EXTENSIVE READING PROGRAMME ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF FRENCH VOCABULARY OF ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

by

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I declare that the above dissertation 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.

_____   _____January 2023_____

SIGNATURE   DATE

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SUMMARY

This study investigated the effects of extensive reading on the development of French vocabulary of Grade 10 learners in the South African school context. Thirty-one learners from a high school in Gauteng participated in one of three groups: (i) a reading group who read 12 children's picture books, (ii) a listening group who listened to the same stories, and (iii) a control group who neither read nor listened to the stories. All three groups wrote a vocabulary pretest and a posttest to measure growth in vocabulary recognition and knowledge. The reading group outperformed the other groups in terms of vocabulary acquisition and recognition. Words that occurred most frequently in the stories tended to be acquired more readily than words occurring less frequently. Whether they were avid or reluctant readers prior to the study, all participants in the reading group persevered with reading the storybooks throughout the intervention.

KEY TERMS

Extensive reading, vocabulary acquisition, frequency, attitude, motivation, picture books, pleasure reading, incidental vocabulary acquisition, additional language, foreign language

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAPS	Curriculum and assessment policy statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
EFL	English first language
ESL	English second language
FAL	First additional language
FLA	First language acquisition
IEB	Independent Examinations Board
SAL	Second additional language
SLD	Second language development

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation examines the impact of an extensive reading programme on French reading and vocabulary development of Grade 10 learners at a high school in Pretoria. This study used an intervention methodology in which an extensive reading programme was specifically implemented as an intervention, and which did not naturally occur within the French foreign language classroom, nor was it used as a teaching strategy by the learners' teachers. The study specifically examined if and how the reading of children's illustrated storybooks in French affected word recognition and word knowledge after Grade 10 French learners participated in a six-week reading programme. In addition, the impact of participation in the reading programme and the effect it had on the learners' attitude (as both an affective and socio-cultural factor) towards reading for pleasure in French, was examined.

This chapter will firstly provide some background information by outlining the main concepts which frame this study, as well as describe important contextual information about the learning and teaching of French in South Africa, followed by a brief overview of different studies on reading and vocabulary development to explain why this specific inquiry is needed within the context of learning French as a second, additional or foreign language. Thereafter the research problems and questions will be discussed. Lastly a list of abbreviations and an overview of the chapters in this dissertation will be provided.

1.2 Background and context of the research problem

Learning an additional language is a difficult undertaking, a great learning task that usually spans several years. There are many different aspects of the new language to be acquired such as the grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and so forth. This study focuses on learning a language as a second, additional or foreign language. Richards and Schmidt (2010: 472) define additional language learning as leaning a language besides one's mother tongue. Foreign language learning

1   is defined more narrowly "[as] a language that plays a major role in a particular
2   country or region though it may not be the first language of many people who use
3   it" (Richards & Schmidt, 2010: 472). One should also note that there are usually
4   reduced opportunities for natural exposure to the foreign language in the given
5   learning context. Furthermore, a distinction is drawn in the field between language
6   learning, language acquisition and development. Jordaan (2021:13-14) outlines
7   that language acquisition refers to the process of developing and/or learning a
8   language. First language acquisition (FLA) refers to the natural and unconscious
9   yet spontaneous process of developing one's first, or dominant, language by
10 internalising the grammar rules as a result of exposure to comprehensible input
11 as a child. On the other hand, second language acquisition (SLA) usually involves
12 the conscious development of a language by a learner in a more formal
13 educational environment, by applying different teaching and learning strategies
14 including the study of rules and words (Richards & Schmidt, 2010: 312; Gass,
15 Behney & Plonsky, 2020; Brown, 2014). For the purpose of this study, the term
16 second language development (SLD) is used to refer to the process of SLA as
17 both second (or additional) language and foreign language development in
18 learners of French.
19
20 It is also important to note that specific terms and meanings associated with the
21 terminology used within academic contexts also exist within the South African
22 education system. The Department of Basic Education uses four important terms
23 in their documents which outline the status of the language of learning and
24 teaching. Firstly, they refer to the term *mother tongue* as "the language that a
25 learner has acquired in his/her early years, and which has normally become
26 his/her natural instrument of thought and communication", as well as *home
27 language* which is "the language that is spoken most frequently at home by a
28 learner" (Department of Basic Education, 2010:3). Both terms are related to the
29 acquisition and development of a first language. The term *first additional language*
30 (FAL) refers to a "compulsory language subject that learners have to study at that
31 level[1]" while the term *second additional language* (SAL) "refers to a non-

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[1] Here "at that level" refers to the specific grade the learner is studying the language in and the specific level of proficiency of the language being learned/taught which is required by the curriculum of the South African schooling system of that grade.

1 compulsory language subject that may be studied (by choice) by learners at that
2 level" (Department of Basic Education, 2010: 3). Ferreira-Meyers and Horne
3 (2017: 24) define second additional languages as languages "that are neither
4 official nor national languages". This study will thus focus on second additional
5 language learning in the overall field of SLA in the South African education
6 system.
7
8 Language learning can also occur in multiple contexts and for multiple reasons.
9 Language learning does also not only occur in early childhood, in the toddler or
10 infancy stages of human development, but also in other age groups such as early
11 school age, middle childhood, early and late adolescence and adulthood. This
12 study will focus on the language development of adolescents. Wait, Meyer and
13 Loxton (2005: 149,165) define early adolescence as the start of puberty up to the
14 age of 18. During this age and developmental stage language
15 learning/development can occur in informal naturalistic settings or in formal taught
16 settings. For the purpose of this study the learners' overall language learning and
17 exposure occurs in a formal classroom setting in the senior phase of South African
18 education system, specifically focussing on Grade 10 learners (adolescents) of a
19 high school in the Pretoria, Tshwane district.
20
21 As already stated, the learning of an additional language involves multiple facets
22 including grammar and vocabulary learning. In order to be a proficient speaker of
23 a language a learner must know the rules of a language (the grammar – the syntax
24 and the morphology) as also the vocabulary of the language and its meanings
25 (semantics). The learner also has to understand how words are used or have
26 different meanings in different contexts (the pragmatics of a language)
27 .
28 Proficiency in a language depends on different modes of communication including
29 whether the learner can comprehend and produce language. In language
30 learning, comprehension usually precedes production. The language modalities
31 associated with language learning and proficiency are listening and reading for
32 comprehension (receptive proficiency) and then speaking and writing (productive
33 proficiency). This study will focus on the impact that reading has on language
34 learning, focussing on vocabulary learning and development as a means to

3

measure growth in language development. Reading and vocabulary as an aspect of language learning will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. While different facets of vocabulary learning are important, this study will focus on word recognition and word knowledge as an indication of the effect of extensive reading.

1.2.1 French within the South African education system

All South African learners have to learn an additional language, for example an Afrikaans speaking learner is obliged to learn English or any other South African language. In the South African context this is referred to as the First Additional Language. However, the curriculum also allows learners to choose to learn a second additional language. (In the South African context, the "term second additional language" is in many cases equal to "foreign language".)

Many South African learners are interested in learning an additional language such as French for reasons as diverse as the romance of the language, what Ferreira-Meyers and Horne (2017: 23) call "exotism" and "linguistic tourism", to the future career opportunities it might secure. Learning another language is obligatory within the South African education system. However, in the South African education system the learner is provided with a choice of which language they want to study as a second additional (Department of Basic Education, 2010: 3). Affective and sociocultural factors associated with different languages on offer at the different schools play a vital role in which language is ultimately chosen and also how access to oral and written forms of the language will affect the learners' development of proficiency. For many learners their main French environment is the classroom: they have very few, if any, other opportunities to see and hear and produce French outside of the classroom since there are relatively few French speakers in South Africa and learners have few opportunities to use the language in natural social settings. According to the French embassy in South Africa there were approximately 7 080 French individuals in South Africa in 2016 where the majority of speakers were based in Gauteng (Ambassade de France en Afrique du Sud, au Lésotho et au Malawi, 2022). The French embassy's website further outlines that "nearly 30 000 learners choose French in South Africa, where about 21 000 pupils learn French in 224 primary and secondary schools (nearly 1 200

4

1 of whom wrote French at their Matric exam in 2018)" (Ambassade de France en
2 Afrique du Sud, au Lésotho et au Malawi, 2022). [2]
3
4 Although French is not strongly represented in South Africa it is a major language
5 in the international arena. Offering French as a subject choice in schools can
6 contribute to South Africa's multilingualism within and beyond its borders. The
7 Independent Examinations Board (IEB), which is tasked with the assessment of
8 non-official languages in South Africa, points out that teaching these international
9 languages can improve social cohesion, cultural and linguistic awareness, and
10 even tolerance. It can also improve South Africans' position in the world and their
11 potential on the international job market (Independent Examinations Board,
12 2015). Ferreira-Meyers and Horne (2017: 27) found that for many South African
13 learners French represents "a prestigious form of linguistic and cultural capital
14 that carries high symbolic and instrumental value". According to these authors
15 (2017), French used to be taught only in former white schools and universities;
16 however, since the post-apartheid era, French is also seen as an African
17 language with the term Francophonie being used to describe the linguistic and
18 cultural plurality of French, thus repositioning French as an important language in
19 globalisation and global citizenship. Yet, in spite of the fact that French is seen as
20 an important international language it is taught in "relatively few South African
21 schools…[and] is being phased out at some of these schools" (Ferreira-Meyers &
22 Horne, 2017: 27).
23
24 Since leaners are able to choose if and which language they want to study as a
25 second additional language and the fact that this matter of choice is prevalent in
26 second additional language studies in French in the South African education
27 system, this study will include a focus of the influence of affective and sociocultural
28 factors in the reading habits of second additional French language learners. This
29 focus in the study is not only based on the matter of choice which is part of the
30 definition of the term second additional language but is also validated in the
31 following section of the CAPS document of 2016 in which the Department of Basic

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[2] It should be noted that this data tends to exclude the important francophone communities in
South Africa, especially in Gauteng, KwaZulu Natal and the Western Cape.

1 Education (DBE) sets out targets and requirements for proficiency levels
2 (standards) all Grade 10 Second additional language learners should reach:

3

4   By the time learners enter Grade 10, they should be able to
5   communicate in their Second Additional Language at both
6   interpersonal and social levels. However, the reality is that many
7   learners still cannot communicate well in their Additional
8   Language at this stage. The challenge in Grades 10-12, therefore,
9   is to provide support for these learners at the same time as
10   providing a curriculum that enables learners to meet the standards
11   required in Grade 12. These standards must be such that learners
12   can use their additional language at a level of proficiency to
13   prepare them for further or higher education or the world of work.
14   (DBE, 2016: 15)

15

16 Although no mention is made above of communication in the SAL in the oral or
17 written modality, the focus of this study falls on the role of reading in developing
18 vocabulary proficiency within the SAL curriculum. According to the DBE CAPS
19 French Second Additional Language Grades 10-12 document (2016) the
20 curriculum planning involves time allocation, as well as an outline of the language
21 skills and content needed in the grade level. The document specifically focusses
22 on language structure, including divisions in terms of listening and reading as well
23 as speaking and writing. Table 1.1 provides an overview of this curriculum
24 structure.

25

26 **Table 1.1: Overview of CAPS SAL curriculum (DBE, 2016: 15)**

Overview of language skills and content	
Listening and speaking	**Reading and viewing**
Listening	**Reading process**
Listening process	Pre-reading
Pre-listening	Reading
During listening	Post-reading
• Listening for specific information	

6

• Listening for analysis and evaluation • Listening for interaction • Listening for appreciation Post-listening **Speaking** **The speaking process** Planning, researching and organising Practising and presenting **Features and conventions of oral communication texts** Informal speaking and group work Formal speaking and presenting Speaking for specific purposes / contexts Expressions used in conversation	Intensive reading of literary and non-literary texts Extended independent reading and viewing **Writing and presenting** **Writing process** Planning / pre-writing Drafting, revising, editing, proofreading and presenting **Language structures and conventions during process writing** **Text types – structure and language**
Language structures and conventions Language structures and conventions are taught in the context of the above skills and also as part of a systematic language development programme. This should include word choice, spelling, sentence construction, punctuation, paragraph writing, revision of grammatical structures taught in the earlier grades, and the introduction of new grammatical structures.	

1

2 From the table above one can see that the Department of Basic Education
3 foregrounds the importance of communication: listening and speaking as well as
4 reading and writing. It is interesting to note that there is no specific reference to
5 vocabulary, what vocabulary size is expected for different levels of proficiency,
6 and no guidelines on how to develop learners' vocabulary. Vocabulary is
7 subsumed generally under 'language structures'. Although the CAPS document
8 makes reference to both intensive and extensive reading, its role in language and
9 vocabulary development is also not highlighted:

10

11   Learners should be involved in extensive reading of a variety of
12   written and visual texts. They should know how to access

1	classroom, school or public libraries and films and the internet
2	where available. Teachers should guide learners in selecting texts
3	of the right level which are interesting and accessible. Library
4	visits, book clubs, classroom libraries, donated or subscribed
5	magazines and newspapers in the classroom support this aspect
6	of the reading programme.
7	(DBE, 2016: 21)
8	

9 According to the CAPS document teachers are supposed to have 4 hours per
10 week to teach an additional language. According to Table 1.2 (on the following
11 page), 40% of teaching time should be spent on reading and viewing. However,
12 in practice teachers have much less time with their learners.
13

14 **Table 1.1: Time allocation in the curriculum** (DBE, 2016: 6)

Skills	Time allocation per two-week cycle (hours)	%
Listening and speaking	2	25
Reading and viewing: comprehension and literature	3	40
Writing and presenting	2	25
Language structures and conventions (this is also integrated into the four skills)	1	10

15

16 The school participating is this study have five hours in an eight-day timetable
17 cycle. The implication of this shortfall is that teachers have to reduce the time
18 spent on certain activities and although the CAPS document recognises the
19 importance of reading extensively and suggests that vocabulary and language
20 structures be taught in relation to the texts read, the time constraints make it
21 difficult to allow for enough reading time in the classroom to realise instruction.
22 This study sought to examine the possibility and impact of independent reading
23 as a further means of developing French proficiency outside of classroom hours.

1.3 Reading and vocabulary development

As outlined in the previous section, the reality is that many teachers find it difficult to finish the syllabus in the time available and many learners still cannot communicate well in their additional language in Grade 10. Communication is difficult due to a failure in either grammar and/or vocabulary proficiency and development, which can be seen in all language modes such as reading, listening, speaking and writing. This section will provide a brief overview of how proficiency can be impaired after which it will outline how this problem could possibly be addressed.

1.3.1 Factors impeding language learning and proficiency development

The premise underpinning this study is that exposure to input and opportunities to practise are important factors in learning an additional language, and that reading as a type of proficiency plays an important role in building up vocabulary development and language proficiency in general.

Muñoz (2010) outlines four main factors which can impede additional language learning, and which are relevant to the second additional language reading and vocabulary development context outlined in this study. Firstly Muñoz (2010) states that learners of a foreign language often do not get enough natural input and have few opportunities outside of the classroom to practice their language skills. This is also true of the second additional language students within the South African education system. For most of these language learners, whether they are learners at school, at university or at independent language schools such as the Alliance Française, the only contact they usually have with French is in the classroom. Secondly, Muñoz points out that the teacher might not be a native speaker, and thus pronunciation and accent might be a problem for both the teacher but also the learner. In South Africa many French teachers and lecturers are not native speakers, although most of them have language abilities that might even go beyond that of the average native speaker. Thirdly, Muñoz mentions the fact that language learners tend not to communicate with each other in the target language. This can be due to many factors, for example, they may not feel confident enough about their proficiency and they may fear ridicule. Since

1 learners are often already in the habit of using another language to speak to each
2 other, being forced to use French may feel unnatural when communicating with
3 each other. This is especially so when they are just starting to learn the new
4 language and they find it difficult to communicate in a meaningful manner with
5 each other in or outside the classroom using French. Within second language
6 acquisition it is therefore common practice to outline these factors in terms of
7 affective and socio-cultural factors which, as previously mentioned, also form part
8 of the focus of this study. Fourthly, as mentioned in section 1.2.1, French learners'
9 exposure to French is limited as there are relatively few French speakers living in
10 South Africa. The language learners have few occasions to encounter French in
11 their 'real' lives outside the classroom. Therefore, they have very few occasions
12 to hear the language and to practice their language skills in natural social settings.
13 When these realities of the second additional language acquisition situation in
14 South Africa are considered, it becomes clear that French learners need more
15 natural language input than is readily available in the South African context.
16
17 **1.3.2 Factors aiding language learning and proficiency development**
18 Existing literature outlines two main concepts which can be applied to aid
19 language learning and proficiency. The first focuses on Krashen's input
20 hypothesis and the second is that of extensive reading. Both of these concepts
21 inform one another and will form the basis on which the problem statement for the
22 study is formed. These concepts will only be briefly described in this section and
23 will be expanded on in more detail in Chapter 2.
24
25 Advocates of the Input Hypothesis believe that for learning to take place language
26 learners need to be exposed to meaningful and useful examples of the target
27 language, in written or aural form. Krashen (1989) claims that there is a direct
28 correlation between comprehensible input (in aural and written form) and
29 language acquisition. Krashen and other scholars emphasise the importance of
30 high-quality input, in terms of receiving meaningful and useful examples of the
31 target language, in written or aural form, for the successful acquisition of a new
32 language. If learners lack the opportunity to be exposed to natural input and if
33 contact time with their teacher is limited, then quality input must be found or
34 created elsewhere. Reading is seen as a possible answer to this dilemma. Books

can be a source of high-quality natural language input accessible to many South African learners (especially those in Tshwane and other urban areas where learners have access to free wi-fi) thanks to many open libraries available online.

Books, especially books with authentic language, might be a good way for South African French learners to overcome the problem of not being able to communicate well in their additional language. Print based books as well as digital books can serve this input function. Learners who have easy access to the internet also have greater access to a wide variety of books. Krashen (1989) argues that access to a large number of interesting storybooks will have a greater impact on English learning than improved teacher training. Although Krashen was concerned particularly with English language learning, his arguments are equally applicable to any additional language learning. And yet, as Grabe and Stoller (2002: 90) point out "students learn to read by reading a lot, yet reading is not the emphasis of most reading curricula". It is pertinent to note here that learning to read precedes reading. In order to be a proficient reader a reader needs to have adequate knowledge of different reading strategies and skills, which they can only develop by learning or being taught these skills either implicitly or explicitly. Krashen argues that when a learner is provided with quality input then these skills can occur implicitly. If this is not the case, then skills need to be learned/taught explicitly. In the South African context, it is assumed that learners who take French as a SAL have already developed reading skills in their Home Language as well as in their First Additional Language, so reading in French is a matter of transferring existing reading skills to a new language in an already familiar alphabetic writing system, albeit with new orthographic patterns.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis puts forward the idea that exposure, either through hearing or reading, to meaningful input that is neither too easy nor too difficult, is the key to language acquisition. The meaningfulness of the input is of great importance. The desired level of meaningfulness is referred to as i+1, where i is the level at which the learner fully understands the input. At a level of i+1 the input is slightly above the learner's comfort zone and he/she needs to make a slight effort to fully understand the input.

11

1 Krashen believes what he calls "free reading" or extensive reading will not only

2 improve learners' reading and writing skills, but also their spelling, grammar and

3 vocabulary. He and other proponents of extensive reading argue that the simple

4 act of reading lots of interesting and level appropriate material will greatly improve

5 a learner's skills in all areas of language development. Van (2009: 2) adds that

6 reading improves not only language skills, but can also develop the learner's

7 imagination, cultural awareness, and critical thinking. As many teachers can

8 attest, learners who struggle to read also struggle to study, regardless of their

9 chosen field. In other words, a lack of reading skills can limit a learner's academic

10 success.

11

12 Studies such as those conducted by Tien (2015) in Taiwan, Davoudi,

13 Zolfagharkhani and Rezaei (2016) in Iran, Shu-Yuan, Shin and Krashen (2007)

14 and Atilgan (2013) in the USA, seem to support the benefits of reading in terms

15 of the development of language skills in general and vocabulary growth in

16 particular. One way in which the input can be purposefully adjusted and explicitly

17 provided is by means of the introduction of extensive reading programs.

18

19 If one accepts the premise that large quantities of meaningful input are generally

20 beneficial to learners of a second or additional language, then extensive reading

21 programmes should have a logical place in foreign language curricula. In such

22 programmes, language learners are exposed to large quantities of age and level

23 appropriate reading material which should help them improve their language skills

24 while they are reading for meaning. Extensive reading, also called *pleasure*

25 *reading* (Mikulecky, in Chien & Yu, 2015), *sustained silent reading* (Grabe, 1991)

26 or *free voluntary reading* as Krashen named it (Chien & Yu, 2015), involves the

27 reading of large amounts of material for pleasure. Ghanbari and Marzban (2013)

28 define extensive reading as the act of reading large quantities of text with the

29 focus on "reading confidence and reading fluency". Chien and Yu (2015) explain

30 that the term *extensive reading* was first used by Palmer in 1917 to differentiate

31 this kind of reading activity from *intensive reading*.

32

33 Intensive reading usually involves the reading of shorter texts with challenging

34 language, which are used in the classroom to study the form of the language and

the content of the text in depth under guidance of the teacher or lecturer. Ghanbari and Marzban (2013) define intensive reading as the practice of focussing on a particular reading skill at a time and "the close linguistic study of text". In contrast, extensive reading involves the reading of a large amount of less challenging texts purely for meaning and enjoyment, often outside the classroom setting. Although the definition of extensive reading differs slightly from scholar to scholar, the main characteristics are that learners read a lot of material for meaning and pleasure. However, as Chien and Yu (2015) point out, it is only the reader who can determine if the reading is pleasurable. It is therefore important that the learners have the opportunity to select their own reading material. In their definition of extensive reading, Grabe and Stoller (2002) insist on the fact that the reading material should fall within the "linguistic competence" of the learner, echoing Krashen's idea of $i+1$, and that it should at the same time be an enjoyable activity.

This study thus seeks to add to the existing literature on the impact of extensive reading on the vocabulary of learners of a second, additional or foreign language. Although much research has already been done in this field, the target language investigated is most often English. Very few studies have been done with French as the target language and, as far as can be stablished, none up to the date of this dissertation in the South African context. The use of extensive reading programs thus links with providing quality input as well as linking to the different affective and sociocultural factors outlined in the different sections above. These issues will be further explored in the literature review in Chapter 2.

1.4 Research problem

As outlined earlier, in the South African education system second additional language learners are expected to be able to communicate in this language at both interpersonal and social levels by the start of Grade 10 according to the targets set out in the CAPS document (DBE, 2016: 15), yet they experience many challenges in this regard. Krashen's Input theory would suggest that the input (or lack thereof) that the learner receives could either impede or aid the development of a language. Other studies as outlined in the section above (Krashen, 1989; Krashen, 1998; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Van, 2009; Shu-Yuan, Shin & Krashen, 2007; Muñoz, 2010; Atilgan, 2013; Tien, 2015; Davoudi, Zolfagharkhani & Rezaei,

2016) support the idea that extensive reading programmes could be used as an intervention to aid in the development of reading and vocabulary proficiency.

If both anecdotal and scientific evidence (Hiebert 2009; Schwabe, McElvany & Trendtel, 2015; Marinak & Gambrell, 2009) point to the benefits of reading, one would assume that language students would read in the language they choose to study, in this case French. However, from my personal experience as a French teacher as well as from the literature available (Capina & Bryan, 2017), many intermediate language learners seem reluctant to read in French for pleasure. A possible reason for not making reading a significant component of the language course could be time pressures. Teachers see their learners for a limited time per week and the curriculum can be very demanding. Teachers have to teach the whole range of language skills, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc. From the learners' point of view, it is possible that a perceived lack of language skills and a small vocabulary, as well as limited access to appropriate and interesting reading material, could be reasons why learners tend not to read in French. It was my intuitive belief as a French teacher that because French learners do not read, their vocabulary remains limited even though their grammatical skills improve as they continue their study of the language. I wanted to explore this issue in a more systematic and scientific manner, hence the design of this study.

With this study I was interested to examine whether an extensive reading programme for intermediate French language learners over the course of a few weeks would show a significant improvement in the size of the participating learners' vocabulary and in their attitudes towards reading in French. I wanted to determine whether the study would show an improvement in reading confidence and language skills, especially vocabulary, and whether this would bring about changes in learner attitudes towards reading in French and an inclination to continue reading for pleasure in French. In order to examine the effects of extensive reading on French learners' language abilities, I decided to narrow it down to vocabulary specifically, as an index of language ability. Although vast, vocabulary is slightly easier to test and control than the broader and more general construct of language proficiency. I also decided to narrow the 'exposure to books'

factor to exposure to children's picture books specifically. There were several reasons for this: children's picture books are not just sources of authentic language but are also often humorous, with engaging stories that are mostly relatively short, thus making them very good sources of authentic language input for intermediate language learners. I also decided to focus on Grade 10 participants because by then they should have developed a basic level of French language and reading proficiency which should enable them to benefit from a reading intervention. I should add, however, that not only will some of the vocabulary they encounter be unfamiliar, but also some grammatical features (such as the *passé simple* for example). This is an obstacle that can be overcome with the teaching and practice of reading strategies such as using the context and visual support to understand the global message of the text. To continue reading a text, even when one does not understand every word, is a valuable reading strategy to adopt.

This study relied on the voluntary participation of intermediate French learners in a high school. To control for the effect of extensive reading, counterfactual evidence needed to be built into the study. To this end three groups of intermediate French learners were identified: learners who volunteered to participate in a reading group, in a listening group and a control group. The reading group read the selected books, the listening group listened to the same stories while the control group represented 'business as usual' and only attended normal French classes. All three groups of leaners were administered a French vocabulary test at the beginning of the study, and again at the conclusion of the intervention and a third time, four weeks after the intervention. In addition, the learners in the reading and listening groups were administered a questionnaire that tapped into their attitudes to reading in French and their willingness to continue to read for pleasure on their own after the reading intervention.

1.5 Research questions

This study addresses three main research questions, each with related subquestions:

1. How does exposure to children's picture books in French affect Grade 10 SAL learners' vocabulary acquisition, depending on the medium (extensive reading of stories versus listening to stories)?

    a. How does the learners' initial vocabulary level affect vocabulary acquisition during the intervention in the reading and listening groups?

    b. What does performance on the delayed vocabulary test suggest about vocabulary attrition in the reading and listening groups?

    c. What is the influence of an extensive reading programme on vocabulary recognition?

    d. How does the frequency of occurrence of words in the picture books affect vocabulary acquisition?

2. What are some of the perceived socio-affective factors that could lead to successful completion of an extensive reading programme?

    a. How did the learners' reading habits in French change as a result of the intervention?

    b. What were the learners' socio-affective responses to the reading intervention?

    c. What was the Grade 10 learners' perception of children's picture books?

1.6 Methodology

This section outlines the basic elements of the study. Further methodological details of the study will be provided in Chapter 3.

This was a small study with only 31 participants. The small size of the study was determined largely by contextual factors and the fact that data collection occurred during the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown. The learners were all Grade 10 learners doing French as a SAL since entry into high school. They were voluntary participants who either read or listened to 12 French books over a period of six weeks. The volume of books read, and the length of the intervention complies with the definition of extensive reading. Although the

reading material was not self-selected by the participants, the storybooks were humorous, colourfully illustrated and enticing. The reading material used was 12 children's picture books from free, open sources on the internet.

Finding schools willing to participate in this study was quite challenging. French is a specialist subject and not all schools offer it as a subject option. French SAL class in high school are also typically small[3]. The teachers and learners are very busy with full teaching and extra mural programmes. After contacting high schools that offer French as a second additional language to their learners in the Pretoria area, I was able to conduct a reading programme at two schools, one being the school where I teach.

As a first step, I conducted a pilot study in 2019 at one school with a small group of participants to trial the vocabulary test and the selected books. Unfortunately, I was unable to conduct the main reading intervention in 2020 due to the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021, I conducted the main six-week intervention at a different high school with very similar demographics in Pretoria in which 31 learners participated in the study.

Growth in vocabulary recognition and knowledge was used as an indication of the effect of extensive reading on the participating learners' language abilities. This was tested with a self-designed multiple choice vocabulary test. The test was administered to all three groups (reading, listening and control) before they read or listened to any of the stories and again at the conclusion of the six-week intervention. The same test was administered again four weeks later. This second or delayed posttest was used to determine whether the reading intervention had a more lasting effect on the learner's vocabulary.

1.7 Outline of the dissertation

In the following chapters the above-mentioned issues will be unpacked in more detail.

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[3] In South African high schools, learners study at least seven subjects of which four are compulsory and three elective. French is one of the elective subjects.

17

Chapter 2 begins with an overview of second language learning and different factors that can influence it. This is followed by a discussion of some of the literature on research conducted in the field of extensive reading and vocabulary in a second, additional or foreign language. The influence of affective factors and learner attitude will also be examined.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology I followed when conducting this study and presents the results of the pilot study.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the intervention in terms of vocabulary recognition and development as well as any changes in the learners' attitude towards reading for pleasure in French.

Chapter 5 summarises the main findings, identifies the main limitations of this study as well as its contribution to the field, and suggests further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A vast amount of research has been done over the past decades within the field of second language learning, vocabulary and reading.

In this chapter I examine the literature regarding implicit and explicit learning, theories and hypotheses regarding additional language learning, focussing on Krashen's hypotheses, vocabulary acquisition, the role of reading and listening in language acquisition, different types of reading, especially extensive reading, the importance of word frequency and context and the use of children's books as tools to learn vocabulary in a second or additional language. I will also situate my study within this framework.

2.2 Issues in foreign language learning

Keeves and Darmawan (2007) make a distinction between second language learning and foreign language learning. Foreign languages are usually taught in a classroom without much opportunity for natural exposure, whereas second languages are usually acquired through a combination of classroom teaching and natural exposure. After examining French studied as a foreign language Carroll (1975) found that it takes an average student in a typical classroom six to seven years to become competent in all four communicative competencies (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

Mohammed (2018: 1384-1387) found several reasons learners find it difficult to acquire a foreign language. He points out that the difficulties faced by learners vary as according to their abilities and priorities. According to Mohammed, one of the main issues is learner attitude. Self-confidence and a positive attitude towards the target language make it easier for the learner to overcome difficulties. He further lists cultural differences as an obstacle to foreign language acquisition. Learners might know the vocabulary and grammatical structure of the target language but might still find comprehension difficult due to cultural differences,

1 and therefore knowledge of the target language, the culture and community is
2 important. Slang and colloquial expression are often not taught as part of formal
3 curricula. However, these expressions are often used in authentic situations.
4 Negative transfer (applying the grammatical structure of one language to another)
5 can also hold learners back from attaining mastery of their target language.
6 Unfamiliar accents can contribute to difficulties language learners have
7 understanding and communicating in the target language. Complex grammar and
8 vocabulary make it challenging for learners to use a foreign language correctly
9 and may lead to miscommunication and undermine the learners' self-esteem.
10 Often the pronunciation of the foreign language is challenging to language
11 learners as it might be very different from their first language. It is the teacher's
12 responsibility to create a space in which the learners feel safe to participate and
13 experiment with the target language since the environment, in other words "the
14 class atmosphere, geographical space, culture and systems of thought in with the
15 learners learn the language" (Mohammed, 2018: 1386), plays an important role
16 in the successful acquisition of a foreign language.
17
18 Keeves and Darmawan (2007: 22) suggest that foreign language instruction can
19 be optimised by using the target language for a "substantial part of the teaching
20 time in the classroom" and thus increasing the learners' exposure to the language.
21 Teachers can also make use of electronic devices such as computers and cell
22 phones to improve the listening and speaking skills of their learners. Interestingly,
23 these researchers found that these devices provide fewer benefits for the
24 development of reading and writing skills. On the other hand, time spent doing
25 homework has a positive effect on the development of reading skills. They
26 suggest that time spent on homework can be an indication of effort. Carroll (1975)
27 found that language learners with high aspirations to understand their target
28 language tend to perform better in listening tasks, while those who aspire to read
29 the language perform better in reading tasks.
30
31 Since the average high school learner does not have six to eight years to master
32 a foreign language in the school setting, and from the research mentioned above,
33 it is clear that learners with different goals and desires excel in different areas of

1 language acquisition, one must consider different methods of teaching a foreign

2 language to suit the different needs of the language learners.

3

4 2.3 Implicit and explicit learning

5 Besides quantitative and qualitative differences in terms of exposure to the

6 second language (L2), there are also debates around the nature of L2 learning,

7 whether it is best learned implicitly or whether it should rather be taught explicitly.

8 Scholars such as Krashen (1989) claim that language skills can be acquired

9 unconsciously, or implicitly, when the language learner is exposed to quality input.

10 The notion of implicit learning is central to Krashen's input hypothesis. This refers

11 to a situation where a learner is acquiring knowledge or a skill without being

12 consciously aware of the fact that learning is taking place, for example when

13 reading for meaning, the learner might also acquire vocabulary and grammatical

14 knowledge of the language.

15

16 Implicit learning is also sometimes referred to as incidental learning. In other

17 words, the learner is "picking up" a skill without consciously and intentionally trying

18 to do so. The opposite of this phenomena is explicit or intentional learning when

19 the learner is making a conscious effort with the intention to learn new knowledge

20 or refine a skill. In their discussion of the various vocabulary learning strategies of

21 15 experienced Australian language students, Lawson and Hogben (1996: 104)

22 point out that for successful vocabulary retention to take place, the language

23 learner should pay close attention to the "active, constructive elaboration of the

24 word-meaning complex". In other words, the learner should pay close attention

25 not only to the form and meaning of a new word but also to way in which the new

26 word functions in the whole system of the language and in relation to other already

27 known vocabulary. It seems thus that both implicit and explicit learning have roles

28 to play in additional language learning.

29

30 Implicit learning does not mean that the learner does not have to pay any attention

31 at all to the task at hand. He/she is simply focussing their attention on something

32 other than the acquisition of a certain skill. In the case of reading and vocabulary

33 acquisition, proponents of this theory claim that the learner is paying attention to

34 the meaning of the text and not to the form of the individual words and their

21

spelling. Some studies have shown (Rao & Babu, 2016; Ponniah, 2011; Al Homoud & Schmitt, 2009; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Depuy & Krashen, 1993; Pitts, White & Krashen, 1989) that the learner acquires vocabulary when reading simply for meaning. Muñoz (2010: 45) points out that this can be a very slow process taking years and requiring a "massive amount of input and interaction".

Sökmen (1997) names several limitations of implicit vocabulary instruction: She points out that it can be a very slow and error-prone process, that it can be very difficult to undo the damage done by incorrect guesses and inferences, that students with a small vocabulary struggle with comprehension and lastly she makes the very valid point that this is only one method and does not cater to the different needs and study styles of all individual language learners. Implicit and explicit learning and teaching have both advantages and disadvantages and should, according to Brown (2007), be seen as "a continuum of possibilities". He suggests that different strategies be used as the context and the learners demand.

In explicit or intentional learning, the learner makes a conscious effort with the intention to learn new knowledge or refine a skill. According to Sökmen (1997: 239) explicit teaching of vocabulary can take the form of:

- Teaching and learning sight words (words language learners will automatically recognise, and know the meaning of, when encountered in a text, especially common, high frequency words).

- Integrating new words with existing vocabulary in order to create a "network of associations".

- Providing several encounters with words in different contexts during which the teacher should "consciously cue reactivation" of the words and their meaning and function.

- Promoting a deep level of processing, in other words the learners are encouraged to manipulate words, use them in conjunction with other words and actively reflect on their choices and thus reinforcing word associations.

- Facilitating imaging and concreteness. Adding an image or a real-life example to a vocabulary item allows the brain to make a strong

connection between the word and its meaning, also known as the dual coding theory. This allows new vocabulary to become more concrete in the mind of the learner.

- Using different techniques to teach vocabulary breaks routine and boredom while catering to different learning styles. These techniques can be anything from "dictionary work" to the use of mnemonic devices to oral productions.

- Encouraging independent learner strategies since it is not feasible to teach the entire vocabulary of the target language in the classroom.

If it is possible for language learners to acquire language skills such as vocabulary while engaged in an enjoyable activity such as reading for meaning, should it not at least be considered as an alternative to learning long lists of vocabulary by heart?

2.3.1 Naturalistic learning and formal instruction

For language acquisition to take place, input, or exposure to the target language, is needed. This can take different forms. In this section different forms of input, namely naturalistic or immersive input and formal instruction, will be discussed in terms of quantity and quality.

Muñoz (2010) defines naturalistic language learning as "learning that takes place in a context with unlimited access to quality input". This occurs, for example, when a learner is immersed in an environment where the target language is the spoken language. In contrast, most learners of a foreign language have limited instructional hours. Language exposure during these instructional hours also tend to be limited. Muñoz (2010: 43) ascribes this to three factors:

1. The teacher is the main source of language input and might not be a native speaker, in which case, fluency, accent and language ability might be limited.

2. The target language is not the language of communication of the learners and they tend not to use it to speak to each other.

23

3. The target language is not used outside of the classroom. The learners are thus only exposed to their foreign language in the classroom and it is the only place where they themselves practice it.

This is very true of the manner in which French is taught as a foreign language in South Africa. Many teachers are not native speakers (although many have near native speaker language abilities), the learners tend not to speak French to each other as it feels unnatural and, especially when they are just starting to learn the language, they struggle to communicate in the foreign language. Since there are relatively few French speakers in South Africa, language learners seldom have the opportunity to use their new language in a natural social setting. It is therefore important that another source of natural input be found for French language learners in South Africa.

Both quantitative and qualitative differences in terms of input should be considered when considering instructional hours. To try to convert time spent in an environment where the foreign language is used outside of the classroom (immersion) is a "gross generalization" (Muñoz, 2010: 45). Muñoz calculated that ten years' of naturalistic exposure is equal to 50 000 hours of formal instruction (i.e., 200 years of four x one-hour periods/week). This example might seem exaggerated to the point of absurdity, but it shows the enormous difference in quantity of input received by learners in a naturalistic or immersion environment compared to those in a classroom. Muñoz also notes that there is a vast difference in the quality of input (the variety of speech acts, subjects and situations encountered) when these two learning environments are compared. This naturalistic or immersion type of language learning is unfortunately not an option for many foreign language learners, especially learners of French in South Africa.

2.4 Foreign language acquisition theories and hypotheses

As mentioned above there are different types of leaning and manners to acquire languages, and there are thus many theories on how a language should be taught. In this section some of these theories and hypotheses will be discussed.

24

Brown (2007: 248) defines an SLA theory as "an interrelated set of hypotheses and/or claims about how people become proficient in a second language". In the field of SLA there is an abundance of - and sometimes competing - models and theories. As Brown (2007: 285) explains, this "reflects the intricacy of the acquisition process itself and the variability of individuals and contexts". These theories try to understand and explain, not only what language is, but also how it is acquired and how it should be taught. As Brown points out, there is a myriad of factors and variables to be considered when defining these concepts. These include, but are not limited to, the language, the learners and their background, aptitude and attitude, context, purpose and available resources. Generally, these aspects which influence language learning can be divided into affective, sociocultural and cognitive factors. Throughout this dissertation all three of these groupings of factors will be discussed as different manners of learning (cognitive factors), different backgrounds and contexts (sociocultural factors) as well as different personal attitudes and -purposes for learning a language (affective factors) and the vital role they play in vocabulary acquisition.

Looking at only one such a factor, the language learner, for example, one quickly realizes that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible to define the average additional language learner. People with different aptitudes and attitudes and past language learning experiences attempt to learn second or additional languages in different stages of their lives, in different contexts or situations and with different goals in mind, all of which play a role in their language acquisition. The vastness of the field of second language acquisition (SLA) research allows for different theories and models to exist alongside each other, to overlap with one another and to build on one another.

2.4.1 Krashen's hypotheses

Krashen (1982; 1989; 2004a; 2013) developed six theories about second language acquisition namely the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Input Hypothesis, the Affective Filter Hypothesis and the Reading Hypothesis.

According to the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, language can be developed in two ways: it can be acquired or learnt. Acquisition refers to the process of subconscious development of language knowledge and skills through natural communication. First languages are typically acquired in this manner. On the other hand, learning refers to a conscious effort to develop language knowledge and skills (for example the study of grammatical rules and lists of vocabulary). This is often the manner in which a second or additional language is taught. According to the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis there is no "interface" between conscious learning and subconscious acquisition and language proficiency can only by obtained through acquisition. Krashen has been widely criticised for this statement and many scholars (such as Ellis, 1994; Zafar, 2009) argue that teaching and consciously learning rules can also indeed lead to successful second language acquisition and proficiency. Learning this way can become internalised and automatised, eventually becoming part of unconscious language knowledge and use.

The Monitor Hypothesis is an expansion of the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis. According to this hypothesis the acquisition system initiates an act of speech and the learning system "monitors" it, in other words it uses the conscious knowledge of the language to make sure the spontaneous utterance is correct. Krashen explains that although the act of monitoring can assist the language learner to produce language that is grammatically and idiomatically correct, it can slow communication down as the learner might focus more on form and accuracy than on fluency of speech.

According to the Natural Order Hypothesis, language is acquired in a specific order of its parts. In other words, certain grammatical structures are acquired before others. With this hypothesis Krashen claims that this order of acquisition will happen naturally regardless of the order in which a language teacher might teach the different parts of the language.

The Input Hypothesis or Comprehensible Input Hypothesis describes the idea that in order for language acquisition to take place a learner must be exposed, via hearing or reading, to meaningful language input. Great emphasis is placed on

26

1 the meaningfulness of the input. The optimum level of meaningfulness is referred
2 to as i+1, where i is the level at which the learner fully understands the input. i+1
3 implies that the input is just slightly out of the learners' comfort zone, and he has
4 to make a slight effort to fully comprehend the input. According to the Input
5 Hypothesis i+2 would be too far beyond the learner's comprehension and that he
6 might then become frustrated and give up. Similarly, i+0 would not challenge the
7 learner enough and he would not improve his language skills and stagnate at his
8 current level. However, sound the idea of i+1 might appear in theory (and Zafar
9 (2009: 143) points out that since Krashen does not exactly define concepts like
10 comprehensible input or level of competence, this hypothesis is "nontestable"), it
11 is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to determine the exact value of i and of 1.
12 Even if one were able to determine these values, it would be unique to each
13 individual student and would constantly change, making it very difficult to use in a
14 real classroom.
15
16 The Affective Filter refers to a barrier of emotional factors, such as anxiety and
17 defensiveness, low self-confidence, a lack of motivation and stress, which can
18 hinder or prevent language acquisition. Learners with high motivation and low
19 anxiety are better equipped to acquire their target language than learners with low
20 motivation and high anxiety. These emotional factors can create a mental block
21 preventing the acquisition of language even if comprehensible input is available
22 to the learner. On the other hand, positive emotional factors, in conjunction with
23 comprehensible input, will enhance the language acquisition process.
24
25 According to the Reading, or Free Voluntary Reading Hypothesis the more a
26 language learner reads in the target language, the greater his vocabulary will
27 become. Krashen (2013: 29) refers to several studies in which pre- and post-
28 reading tests show that learners acquire vocabulary while reading texts with
29 unfamiliar words. Mason and Krashen (2017) point out that in order for language
30 learners to get the most out of reading, they have to pay attention to what they
31 are reading. They claim that interesting material can so absorb the reader that he
32 becomes extremely focused on the content and acquires vocabulary and other
33 language skills without being aware of it.
34

1   Brown (2007) points out that one should make a distinction between input and

2   intake: the "subset of input" that stays in the learner's long term memory and is

3   truly acquired and can be used to produce output. One should not omit to mention

4   the role the learner's attitude and effort plays in this transformation of input to

5   intake, and finally to output. The concept of attitudes is defined differently

6   depending on the theoretical perspective in which it is contextualised. According

7   to Brown (2007: 366) attitudes are defined as "a set of personal feelings, opinions,

8   or biases about races, cultures, ethnic groups, classes of people, and languages",

9   while Richards and Schmidt (2002: 286) state that language attitudes are "the

10   attitudes which speakers of different languages or language varieties have

11   towards each other's languages or to their own language". According to these

12   definitions the concept of attitude can be classified as either a sociocultural factor

13   or an affective factor or both. For the purpose of this dissertation the concept of

14   attitudes will be contextualised as an affective factor because "expressions of

15   positive and negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of

16   linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficult of learning, degree of importance,

17   elegance […]" and it will focus on a speaker's personal language perceptions

18   (Richards & Schmidt, 2002: 286). Brown (2007), referring to Herbert Seliger's

19   seminal work, suggests that the learner and his/her attitude play an important role

20   in this process. He refers to High and Low Input Generators and explain that

21   learners who are skilled at initiating and maintaining conversations in the

22   classroom and with native speakers tend to be more successful language learners

23   that their shyer, more introverted or more passive classmates. In her small 2017

24   study, Doğan recorded results that seem to agree with this theory. In her study at

25   a Turkish state university English learners worked in pairs on a vocabulary

26   exercise. She found that the more confident, extroverted students produced

27   significantly more language than their less confident counterparts (286 and 292

28   words each as opposed to the 56 to 190 words produced by the less confident

29   participants). Although the confident students did not obtain the best results in the

30   proposed activity (a more equal pair outperformed them), their test scores were

31   some of the highest of the group (8 and 9 out of a possible 10).

32

33   Although Krashen's Hypotheses probably oversimplify the process of language

34   acquisition and might not be suitable for all adolescent and adult language

learners, they do offer an interesting notion that many language learners might appreciate: one does not solely have to focus on grammatical rules and lists of vocabulary in order to improve one's language skills. Exposing learners to vast quantities of comprehensible input and encouraging learners to push themselves a little out of their comfort zone could allow them to improve their language skills while focussing on the meaning and information contained in the text, thus doing two things at once without realising it.

2.4.2 The role of listening in language acquisition

Thus far, reading in language acquisition has been discussed, but listening can also play a role in language acquisition and will be discussed in this section. Increased language input can be very beneficial to language learning. Reading is often used as a mode of supplementary input; however, listening is also a source of input that might be beneficial to language learners, especially to learners who are auditive learners. Listening is one of the four communicative competencies language learners should master. However, Zhang and Grahams (2020:6) point out that due to the "fleeting nature of oral input and learner's difficulties with speech segmentation" listening to oral input alone is often not enough for vocabulary acquisition to take place. They suggest that oral input be supplemented with intentional and explicit teaching.

Brett, Rothlein and Hurley (1996) found that listening to stories and receiving explanations of unknown words was a more effective mode of acquiring vocabulary than just listening to the stories. They conducted a study involving 175 fourth graders. Over a period of five days the participants listened to two stories. One group listened to the stories and received brief explanations of the words they did not know. The second group only listened to the stories but received no explanation of unfamiliar words. The third group was the control group and did not listen to the stories nor did they receive explanations of the words tested. All three groups wrote a pretest, a posttest after the conclusion of the intervention and a delayed posttest six weeks after the intervention. The group who received explanations of the target words while listening to the stories performed significantly better on both the posttest and the delayed posttest when compared to the other two groups.

Similarly, Zhang and Grahams (2020) conducted a study on 137 first-year Chinese high school learners studying English in China. They compared the effects of three types of listening activities on the vocabulary knowledge of the participants: intentional vocabulary instruction through listening where the target words were explained in English to one group of participants and for the second group of participants the words were explained in Chinese, and the third group only listened to the input. All three groups wrote posttests directly after the listening intervention and delayed posttests two weeks after the intervention. They found that in the short term the participants in the Chinese/English group retained more vocabulary items than the English/English group, however, this difference was statistically insignificant. And two weeks later, when the delayed possttests were written, the group who received input only in English retained 21% more items than the group who received input in Chinese and in English. The group who only listened to the input and who did not receive any additional tuition, made "small but significant" vocabulary gains from the pretest to the posttest, however, the gains were described as "unstable" after writing the delayed posstests since the participants' scores fell to below the pretest scores. The researchers speculate that this might be due to the participants low proficiency in English. Zhang and Grahams found that vocabulary can be acquired through listening activities, however, it is more beneficial to the language learners if these activities are accompanied by intentional vocabulary teaching.

2.5 Vocabulary

Vocabulary, the knowledge of words (pronunciation, form, use, etc.), and how to use them, on their own and in phrases, can be described as the building blocks of a language as it plays a vital role in conveying meaning. Researchers such as Baleghizadeh and Golbin (2010), Matsuoka and Hirsh (2010), and Stæhr (2008) found a strong correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. In his study of the influence of vocabulary size on the reading and listening comprehension of 88 Danish high school ESL learners, Stæhr (2008) found that a lexical coverage of 98% of a text can ensure "adequate comprehension" of the text. He also found a correlation between the participating learners' writing skills and vocabulary size. Al-Dersi (2013: 72) is of the opinion

30

1   that second or additional language learners, especially adolescents and adults,

2   need a "mature vocabulary" in order to thrive academically. Al-Dersi emphasises

3   the important role that vocabulary plays in the four language skills (listening,

4   speaking, reading and writing): "Mastery over required knowledge of vocabulary

5   can make a foreign language learner an effective speaker, good listener, reader

6   and writer" (Al-Dersi, 2013: 73).

7

8   It has been my experience at the various institutions I taught that foreign language

9   programmes tend to focus mainly on the grammar of the language[4]. However,

10 without vocabulary, knowledge of grammatical structures is not enough to enable

11 communication.

12

13 Vocabulary can be described in terms of breadth, or size, and depth, or quality,

14 of knowledge of the words (Schmitt, 2014). Matsuoka and Hirsh (2010: 58) explain

15 that breadth of vocabulary refers to the number of words a person has "at least

16 superficial knowledge of". Breadth of vocabulary is usually described in terms of

17 word recognition, recall or production. Word recognition is improved by the

18 frequency or number of times a language learner encounters a word. Although

19 estimates vary, learners need to encounter new vocabulary frequently for learning

20 to happen. Nation (2014) suggests that as many as 16 encounters are needed in

21 order for a new word to become firmly established in memory.

22

23 On the other hand, depth of vocabulary refers to a person's knowledge of the

24 meaning and form of vocabulary items both in receptive (listening and reading

25 activities) and productive (speaking and writing activities) (Matsuoka & Hirsh,

26 2010). Depth of vocabulary can also be described in terms of what a person can

27 do with a certain lexical item. The distinction is made between receptive (also

28 called passive lexical mastery) and productive (or active) knowledge (Schmitt,

29 2014). Al-Dersi (2013) explains that receptive vocabulary knowledge refers to

30 words a person recognises and understands either in oral or written contexts.

31 Productive vocabulary knowledge refers to the lexical items a person uses when

---

[4] It should be noted that this is a reflection of my personal experience and that the focus of language programs might differ from institution to institution. This does not negate the importance of striking a balance between the teaching of language structures and vocabulary.

1 producing language (speaking or writing). Receptive vocabulary tends to be larger

2 than productive vocabulary (Al-Dersi, 2013; Schmitt, 2014), however this

3 knowledge is not static. As a language learner is exposed to a lexical item, his

4 knowledge will gradually move from recognising the word (receptive knowledge)

5 to being able to use it in his own oral or written texts (productive knowledge

6 (Schmitt, 2014: 7).

7

8 Schmitt (2014) explains that while measuring breadth of vocabulary might be

9 straightforward (count the lexical items known to the subject), measuring depth is

10 quite complicated since the links between lexical items and connotations can be

11 hard to conceptualise and there are various levels of knowledge of meaning of

12 vocabulary. In this study, the term vocabulary will refer mainly to the breadth of

13 vocabulary knowledge, in other words how many words the participating learners

14 can recognise and know the meaning of.

15

16 An important concept when discussing vocabulary size is word families or the

17 most basic form of a word and the "inflected and derived word forms associated

18 with it" (Pretorius & Murray, 2014). Words in a word family have a stem in

19 common, but can be different parts of speech (Nation, 2014: 4). For example:

20 words such as *la pluie* (rain, noun), *pleuvoir* (to rain, verb), *il pleut* (it rains, verb),

21 *il a plu* (it rained, past participle), *parapluie* (umbrella, noun), *pluvieux/pluvieuse*

22 (rainy, adjective) all belong to the same word family. Nation (2006: 67) explains

23 that the concept of word families is important in vocabulary development since

24 the assumption is that knowledge of one 'member' of a word family might mean

25 that a language learner could understand the meaning of other member of the

26 word family when reading or listening by using lexical and morphological

27 knowledge of the target language. Nation points out that L2 learners' knowledge

28 word families will be less inclusive than that of native speakers, often due to poor

29 knowledge of the morphology of the target language (i.e., how morphemes can

30 change parts of speech, for example the suffix *-ieux/ieuse* changes a noun into

31 an adjective.).

32

33 Scholars seem to have different opinions concerning the optimal vocabulary size

34 language learners need to benefit from reading activities in terms of vocabulary

1 gain. Nation (2014: 2) states that readers need to know at least 98% of the words

2 in a text in order to understand the text adequately. During their research Huckin

3 and Coady (1999) found that students should be able to recognise and

4 understand between 2 000 and 3 000 of the most frequent word families in English

5 to read texts with comprehension. Nation and Anthony (2013) explain the concept

6 of word family levels in terms of frequency as follows: The first 1 000 to third 1

7 000 words fall in the high frequency level. These are high frequency, essential

8 words used in general, everyday contexts. The fourth 1 000 to ninth 1 000 words

9 fall in the mid frequency level and are still considered general purpose vocabulary.

10 The tenth 1 000 and more words are considered low frequency and are often

11 technical vocabulary used in a specific discipline.

12

13 To understand 'unsimplified' English text adequately the reader should have

14 knowledge of the first 9 000 words. Full comprehension of a text, when one only

15 occasionally has to guess the meaning of an unknown word or phrase, requires

16 knowledge of 5 000 word families. To read university level texts with

17 comprehension requires a vocabulary size of about 10 000 word families. As

18 Webb and Macalister (2013) point out, at 90% coverage one out of every ten

19 words is unknown, which means on a page with 200 words one would have to

20 look up or guess the meaning of 20 words. Reading a book at 90% coverage

21 would mean looking up hundreds of words which will not only be time consuming

22 but could also be frustrating and demoralizing.

23

24 A limited vocabulary can be a frustrating obstacle for learners of a foreign

25 language as it keeps them from reading at their cognitive level. In other words,

26 their language abilities and especially their limited vocabulary keep them from

27 reading texts they would find interesting and intellectually stimulating. It is

28 therefore important that language learners build and expand their vocabulary in

29 order to read and comprehend more challenging texts to keep them motivated to

30 continue reading and growing their language skills.

31

32 When defining vocabulary, one should also consider the concept of acquisition.

33 When does one consider a new word as having been acquired? Henriksen (in

34 Huckin & Coady, 1999: 185) describes vocabulary acquisition as a scale ranging

from "partial recognition knowledge to precise knowledge and productive use capability". Vocabulary acquisition can thus be described as an action on continuum, starting with never having seen/heard a word, to recognising it (aurally or in written form) but still not knowing what it means, to same basic understanding (especially in a clear context), to deeper knowledge and being able to use it in one's one speech or writing. As stated earlier, Nation (2014) found that input and repetition are needed to acquire vocabulary, with at least 16 repetitions needed to acquire a word. That means that a language learner has to encounter a corpus of just under 200 000 words to reach the second 1 000 word level (in English) and 3 million words to reach the ninth 1 000 word level. Nation calculated that a learner should read two to 24 novels to reach these word levels, thus entailing a learning rate of 1 000 word families per year.

After examining the research literature and, especially, studies done in Iran on the topic of depth and breadth of vocabulary and the influence thereof on language learners' reading comprehension, Mohammadi and Afshar (2016) concluded that both breadth and depth of vocabulary have a strong correlation with reading comprehension. They point out that in order to read with comprehension language learners should have knowledge of the high frequency words as well as additional vocabulary to read on a specific topic. The notion of word frequency is discussed in more detail below.

2.5.1 Word frequency, exposure and vocabulary acquisition

Words are not equal – some words occur far more often in our daily language use than others, and these are the words we typically learn first. Brown (2007: 255) defines frequency of exposure as the "number of times a specific word, structure, or other defined element of language draws the attention of a learner". Nation (2006: 63) claims that high-frequency (high occurrence) and wide-range words are acquired (by both L1 and L2 learners) before low-frequency and narrow-range words. In other words, the vocabulary that the learner hears or sees often and in many different contexts tends to be acquired before vocabulary encountered less frequently (although exceptions can and do occur). Most L2 courses tend to teach learners high frequency words first – knowing the first 3 000 words in English enables a learner to understand basic conversations in English.

Brown (2007: 40) notes that frequency alone might not be enough to explain the order of acquisition of linguistic features; the meaningfulness of the encounters might also play a significant role. He also points out that the reader has to attach some importance or salience to the encounter.

On reviewing the literature on the subject, Huckin and Coady (1999: 185) found that to fully integrate a word into one's vocabulary takes anything from 5 to 16 written exposures. In his discussion on language learning algorithms, Monsell (1991: 149) focuses on the effects of frequency of exposure and notes that "experience is the stuff of which all learning is made". He explains that word exposure contributes to the building of a lexicon in two ways. Firstly, it adds new items to the lexicon, as one becomes more familiar with a word it becomes part of one's own vocabulary. Secondly, it "modifies representations already *in* [Monsell's emphasis] the lexicon", one learns a new meaning of an already familiar word (such as homonyms or the literal or figurative meaning of a word).

Kweon and Kim (2008) remark that vocabulary frequency in texts read is a greater predictor of vocabulary acquisition than frequency in the target language in general. One of the highest frequency words in the texts used in their study with Korean ESL students was *canteen*; it occurred 52 times in the texts and was successfully acquired; however, it is not a word that the students encountered frequently in general and none of them knew the word before the intervention. These researchers suggest that "frequency in language is insufficient to explain the rate at which learners acquire them" (p. 207).

After a reading intervention at a school in Quebec with ESL learners at five different levels language proficiency, Zahar, Cobb and Spada (2001) found that for vocabulary acquisition to take place word frequency was more important than contextual support. They also found that learners with lower language proficiency levels needed more encounters with a word in order to acquire it than more proficient learners.

35

1   In their 2003 study Waring and Takaki found that after reading the 400-word

2   graded reader, *A Little Princess*, 15 Japanese university students did acquire

3   some words (with a frequency rate of 1 - 18 occurrences). However, the retention

4   rate dropped significantly in the post-tests conducted one week and three months

5   after the intervention. The data gathered in this intervention showed that words

6   encountered more frequently in the texts were more likely to be retained. The

7   researchers found that none of the words encountered less than eight times were

8   retained after three months. They suggest that knowing how many times a word

9   needs to be encountered to be retained would be useful since one can then tailor

10 graded readers to enhance the possibility of acquiring vocabulary through

11 reading. Pigada and Schmitt (2006) report similar results. The French learner

12 participating in their single case study showed improvement in spelling,

13 grammatical knowledge and meaning after the reading intervention. However,

14 very little meaning uptake seems to have happened for words which occurred only

15 once. For verbs uptake improved noticeably at 2-3 exposures and for nouns at 4-

16 5 exposures. They note that frequency alone is not a guarantee of acquisition: the

17 learner in their study did not acquire the meaning of some words that occurred

18 more than 20 times (*le radeau* (raft) and *entendre* (to hear), for example).

19

20 Like Pigada and Schmitt (2006), Teng (2014) also found that the meaning and

21 usage of verbs were acquired before the meaning and usage of nouns (the

22 meaning and usage of adjectives seemed to be the most difficult to acquire). The

23 20 university students participating in Teng's study read a graded reader, *Love or*

24 *Money*, with 30 pseudo-words. Teng found that form (word recognition) was

25 acquired before meaning, and word usage was the last skill to be acquired. Higher

26 frequency words had a higher rate of acquisition than words that appeared less

27 frequently in the text. Teng found that at least eight encounters with a word were

28 necessary for a 50% chance of the students recognising the words in the post-

29 test. For a 50% chance of students remembering the meaning of a word and/or

30 being able to use it, they had to have encountered the word more than 14 times.

31

32 In a similar study in 2016 with 30 university students, Teng obtained similar

33 results. For this study 36 pseudo-words in the graded reader, *The Star Zoo,* fell

34 in six bands of frequency (from only one occurrence in the text to more than 20).

36

In order to recognise a word, the students had to encounter it at least 14 times and to use it they had to encounter a word at least 18 times. Teng concludes that incidental vocabulary acquisition through reading was very limited. However, it should be noted that the students who participated in these studies read only one graded reader.

This is in contrast with Rott (1999) who found that as little as two encounters with a word is needed to attain a "significant" increase in receptive vocabulary knowledge. Rott's study comprised of six groups of intermediate university students studying German as a foreign language (95 students in total). Each group read six paragraphs written specifically for the intervention over a period of two to six weeks; two groups read over a period of two weeks, two groups read over a period of four weeks and two groups over six weeks, thus respectively being exposed to the target words twice, four times and six times. Min (2008) points out that these paragraphs, written specifically for the study to control for word frequency, are not authentic texts and this is therefore not a true extensive reading intervention.) All the groups wrote a pretest and two posttests. Rott found that productive word knowledge decreased from the first posttest (immediately after reading the text) to the last post-test (one month after the reading). However, all but one of the extensive reading groups retained receptive knowledge of the vocabulary over four weeks.

One reason that Teng's results might be so different from Rott's could be the fact that he made use of pseudo-words. This could mean that the participating students had no existing vocabulary knowledge to associate the new vocabulary with, thus making it much harder to assimilate the new words into existing word families. For example, if a French learner knows the verb *jouer* (to play) and he encounters the noun *jouet* (toy) in a text, the phonetic and orthographic familiarity of the new word might make it easier to add the new word to the existing word family. A made-up pseudo-word, or nonword as Teng calls it, might make this connection more difficult.

37

2.6 Types of reading for vocabulary acquisition

The majority of teachers, researchers and language learners seem to agree that reading is hugely beneficial to the process of language acquisition and that after the acquisition of the first few thousand words, vocabulary acquisition occurs mainly through incidental learning, especially reading (Huckin & Coady, 1999: 182). However, there seems to be some contention as to what type of reading is the best way to facilitate language, and especially vocabulary, acquisition.

As already discussed (cf. Section 1.3.2), different types of reading can be divided into two broad groups, namely intensive reading and extensive reading.

To recap, Ghanbari and Marzban (2013: 3855) define intensive reading as the practice of focussing on a particular reading skill or feature of the language at a time and "the close linguistic study of text". Intensive reading usually involves shorter texts with challenging language used to study the form of the language and the content of the text in depth. This is usually an activity led or facilitated by a teacher in a language classroom. The text is typically read together as a class, and the teacher points out, or leads the learners to discover, certain aspect of the text (grammatical structures, figures of style, syntactical structures etc.). Making students aware of words in the text being read, and explaining their structure and meanings is an integral part of intensive reading.

2.7 Types of extensive reading

In contrast to the formal learning and teaching of vocabulary in intensive reading, extensive reading refers to the act of reading large quantities of text, with the focus on "reading confidence and reading fluency" (Ghanbari & Marzban, 2013: 3855). As these researchers point out, these are two very broad groups and there are more types of reading and reading activities such as oral reading (where the focus is on pronunciation, intonation and prosody) and text translation (where grammatical and lexical features of the foreign language are emphasized), narrow reading and accelerated reading. These last two kinds of reading activities are interesting for this study as they can be seen as types of extensive reading and will be discussed in more detail (Section 2.7.1.1 and 2.7.1.2). But first, extensive

reading will be discussed in terms of what it is, the possible benefits and criticism thereof.

2.8 Extensive reading

If one accepts the premise that large quantities of meaningful input are generally beneficial to learners of a second or additional language, extensive reading programmes would be a logical continuation of the Input and Free Voluntary Reading hypotheses. In such programmes, language learners are exposed to large quantities of age and level appropriate reading material which should help them improve their language skills while they are reading for meaning.

As previously mentioned, Chien and Yu (2015) explain that the term extensive reading was first used by Palmer in 1917 to differentiate this kind of reading activity from intensive reading. Extensive reading is also sometimes called pleasure reading (Mikulecky, in Chien & Yu, 2015), sustained silent reading (Grabe, 1991), while Krashen refers to it as free voluntary reading or recreational reading (Krashen, 2004a).

Extensive reading involves the reading of a large amount of less challenging texts that are age and level appropriate, purely for meaning and enjoyment. Although the definition of extensive reading differs slightly from scholar to scholar, the main characteristics are:

- learners read a lot of material,
- for meaning and pleasure,
- that are age and level appropriate.

However, as Chien and Yu (2015) point out, it is only the reader who can determine if the reading is pleasurable. It is therefore important that the learners have the opportunity to select their own reading material or are provided with a range of texts to increase the change that at least some of it will be enjoyable.

In their definition of extensive reading, Grabe and Stoller (2002) insist that the reading material should fall within the "linguistic competence" of the learner, echoing Krashen's idea of i+1, and that it should at the same time be an enjoyable

39

1 activity. In other words, the texts should not be too difficult nor too long for the

2 reader to manage. The level of the texts is thus important. According to the Input

3 Hypothesis large quantities of quality input, such as the reading of books, will

4 improve the readers' language skills while they are focussed on the meaning of

5 what they are reading. Huckin and Coady (1999: 182) call this idea of doing two

6 activities at the same time (reading and acquiring vocabulary in this case)

7 "pedagogically efficient". Extensive reading is thus by definition a pleasurable

8 activity and the learners should not experience it as homework or, worse, as

9 punishment. Shaffer (2012) adds that reading should be its own reward and the

10 teacher should be a role model of this behaviour.

11

12 Krashen and McQuillan (2007:68) add that extensive, or, as he calls it, free

13 voluntary reading is the type of reading most literate adults do when reading for

14 pleasure: there are no book reports or comprehension questions, and if one does

15 not enjoy the book one can stop reading at any time. When discussing the results

16 of her case study involving an adult language learner participating in a six-month

17 reading programme, Tse (1996) emphasises the importance of a low anxiety

18 reading environment and support according to the learners' individual needs. This

19 support can take the form of guidance to select reading material, discussion of

20 reading strategies, peer discussions of the books read and teachers modelling

21 good reading behaviour.

22

23 Often learners of a foreign or additional language have very little contact with the

24 target language outside the classroom, which can be "planned, restricted, gradual

25 and largely artificial" (Elley & Manghubai, 1983, in Bell, 1998) and where they are

26 only exposed to their teachers' level of language competency (Kim & Hall, 2002:

27 333). Teng (2015) also names restricted classroom time as a reason why

28 teachers and learners of an additional language depend to a great extent on

29 incidental vocabulary acquisition. Extensive reading can mitigate this situation by

30 exposing learners to a wide variety of authentic examples of the target language,

31 which according to Krashen's Input Hypothesis will lead to language acquisition.

32 Bell (1998) points out that extensive reading can provide the exposure to the

33 language a learner of a second or additional language might lack. Kim and Hall

34 (2002: 332) state that reading in the second language can provide the language

40

input that L1 speakers would typically get from their caregivers. They explain that children recognize and learn the link between language and social interaction from verbal and nonverbal cues from their caregivers and that reading can support and expand on the same "language socialization" that takes place in the second or additional language classroom (Kim & Hall, 2002: 333).

According to Grabe (1991) extensive reading is an important part of a language programme as it gives learners the opportunity to "practice the automaticity of word recognition and decoding". It is a valuable skill for language learners to be able to read well in their target language. The more students practice reading the better they are able to read and the more they benefit and improve their language skills. Krashen and McQuillan (2007: 68) claim that exposure to enough interesting reading material for a "sufficient period" will not only improve the language learners' reading skill, but their writing, spelling, grammatical competence and vocabularies will also improve. Readers are exposed to a wide range of vocabulary in different contexts, to different syntactic structures (for example how verbs and adverbs function together, the use of different tenses in different contexts…), to examples of spoken language such as exclamations and interjections in dialogues and to collocations and figurative speech. Plentiful language input should thus lead to greater language skills.

For students to fully benefit from a reading programme, Grabe and Stoller (2002: 90) suggest that students need to be encouraged and supported to read independently and on their own. These researchers would like to see some class time devoted to "free reading time, sustained silent reading opportunities, lab reading periods, library reading and the reading of extended texts together". These kinds of activities have to be well managed, otherwise they can easily get out of hand: if the teachers are not present and involved, the learners could easily use the time to do other activities such as homework of just talking to each other. Teachers would need support from their school, district and curriculum, in other words the department or ministry of education, and enough interesting reading material to make extensive reading in the classroom a reality.

41

Making a strong argument in support of extensive reading in the classroom, Anderson (1996, in Grabe & Stoller, 2002: 90) states:

> In summary, there is a rather strong case, a case based on hard facts, that increasing the amount of children's playful, stimulating experience with good books leads to accelerated growth in reading competence. This conclusion appears to be a universal of written language development, true not only of English-speaking children learning to read English, but also true of children from various language groups learning their home language, a second language from their own country, or a foreign language.

2.8.1 The benefits of extensive reading

An extensive reading programme, in a low anxiety environment with age and level appropriate reading material, has many potential benefits of language learners whether they wish to improve an additional language or a foreign language. And since the learning principle is the same for an additional language as for a foreign language, the benefits of extensive reading are the same and will be discussed together.

Krashen and McQuillan (2007: 68) state that learners who read more "read better, write better, spell better, have better grammatical competence and have larger vocabularies". Hedgcock and Ferris (2009: 210) add that even detractors of extensive reading "acknowledge the importance and indispensability of extensive reading". Based on researchers such as Bell (1998) Huckin and Coady (1999), Hedgcock and Ferris (2009), Shaffer (2012) and Ghanbari and Marzban (2013), the benefits of acquiring vocabulary through reading can be summarised as follows:

1. Since vocabulary is contextualized, the reader is potentially exposed to a rich sense of an unfamiliar word's meaning. Extensive reading can increase knowledge of vocabulary, as students can, in some circumstances, infer or guess the meaning of new and unknown words from the context of the text.

2. It is "pedagogically efficient", as the student is simultaneously engaged in two different activities – reading and vocabulary building.

42

3. Reading is a learner-based method of acquiring vocabulary, especially if the students select their own reading material. The learners may feel in greater control of their own learning and could motivate them to read more material that interests them.

4. Since learners read at their level/within their comfort zone the text is a source of "comprehensible input". Reading increases students' exposure to the target language, which is especially beneficial to students learning a foreign language which is not spoken in their immediate environment.

5. Extensive reading can improve students' general language competence. It can lead to an improvement in the students' own writing as they get more familiar with written texts.

6. It can build reading confidence and can motivate students to read. It is an interesting self-perpetuating phenomenon in that as students read more, they gain more reading confidence and discover the joys of reading and read even more. Stanovich (1986: 381) explains this phenomenon by referring to the term coined by Merton in 1968, viz. the Matthew effect. Learners who read more, read better and therefore read more and reap more benefits. On the other hand, learners who are poor readers, read less and do not improve their reading skills, thus falling further and further behind.

7. It can consolidate previously learned language. Extensive reading thus serves as a way in which to enhance grammatical skills and awareness.

8. It builds confidence and students are not scared to attempt to read longer and more complex texts. Bell (1998) also notes that extensive reading, providing students with the opportunity to practice reading skills and strategies, prepares students to read longer books and academic texts.

9. It encourages the exploitation of different reading strategies. Being able to read fluently and not word-for-word allows for greater comprehension. When one focusses too much on each individual word, it becomes difficult to interpret the message of the text. Decoding word-for-word consumes working memory. As decoding becomes

43

1   automatised, reading becomes more fluent and this frees up working

2   memory so that more attention can be paid to meaning.

3   10.   It encourages the development of prediction skills. Using pre-existing

4   schema to predict the content of a text allows the reader to "interpret

5   the message beyond the printed words" (Bell, 1998). This is a valuable

6   skill, especially for adult language learners who would want to read

7   more complex text with complex ideas.

8

9 Cho, Choi and Krashen (2005) also report on the benefits of extensive

10 reading/sustained silent reading in a very heterogeneous Korean language class

11 in the United States. Students (n=31) with very different levels of Korean language

12 skills (from eight students who spoke no Korean at all to eight fluent native

13 speakers) read Korean comic books and graphic novels for 20 minutes at the

14 beginning of each lesson. Their teacher chose to have them read comic books

15 because he, himself an avid comic book reader, knew that the quality of these

16 books is of a high standard and that it covers a vast variety of topics, from Korean

17 history to global themes such as love, success, poverty and death. He also had a

18 big collection of comic books he could share with his students. At the end of the

19 semester the teacher reviewed the effectiveness of the reading programme with

20 a questionnaire. Of the students present on the day, 86% reported that they did

21 read during the allocated reading time (only two students admitted that they did

22 not read at all). This is noteworthy as at the beginning of the semester 23 of the

23 31 students could not read or write Korean. With the aid of Korean comic books

24 the teacher succeeded in turning his students into readers of Korean literature:

25 during the course of the semester they complained that there were not enough

26 books to read and the teacher supplemented his collection of 200 comic books

27 with 230 more books; some students even read during their lunch break and some

28 formed a Korean reading club; they did not only read comic books as some

29 students brought other books from their homes. The students also reported that

30 the 20 minutes of reading at the beginning of their school day (the Korean lesson

31 was the first of the day) was an enjoyable way to start focussing on the lesson

32 that followed. The teacher noticed another incidental benefit of the reading

33 programme: it had a positive effect on the students' discipline. Because the fluent

speakers were often bored, they misbehaved. Since they had the option to read interesting material during class time, this problem was solved.

This small study shows some of the benefits of using comic books to introduce even very poor readers to the pleasures of reading and how it can help them develop positive reading habits which in turn can contribute to positive attitudes in the classroom and regarding the language. The researchers also note that "pleasure reading provides a way of increasing one's [language] competence without the risk of making errors in public" (Cho, Choi & Krashen, 2005). This is an important factor, especially when teaching a foreign language to adolescents and adults who might be reluctant to make mistakes in front of their peers and would rather not use the language than appear 'silly'.

Al-Homoud and Schmitt (2009) found in their study that extensive reading had a positive influence on the reading speed and fluency of 71 male Saudi Arabian university students enrolled in an intensive 10-week course of English as a foreign language. They found that the participating students read faster and more fluently than those in the control group.

These researchers argue that interesting reading material plays an important role in improving students' reading speed. They speculate that students who enjoy what they are reading read faster in order to discover what will happen next and how the story will end. This is an interesting point to consider when selecting reading material for an extensive reading programme and why learners should be guided to eventually select their own reading material.

2.8.2 Extensive reading and vocabulary acquisition

As has already been noted, reading has a positive effect on vocabulary acquisition, especially in a foreign language. Some researchers such as Krashen believe strongly that reading is the main vehicle of vocabulary acquisition. Waring and Takaki (2003) quote him as stating "reading is good for you. The research supports a stronger conclusion, however. Reading is the only way, the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, and adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar and the only way we become good spellers" (Krashen, 1993:

1 23 in Waring & Takaki, 2003: 130). Many studies, with varying results, have been
2 conducted in language classrooms all over the world to test the role of reading in
3 vocabulary acquisition, with varying findings. In this section some of these studies
4 are reviewed.
5
6 In 1989 Pitts, White and Krashen repeated Saragi, Nation and Meister's 1978
7 study with *A Clockwork Orange*, a fairly difficult novel with 241 slang words of
8 Russian origin or nadsat words. The researchers were certain that the
9 participating students had no previous knowledge of the nadsat words, making *A
10 Clockwork Orange* the ideal text with which to test incidental vocabulary
11 acquisition. They conducted their study with two experimental groups of 35 and
12 16 adult intermediate ESL learners in Los Angeles and Santa Monica respectively
13 and one control group of 23 adult ESL learners. The first experimental group had
14 60 minutes to read the first two chapters of the novel. They were not encouraged
15 in any way to pay special attention to the vocabulary, instead they were told that
16 they would be writing a test on literary criticism and comprehension, thus
17 encouraging them to focus on meaning rather than vocabulary while reading. The
18 second experimental group watched the first two scenes of the film to give them
19 some background information to make comprehension of the challenging text a
20 little easier. They had 40 minutes to read the text. Ten minutes after the reading
21 activity, both groups, as well as the control group, who did not read the book nor
22 watch the film, were given a multiple choice vocabulary test. The test consisted
23 of 30 nadsat words which appeared between one and 27 times in the selected
24 passage. Each item in the test has five possible answers, including the option "I
25 don't know". The distractors were chosen in a way to ensure no partial semantic
26 or linguistic knowledge would come into play. As predicted, the two experimental
27 groups did significantly better in the vocabulary test than the control group, with
28 one group scoring 6,4% and the other 8,1% against the 0% of the control group.
29 Although these gains in vocabulary might seem very small, one should keep in
30 mind that the subjects read a difficult text in a short time and that they had no
31 partial knowledge and little or no background information to rely on. These
32 researchers interpreted the results of this experiment as a clear indication that,
33 not unlike children acquiring L1 vocabulary from reading, adult learners can and
34 do also acquire incidental vocabulary while reading for meaning. The implication

1   for students of a second or additional language is that if they wish to grow their
2   vocabulary, they should engage in a lot of reading for meaning and pleasure. As
3   Pitts, White and Krashen point out, interesting, comprehensible reading material
4   is "an important source of vocabulary in second language acquisition" (1989: 275).
5
6   In a similar study, Dupuy and Krashen (1993) conducted a short experiment with
7   third semester (intermediate) students of French as a foreign language to test the
8   effect of an extensive reading activity on the students' vocabulary. An
9   experimental group of 15 third semester students watched the first five scenes of
10 the film *Trois hommes et un couffin,* without subtitles, and the following day they
11 had forty minutes to read the next five scenes of the film script (about 15 pages).
12 The film served as background and context for the text as it is quite difficult. The
13 students were told that they would write a comprehension test after reading the
14 text. They were not given any indication to pay special attention to vocabulary.
15 Immediately after the forty minutes of reading they were given a vocabulary test
16 with thirty items from the text. The test had thirty multiple choice questions with
17 four possible answers (in English) one of which was "I don't know". The test was
18 also taken by two control groups: another group of third semester French students
19 who did not see the film and did not read the text, and to ensure that the
20 vocabulary was unknown to third semester students, a group of fourth semester
21 students also took the test without having watched the film or having read the text.
22 The items in the test were "extremely colloquial" with words such as *nana* (girl),
23 *crevé* (exhausted) and *dengue* (crazy). Even after adjusting the results for
24 guessing and partial knowledge, the experimental group (i.e., the students who
25 read the script) outperformed the two control groups with a mean score of 14.7
26 out of a possible 30 to the 8.0 of the third semester control group and 8.9 of the
27 fourth semester group. The researchers acknowledge that this experiment does
28 not necessarily prove that extensive reading is in any way a better technique to
29 acquire vocabulary than other methods such as direct instruction for example, nor
30 does it answer the question of long term vocabulary retention. It does, however,
31 show that it is possible for students of a foreign language to grow their vocabulary
32 when engaged in reading for meaning (in this case the vocabulary gain is
33 estimated as six words per forty minutes of reading). It should be noted that the
34 researchers did not control for the effects of aural exposure to the text.

47

1

2 Waring and Takaki (2003) conducted a similar experiment with Japanese ESL

3 university students. However, they changed the spelling of 25 words in a graded

4 reader, *A Little Princess*, to ensure that the words were not familiar to the students

5 (thus creating a kind of nadsat word).[5] They administered three posttests: one

6 immediately after the reading activity, one a week later and the last one three

7 months later. The researchers found that although it is possible to acquire

8 vocabulary incidentally, most of the words they tested for were not acquired; after

9 three months only one of the most frequently recurring words from the text was

10 retained. Waring and Takaki conclude that reading one graded reader is not

11 enough to build vocabulary, they suggest that "a massive amount" of reading

12 might be necessary for any significant vocabulary gains and retention.

13

14 In 2011 Ponniah conducted an experiment with 49 adult ESL learners from the

15 National Institute of Technology in India to test Krashen's comprehensible input

16 hypothesis. The students were divided into two groups and given the same two

17 pretests. In the first of the pretests they were asked to define twenty words,

18 identified in the pilot study as being unfamiliar to the students, and in the second

19 test they had to use these words in sentences. The experimental group then read

20 the short story *The Chinese Statue* by Jeffery Archer, which Ponniah had edited

21 slightly in order to "enhance comprehensibility" and to make sure the difficult

22 words occurred at least twice or were used in such a way as to make their

23 meaning clear. While the experimental group read, the control group studied a list

24 of dictionary definitions of 51 of these difficult words. The students spent about 60

25 minutes on these activities whereafter they took the same tests as posttests. The

26 results of the posttests showed that both groups made significant gains. In the

27 definition test the comparison group improved with 17,6% and the experimental

28 group with 29,6%. In the second test (the sentence writing exercise), the

29 difference between the two groups was even greater: the comparison group

30 improved their score with 2,8% and the experimental group improved with 33,6%.

31 Although this experiment did not test for long term vocabulary gains, the

32 researcher interpreted these results as evidence that reading for meaning enables

---

[5] It is acknowledged that the pedagogical soundness of exposing ESL students to fake vocabulary is debatable.

1 students not only to acquire new vocabulary, but also to improve their grammar

2 skills. This finding is consistent with the comprehensible input hypothesis that one

3 acquires more vocabulary when "experiencing comprehensible input" compared

4 to when one is consciously focussing on form (Ponniah, 2011). What is interesting

5 in Ponniah's study is that the participating students themselves did not believe

6 that reading for meaning and pleasure would result in vocabulary gains. During

7 interviews with the researcher, they expressed their doubts about the theory that

8 reading would lead to an increase in their vocabulary and stated that they

9 preferred to develop their vocabulary by consciously learning the meaning of

10 words from lists. Ponniah does not mention if this experiment succeeded in

11 convincing the students of the benefits of reading for meaning.

12

13 These studies show that students are able to acquire vocabulary from reading for

14 meaning and pleasure. However, they can perhaps not be classified as genuine

15 *extensive* reading as the students only read for a very short period of time and

16 most of the researchers acknowledge that they did not test the long term retention

17 of vocabulary acquired in this manner. Other researchers have conducted studies

18 over longer time periods with varying results.

19

20 Pigada and Schmitt (2006) report on their case study with an adult learner of

21 French as a foreign language. The study measured the influence of a month-long

22 extensive reading programme on the lexical knowledge of a 27-year-old Greek

23 speaking French learner. Before this study, this student took a year-long break

24 from French and the researchers noted that his level of proficiency was somewhat

25 lower than the average intermediate French learner. During the study he lived and

26 studied in England, and apart from the books he read, he had no other contact

27 with the French language.

28

29 As the aim of the study was to test lexical knowledge, the researchers selected

30 133 target words (70 nouns and 63 verbs) to be tested on meaning, spelling and

31 grammatical behaviour (the gender of the nouns and the prepositions following

32 the verbs). They made use of one-on-one interviews with the student as a method

33 of measurement. They conducted an interview before the study to determine the

34 student's knowledge of the target words. The posttest was identical to the pretest

1   and was conducted over two days to test his knowledge of the spelling, meaning

2   and grammatical behaviour of the target words. He was explicitly asked not to

3   guess any of the answers. The researchers were confident that their chosen

4   measurement instrument of an individual interview allowed them to eliminate

5   guessing to a large extend. They reported that the student acquired a "substantial"

6   amount of lexical knowledge during the reading programme. However, the

7   improvement was not spread evenly across the different types of word knowledge

8   they tested for: all the noun groups and all but two of the verb groups showed

9   strong improvement in spelling. Knowledge of meaning improved significantly in

10   all the groups except the single exposure verb group. Grammar knowledge

11   improved in all frequency groups of the nouns, but for the verbs the improvement

12   was much less significant. Min (2008) points out that when the improvement of

13   orthographic and grammatical knowledge is not taken into account, Pigada and

14   Schmitts's results are less impressive. When only improvement of pure lexical

15   knowledge is considered, the uptake of target words is only 6% (Min, 2008: 76).

16

17   Al-Homoud and Schmitt (2009) conducted a 10-week extensive reading

18   programme at the Al-Imam Mohammad Ibn-Saud Islamic University in Saudi

19   Arabia with 70 male EFL students with "rather weak language proficiency" even

20   though they had been studying English for six years at school. The students were

21   divided into a control group who followed the traditional syllabus of intensive

22   reading and comprehension instruction, including a strong focus on explicit

23   vocabulary instruction. The intervention group participated in an extensive reading

24   programme during which time they received some traditional instruction as their

25   language skills were very poor but mostly they read an average of 20-30 pages

26   per week (weak readers) to 50-60 pages per week (stronger readers) from graded

27   readers. At the end of the 10-week reading programme Al-Homoud and Schmitt

28   (2009) measured changes in vocabulary size in three sections (2 000-word level,

29   3 000-word level and academic vocabulary). At the 2 000-word level both groups

30   showed significant gains in vocabulary size: an average of 390 words for the

31   extensive reading group and 460 words for the intensive reading group. At the 3

32   000-word level both groups gained an average of 140 words. The gains at this

33   level were smaller than at the 2 000-word level as most students read from graded

34   readers at a 1 800-word level. When the researchers tested the academic

1 vocabulary of the students, the results were similar to those of the 3 000-word

2 level. Both groups made some gains (an average of 44 words for the intensive

3 reading group and 32 words for the extensive reading group). Although these

4 gains might seem small, one should keep in mind that these students initially had

5 fairly poor language skills.

6

7 The results of the academic vocabulary tests in the above study are rather

8 surprising. The students in the control group read and studied academic texts

9 intensively and the gains they made were expected. However, the students in the

10 extensive reading group were not exposed to academic texts, and graded

11 readers, especially those at lower levels, contain little if any academic vocabulary.

12 Yet these students showed similar gains in the size of their academic vocabulary

13 as their counterparts who studied it intensively. The authors point out it is

14 important to note that these students (in both the control group and those

15 participating in the extensive reading classes) do not come from a culture of

16 reading. Al-Nujaidi (2003, in Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009) reported that a similar

17 group of students stated that they only spent about 15 minutes per week reading

18 for pleasure. The researchers mention that some time had to be devoted at the

19 beginning of the course to teach the students "to know and to cope with the new

20 reading approach" including how to borrow and return their books, how to choose

21 a book for themselves and how to read for pleasure and to enjoy the story or

22 information rather than just reading in order to answer comprehension questions.

23

24 These studies show the importance of having realistic expectations when initiating

25 a reading programme. It seems clear that students do acquire some vocabulary

26 (as well as orthographic and grammatical knowledge of the language) from

27 reading. However, for long term retention, of not only form but also meaning, to

28 take place, students should encounter the words frequently. This implies that they

29 will have to read 'a massive amount' (as Waring and Takaki (2003) put it). Reading

30 one book or a few pages (for example the studies of Pitts, White & Krashen, 1989;

31 Dupuy & Krashen, 1993, Waring & Takaki, 2003; Ponniah, 2001) might not make

32 a significant difference to the size of language learners' vocabulary, but reading

33 many books over a longer period of time (for example the studies of Pagada &

34 Schmitt, 2006; Al Homoud & Schmitt, 2009) could (and researchers such as

Krashen believe that it will) be very beneficial to students' vocabulary and language skills in general.

2.8.3 Criticism of extensive reading and the research on extensive reading

Not everyone is entirely convinced of the benefits of extensive reading in a second or foreign language programme or of the methodology used in studies on extensive reading. The effect of extensive reading on learners' vocabulary and grammar skills is questioned because, as Pigada and Schmitt (2006) point out, most studies use "measuring instruments that are not sensitive to small amounts of learning" and can therefore not clearly show the nuanced effects of extensive reading on the subjects' vocabulary. Min (2008) is very critical of studies conducted in the field of extensive reading, stating that in many cases claims made regarding the benefits of extensive reading are not based on empirical evidence. Min also accuses researchers who did conduct empirical studies of showing "a lack of rigor", "faulty methodological designs", a lack of control groups, measuring instruments not being sensitive enough and "a failure to examine the long-term effect of reading" (Min, 2008:75).

Mason and Krashen (1997) found that although research seems to support the benefits of extensive reading, many teachers are still not convinced that such a programme will prove beneficial to their learners. According to Mason and Krashen the main concerns of these teachers are:

- Although studies have shown the benefits of extensive reading programmes in a second language, they do not necessarily prove that such programmes will show the same kind of results in a foreign or additional language.
- Some teachers are concerned that extensive reading programmes would only be beneficial to students who are already successful and motivated language learners, and that the struggling students do not have the necessary grammatical skills, vocabulary and motivation to fully participate and benefit from such a reading programme. Cho, Choi and Krashen (2005) found that in their study of students studying Korean in an American school, the students with poor language skills

did struggle with the comic books that were available. The students reacted to this problem in several ways: some students worked hard to understand what they read, others choose to read easier, shorter texts such as magazines, especially the advertisements, and a third group did not read at all. This shows the importance of making interesting, level appropriate reading material available as well as teaching strategies to students to cope with difficulties they might encounter. Similarly, Takase (2007) reported that unmotivated students' reluctance to read is one of the largest problems faced by teachers implementing extensive reading programmes in Japan (39,1% of the teachers participating in his survey mentioned unmotivated students as a concern).

- Teachers are concerned that reading alone is not enough and that an extensive reading programme should be supplemented with other activities such as explicit vocabulary teaching, writing and grammar exercises. Chien and Yu (2015) also point out that extensive reading is often criticised for this perceived lack of formal language instruction and that it could be "restraining the development of students' linguistic knowledge of the target language" (p.3). They quote Green (2005) as saying that extensive reading leads to the "development of a superficial fluency" (p.3). Chien and Yu suggest that extensive reading programmes should be run in conjunction with traditional grammar classes.

- Some teachers seem to be unconvinced that the effects of extensive reading are reliable and lasting.

In a study conducted among high school teachers in Japan, Takase (2007) found that the critique and concerns regarding extensive reading programmes in high schools in Japan vary greatly. Teachers who have not yet implement an extensive reading programme were mostly concerned about the lack or cost of appropriate reading material, the impact such a programme would have on already limited class time and a lack of support from colleagues. Teachers with experience of extensive reading programmes also noted that the cost and lack of resources were a real problem when implementing a reading programme, although they

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stated that this was not as big a problem as the non-practitioners thought it might be. The extensive reading practitioners pointed out that time consuming book management and reluctant students who are not interested in reading were the real difficulties they faced. Takase points out that teachers who struggled with unmotivated students were not very experienced in extensive reading programs and he suggests that as the teachers gain more experience the problem may dissipate.

During his research in Korea, Shaffer (2012) found that schools were hesitant to implement extensive reading programmes due to a lack of understanding of how exactly such a programme would function and how it would benefit language learners, as well as a "reluctance to use valuable class time" (2012: 141) on silent reading activities. He also mentioned that the perceived difficulty and the costs involved in extensive reading programmes were major stumbling blocks.

In their discussion of the influence of extensive reading on vocabulary development, Al-Homoud and Schmitt (2009: 386) point out that although it does seem as if extensive reading has a positive effect on vocabulary development, it is hard to tell whether the gains in vocabulary stem from the extra exposure to the language or from the reading itself. This is especially true of situations where the extensive reading is an "add-on" to the normal syllabus. Huckin and Coady (1999) note that one should be careful to distinguish between vocabulary acquisition and comprehension. Since reading provides context which enables readers to guess the meaning of an unknown word, they might not make the effort to learn and fully acquire the word. The authors point out that although according to Krashen's Input Hypothesis, vocabulary acquisition occurs when the learner is focused on meaning rather than form, other researchers (such as Ellis, 1994; Robinson, 1995 and Schmidht, 1993, in Huckin & Coady, 1999) found that learners should pay conscious attention, at least to some degree, to form as well as to meaning for vocabulary acquisition to take place through reading. Other studies (Parry, 1993; 1997, in Huckin & Coady, 1999 and Paribakht & Wesche, 1997) have found that when students read with a specific task in mind they retain the vocabulary needed for said task better than when they are simply reading for meaning or pleasure.

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1 Thus, reader engagement and purpose seem to be important factors in the
2 process of vocabulary acquisition through reading.
3
4 Huckin and Coady (1999) make the case that multiword phrases or collocations
5 (for example *break a leg* or *take a bow*) may not easily be learnt through incidental
6 exposure since the meaning cannot be inferred from the sum of the parts,
7 particularly for students of a foreign language. They base their concerns on the
8 research of Bahns and Eldaw (1993), who studied advanced EFL students and
9 found them struggling to pick up collocations, and Arnaud and Savignon (1997),
10 who found that non-native English teachers in France lacked knowledge of
11 idiomatic expressions when compared with native speakers, although their
12 knowledge of low frequency words was on the same level as the university level
13 native speakers. These researchers came to the conclusion that phrases and
14 collocations should be taught explicitly in a foreign language, rather than hoping
15 that learners will be able to acquire this knowledge through incidental exposure.
16
17 When studying the literature on extensive reading Chien and Yu (2015) came
18 across several recurring questions about the effectiveness of extensive reading
19 as a method to teach a foreign language. They found that some researchers (such
20 as Huckin and Coady, 1999) are not convinced that vocabulary can be acquired
21 simply by reading simple texts and without consulting dictionaries. The
22 simplification of authentic texts is another issue that came up. If learners are only
23 reading texts that have been adapted to their level of reading and language skills,
24 are they really being prepared to read complex, authentic texts? One would then
25 perhaps have to consider Krashen's idea of i + 1, to expose learners to texts that
26 push them slightly out of their comfort zone in order to keep improving their
27 reading and language skills.
28
29 In 2017 Milliner conducted a study with 19 Japanese university students, studying
30 English as a foreign language. The students read on average 263 767 words (39
31 graded readers) on their smartphones during one academic year. All but two of
32 the students reached the reading targets. The students were encouraged with
33 rewards, in-class reading time and book discussions. When the students' TOEIC
34 (Test of English for International Communication) scores at the end of the

academic year were compared to those of previous years, they scored on average 38 points higher. The participating students' reading test scores improved by 29 points from December 2014 (pre-treatment test) to December 2015 (post-treatment test). However, the students also studied for the TOEIC with various drill and practice tests from a TOEIC textbook. The researcher is therefore unable to state unequivocally that the extensive reading programme is the sole reason for the students' high test scores.

McQuillan (2019) re-analysed Milliner's (2017) findings and noted some concerns namely:

1. The Milliner study had no control group. Other sources of input might have had an influence on the results obtained. This is a point Milliner also makes.

2. The extensive reading programme was not the only activity contributing towards the students' grade and they did other language activities to improve their language skills.

3. McQuillan (2019) points out that the reading in this study was not "free reading". Although the students were free to choose the books they read (from a library of more than 500 titles), it was assigned reading that contributed to 20% of their final grade. The students had to write regular reading comprehension tests. And, perhaps most tellingly, the majority of students read little more than the minimum required to obtain the full credit. Milliner (2017) states that most of the students saw the extensive reading as a compulsory part of the curriculum. McQuillan (2019) argues that since the students did the minimum reading, one could assume that they also choose the simplest, easiest books to read. The students in this study read an average of 41,4 hours over the course of the two semesters of the reading programme. However, when one breaks this impressive number down, it appears that they read only a little more than 10 minutes a day (although one could argue that 10 minutes a day is better than no reading at all).

McQuillan (2019) argues that the Milliner study did not meet the requirements of an extensive reading programme as the reading done was prescribed, followed

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1 by comprehension tests and counted for 20% of the students' grade. McQuillan's

2 conclusion is that "forced pleasure reading" will not yield the same positive results

3 as a true extensive reading programme might.

4

5 Implementing an extensive reading programme is costly and time consuming, as

6 the teachers participating in Takase (2007) and Shaffer (2012) testified. Books

7 must be bought, stored and managed. Chien and Yu (2015) suggest that schools

8 and universities apply for government funding or start with a small extensive

9 reading programme. Another option is to make use of free online libraries.

10 However, the time cost to the teacher is still high in terms of having to find

11 appropriate reading material and the amount of administration involved in running

12 an extensive reading programme.

13

14 2.8.4 Extensive reading and student motivation/attitude

15 In test-driven language programmes learners often have to read, analyse and

16 study material they find difficult and uninteresting. Reading activities in the

17 additional language class are mostly used to analyse texts or to point out linguistic

18 features of the language, and, are seldom, if ever, just for pleasure. This can

19 cause learners to become unmotivated to read in their additional language as they

20 think it is difficult and time consuming. Van (2009: 4) points out that when the

21 learners find both the language and the cultural references in a text difficult to

22 understand, it could create a situation where the learners become passive and

23 demotivated to continue reading "due to the lack of enjoyment or benefit from the

24 experience". An extensive reading programme, in which learners (re)discover the

25 joy of reading and (re)learn reading strategies, might change this negative attitude

26 towards reading in their additional language. As McQuillan (1997) points out, the

27 notion of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation originates from cognitive psychology:

28 psychologists found that some tasks are driven by external factors, such as

29 rewards or punishments, and others are driven by internal factors. People who

30 are intrinsically motivated seem to perform certain tasks without any external

31 incentives.

32

33 Some language teachers are concerned that only highly motivated learners with

34 strong language skills will benefit from an extensive reading programme.

57

However, in their study with Japanese students learning English as a foreign language, Mason and Krashen (1997), in response to this concern, showed that unmotivated, "reluctant" students participating in an extensive reading programme showed improvement in vocabulary, grammar and attitude towards the foreign language. At the end of a semester of extensive reading, during which time struggling students read on average 30 graded readers, these students showed significantly greater improvement in English when compared to students in the comparison group (who tested much stronger at the beginning of the semester). The researchers noticed a significant improvement in the participating students' attitude towards English and state that "many of the once reluctant students of EFL became eager readers". Although this was a fairly small study (of only two classes of 20 students each), it does support other similar research and adds to the evidence of the positive effects of extensive reading on the language skills and motivation of poorer students of a foreign language.

In their study Al-Homoud and Schmitt (2009) used a 6-point Likert scale questionnaire to measure student attitude at the end of their 10-week extensive reading programme with students at a university in Saudi Arabia. The students in both the intensive reading control group and the extensive reading test groups were fairly weak students of English as a foreign language. In nine of the ten categories on the questionnaire the students in the experimental group displayed a significantly more positive attitude towards English and language learning than those in the control group (the difference between the two groups were at least .55 on the 6-point Likert scale, and in some cases as much as 2.1). The only category that did not show this difference was the questions concerning the perceived improvement of language skills other than reading and vocabulary. The students in the extensive reading group gave more positive answers on the questionnaire than their peers in the control group concerning their reading development, reading comprehension, reading fluency, learning of vocabulary, the classroom exercises and the reading material.

As these researchers point out, a positive attitude towards reading is very important as it is more likely that such a student would continue to read in his foreign language and reap even more benefits from reading and make more

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progress. Bell (1998) also noticed this during his extensive reading experiment with mature ESL students in Yemen: interesting reading material that meet the students' tastes and needs "energize and motivate them to read more books". Guthrie et al. (2007: 306) found that children who are "highly involved in reading seem to define themselves as readers, and devote much time and energy to reading".

2.8.5 Narrow reading

Schmitt (2000: 150) suggests narrow reading for intermediate learners. The learners are given many authentic texts on the same topic to read, or texts written by the same authors. The idea is that many topic-specific words will be repeated in slightly different contexts. As the learners become more familiar with this vocabulary, they will find it easier to read texts on the specific topic and the vocabulary will be internalised. Krashen (2004b) explains that vocabulary and grammatical structures are acquired through large amounts of comprehensible input, where language learners acquire new words when they encounter these many times in texts that they understand. He suggests that narrow reading might facilitate this process (Krashen 2004b: 17) as learners become used to a specific writer's style, or a specific topic dealt with by several different writers.

Schmitt (2000) suggests reading an ongoing news story as an example of narrow reading. The articles discuss the same event and will therefore use mostly the same topic-specific vocabulary. The learners will encounter words in a context that will be familiar and therefore they should be able to read the texts with more ease and acquire the vocabulary specific to the topic.

One might also consider reading books by the same author, as the readers will become accustomed to the style of writing and vocabulary (e.g. reading a series of Dr Seuss books or, as in this study, the *Tyranno le terrible* series by Hans Wilhelm). Krashen (2004b) points out that not only does the familiarity of the vocabulary and style contribute to the readers' comprehension, but also increased background knowledge. If a language learner has knowledge of a subject (whether through repeated exposures to texts on the subject or from his own

general knowledge), reading, or listening, becomes easier and, according to Krashen, uptake of lexical and grammatical knowledge increases.

Narrow reading might be a good strategy for students learning a language to be used in a very specific context (e.g. business people wanting to expand into another country or doctors going to work in a foreign country). It might, however, be slightly limiting and even frustrating to a diverse group of language students with different goals, aims and interests, especially if time is limited.

2.8.6 Accelerated reading

Another popular reading strategy is Accelerated Reading. Accelerated Reading has four major components: access to interesting reading material, adequate time to read (at least an hour a day), content tests and rewards or points to be won on the tests. The main difference between Accelerated Reading and extensive reading is the introduction of tests and prizes or rewards in an Accelerated Reading programme as motivators. In an Accelerated Reading programme learners are encouraged to read in order to win prizes as a reward when they do well in the subsequent content tests, the assumption being that the prizes motivate them to read. There is some contention as to the efficacy of prizes in the long term. Many scholars, (Krashen, 2005; McQuillan, 2019; Kohn, 1993) believe that rewarding reading could have a negative effect on the students in that they will only read if there is the possibility of a reward.

In his discussion of Accelerated Reading and some of the studies published on the subject, Krashen (2005) points out some concerns regarding Accelerated Reading programmes in general and the research in particular. He evaluated four studies:

- Melton et al. (2004, in Krashen, 2005) who studied the gains in reading abilities of 322 Grade 5 learners who were considered poor readers and who partook in a yearlong Accelerated Reading programme. The learners were divided into quartiles according to their pretest reading comprehension test scores. The learners in the lowest quartile showed no significant improvement, while the learners in the other three

60

1   quartiles performed significantly worse than those in the control
2   groups.

3 •   The second study is that of Mallette, Henk and Melnick (2004, in
4   Krashen, 2005) who compared Grade 4 and 5 learners in two school
5   districts. In one district Accelerated Reading was used as the entire
6   language programme from Grade 1, while Accelerated Reading was
7   only used as an occasional support in the language programme in the
8   second district. This study measured the learners' attitudes towards
9   reading and found that although the Accelerated Reading students
10   displayed a more positive attitude towards academic reading, they did
11   not engage in more leisure reading than the comparison group.

12 •   The third study Krashen evaluated is that of McGlinn and Parrish
13   (2001, in Krashen, 2005). These researchers studied the effects of a
14   three month Accelerated Reading programme on ten grade 4 and 5
15   ESL learners. Their progress was measured by their teacher's
16   evaluation of their reading comprehension at the start of the
17   programme and the level of the books they were able to read and
18   understand at the end of the programme. Five of the learners showed
19   significant improvement (from an increase of four months in reading
20   level to a year and nine months), however the other students showed
21   no significant gains in reading ability (two were found to have learning
22   disabilities, one did not have adequate English skills and one
23   attempted to read books that turned out to be too difficult). As this study
24   had no comparison group it is difficult to state that the gains in reading
25   ability were solely due to the Accelerated Reading programme. It is
26   also unreliable to rely solely on a teacher's impression of learners'
27   reading ability without validating this with actual assessments of
28   learner reading comprehension.

29 •   The fourth study evaluated is the 2003 study of Johnson and Howard
30   (in Krashen, 2005). They tracked the reading abilities of low
31   socioeconomic status grade 3, 4 and 5 learners who participated in a
32   year-long Accelerated Reading programme. They found that the
33   learners who were "high" users of Accelerated Reading gained on
34   average 2,24 years on a standardised test of reading, while the gains

made by the "average" and "low" users were significantly lower (1,5 and 0,73 years respectively); and only 12 percent of the learners were high users. According to Johnson and Howard 36% percent of the participating learners were "average users" and read three to five books during the year-long intervention. The majority (52%) of the learners only participated minimally (read less than three books over the course of the year) "in spite of large amounts of encouragement".

Krashen points out that although some of the above studies included control groups, none of them compared their results to learners only exposed to equal access to books and time to read but without the content tests and prizes. Therefore, the results do not clearly show the influence of Accelerated Reading on learners' reading abilities as it could just as easily have been due solely to the exposure to reading material and reading time. In an earlier study, McQuillan (1997) came to similar conclusions after evaluating ten studies concerning the use of incentives to encourage primary and secondary school learners to read more. Like Krashen, McQuillan also points out that there is little evidence supporting the claim that prizes or rewards for reading is the main factor in the success of any of the reading programmes he evaluated. McQuillan (1997) came to the conclusion that there is insufficient evidence that rewards and incentives had any positive effect on the reading comprehension, vocabulary gains or reading habits of the learners participating in the ten studies he evaluated.

A further concern is with the use of prizes as it could diminish the enjoyment derived from pleasurable activities, such as reading, and turn it into work or chores (Kohn, 1993). The risk is that once learners no longer get prizes to reward them for reading, they will stop reading or read much less than they did when they were receiving external rewards. To evaluate the impact of prizes on the learners' reading habits, more longitudinal research is needed to track learners who participated in Accelerated Reading programmes. Studies on the effects of Accelerated Reading should also control for age as external rewards play different roles in motivation at different stages of cognitive development. Younger children react well to external rewards, such as stickers for example, but by adolescence one would expect internal motivation to become a stronger driving force. Although

1 researchers such as Krashen and McQuillan are strongly in favou r of reading
2 programmes to improve learners' language abilities, they are clearly not
3 convinced of the benefits of reward-driven Accelerated Reading programmes.
4
5 ## 2.9 Incidental vocabulary learning and text context
6 If one accepts the premise that incidental vocabulary acquisition is one of the
7 major benefits of extensive reading, the next logical question would be: are all
8 texts equally beneficial? Or should the teacher be concerned with the context in
9 which and the frequency with which new vocabulary appears?
10
11 In their 2006 study Pigada and Schmitt also looked at the influence of frequency
12 on vocabulary acquisition. Their case study revealed that the spelling of nouns
13 and verbs improved regardless of the frequency of encounters with unfamiliar
14 items, knowledge of meaning of verbs improved slightly in all but the single
15 exposure groups. Knowledge of meaning of nouns improved after four exposures.
16 They also measured improvement in grammatical knowledge of nouns (gender of
17 French nouns) in all the frequency groups and of preposition use with verbs in all
18 frequency groups except the 10+ exposure group. These results seem to indicate
19 that frequency of exposure has varying effects on different language skills and
20 that even limited expose to unfamiliar words can have a positive impact on
21 orthographic knowledge. However, one should note that this was a very small
22 study with only one subject.
23
24 In his large study Webb (2007) found that 121 intermediate Japanese EFL
25 students showed gains in both receptive and productive knowledge of vocabulary
26 and grammar every time encounters with target pseudo-words in texts with
27 varying richness of context increased. The participating students, who read
28 carefully controlled texts with a set number of pages and target word encounters,
29 showed some gains in receptive knowledge of orthography, syntax, association,
30 knowledge of meaning and form after one encounter with the target words. These
31 gains improved significantly after three encounters, again after five and at seven
32 encounters productive knowledge improved significantly. At ten encounters the
33 students showed increased knowledge of all aspects tested. Webb took the

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results of this study as evidence that for incidental vocabulary acquisition to take place there are no set number of exposures or particularly rich context necessary.

Webb (2008) conducted a further experiment, as part of a larger study, with 50 second year Japanese ESL students who had studied English for at least seven years. The study was conducted in order to determine the importance of the context in which the vocabulary appeared. The students read various short texts in which 10 target words appeared in contexts with varying levels of clearness. The forms of the target words had been altered or "disguised" to ensure the students had no previous knowledge of these words. The texts presented to the target group were rated as "more informative" as it was structured in such a way that it contained more information that could make the meaning of the target words clear. The control group read texts with the same target words, but with less information to aid in the comprehension of these words. Webb found that students who read the target words in the more informative contexts performed significantly better than the control group in the post reading tests testing for recall and recognition of meaning. Webb took this as an indication that if students encounter unknown vocabulary repeatedly in clear, informative contexts, they should acquire the words faster than if they encounter them in unclear or opaque contexts. Webb argues that when it comes to encountering and acquiring new vocabulary, quality is more important than quantity. In other words, if a new word is encountered in a context that makes the meaning clear a student is more likely to acquire said word than if he encounters it more times but has doubts about the meaning. This is especially important for L2 learners who have limited contact with unfamiliar words.

Interestingly, both Webb's groups scored well in the recall and recognition of form tests. Webb's interpretation of these results is that frequency is more important than context for the incidental learning of spelling. He also thinks that this can be evidence that students do not just ignore unfamiliar words in a text.

Srinivas and Patro (2018) tested the effects of repetition on the incidental acquisition of second language vocabulary. Ninety Grade 11 learners participated in the study and read seven passages of about 200 words all containing the eight

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target words. The researchers found that although the group who encountered the target words seven times performed better in the posttest than the groups who encountered the target words only once or three times, these last two groups also showed improvement in lexical and grammatical knowledge of the target words. The researchers concluded that although multiple exposures to vocabulary can help learners to acquire new vocabulary, as little as one exposure can have a positive effect on learners' vocabulary and grammar knowledge. They point out that context contributes to the incidental acquisition of vocabulary.

These studies emphasise the importance of clear, unambiguous context of new vocabulary in texts presented to students, especially when students have limited knowledge of the target language, if one wishes to improve knowledge of meaning of new vocabulary. (And Webb (2007) points out that second language learners, in comparison to native language speakers, are at a disadvantage when having to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words from a difficult or unclear context.) One should however not disregard the positive impact of even very limited frequency on other language skills such as spelling and grammatical knowledge.

2.10 Appropriate reading material: children's picture books

If context is as important as researchers such as Webb (2008) and Srinivas and Patro (2018) believe, should teachers evaluate and select their learners' reading material? One of the requirements of extensive reading is that learners should read interesting, age- and level-appropriate reading material and that the learners should ideally select their own reading material, or at the very least have access to a selection of books to choose from. Finding such reading material for adolescent learners of a second or additional language can be quite challenging. One possibility is to consider children's picture books for beginner or intermediate level learners. Children's picture books may not be age appropriate, but adolescent readers tend to enjoy the fun factor, often the stories are quite amusing, and the pictures contribute to the usually unambiguous context of new vocabulary. Reading picture books has another benefit for language learners: they can read a lot of books in a reasonably short amount of time, which can create a sense of achievement and confidence to read more advanced material.

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1 Krashen is a firm believer that if students are to be successful language learners
2 and readers, they have to have access to interesting reading material. He believes
3 that access to interesting reading material will turn students into readers
4 (Krashen, 1998). Similarly, Guthrie et al. (2007) found that children with high
5 interest in the books they read not only stated that they enjoyed the books, but
6 also excelled in recalling the text and could retell the contents of the book with
7 great detail.
8
9 Although Krashen admits that not all reading material (such as comic books and
10 magazines) is "sufficient to develop higher levels of literacy", it serves as a first
11 step towards "heavier reading" of more complex and academic texts (Krashen,
12 1998: 19). In his analysis of the PISA 2000 results, Krashen (2006) evaluated the
13 test scores of fifteen-year-olds from 32 countries who were tested to determine
14 reading proficiency in their mother tongues. The learners were given a variety of
15 texts (narratives, expository and argumentative texts, lists, graphs and diagrams)
16 and to answer questions they had to use skills such as simple information
17 retrieval, interpretation of the text and reflection on the content. Krashen
18 investigated the relationship between test scores and the reading habits of the
19 participating learners. He found a strong correlation between high test scores and
20 high reading activity. However, from this data it seems as if there is no indication
21 that learners need to read long texts (books) in order to benefit from the reading
22 activity. The learners who indicated that they read high volumes of shorter texts
23 (magazines, comic books etc.) performed just as well in the PISA tests as those
24 who said they read high volumes of long tests. Finland, for example, gained the
25 top reading score and the Finnish learners ranked second in the short text reading
26 group. Krashen did find that reading (long or short texts) was a great predictor of
27 high test scores.
28
29 Webb and Macalister (2013) did a corpus driven analysis of 688 texts, using
30 Nation's 2006 lists of word families, to determine the vocabulary size necessary
31 to read different types of texts with comprehension. They compared texts written
32 for English speaking children (age 7 – 13), graded readers for ESL learners and
33 texts written for adult readers. They focussed on word families as they deemed
34 that knowledge of one word would enable recognition of other words in the family.

66

1	If, for example, a student knows the word *danger*, he might also understand
2	*dangerous*. Their results show that knowledge of 1 000 word families plus proper
3	nouns would enable 82.43% coverage (the percentage of words known in a text)
4	of the texts written for adults and 83.25% coverage of the texts written for children.
5	For both types of texts one approaches 90% coverage at the 2 000 word family
6	level. Graded readers on the other hand reach 90% coverage at the 1 000 word
7	level and 96.73% coverage at the 2 000 word level. Their research also found that
8	for "adequate comprehension" of a text one should have about 98% coverage.
9	This would imply that readers should have knowledge of about 10 000 of the most
10	frequent word families to read children's books with comprehension. These
11	researchers found that the texts written for young children (7-8 years old) demand
12	a larger vocabulary than the texts written for older children (11-13 years old). They
13	think the reason might be that children's stories make use of a very genre specific
14	vocabulary (using words such as fairy, dragon and monster) that is less common
15	in texts for older readers.
16
17	Although Webb and Macalister (2013) came to the conclusion that children's
18	books are not the most suitable reading material for L2 learners due to the large
19	vocabulary needed to read these texts with comprehension, they do allow for the
20	notion that reading children's books might be an effective method for incidental
21	vocabulary learning. They concluded that even if one read all four levels of graded
22	readers used in their study, one would still not have "come close to reaching the
23	vocabulary size necessary to reach 98% coverage of texts written for children"
24	(Webb & Macalister, 2013: 314).
25
26	One could therefore argue that reading only graded readers would almost surely
27	enable incidental vocabulary acquisition due to the high frequency of the
28	vocabulary used in these texts. However, it is a relatively small vocabulary (1 000
29	- 2 000 word families) and would not prepare a learner to advance to more
30	challenging texts and certainly not academic works. Webb and Macalister (2013:
31	315) found only 242 word families with a frequency of ten or more encounters in
32	the graded readers and 756 word families with a similar frequency in the children's
33	books they analysed. It should be said that this genre specific vocabulary might
34	not be very useful to adolescent and adult learners although it could serve as

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1 encouragement to continue to read more challenging texts. Genre specific word
2 knowledge can also build a network of relationships to other words (e.g. *comet,*
3 *meteorite, asteroid…*). Thus acquiring genre specific vocabulary that is easily
4 recognised and understood can lead to increased word knowledge and expansion
5 of word families.
6
7 When evaluating the appropriateness of children's books for language learners,
8 one should not only focus on coverage and vocabulary size. Other factors to
9 consider are the learners' background, context knowledge and external clues
10 enriching the context of children's picture books. Second language learners might
11 already be familiar with the stories from their own childhood which would make
12 comprehension easier. Repetition of vocabulary or set phrases and grammatical
13 structures is also often a feature of children's book that can contribute to language
14 and vocabulary acquisition. Another valuable characteristic of children's books is
15 the illustrations: not only does it contribute to the enjoyment of reading children's
16 literature, but it also serves in a large way towards unlocking unknown vocabulary
17 without having to turn to a dictionary.
18
19 If children acquire L1 vocabulary through reading children's books, one could
20 reason that L2 learners will also benefit from picture books. Hitosugi and Day
21 (2004) studied 14 second semester first year university students learning
22 Japanese at the University of Hawai'i who improved their reading comprehension
23 by reading children's books over a course of ten weeks as part of an extensive
24 reading programme. The researchers used books written for L1 children because
25 there are not many graded readers available in Japanese. They were concerned
26 that the students might feel insulted having to read books that were not cognitively
27 appropriate and too childish for university students. The researchers dealt with
28 this issue head on by explaining to the students that they did not think of them as
29 children, but that Japanese children's books were linguistically of a high standard
30 and the only books available at their level of language competency. The extensive
31 reading programme counted for 10% of the participating students' final grade and
32 the students had a reading target of 40 books over a 10-week period. (Four
33 students read more than the required 40 books. However, seven students read
34 30 books of fewer.) Extensive reading was part of the students' homework and

thus an add-on to the normal syllabus. The students' reading ability was tested with three different reading activities and their attitude towards learning Japanese was tested with a questionnaire. The researchers report that some of the students' attitudes towards Japanese changed drastically: one of the students reported that she developed a closer relationship with her Japanese-speaking grandmother once they started reading the children's books together. Another student who was at first considered to be "marginal", read 40 books and "blossomed", he participated more in class and become more confident and comfortable expressing himself in Japanese (Hitosugi & Day, 2004: 29).

Hitosugi and Day (2004) explain that the tests conducted were not for research purposes but rather for "enrichment of learning". However, the tests did show an improvement in reading comprehension. The questionnaire showed that the students in the reading programme reported more positive attitudes towards Japanese than the students following the traditional curriculum. Interestingly, the students in the extensive reading programme, who encountered many more unknown words, reported a smaller need for dictionaries than the students in the normal class, even though they felt that reading in Japanese was more difficult. The researchers speculate that the students in the extensive reading programme might find reading Japanese more difficult than the other students because they were exposed to more complex texts and vocabulary than the texts studied during classroom lessons. Another benefit of reading authentic children's books is the exposure to, in this study, Japanese culture. This can be especially valuable in situations where the foreign language is not the language of the country in which the learners are studying.

The use of children's books in an extensive reading programme has several benefits. It is not only a source of authentic language, but in some cases it also exposes the readers to the culture. Ghosn (2002: 172) puts forward that authentic children's books are not only a vehicle for language learning but can also aid in the development of "the thinking skills that are needed for L2 academic literacy". Reading children's books can therefore be a stepping stone to reading more age appropriate texts in the foreign language. The pictures in children's books can aid in the comprehension of the story and help learners become less dependent on

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dictionaries and read more fluently and faster. Ellilä (2019: 47) points out that when written words are reinforced with images, it creates a strong mental image and can enhance the memorisation and comprehension of vocabulary.

Much of the research in the field of extensive reading has been done with English as the target language. In this study the focus is on French as an additional language and the influence extensive reading, and to a smaller extend listening, have on the vocabulary acquisition of South African learners. Many of the factors mentioned in this chapter (frequency of exposure to vocabulary, pre and posttests, appropriate reading material, attitudes towards reading in the target language etc.) were taken into consideration when the study was designed.

2.11 Conclusion

From this review of the literature of the field of SLA and reading research, one can conclude that although there are many different theories and hypotheses concerning language acquisition and learning, they often build on each other or overlap. It seems clear that different learners will benefit from different strategies or methods. Krashen's Input Hypothesis, according to which enough exposure to the target language will lead to language gains such as grammar skills and increased vocabulary, has often been tested as a possible foundation for the teaching of second and additional languages. Many of these studies and experiments with extensive reading seem to support this hypothesis. However, as Pigada and Schmitt (2006) point out, in many of the studies the test subjects read as little as one text, and mostly not self-selected texts, and therefore, one can argue that these studies do not truly reflect "extensive reading conditions" as defined by Grabe and Stoller (2002) as exposure to large quantities of enjoyable reading material within the reader's linguistic competence. Furthermore, the majority of studies on extensive reading has been done with English as the target language.

In this study I examined the influence of extensive reading on the incidental vocabulary acquisition of French as an additional language in the South African high school context, using a pre- and posttest design. Two groups of lower intermediate test subjects participated in an extensive reading programme over

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1   the course of 8 weeks, during which time they were exposed to a wide selection

2   of children's books in French. One group read 12 books and the other listened to

3   the stories being read to them. The aim is to determine whether reading large

4   quantities will not only improve language skills such as vocabulary, but also have

5   an effect on general attitudes towards the language.

6

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the methodology followed during this study. It will include discussions of the participants, the testing tools I used, the procedures followed, some ethical considerations as well as a short overview of the data analysis.

To recap, the main research questions and subquestions are as follows:

1. How does exposure to children's picture books in French affect Grade 10 SAL learners' vocabulary acquisition, depending on the medium (extensive reading of stories versus listening to stories)?

    a. How does the learners' initial vocabulary level affect vocabulary acquisition during the intervention in the reading and listening groups?

    b. What does performance on the delayed vocabulary test suggest about vocabulary attrition in the reading and listening groups?

    c. What is the influence of an extensive reading programme on vocabulary recognition?

    d. How does the frequency of occurrence of words in the picture books affect vocabulary acquisition?

2. What are some of the perceived socio-affective factors that could lead to successful completion of an extensive reading programme?

    a. How did the learners' reading habits in French change as a result of the intervention?

    b. What were the learners' socio-affective responses to the reading intervention?

    c. What was the Grade 10 learners' perception of children's picture books?

3.2 Research design and approach

The aim of the study is to examine what effect the extensive reading of children's picture books has on vocabulary acquisition and attitudes to French of Grade 10 French SAL learners in the South African schooling context. To this end a mixed method design was used in this study, with the quantitative aspect of the study forming the main component. This comprised vocabulary assessment and a questionnaire focussing on attitude (further details to be provided in section 3.7.3). The vocabulary assessment comprised a multiple-choice vocabulary test taken at three different intervals to measure vocabulary growth. The qualitative component comprised open-ended questions in the questionnaire as well as my interactions with and observations of the learners during the meetings, their responses and attitudes towards reading. In this way the data was triangulated to gain deeper insight into how the participants responded to the intervention.

In addition to the intervention group, the research design included two counterfactuals to the extensive reading variable: a listening group (who listened to the same books that the reading group read) and a control group, who neither read nor listened to the books but who received the same formal French lessons as the other two groups. The function of the listening group was to isolate reading as a variable. The function of the control group was to reflect 'business as usual' exposure to French via classroom teaching, to control for the effect of extra exposure to French in the listening and reading groups.

The theoretical approach in this study is deductive as I start with the hypothesis that extensive reading will contribute to an increase in vocabulary size and a more positive attitude towards reading in French. I then conducted an intervention to test this hypothesis. The data gathered during the intervention is analysed in order to determine if the hypothesis holds true in this particular context.

This study follows an analytic/constituent approach as its focus is on specific factors, or constituent parts, of second language exposure (extensive reading) and investigates its influence on a subsystem of second language acquisition (vocabulary acquisition) (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989: 27). According to Lightbown and Spada's (2017: 220) definition, this is a longitudinal study as data is collected

from a group of subjects over a period of time. More specifically, the data were collected at three points in time: at the beginning of the treatment (the pretest) and twice thereafter (first posttest and delayed posttest). However, the participants were also observed and interviewed during the course of the intervention. Therefore, the data collection was ongoing and continuous throughout the intervention.

Nunan (1991: 250) suggests that a hypothesis should be the starting point of a "classroom-orientated" study and that "research should be driven by issues". Because the aim of this study was to test the effect of extensive reading on vocabulary, this study can therefore be described as hypothesis-driven (Seliger & Shohamy,1989: 30).

It is to be noted that this study was conducted largely during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic with all its accompanying constraints and stressors, which necessitated some adaptations to the original plan and caused some delays in data collection. The pilot study was conducted before the outbreak of the pandemic and the main study only two years later due to challenges such as social distancing, health protocols implemented, online teaching by the school and absenteeism. Despite these constraints, I tried to ensure that the study design was rigorous and that counterfactuals were in place.

3.3 Ethics

The subjects in this study are minors – Grade 10 learners – between the ages of 15 and 16 years. This meant that considerable care had to be taken to ensure their physical and psychological well-being.

I obtained ethical clearance from UNISA to conduct the study (Appendix 1). I had permission from the Gauteng Department of Education (Appendix 2) as well as from the schools' headmasters to conduct my research at the schools in question (Appendix 3).

During my first meeting with the Grade 10 classes in the pilot and the main study, I made sure to explain the nature and purpose of my research in a manner the

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1   learners would understand. I emphasised the confidential nature of the study. I

2   assured them that their names and results would not be made public, nor shared

3   with their teachers or other learners. I also explained the voluntary nature of the

4   study: the learners who chose to participate could also choose the group they

5   would like to join. I distributed letters of consent and assent explaining the nature

6   of study to both the learners and their parents or guardians (Appendix 4). No

7   learner without written consent was allowed to join the reading/listening

8   programme. This procedure was followed during both the pilot study and the main

9   study.

10

11   To make sure that the participating learners were comfortable and at ease, the

12   weekly meetings took place in their French classroom. Their teacher was not

13   present during these meetings. I believe that the familiarity of the surroundings

14   allowed the participants to feel confident and at ease during the reading

15   programme. Before and after each test, I reminded the learners that their results

16   would be treated confidentially.

17

18   It was very important to me that the participating learners felt safe, both physically

19   and emotionally. All questions and opinions were treated with respect. I tried my

20   best to create an environment in which the learners felt comfortable to ask

21   questions and to voice difficulties they might have encountered. The fact that

22   during the pilot study the learners felt free to tell me that they disliked one of the

23   books led me to believe that I succeeded in this regard.

24

25   During the main intervention (which took place during the Covid-19 pandemic),

26   the health of the participants was very important to me and to the school. During

27   meetings we all wore masks and sanitised our hands before entering the venues

28   (following the school's protocols). The classrooms were well ventilated and social

29   distancing was observed. The learners were all used to these practices and

30   complied with the school's rules. After each meeting I sanitised the desks and

31   chairs the learners and I used.

32

3.4 Nature of the intervention

As already stated, the main aim of this study was to determine the influence of extensive reading on the vocabulary size and attitude towards reading in French of Grade 10 learners. In order to do this, an extensive reading intervention was conducted at two schools, first as a pilot study (see section 3.7) and then as a main study (see section 3.8).

3.5 French L2 teaching context and participants

While methodological details about the pilot and main study are provided in sections 3.7 and 3.8 below, this section serves to provide a broad sketch of the context and participants. It was quite a challenge finding participants for this study – not all high schools offer French and if they do, not many learners take the subject. Only two schools were willing to participate in the study. Due to the small number (five) of learners who completed the reading programme during the pilot study, I conducted the main intervention at a different school in the same school district in order to increase the sample size.

In the Grade 10 French classes at these schools there are usually about 20 learners each year. These learners have typically been taking French as a school subject since Grade 8. In Grade 8 and 9 they have four periods (of 35 minutes) during an eight-day cycle and have reached A1 language proficiency level (i.e., beginner level according to the language proficiency levels[6] of *France Éducation International*, the French body concerned with testing and standardising French as a foreign language worldwide). In Grade 10 they have 8 x 35-minute periods in an eight-day cycle. At the end of the Grade 10 year, they should be at the A2 language proficiency level (i.e., advanced beginner or elementary according to *France Éducation International*). They are thus considered lower intermediate learners of French and should be able to communicate comfortably about subjects such as their own lives, their immediate environment, they should be able to use the simple present, future and past tenses, and they should be able to read and understand short texts. Their teachers do not use one specific textbook but rather

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[6] Detailed demarcation of competencies of the different language levels are available on *France Éducation International*'s website (https://www.france-education-international.fr/diplome/delf-junior-scolaire).

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a collection of books, their own personal notes and material from various online sources.

The extensive reading programme was completely voluntary. However, all the learners were encouraged to participate.

3.6 Features of the intervention

The participating learners were exposed to 12 children's books over a period of 6 weeks. Although the duration of the intervention programme itself was not long, exposure to stories in French was fairly intense. Since the majority of the participants did not read French for pleasure outside of the classroom prior to the intervention, 12 books can be considered a relatively large amount of reading. Even though the definition of extensive reading states that reading material should ideally be self-selected, the books were selected for the participants. Firstly, this was done because it was the learners' first encounter with children's storybooks in French and with reading in French for fun and they needed guidance as to what to read and where to find it. Secondly, the books were selected for the learners in order to standardise and isolate the act of reading and thus exposure to vocabulary to ensure that it remained a variable that could be accounted for.

3.6.1 Treatment

As mentioned above, in this study the treatment or independent variable is the modality of exposure, i.e., extensive reading of or listening to French stories. The learners in all three groups continued to be taught the normal curriculum of grammar, comprehension, and literature. However, the learners in the reading group read extensively during six weeks (two books per week) of the intervention. At the same time the learners in the listening group listened to the books being read to them. The learners in the control group only attended their normal French lessons. All three groups wrote a pretest and the reading and listening groups wrote two posttests to measure their vocabulary and the effect of the reading programme. The control group wrote only one posttest – the first one.

The intervention groups were exposed to the same story texts, but in different formats (written text and aural exposure). Therefore, the pre- and posttests do not

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just measure vocabulary growth but can also be used to measure the influence of the modality (extensive reading versus listening) on vocabulary growth.

The intervention happened concurrently with the learners' normal school curriculum. The participating learners met once a week for eight weeks (for the initial meeting, six weeks of reading, and the delayed posttest) outside of class time, in the French classroom. During these meetings, the participants from both the reading and listening groups discussed the books they read or listened to, mentioned difficulties that they encountered and successes they achieved. I also introduced and modelled reading strategies that they could use while reading. Details of the timeline are provided in Table 3.1 in section 3.8 below (page 92).

The same books were read to the listening group following the same timetable as the reading group. Since the listening group did not read the books, they did not complete book reports. I created PowerPoint presentations of the illustrations accompanying the stories in order for the listening group to get the same benefit from the illustrations as the reading group.

Both intervention groups wrote the vocabulary test (discussed below), before the intervention and twice after the conclusion of the reading programme. The control group wrote only the pretest and first posttest. The first posttest was written immediately after the conclusion of the reading intervention and the second delayed posttest was four weeks later. Further information about the instruments and materials is provided in sections 3.7 and 3.8.

3.6.2 Intervention material

I choose to use children's picture books as texts for the reading programme since storybooks with pictures are usually short, use high frequency words, fairly simple language and the storyline, which is often humorous, is supported by visuals. These features make them easy to read, more fun, give the reader a sense of accomplishment and build confidence, thereby encouraging the intention to read. It is more useful to expose learners to shorter texts in order for them to feel a sense of accomplishment, build reading confidence, provide practice

opportunities for applying reading strategies and to discover the joy of reading in French. (See Appendix 8 for an example text.)

The reading material used in the reading programme is all from free open sources so as not to exclude anyone from the programme for financial reasons and to show the learners where and how to find more books on their own. (See Appendix 9 for the complete book list.) All the material was provided to the learners, allowing anyone who wished to participate in the reading programme to do so.

The material used in this study was tested during the pilot study and adjusted thereafter, as needed. For example, one of the books used in the pilot study proved to be too difficult for the learners to understand the story. This story was replaced with another one for the main intervention.

3.7 Pilot study

Given that there is a paucity of research of this nature in French L2 learning/teaching contexts, the purpose of the pilot study was to trial the research instruments and procedures as well as the intervention materials and methods The pilot study was conducted over a period of five weeks, starting at the beginning of August 2019. I gained some valuable information from the pilot study which I will discuss below.

The pilot study had three main objectives:

1. To test and evaluate the test instruments (the vocabulary test, the book report, the reading attitude questionnaire and the interview schedule).
2. To test the effectiveness and appropriacy of the selected intervention material. Here I was particularly interested to establish whether the participants enjoyed reading the selected picture books and if the books served the purpose of the study. This information was collected by means of book reports, a questionnaire and informal interviews.
3. To test the procedures (appropriate times for testing, how best to conduct the interviews, etc.).

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Because there was no standardised vocabulary test suitable for this study, I designed a vocabulary test that incorporated words from the books the participants read. The main aim of the pilot study was to trial the appropriacy of the vocabulary test. The questionnaire was also self-designed for this study and also needed to be trialled. In addition, I also wanted to see if the intervention I designed was feasible for the South African schooling context for French SAL learners. I also wanted to see if the books I selected were suitable and received favourably by the participants.

3.7.1 Context

The pilot study was conducted at a boys' high school in Gauteng. The pilot study ran over the course of six weeks from August to September 2019. In 2019 there were 21 learners in the Grade 10 French class. The pilot study was conducted over a period of six weeks. During the first meeting, before the participants read the books, they wrote the pretest. Four weeks were dedicated to the treatment (reading or listening) and the sixth week to the posttest, questionnaire, and final interviews.

3.7.2 Participants

After obtaining permission to conduct my research from the Gauteng Department of Education as well as from the headmaster of the school, I met with the Grade 10 French learners.

This group was very homogeneous in some respects. They were all boys from the same French class between the ages of 15 and 16 years. All the participants claimed to be interested in languages and eager to improve their French.

The participating learners volunteered to participate in the reading programme and decided in which group they wanted to be. I decided on the self-selection of groups in an attempt to ensure that the participants would enjoy the experience and complete the programme. This proved to be a good strategy: during the pilot study one learner in the listening group stated outright that he did not like reading and that he would not have participated in the programme if he had been required to read the books, but that he enjoyed listening to the stories. Although it was not

the focus of this study, the learners' predilection for either visual or auditory learning undoubtedly played a role in group they chose to join.

Five learners participated in the pilot study: four in the reading group and one in the listening group. The pilot study did not have a control group.

During the intervention, and from the questionnaires, I learnt that for most of the participants French was a third or fourth language and that they spoke Afrikaans, English, Sepedi and Setswana at home.

3.7.3 Instruments

The materials that were tested and consequently refined after the pilot were the selected children's story books, the vocabulary test, book reports and the questionnaire.

Intervention material

The reading material used was from free, open online sources which the participants read on their phones or other devices. During four weeks of the pilot study the participants read eight illustrated children's books from different online sources (two books per week). These books are authentic texts written for French children. If the participants read all eight books, they read approximately 4 300 words. (See Appendix 10 for the complete list of books read during the pilot study.)

For the listening group I prepared PowerPoint slides with the illustrations from the books. The French classroom was equipped with a data projector and the teacher allowed me to use her desktop computer to show the presentation to the participants. The participants in this group could therefore look at the illustrations while the stories were read to them.

Book reports

The reading group were supplied with document files with eight book reports (Appendix 7) in which they were asked to record the books they read, providing basic information such as the main characters and plot outline, as well as their impressions thereof. This gave the learners a visual record of their reading and

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allowed me to track what and how much they read. It also served the learners as a reminder of the characters and plot when we discussed the books as well as notes they made of words they had to look up in dictionaries.

It is only the participants in the reading group who were asked to complete the book reports. The participants in the listening group did not get 'homework' since the books were read to them and discussed during their meetings. Once I explained the book reports to the participants, they completed them easily.

Vocabulary test

The participants in the both the reading and the listening groups wrote a pre- and a post-treatment vocabulary test. The pilot test consisted of 15 items (verbs, nouns and adjectives) ranging from A1 to B1 level as determined by *France Éducation International* taken from the books the students read during the pilot study. These were all words that appeared more than once in the reading material. The reason for this short test was that I did not want to overexert the learners. They completed the test within a few minutes and showed no signs of fatigue. This observation led me to increase the items in the vocabulary test to 35 in the main study.

Vocabulary growth (i.e., in terms of breadth/size) was assessed with a vocabulary test. Since I could not find a standardised vocabulary test for French, I adapted Paribakht and Wesche's (1997) Vocabulary Knowledge Scale for this study. However, instead of asking the participants to use the word in a sentence, like Paribakht and Wesche, I asked for a translation or definition (in French or English), in option 4 of the test (see below). I choose to simplify the test in this manner to keep it easy to answer. I wanted the participants to answer all the questions and not leave some out because they did not want to or could not write sentences. The test was set in English and tested verbs, nouns and adjectives encountered in the intervention stories. A multiple-choice format with four options for each item was used:

1. I have never seen this word before.
2. I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

3. I have seen this word before, I think it means …

4. I know this word, it means...

For options 3 and 4, the participants had to give a definition or explanation of the item. This allowed me to verify whether they did know the meaning of the word or whether they knew it partially or not at all.

The pre- and posttests were identical in order to show vocabulary growth. After the pretest the participants did not receive any feedback, and they did not get their tests back.

Questionnaire

I also made use of a questionnaire (Appendix 6) to examine the learners' attitude towards French and reading in French. The questions were in English, and the participants answered in English. The questionnaire consisted of 28 questions, a mixture of closed and open-ended questions. There are advantages to both kinds of questions. As Nunan (1992: 143) explains, closed questions are easier to quantify, and therefore one can easily draw statistical conclusions from the information obtained. However, open-ended questions allow the respondents to freely express their opinions which enables the researcher to discover new ideas not previously anticipated.

3.7.4 Procedures

For the pilot study the participating learners were divided into two groups: the treatment group who read the storybooks and completed the book reports and the listening group who listened to the stories and did not complete the book reports. The participants chose which group they wanted to be in, the rationale being that if they chose the activity, they were more likely to continue with the programme and not drop out after a few weeks. In the pilot the majority of the learners (seven of the eleven who started) chose to be in the reading group. After the first week only four continued to read and one to listen.

After the initial meeting during their French lesson, the meetings for the reading programme took place outside of class time. We met once a week in the French

1 classroom, where the participants felt comfortable and at ease, for 20 – 30
2 minutes. During the intervention the two groups did not meet at the same time,
3 the reading group met separately from the listening group.
4
5 Each week the reading group read two books from the reading list. During the
6 weekly meetings we discussed the books they read the previous week: what they
7 enjoyed, or not, new vocabulary they encountered, how they were feeling about
8 the book and the act of reading on their own in French, etc. These discussions
9 took place in English to encourage participation and since extra French exposure
10 might skew the results[7]. The discussions were very informative, and I gained
11 some valuable insights, especially concerning the participants' likes and dislikes
12 regarding the books. I was pleasantly surprised by how much they enjoyed the
13 illustrations and their sense of accomplishment as they read more and more
14 books. During the fourth meeting, the participants stated that they were "proud"
15 and "excited" when they realised that they had read six "real" French books in just
16 a few weeks.
17
18 The listening group also met weekly in the French classroom. The classroom is
19 equipped with a screen and a projector. I created PowerPoint slides with the
20 illustrations from the books (I removed the written text). I read the same books to
21 the learner in the listening group as the learners in the reading group read each
22 week. Similar to the participants in the reading group, the learner in the listening
23 group seemed to enjoy the stories and the illustrations. He did stop me from time
24 to time to ask me to explain something he did not understand. I explained mostly
25 in English as extra French exposure might skew the results of the study. During
26 our third meeting he asked me what something meant, saying he recognised and
27 understood new vocabulary, but because he just heard it and the story continued,
28 he did "not have the time to really absorb" the new vocabulary. Interestingly, he
29 also sometimes asked me to write an unfamiliar word on the board (French writing
30 and pronunciation are quite different, and these learners are obviously aware of
31 this).
32

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[7] It should be noted, that due to the design of the study, it was not possible to fully control extra exposure to French outside of the intervention.

For the sixth and final meeting all the participants met at the same time to write the posttest. The vocabulary tests were not anonymous since I had to be able to analyse the vocabulary growth of each individual participant. I reminded them that I would not disclose their identities in my dissertation, nor would I share individual results with their teacher. This time the learners were familiar with the format of the vocabulary test and there were quite a few groans of "I have seen this word, but I just can't remember it". It took them only a few minutes to complete the vocabulary test.

Once the learners completed the vocabulary test I asked them to complete the questionnaires. I was pleasantly surprised about the amount of care and effort they put into answering the questionnaire.

All of the participants asked me to send them their results on their completion of the reading intervention. Their French teacher was also very interested in the results. Once I had analysed the data from the pre- and posttests, I created a breakdown of each individual participant's results that I presented in a manner that was easy to understand for a Grade 10 learner. Again, I insisted on the fact that the results are confidential unless they chose to share the results with someone else. For the teacher I collated the results and presented it in a similar manner as for the learners but withholding their identities.

3.7.5 Review and discussion of the pilot study

Although the pilot study only ran over six weeks, I gained valuable information which I will discuss below.

Vocabulary test

From the pilot study I gained extremely valuable information regarding the vocabulary test:

- The vocabulary test had a Cronbach alpha reliability score of 0.89, which indicated that it is a reliable test. Tavakol and Dennick (2021) explain that a Cronbach alpha of 07.0 is considered good and 0.90 and above is considered excellent. They also note that a test with a low number of questions can cause a low value alpha score.

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- The format of the test questions proved efficient in showing quite nuanced receptive vocabulary growth from pre- to posttest times since knowledge of a specific item can change very slightly from the pretest to the posttest. For example, answers can change from "I have never seen this word before" to "I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means".

- From the interviews I found that because it is quite clear from the format of the vocabulary test that it did not count for official marks, the participants were very honest in answering the questions.

- The format of the questions eliminated any guessing and I believe that it gives a fairly accurate representation of the participants' receptive vocabulary knowledge.

- The vocabulary test used in the pilot study consisted of only 15 items. The participants completed this test in only a few minutes and were not fatigued in any way. For the main intervention I therefore decided to increase the items to 35 in order to obtain more data.

Reading material

The informal interviews as well as the book reports allowed me to evaluate the effectiveness of the books the learners read during the four weeks of the intervention. I was concerned about one of the stories read during the first week, *Petit Vénusien*. It is a very simple story about a little alien that needs to use the toilet. My concerns were that the learners might find the story too simple and childish or uninteresting and that they might feel the subject matter is inappropriate. After much deliberation, I decided to include this book, because it is such a simple story that is greatly supported by the illustrations and none of the participants should have any trouble reading and understanding the story (although some of the vocabulary is quite advanced). My reasoning was that "an easy win" should give the learners the necessary confidence and motivation to continue reading more challenging texts. During subsequent interviews all the participants stated that they enjoyed this book; four of the five participants singled it out as their favourite book read during the intervention – they enjoyed the silly story and loved the illustrations.

The book reports, interviews and questionnaire helped me to identify another book that I had to re-evaluate: *La révolte des insectes volants*, a story about insects who are planning to get the better of the humans whose cars kill them when they try to cross a highway. This book has fewer illustrations and the text is longer and more complex than the other books the participants read. None of the participants enjoyed this story. According to the book reports two of the learners did not read the whole story because they found the text too difficult. One of the learners wrote in the questionnaire that the only thing he would change in the reading programme is "to get rid of *La révolte des insectes volantes*". Consequently, *Petit Vénusien* was included in the book list for the main intervention, but not *La révolte des insectes volantes*. I also made sure that the books I selected had many supporting illustrations and that the text was not too long nor too complicated.

Book reports

I found that the participants in the pilot reading group diligently completed the book reports. During the interviews I asked specifically if they found it tedious or even a waste of their time. They were very positive about the book reports, stating that the reports provided a structured format for them to ensure that they understood what they read and they liked that they had space to make notes of new words they encountered. They also liked that they could give their opinion of the book. None of the participants complained that it took too long to complete.

Due to the positive feedback concerning the book reports, I retained the book reports in this format for the main intervention.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire had 28 items designed to gain background information about the participants, their reading habits (before and after the intervention) as well as their experience of the reading intervention. At the conclusion of the pilot study the participants took great care to answer the questionnaire (none of the items were left unanswered) and it seemed as if they enjoyed the opportunity to express their opinions and to give feedback on the reading programme.

Due to time restraints the questionnaire was completed directly after the completion of the reading intervention. The participants found items 23 and 24 (Do you still read for your own pleasure? Why?) difficult to answer since they had just completed the reading intervention and did not have time to read their own reading material. It did not seem to tap into the effect of the reading programme on their reading attitude. With hindsight this question could have been phrased better (e.g. Based on your experience in this reading programme, do you think you will continue to read French books for your own pleasure? Answer as honestly as possible.). For the main intervention, the questionnaire was completed with the second posttest, four weeks after the reading intervention and some of the learners did say that they continued to read in French for their own pleasure.

Interview schedule

During the pilot study the interviews took the form of informal conversations within the groups with me guiding the discussions to get specific information if needed. I found that once the participants got to know me better, they were very open about their experiences and their likes and dislikes. For example, after they read *Quel ennui mes amis* (a story about a little bear who is in a bad mood because he is bored) one of the learners told the group that he recognised himself in the story because when he gets bored, he also feels grumpy. Often a remark or question from one of the participants would trigger comments from the other participants. In this manner I gained interesting information about their perception of the books and their comprehension of the texts that I might not have been able to elicit in a formal one-on-one interview and therefor I decided to employ this informal, unstructured interview format in the main intervention as well.

I gained invaluable information from the pilot study about the participating learners, their language abilities and reading preferences that I used to improve the main intervention. The information gained from the pilot study also enabled me to refine the testing instruments, especially the vocabulary test and book list.

3.8 Main study

3.8.1 Context

As stated, the main intervention was conducted at a different high school with two Grade 10 classes (one had 21 learners and the other 22 learners) and followed the same curriculum.

Although the main intervention had been scheduled for 2020, it was delayed and only conducted in 2021. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown that disrupted education, it proved impossible to conduct an eight-week intervention during 2020 since the school had to close their campus for extended periods of time. The school continued teaching online, however both teachers, and the learners, found it very challenging and we decided that it would not be in the learners' best interest to conduct an intervention during that time.

3.8.2 Participants

In all, 31 learners participated in the main study (18 learners in the reading group, six in the listening group and seven in the control group). Participation was voluntary and the learners were free to choose the group they wished to join.

The participants spoke a variety of languages such as Afrikaans, Dutch, English, Flemish, Korean, Sepedi, Shona, Swahili, Venda, Tsonga, Vietnamese, Xhosa and Zulu as home languages. All the participants were fluent in English. They all took French as a second additional language and were intermediate learners.

To isolate the act of reading as a variable, this study had three groups of subjects: a reading group, a listening group, and a control group. The reading group consisted of the 18 learners who chose to read the books selected for the extensive reading programme. The listening group consisted of six learner who chose to listen to the books being read to them. The control group consisted of seven learners who did not read nor listen to the books, they only attended their normal French lessons and did not receive the additional input. Both the reading and the listening group received input supplementary to the normal curriculum. The function of the listening group was to control for the extra input the learners in the reading group received in the form of reading. Both groups were exposed

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to the same books, participated in the same discussions, and wrote the same vocabulary tests. In other words, both groups read or listened to the same story books and devoted extra time to French. It was only the medium of exposure that was different. By including the listening group in this study, I tried to isolate reading as the catalyst for vocabulary growth from extra exposure to French.

Although more learners participated in and completed the reading programme during the main intervention than during the pilot study (18 readers versus 4; 6 listeners versus 1, as well as 7 learners in the control group of the main intervention), the participants came across as less enthusiastic than during the pilot study. Many of the learners did not attend all the meetings and discussions and I found they were less forthcoming than during the pilot study. I identified two possible reasons for this change:

1.   Due to Covid-19 protocols, we were all masked, kept to the prescribed social distancing and I was encouraged to keep the contact sessions as short as possible. Since they could not see my face in full, it is possible that it took them longer to get to know me and to feel comfortable enough to share and discuss their thoughts on the books.

2.   During the first few meetings, the teacher of one of the classes stayed in her classroom and observed and made comments during the discussions. This clearly made the learners less forthcoming, and I subsequently asked her not to be present. It is possible that her initial presence and comments may have inhibited the relationship that I tried to establish between myself and the learners.

One of the main differences between the pilot study and the main study was the addition of a control group. For the main study, I added a control group of seven learners. The control group did not read nor listen to the stories, in other words they had no supplementary French input apart from the normal taught syllabus. The control group wrote the pretest and the first posstest with the two other groups. The teachers allowed a few minutes during class time for them to write the tests. The control group did not write the delayed posstest.

Participation in the study was voluntary. I was aware that voluntary participation would mean that the learners who participated in the reading programme might be those who were already highly motivated to improve their language and vocabulary skills. This was confirmed by one of the teachers who pointed out that the participating learners were highly motivated and her "top students". This became clear to me when they explained to me that they all wanted to be in the reading group, because "you learn more from reading". Their main reason for joining the reading programme was to improve their French. When writing the first posttest, some of the learners remarked that they were frustrated because they did not have the pretest to study from their mistakes in order to improve in the posttest.

3.8.3 Instruments

For the main intervention I used the extended vocabulary test (with a new total of 35 items), questionnaire, and book report. The questionnaire and book report were the same as for the pilot study.

The main vocabulary test consisted of 35 items (nouns, verbs and adjectives) that a language learner with an A2 or B1 level (intermediate level) should have acquired according to *France Éducation International*. The same test was used during all three testing occasions. After the first two tests, the learners did not receive any feedback, nor did they get the tests back to prevent them from studying the test. Although repetition can play a role in the gains made in vocabulary growth, there were six-week and four-week periods between test sessions that helped to reduce memory effects, and the effect of test familiarity was not noticeable during the pilot study.

3.8.4 Procedures

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I had to adjust the intervention slightly from the procedure I followed during the pilot study. The main difference was to the listening intervention. For the pilot study I read the books to the learner in the listening group. However, to minimise contact with the participants during the main intervention, I made recordings of the books with the pictures and gave it to

1   the learners in the listening group on memory sticks. They listened to the stories

2   at home in their own time.

3

4   Since both groups read or listened to the books at home, it was possible to meet

5   them at the same time to discuss the books, reading strategies and how they felt

6   about reading, or listening to, the books. This strategy worked well. It eliminated

7   the "us and them" mentality from having two groups who are treated differently.

8   Table 3.1 below shows the timetable of the intervention with the books read and

9   the reading strategies discussed as well as the administration of the vocabulary

10   tests.

11

12   The weekly meetings with the participants were an important source of

13   information. During each meeting the books that the participants had read were

14   discussed and reading strategies were introduced and modelled. These strategies

15   included how to use visual support and context to understand a text, how to read

16   without a dictionary, and how to use morpho-syntactic knowledge of French to

17   "decipher" new words. The conversations with the participants were semi-

18   structured and mostly led by the participants, however, I did steer the

19   conversation by means of questions to stay on the topic of reading and

20   vocabulary. Each week I asked the same questions:

21   •   Who read both books? (This small act of accountability encouraged the

22   participants to keep reading the books.)

23   •   What did you like / dislike about the story? (This question acted as a

24   catalyst to start the book discussion.)

25   •   Which words did you have to look up in the dictionary? (This question

26   often led to a discussion of reading strategies.)

27   •   How did you feel when reading the books? (This question allowed to

28   participants to talk about the challenges they encountered and their

29   accomplishments.)

30

31   As the participants got to know me better, they became more candid in their

32   discussions of the books, the problems they encountered and their achievements.

33   In order to maintain the atmosphere of an informal conversation, I did not take

notes during the meetings, however, I did make detailed notes directly after each meeting.

At the start of the programme all the learners, those in the reading and listening groups as well as those in the control group, were administered the vocabulary test to determine their vocabulary knowledge. The new items added to the vocabulary test did not seem to tire the learners – they completed the test in less than 10 minutes. This pretest served to determine the learners' vocabulary knowledge before the intervention. Six weeks later, directly after the completion of the reading intervention, the vocabulary test was again administered to all three groups to determine any growth in vocabulary. The test was again administered four weeks later to measure the longer term effects of the reading intervention. After the delayed posttest, the participants received a summary of their results as in the pilot study.

During the last meeting, after writing the vocabulary test, participants completed the questionnaire (Appendix 6). Neither activity took very long. The participants spent about ten minutes on the vocabulary test and even less time on the questionnaire.

Table 3.1: Timetable of reading/listening intervention

Week	Activity
Week 1	Introduction of French story intervention. Handing out of consent forms.
Week 2	First vocabulary test. Handing out and explanation of book reports and reading lists. Reading strategy: • Discussion on how to read for fun (i.e., no dictionaries).
Week 3	Group discussion of first two books read/listened to: • *Tu peux* by Elize Gravel (https://elisegravel.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/tupeuxfin2.pdf) • *Petit Vénusien* by Odysseus (http://livres.abuledu.org/titles/24)

	Reading strategy: • Feedback on being less dependent on dictionaries.
Week 4	Group discussion of books read: • *Foxy et le mystérieux invité* by Sébastien Thorel (http://livres.abuledu.org/titles/26) • *Ne pleure pas Monsieur le loup* by Odysseus (http://livres.abuledu.org/titles/18) Reading strategy: • Using additional information (photos, illustrations, infographics, etc.) to aid in reading and understanding a text.
Week 5	Group discussion of books read: • *Quelle porcherie* by Hans Wilhelm (https://childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/Quelle%20Porcherie.pdf) • *Quel ennui mes amis* by Hans Wilhelm (https://childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/Quel%20Ennui%20mes%20amis.pdf) Reading strategy: • Using one's existing knowledge of a topic to understand a text in French.
Week 6	Group discussion of books read: • *Du balai !* by Hans Wilhelm (http://www.childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/DU%20BALAI%20%20%20binder.pdf) • *Sale menteur* ! by Hans Wilhelm (http://www.childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/Sale%20Menteur.pdf) Reading strategy: • Using context to understand unknown words. • Reading a whole paragraph to understand the meaning and not focus solely on individual words.
Week 7	Group discussion of books read:

	• *Tyranno, le terrible* by Hans Wilhelm (http://www.childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/Tyranno%20le%20terrible.pdf) • *Tyranno, l'espèce de sale tricheur* by Hans Wilhelm (http://www.childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/Tyranno%20lespece%20de%20sale%20tricheur.pdf) Reading strategy: • Using knowledge of French syntax and morphology to work out meaning of unfamiliar words.
Week 8	Group discussion of books read: • *Restons bons copains !* by Hans Wilhelm (https://childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/Restons%20bons%20copians.pdf) • *Tom déménage* by Hans Wilhelm (https://childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/Tom%20Demenage.pdf) First posttest and questionnaire.
Week 8 - 11	No meeting
Week 12	Second possttest

1

3.8.5 Data analysis

To analyse the quantitative data collected from the vocabulary tests and to some extent from the questionnaires, I made use of Microsoft Excel spread sheets and the statistical analysis software IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26.0). Descriptive and inferential data was used to analyse the test scores. Since I compared data from the tests of three groups (the control group, the reading group and the listening group), I made use of independent samples and matched pairs t-tests to compare the mean scores within and across the groups. The descriptive data from the questionnaire and interviews were organised on a spread sheet and evaluated and interpreted in order to look for patterns. The results of the data analysis will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter described and explained issues relating to the methodological aspects of this small, mixed method study.

Both the pilot study and the main study had certain challenges (limited number of participants, the challenges of conducting an intervention during Covid-19). However, I gained valuable information from both experiences. The pilot study proved invaluable as a "dress rehearsal" for instruments, material and procedures. It enabled me to notice flaws and gaps in the planned intervention, thereby enabling me to address the research questions in the main study with greater rigour. In Chapter 4 I will present and discuss the results in detail.

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I unpack and discuss the results of the reading intervention according to the research questions that were posed in Chapter 1. The results pertaining to the participants' performance on the vocabulary assessments are presented first, followed by a discussion of factors that could predict successful completion of a reading programme as well as a discussion of the participants' attitude towards children's picture books.

To recap, this study examines the effects of exposure to French stories on the French vocabulary of L2 learners, with two voluntary intervention groups (an extensive reading group and a listening group, testing two different proficiency skills) as well as a control group, the latter consisting of learners from the same classes as the reading and listening groups. It was a small study since only 31 learners participated in the study, seven in the control group and 24 in the intervention groups, where 18 learners read the stories and six listened to recordings of the same stories. The results of each group will form part of the analysis and discussion of the data in each section below.

The participants were tested at three different points: (i) a pretest (in March 2021), (ii) a posttest (posttest 1) (immediately after the intervention, six weeks after the pretest) and (iii) a delayed posttest (posttest 2) (four weeks after posttest 1). It is important to note that not all the participants wrote the delayed posttest. Ten participants from the reading group, three from the listening group and seven from the control wrote the delayed posttest. When analysing and comparing the results of the delayed posttest in relation to the first posttest, only the participants who wrote all three tests were considered. In this chapter the reliability of the testing instrument will first be assessed, after which descriptive statistics for each of the groups will be given at these abovementioned points during the analysis and discussion. Both the different participant groups as well as the points at which they were tested play a vital role in addressing the research questions as well as providing a structure for the subsections in this chapter.

4.2 Reliability of the test instrument

As outlined in Chapter 3, Tavakol and Dennick (2021) explain that a Cronbach alpha reliability score above 0.70 is acceptable but that 0.80 or greater is preferred. The vocabulary assessment in the main study at pretest time had a Cronbach alpha reliability score of 0.95. The internal consistency of this assessment can thus be classified as excellent as is stipulated by Tavakol and Dennick (2021).

As can be seen in Table 4.1 below the skewness and kurtosis indices indicate that the distribution in the group as a whole was not normal and therefore non-parametric tests were used. Furthermore, since this was a small sample of learners, non-parametric tests were more suited to analyse the data.

Table 4.1 Skew and Kurtosis of the pretest, posstest and delayed posttest[8]

		Skew	Kurtosis
Entire sample	Pretest	1,32	2,55
	Posttest 1	0,78	-0,12
	Posttest 2	0,30	-1,42
Reading group	Pretest	1,70	4,28
	Posttest 1	0,86	-0,35
	Posttest 2	-0,05	-1,83
Listening group	Pretest	2,29	5,41
	Posttest 1	2,04	4,43
	Posttest 2	0,94	N/A
Control group	Pretest	0,60	-1,47
	Posttest 1	0,83	-1,10
	Posttest 2	0,97	-1,04
Control* group	Pretest	1,22	1,33
	Posttest 1	0,83	-1,22
	Posttest 2	0,34	-2,69

Control* indicates the control group without the two outliers.

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[8] In this table and subsequent graphs when referring to the different groups, the data from the reading group will be presented in green while the data from the listening group will be presented orange. The data from the control groups will be presented in blue, with a differentiation outlined in different shades of blue per control group type. The different test times will also be represented as colours, namely, blue for the pretest, orange for posttest 1 and grey for posttest 2. Also note that control* indicates the control group without the two outliers.

4.3 Research question 1: Vocabulary results of the reading intervention

In this section descriptive statistics will first be provided for the different test points, followed by inferential statistics pertaining to research question 1 and its subquestions.

The control group was small, with only seven participants. From the participants' individual data (Appendix 12) it is clear that there were two outliers (participants 28 and 29) in the control group. One was a Congolese learner who speaks English at home, but her parents speak French to each other. She decided to learn French to be able to communicate with her extended family and she made a big effort during the course of the year to improve her written and oral skills. The other learner was a Flemish speaker who grew up in Belgium and was thus far more exposed to French than just the formal schooling environment. He was very interested in languages and worked hard to improve his French. He was one of the participants who expressed his frustration at not getting the tests back "to study the words they got wrong". His participation in this study was limited to being part of the control group due to his already very full extra mural programme. This control group's results are reported with the two outliers as "control group" and without the outliers as "control* group".

Research question 1 addresses the effect of exposure on vocabulary acquisition among French SAL learners:

RQ1: How does exposure to children's picture books in French affect Grade 10 SAL learners' vocabulary acquisition, depending on the medium (extensive reading of stories versus listening to stories)?

The descriptive results, reported as percentages, are given in Table 4.2. The means for the whole group (including the control group) are first shown, followed by outcomes for the reading group, the listening group and the control group. (See Appendix 12 for individual test results.)

Table 4.2 Descriptive statistics of the pretest, posttest 1 and posttest 2

		Mean	SD	Min	Max	Range
Entire sample (n=31)	Pretest	25%	0,16	6%	77%	71%
	Posttest 1	38%	0,21	9%	89%	80%
	Posttest 2	42%	0,24	9%	80%	71%
Reading group (n=18)	Pretest	27%	0,17	9%	77%	69%
	Posttest 1	46%	0,21	20%	89%	69%
	Posttest 2	51%	0,20	26%	77%	51%
Listening group (n=6)	Pretest	13%	0,11	6%	34%	29%
	Posttest 1	17%	0,10	9%	37%	29%
	Posttest 2	12%	0,04	9%	17%	9%
Control group (n=7)	Pretest	29%	0,15	14%	51%	37%
	Posttest 1	33%	0,17	17%	60%	43%
	Posttest 2	42%	0,26	20%	80%	60%
Control* group	Pretest	21%	0,08	14%	34%	20%
	Posttest 1	24%	0,07	17%	34%	17%
	Posttest 2	27%	0,08	20%	37%	17%

From Table 4.2 above, it is clear that the whole group of participating learners, including the control group, did improve their average test scores from the pretest (25%) to posttest 1 (38%) to the delayed posttest (posttest 2 - 42%).

In the reading group, the average score of the participants increased from 27% (SD 0.17) to 46% (SD 0.21) after the reading intervention, to 51% in the delayed posttest (SD 0.20), thus indicating an increase of 19% from pretest to posttest and a further 6% from posttest 1 to the second. Since the participants were required to give a translation or definition of each item (productive vocabulary), and did not simply have to recognise the item (receptive vocabulary), the improvement in the test results is considered vocabulary acquisition.

In the listening group, the average score of the participants increased slightly from 13% (SD 0.11) in the pretest to 17% (SD 0.10) after listening to recordings of the books, thus indicating an increase in vocabulary of 4% from pretest to posttest. In contrast to the reading group, the average score of the participants in the listening group decreased from posttest 1 to the delayed posttest (17% to 12%).

The control group's average test scores are very similar to those of the reading group: 25% (SD 0.15) in the pretest, 33% (SD 017) in posttest 1 and 42% (SD 0.26) in the delayed posttest. However, once the two outliers are removed the control group's average scores are lower with less variation in the group, as shown in the smaller SDs: 21% (SD 0.08) in the pretest, 24% (SD0.07) in posttest 1 and 27% (SD 0.08) in the delayed posttest. The average test scores of the learners in the control group increased across all three test points, similarly to the reading group, but in contrast to the reading group, the growth was fairly small (3% improvement).

The difference between the scores of the pretest and posttest 1 is considered as vocabulary acquisition. Similarly, the difference between posttest 1 and posttest 2 is considered as vocabulary retention.

The purpose of analysing data in this manner is to outline not only how the participants performed at different points but also to see if they fared differently depending on the type of intervention.

The low minimum and maximum scores (with the exception of an outlier in both the reading and the listening groups) and the relatively small variance in performance at pretest time for all three groups show the initial similarity in the scores of the participants and their limited vocabulary knowledge, but this increased somewhat in the posttest. This spread is visible in the box and whisker plots below in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Box and whisker plots of vocabulary knowledge across all three test points
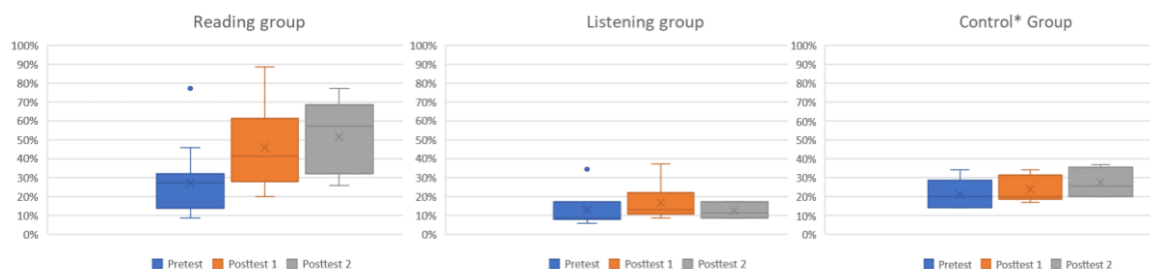
To determine whether there was a significant difference in vocabulary performance amongst the three groups at pre- and posttest times, a Kruskal-Wallace test showed significant statistical differences between the three groups (p = 0.000). To determine exactly which groups are different, a post-hoc Dunn's test showed a significant difference between the reading group and the listening group (p = 0.001) and between the reading group and the control group (p = 0.002). However, there was no significant difference between the listening and the control group (p = 0.923). Therefore, the deduction can be made that the increase in vocabulary size can be attributed to the effects of the reading intervention, suggesting that the medium of exposure provided during the intervention plays a vital role in acquisition.

We turn now to subquestion 1a where the focus is on the effects of initial vocabulary levels on subsequent vocabulary growth.

RQ1a: How does the learners' initial vocabulary level affect the vocabulary acquisition developed during the intervention in the reading and listening groups?

A Spearman's correlation between initial vocabulary score (pretest) and posttest 1 score showed a strong correlation between vocabulary size and vocabulary gains (reading group r_s = 0.86, p = 0.003; listening group r_s = 0.95, p = 0.001; and control group r_s = 0.97, p = 0.001) across all groups.

An examination of performance at the 25th, 50th and 75th percentiles provides a clearer picture of how initial vocabulary affects subsequent word growth. Participants who started the intervention with an initial low score (those at the 25th percentile) acquired fewer items than those who started with a higher score (those at the 75th percentile) across all the groups (individual test results are made available in Appendix 12). When one further disaggregates the results as shown in Figure 4.2 below, one can see that the participants at the 25th percentile in the reading group remained in that position even though they more than doubled their scores (15% to 35%). Although the participants at the 50th percentile made large vocabulary gains in the reading group (27% to 57%), they never caught up with their peers at the 75th percentile, who initially knew the most words and added far

1 more words to their repertoire to improve their scores from 31% to 67%. The same

2 cannot be said of the participants in the listening group with the lowest score, who

3 only improved by 3% (from 6% to 9%). The test scores of the participants in the

4 control group showed a similar trend: the learners who started with the lowest

5 scores (as a reflection of initial knowledge) remained in that position at the time

6 of posttest 1 (as a reflection of subsequent knowledge), and the learners with the

7 highest scores also remained the top scorers in the posttest. When assessing

8 these results, one should keep in mind that the listening group was small and very

9 weak at the start of the intervention and caution is thus required when interpreting

10 and generalising their results. The participants at the 25th and 75th percentile in

11 the control group are more comparable to those in the reading group at the

12 beginning of the intervention but their vocabulary growth was smaller.

13

14 **Figure 4.2 Percentile ranges of the reading group, listening group and**

15 **control group**
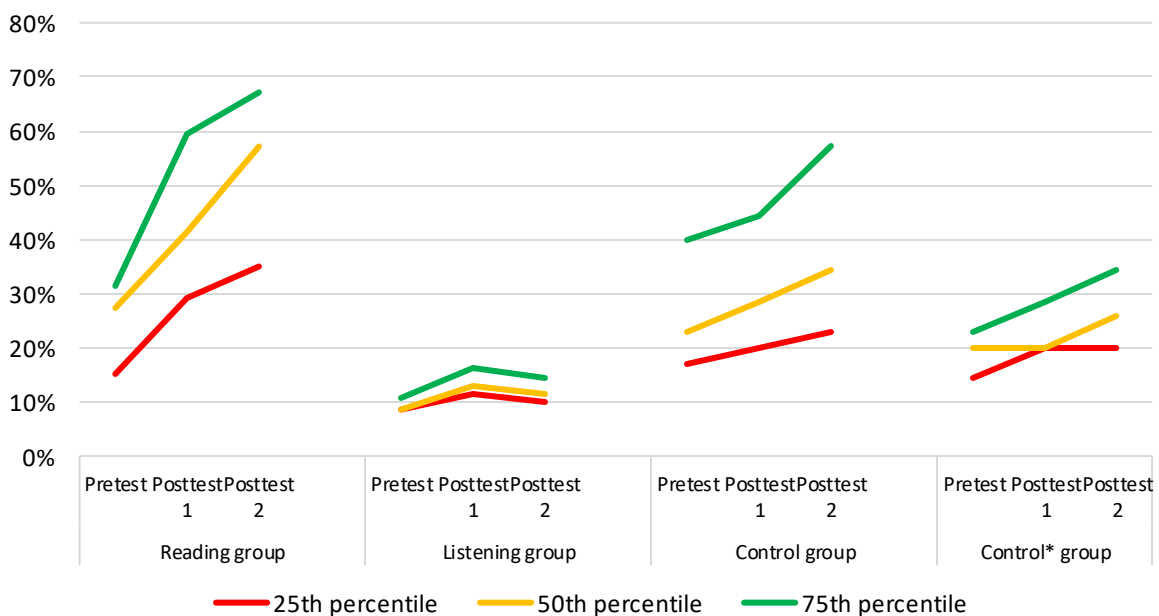
16

17 The percentile range (see Figure 4.2) of the reading group shows a marked

18 increase in vocabulary size from the pretest to posttest 1 among the participants

19 in the lower range and especially those in the upper range. The same trend is

20 visible amongst the participants in the listening group – although the increase in

21 vocabulary size is smaller than for those in the reading group. The learners in the

22 upper percentile range improved their vocabulary size more than those in the

103

lower range. The scores of the learners in the control group (with and without the outliers) show the same trend: those in the upper percentile range improved more than those in the lower range.

The trend of learners with a larger vocabulary improving their vocabulary size more than those with a smaller vocabulary continues when one looks at the results from posttest 1 to posttest 2. In the reading group the learners in the upper percentile range continued to grow their vocabulary at a faster rate than those in the lower range. In the listening group the vocabulary size of the learners in all three percentile groups decreased from posttest 1 to the delayed posttest. In the control group the learners in the upper percentile range improved their vocabulary size drastically in comparison to the learners in the lower percentile ranges. Even when the outliers in the control group are removed, the learners in the upper and middle percentile ranges continued to improve their vocabulary size, however the vocabulary size of the learners in the lower percentile range decreased.

From Figure 4.2 is it clear that learners who started the intervention with larger vocabularies benefited more from the reading programme in comparison to the learners who started the programme with smaller vocabularies. The learners in the upper percentile range continued to grow their vocabulary after the completion of the intervention. The learners with smaller vocabularies, including the three in the reading group, made smaller gains when compared to the stronger learners, however they also showed improvement in their vocabulary size.

I now turn to research question 1b where the results between posttest 1 and posttest 2 are compared:
RQ1b: What does performance on the delayed vocabulary test suggest about
     vocabulary attrition in the reading and listening groups?

As indicated, not all the participants wrote the delayed posstest. Of the 18 learners in the reading group who wrote the first pretest only ten wrote the delayed posttest. Three of the six learners in the listening group wrote the delayed posttest and all seven the participants in the control group wrote the delayed posttest.

1   At the onset of the intervention, it was hypothesised that the learners would not

2   retain all the vocabulary items they acquired during the reading intervention due

3   to the passing of time. However, in this study the average test scores continued

4   to improve from the first posttest to the delayed posttest. The reading group's

5   average improved from 46% to 51% in the delayed posttest. Although some of

6   the participants did forget a few words, as can be expected, four participants

7   gained vocabulary during the four weeks between the two posttests. In Figure 4.3

8   below, one can clearly see the steady increase in vocabulary size in the reading

9   group from posttest 1 to posttest 2. It should be noted that all the participants who

10   took the delayed posttest reported that they continued to read in their own time,

11   to listen to podcasts, to play word games, and to watch videos.

12

13   Only three of the six participants in the listening group wrote the delayed posttest.

14   Their average score dropped from posttest 1 to posttest 2 from 17% to 12% (1%

15   less than the pretest). Only one of the participants gained a vocabulary item during

16   the four weeks between the two tests. In Figure 4.3 below one can clearly see the

17   decrease in vocabulary size among the learners in the listening group.

18

19   The learners in the control group also showed an increase in their vocabulary size

20   from posttest 1 to posttest 2. Even when the two outliers are removed the learners

21   in the control group showed a steady increase in vocabulary size from posttest 1

22   to posttest 2.

23

24   **Figure 4.3 Pretest, posttest 1 and posttest 2 scores**

Average test scores

25
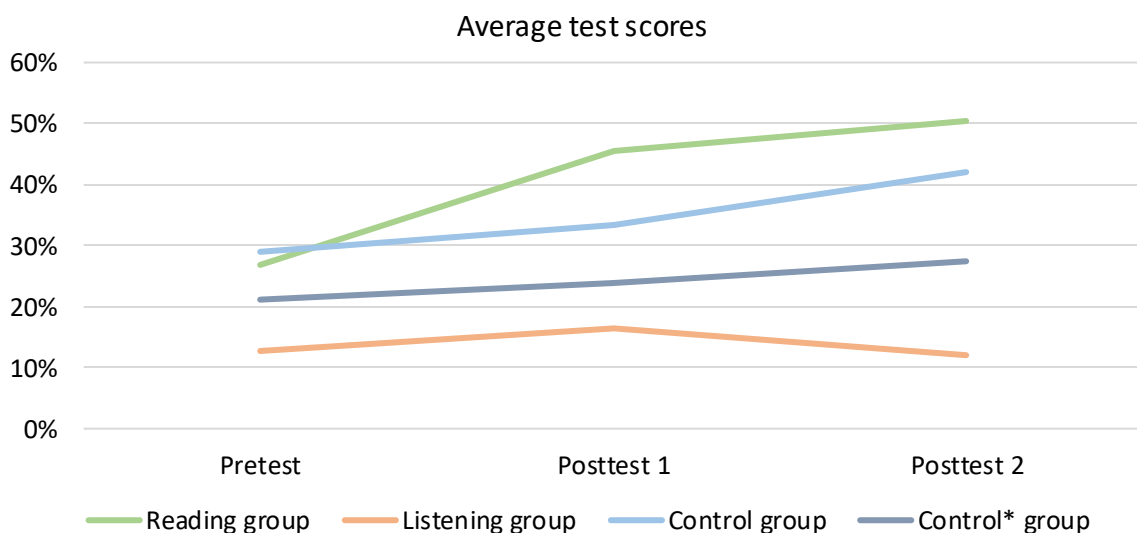
The vocabulary knowledge of the participants in the reading and listening groups was further analysed to explore more subtle ways in which their vocabulary knowledge changed over time, from not having seen words to recognising them to knowing their meanings:

RQ1c: What is the influence of exposure to French via different media (reading and listening) on vocabulary recognition?

Although scores on the vocabulary test were calculated according to the translations or definitions given for each item, the vocabulary test was designed to also measure more subtle changes in vocabulary knowledge. As described in Chapter 3, each of the 35 items on the test has four options:

    1.   I have never seen this word before.

    2.   I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

    3.   I have seen this word before, I think it means…

    4.   I know this word, it means…

Since options three and four could have a correct and an incorrect answer, each item has six possible outcomes. In order to analyse the results each outcome was assigned a letter value.

a = I have never seen this word before.

b = I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

c = I have seen this word before, I think it means…(incorrect answer)

d = I have seen this word before, I think it means … (correct answer)

e = I know this word, it means…(incorrect answer)

f = I know this word, it means… (correct answer)

Using Microsoft Excel each participant's answers were captured and then analysed to determine subtle changes in word recognition. For example, if the participants move from never having seen a word to having seen it but not yet knowing its meaning it shows a small growth in word recognition. Table 4.4 below shows the changes in answers from the pretest to posttest 1.

1

Table 4.3 Changes in answers from pretest to posttest 1across groups

Pretest answer	Posttest 1 answer	Changes in answers	Read	Listen	Control	Control *
Never Seen before Option a	a No Change	a…a	9,7%	16,2%	17,1%	21,1%
	b Seen before	a…b	17,6%	28,1%	11,4%	14,9%
	c Think I know the answer incorrect	a…c	2,5%	5,2%	2,4%	2,9%
	d Think I know the answer correct	a…d	3,3%	1,9%	1,2%	0,6%
	e Know the answer incorrect	a…e	0,8%	0,5%	0,4%	0,6%
	f Know the answer correct	a…f	4,3%	0,5%	0,4%	
Seen before Option b	a Never Seen before	b…a	1,7%	1,9%	5,7%	6,9%
	b No Change	b…b	10,2%	18,1%	15,5%	15,4%
	c Think I know the answer incorrect	b…c	2,2%	4,8%	1,2%	1,7%
	d Think I know the answer correct	b…d	3,2%		1,6%	1,7%
	e Know the answer incorrect	b…e	0,8%	0,5%	0,4%	
	f Know the answer correct	b…f	4,9%	1,4%	2,4%	1,7%

3

4

5

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Think I know the answer incorrect	**Option c**	a Never Seen before	c…a	0,5%		0,4%	0,6%
		b Seen before	c…b	1,0%	1,4%	1,6%	2,3%
		c No Change	c…c	1,9%	3,8%	2,4%	2,3%
		d Think I know the answer correct	c…d	1,6%	1,0%		
		e Know the answer incorrect	c…e	1,1%	1,0%	0,8%	0,6%
		f Know the answer correct	c…f	1,6%	0,5%	0,4%	0,6%
Think I know the answer correct	**Option d**	a Never Seen before	d…a			0,8%	1,1%
		b Seen before	d…b	1,1%	0,5%	1,2%	1,1%
		c Think I know the answer incorrect	d…c	0,2%			
		d No Change	d…d	2,2%	2,4%	2,0%	1,7%
		e Know the answer incorrect	d…e		0,5%		
		f Know the answer correct	d…f	5,4%	4,8%	2,4%	1,1%
Know the answer incorrect	**Option e**	a Never Seen before	e…a	0,2%			
		b Seen before	e…b	0,3%		0,4%	0,6%
		c Think I know the answer incorrect	e…c	0,5%		0,8%	0,6%
		d Think I know the answer correct	e…d	0,3%		0,4%	
		e No Change	e…e	1,6%	0,5%	3,3%	3,4%
		f Know the answer correct	e…f	1,3%		0,4%	0,6%

1

Know the answer correct **Option f**	a Never Seen before	f…a				
	b Seen before	f…b		0,5%		
	c Think I know the answer incorrect	f…c	0,2%			
	d Think I know the answer correct	f…d	1,0%	0,5%	1,2%	0,6%
	e Know the answer incorrect	f…e			0,4%	
	f No Change	f…f	17,0%	3,8%	20,8%	15,4%
Total per group			100%	100%	100%	100%

1

2 From the possible six answers given in the pretest, three of the six possibilities

3 were chosen the most, namely, "I have never seen this word before", "I have seen

4 this word before, but I can't remember what it means" and the "I know this word

5 (correct meaning provided)". This trend is applicable across all three groups.

6

7 The answers of the participants in the reading group changed from pretest to

8 posttest 1. The most changes (17,6%) occurred where the participants shifted

9 away from option a (I have never seen this word before) to option b (I have seen

10 this word before). The other trends in the reading group were option f that

11 remained option f (know the correct answer) and option b that remained option b.

12 A smaller change in answers (4,9%) that should also be noted, is the change from

13 option b to f (having seen the word to knowing the correct answer.).

14

15 The biggest change in the answers of the participants in the listening group from

16 pretest to posttest 1 occurred from option a to option b (28,1%), showing the

17 participants recognised the words after the intervention even though they did not

18 yet know the meaning of the words. The other trends in the listening group were

19 option a to option a (16,2%) and option b to option b (18,1%). These answers

20 show that although the participants recognised more words after the intervention,

21 they had not yet learnt the meaning of many of the words.

22

1　The results of the control group (without outliers) were fairly static, the participants

2　changed few of their answers in posttest 1 (option a to option a 21,1%; option b

3　to b 15,4%; option f to f 15,4%). Similar to the other groups, the biggest change

4　in answers occurred between option a to option b (14,9%).

5

6　From Table 4.3 one can see an increase in familiarity with and knowledge of the

7　tested vocabulary, but also regression in some cases. For example, 1,7% of the

8　answers participants in the reading group changed their answers from option b (I

9　think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember it) to option a (I have

10　never seen this word before). This change from option b to option a occurred four

11　times (1,9%) in the listening group. In both groups this regression in familiarity

12　with the vocabulary occurred in less than 2% of the answers given. A possible

13　explanation can be that in the prestest, in particular, they did not want to admit to

14　too many unknown items.

15

16　We now turn to changes in answers from posttest 1 to 2. As mentioned before,

17　only 18 participants wrote posttest 2 and it is only their answers that are

18　considered in table 4.4 below.

19

20　**Table 4.4 Changes in answers from first posttest 1 to delayed posttest 2**

21　**across groups**

Posttest 1 answer	Posttest 2 answer	Changes in answers	Read	Listen	Control	Control*
Never Seen before Option a	a No Change	a…a	3,1%	4,8%	4,9%	6,9%
	b Seen before	a…b	4,9%	14,3%	15,1%	20,0%
	c Think I know the answer incorrect	a…c	0,6%		0,8%	1,1%
	d Think I know the answer correct	a…d	0,6%	1,0%	1,2%	1,1%
	e Know the answer incorrect	a…e	0,3%		0,8%	0,6%
	f Know the answer correct	a…f	0,3%		1,2%	

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2

Seen before **Option b**	a Never Seen before	b…a	2,6%	3,8%	2,9%	4,0%
	b No Change	b…b	18,3%	38,1%	17,6%	21,1%
	c Think I know the answer incorrect	b…c	2,6%	2,9%	3,3%	4,6%
	d Think I know the answer correct	b…d	2,0%		2,4%	2,3%
	e Know the answer incorrect	b…e			0,8%	1,1%
	f Know the answer correct	b…f	0,6%		3,3%	1,1%
Think I know the answer incorrect **Option c**	a Never Seen before	c…a			0,4%	0,6%
	b Seen before	c…b	2,0%	5,7%	1,2%	1,7%
	c No Change	c…c	4,3%	11,4%	2,9%	2,9%
	d Think I know the answer correct	c…d	0,9%		0,4%	
	e Know the answer incorrect	c…e	0,9%	1,9%	1,6%	2,3%
	f Know the answer correct	c…f			0,4%	
Think I know the answer correct **Option d**	a Never Seen before	d…a				
	b Seen before	d…b	1,4%	1,0%	1,2%	1,1%
	c Think I know the answer incorrect	d…c	1,4%			
	d No Change	d…d	5,7%	1,9%	1,2%	1,1%
	e Know the answer incorrect	d…e		1,0%		
	f Know the answer correct	d…f	4,9%	1,0%	4,1%	2,3%

3

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Know the answer incorrect — **Option e**	a Never Seen before	e…a				
	b Seen before	e…b	0,3%		0,4%	0,6%
	c Think I know the answer incorrect	e…c	0,6%			
	d Think I know the answer correct	e…d				
	e No Change	e…e	3,7%	2,9%	3,7%	3,4%
	f Know the answer correct	e…f	0,6%		1,2%	0,6%
Know the answer correct — **Option f**	a Never Seen before	f…a				
	b Seen before	f…b	1,4%			
	c Think I know the answer incorrect	f…c				
	d Think I know the answer correct	f…d	4,6%		0,8%	1,1%
	e Know the answer incorrect	f…e	0,3%		0,4%	0,6%
	f No Change	f…f	31,4%	8,6%	25,7%	17,7%
Total per group			100%	100%	100%	100%

2 The answers from posttest 1 to posttest 2 for the reading group show little change.

3 Option f (Know the correct answer) and option b (I have seen this word before)

4 remained largely unchanged (31,4 % and 18,3%).

5

6 This trend also occurred in the listening group. Option b and option c (guessing

7 an incorrect answer) remained largely unchanged (38,1% and 11,4%).

8 Interestingly a 14,3% change in answers occurred between option a and option

9 b. This might be due to test familiarity.

10

11 The same trend is observed in the control groups. In the intact control group option

12 b (I have seen this word before) and f (know the correct answer) remained largely

13 unchanged (17,6% and 25,7%). In the control group without outliers a 20,0%

14 change in answers from option a to option b occurred. Displaying a trend similar

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to the other groups options b and f (21,1% and 17,7%) remained largely unchanged.

By comparing answers across the three test times as well as across the groups it seems that all three groups showed shifts in vocabulary recognition, and they seemed slightly more confident in knowing the meanings of words. From the two tables above one can see that the biggest improvement in confidence occurred between the pretest and posttest 1. This trend is similar to the growth in vocabulary acquisition seen in Table 4.2.

In order to determine whether the number of times that learners encountered a vocabulary item in the texts they read had an influence on the success with which the item was acquired, the following research question was posed:

RQ1d: How does the frequency of occurrence of words in the picture books affect vocabulary acquisition?

Only the reading group's data is examined since the main focus of this study is the influence of extensive reading on the vocabulary of grade 10 learners. The control group was also not included as they were not exposed to the stories in which the given words occurred.

In the context of this research question, "frequency of occurrence" refers to the number of times a vocabulary item appears in the texts the learners read. All the items in the vocabulary test played either a prominent role in a story or their meaning was clearly reinforced with an illustration.

If the participating learners read all the books during the reading intervention, they would have read a total of 7 336 words. Thirty-five items were tested in the pre- and posttests and the participants would have encountered these 35 target words up to 20 times. Many of the items appear in more than one book. Each of the target words play a prominent role in at least one of the texts.

1 To recap (cf. Chapter 3), the vocabulary items tested in this study were divided

2 into three bands of exposure according to the number of times they occurred in

3 the texts. Items were classified as follows:

4 • Low exposure words: Items were placed in this group if they occurred

5 between one and three times in the texts (n =12).

6 • Mid-exposure words: Items were placed in this group if they occurred

7 between four and seven times in the texts (n = 19).

8 • High exposure words: Items were placed in this group if they occurred

9 more than 15 times in the texts read (n = 4).

10

11 **Table 4.5 Exposure and acquisition size of all test items for the reading**

12 **group**

	Exposure	Score			Acquisition size	
		Pretest	**Posttest 1**	**Posttest 2**	**Pretest → Posttest 1**	**Posttest 1 → Posttest 2**
Se salir **Verb: to get dirty**	Low	6%	28%	30%	22%	2%
Faufiler **Verb: to weave in and out, to move between**	Low	0%	6%	10%	6%	4%
Un nid **Noun: a nest**	Low	0%	6%	10%	6%	4%
Grimper **Verb: to climb**	Low	11%	11%	20%	0%	9%
Une cabane **Noun: a treehouse**	Low	44%	50%	60%	6%	10%
Un arc-en-ciel **Noun: a rainbow**	Low	28%	44%	60%	17%	16%
Nettoyer **Verb: to clean**	Low	17%	39%	40%	22%	1%

	Exposure	Score			Acquisition size	
		Pretest	**Posttest 1**	**Posttest 2**	**Pretest → Posttest 1**	**Posttest 1 → Posttest 2**
Un chef-d'oeuvre Noun: a masterpiece	Low	0%	11%	40%	11%	29%
Mentir Verb: to lie	Low	17%	39%	50%	22%	11%
Une glace Noun: an ice-cream	Low	100%	94%	100%	-6%	6%
Un cadeau Noun: a gift	Low	22%	56%	70%	33%	14%
Tricher Verb: to cheat	Low	6%	28%	20%	22%	-8%
Le paysage Noun: the countryside	Mid	11%	17%	30%	6%	13%
Un invite Noun: a guest	Mid	0%	17%	0%	17%	-17%
Échapper Verb: to escape	Mid	11%	22%	30%	11%	8%
Les ongles Noun: Nails	Mid	6%	28%	30%	22%	2%
Être fâché Verb: to be angry	Mid	22%	39%	30%	17%	-9%
Déménager Verb: to move house	Mid	6%	22%	30%	17%	8%
Vieux (masculin)	Mid	56%	61%	60%	6%	-1%

	Exposure	Score			Acquisition size	
		Pretest	**Posttest 1**	**Posttest 2**	**Pretest → Posttest 1**	**Posttest 1 → Posttest 2**
Adjective: old (masculine)						
Vieille (feminin) **Adjective: old (feminine)**						
Enorme **Adjective: enormous**	Mid	56%	72%	100%	17%	28%
Couper **Verb: to cut**	Mid	11%	22%	20%	11%	-2%
La verité **Noun: the truth**	Mid	11%	39%	70%	28%	31%
La colère **Noun: anger**	Mid	6%	33%	20%	28%	-13%
S'ennuyer (s'ennuie) **Verb: to be bored**	Mid	17%	44%	40%	28%	-4%
Une piscine **Noun: a swimming pool**	Mid	78%	100%	100%	22%	0%
Un mensonge **Noun: a lie**	Mid	6%	6%	10%	0%	4%
Un jeu **Noun: a game**	Mid	11%	33%	50%	22%	17%
Furieux **Adjective: furious**	Mid	22%	89%	90%	67%	1%
Un copain	Mid	39%	72%	80%	33%	8%

	Exposure	Score			Acquisition size	
		Pretest	Posttest 1	Posttest 2	Pretest → Posttest 1	Posttest 1 → Posttest 2
Noun: a friend / a boyfriend						
Une tortue **Noun: a tortoise / a turtle**	Mid	50%	89%	80%	39%	-9%
Un jardin **Noun: a garden**	Mid	83%	100%	90%	17%	-10%
Un arbre **Noun: a tree**	High	50%	56%	80%	6%	24%
Une montre **Noun: a watch**	High	61%	94%	90%	33%	-4%
Un loup **Noun: a wolf**	High	11%	50%	60%	39%	10%
Un désastre **Noun: a disaster**	High	72%	94%	100%	22%	6%

1

2   Looking at the pretest scores it seems clear that some of the items were familiar

3   to the participants prior to the reading intervention: *une glace* (100% correct

4   answers, low occurrence group), *une piscine* (78% correct answers, mid

5   occurrence group) and *un jardin* (83% correct answers, mid occurrence group).

6   These are the items of which knowledge increase to 100%, with the exception of

7   *une glace* (one participant gave the wrong translation in posttest 1), after the
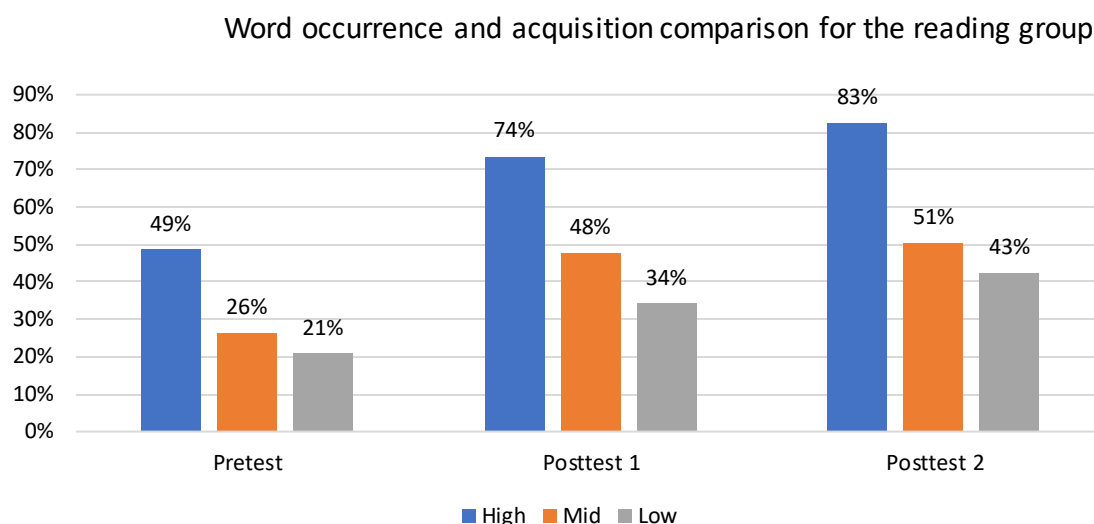
8   reading intervention.

9

10   As expected words in the high occurrence group were acquired at a high rate (*un*

11   *loup* with a 39% uptake and *une montre* with a 33%). Interestingly, some words

12   from the mid occurrence group were acquired at a similar rate (*furieux* with a 67%

13   uptake, *une tortue* and *un copain* with an uptake of 39% and 33%).

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1 Figure 4.4 visually shows how frequency of occurrence of target word affected

2 word growth.

3

4 **Figure 4.4 Vocabulary acquisition in all three occurrence bands for the**

5 **reading group**

Word occurrence and acquisition comparison for the reading group

6

7 The pretest scores show which words from each word group the participants were

8 familiar with before the reading intervention. As can clearly be seen, the high

9 frequency words (ie. those that occurred most frequently in the stories) were

10 consistently acquired most readily at posttest 1 and 2 (49% initially to 74% and

11 83% respectively), followed by the mid frequency group (26% initially to 48% and

12 51% respectively), and then the low group (21% initially to 34% and 43%).

13 Interestingly this is the high and low occurrence groups have the biggest growth

14 between the two posttests.

15

16 The data in the reading group indicates that the number of occurrences a learner

17 encounters a word in a text has a direct effect on the likelihood they will acquire

18 the word. However, this data also indicates that over and above frequency, other

19 factors such as the role that a word plays in a story or knowledge of cognate terms

20 across languages can also affect vocabulary uptake. For example, words that play

21 a significant role in a text can be acquired after as few as one to three

22 occurrences. For example, many of the participants did not know *un chef-oeuvre*

23 (Low group) before the intervention, many guessed that it means a "master chef",

24 because they recognised the word "chef". They encountered this word in a story

25 (*Quelle porcherie*) about a little pig whose beautiful painting (his masterpiece)

changed his homelife. This item occurred only twice in the text, however its acquisition rate improved by 29%. One of the participants noted in his posttest that *un chef-oeuvre* means a masterpiece and that he used "to think it means a really talented chef", thus showing confident awareness of the acquisition of the item. The context in which the word appeared in the text and the illustrations clearly played a significant role in the acquisition of the word.

One of the participants mentioned after he wrote the posttest that some of the items are very similar to Portuguese and that it helped him to work out their meaning, when reading the stories and answering the vocabulary test. He mentioned *les ongles* (4 occurrences, mid group), *mensonge* (6 occurrences, mid group) and *mentir* (2 occurrences, low group). One could thus conclude that vaguely familiar cognate words where the meaning is confirmed in a text do not need to be encountered many times to be acquired. Being aware of and using cognates to their advantage is a skill many of the participants found useful and a few said it "helped in class" as well. Teaching learners reading strategies seem to improve their confidence in their ability to use prior knowledge to make sense of unfamiliar words.

During the interviews the participants stated that the illustrations are very useful when they were not sure of the meaning of a word. One participant stated that she used the illustrations as a "crutch" when she was unsure of the meaning of a word. Many of the participants agreed that looking at the illustrations confirmed that they understood the story when they encountered unfamiliar words.

This anecdotal evidence, as well as the data from the vocabulary tests suggests that although the number of times a learner encounters a word in a text plays an important role in the likelihood of the word being acquired, it is not the only factor that plays a role – the prominence of the word, cognates in other languages and contextual clues can also contribute to vocabulary acquisition.

To determine the relationship between the two variables (the answers on the vocabulary tests (across all three occurrence groups) and the number of times the words appeared in the texts), the nonparametric Spearman's rho correlation

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was used. The results showed a significant positive relation: $r_s = 0.49$, $p = 0.001$ indicating a relationship between the number of vocabulary items acquired and the number of times the items appeared in the texts. (As previously defined, vocabulary acquisition refers to items the participants could not correctly identify in the pretest but could answer correctly in the first posttest.)

4.4 Research question 2: Perceived socio-affective factors for success

In this section data pertaining to research question 2 derives from the reading group with regards to factors which contribute to the successful completion of an extensive reading programme since the focus here is on the socio-affective dynamics during implementation of a reading programme for additional language learners:

RQ2: What are some of the perceived socio-affective factors that could lead to successful completion of an extensive reading programme?

In this study context successful completion of the reading programme means that the learners attended most of the meetings, read the books and wrote at least the pretest and first posttest. The data presented here was collected mostly from the questionnaires but also from informal interviews. To address this research question, I asked follow-up questions and used the information gathered during the informal interviews and the answers provided in the questionnaires from only the reading group to find answers to these questions focussing in particular on the reading group since they were the subjects of the reading intervention.

The learners in the reading group were very enthusiastic during our face-to-face meetings, especially during the initial meetings. Almost all the learners indicated that they wanted to participate in the reading programme and brought back permission letters signed by their parents or guardians. About 25% of these learners did not complete the reading programme and were therefore excluded from the data analysis. A few attended only the first meeting and dropped out of the reading programme. They explained that they were already participating in many other extra-mural activities or had extra academic tuition after school. The remaining participants make up the total of participants reported on in this Chapter

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1 (n=18 for the reading group). This issue of initial participant attrition mentioned
2 above, initially raised questions about the feasibility of the intervention and
3 whether adolescents would spend some of their limited free time reading French
4 picture books. It is clear that after the initial drop out, the students (n=18) who
5 committed to the reading programme completed it successfully.
6
7 It is possible that the participants who successfully completed the reading
8 programme might already have been readers and therefore more likely to
9 persevere and/or enjoy the reading programme. If reading was already an
10 enjoyable hobby, it might have made it easier for 'established readers' to transfer
11 the habit to French. RQ2a addresses this issue:
12 RQ2a: How did the learners' reading habits in French change as a result of the
13 intervention?
14
15 Table 4.6 below, shows the participants' reading habits prior to the reading
16 intervention as part of the reading programme and the subsequent growth in their
17 vocabulary. Column 5 in the table captures the number of new words acquired
18 per type of reader.
19
20 **Table 4.6 Reading habits prior to intervention and subsequent improvement**
21 **in vocabulary size**

Hours read per week before intervention	Number of participants	Number of books read (in any language) per week before intervention	Number of meetings attended (out of a possible 6)	Vocabulary items gained	Chosen Intervention
Avid readers 3+ hours	4	1 – 5	2 - 6	Mean: 11 Range 3 -15 (9% - 43%) The participant who read 5	Reading

				books per week acquired 15 (43% increase) new words during the intervention	
Moderate readers 1-2 hours	8	1 – 2	2 - 6	Mean: 2,5 Range: 1 – 13 (3% - 37%)	Reading
Reluctant readers 0 -1 hour	7	0 – 1	2 - 6	Mean: 7 Range: 4 – 8 (11% - 23%)	Reading

Of the 18 participants in the reading group at pretest time only four seemed to be avid readers, reporting reading more than four hours per week. One of them stated that if he has enough time, he reads up to five books a week, preferring fiction, especially drama and romance. This is also the only participant who indicated that he read French, other than homework assignments, before participating in the reading intervention. He attended only 2 of the meetings but read all the books and improved his tests scores from 31.42% to 74.28%, gaining 15 vocabulary items. One of the participants claimed that he read between two and four hours per week and that he read on average three books per week. He read both fiction and non-fiction as well as online newspapers. He attended four of the six meetings and improved his test scores from 31.42% to 42.85%, gaining four new words.

Eight of the participants had more moderate reading habits, spending one to two hours per week reading one or two books. These learners read fiction and non-fiction, especially adventure stories, books on history, politics, and sport. Some of them read articles online. All of them claimed to buy books and only one used the school library. Respectively they attended two, three and all six the meetings. One of these learners gained 13 vocabulary items between the pretest and the first posttest.

Seven learners appeared to be reluctant readers and reported that they read less than one hour per week. Although they did not spend a lot of free time reading, they claimed to enjoy fantasy, sci-fi and adventure stories. An encouraging result is that one of the reluctant readers who stated that he did not read for pleasure at all apart from "sometimes online newspapers" improved his vocabulary score with seven items (20%) after the reading intervention. Interestingly, the participants in the reluctant category who did not read in their free time, chose to join the reading group rather than the listening group. A few of these learners stated that their goal was to improve their vocabulary.

From Table 4.6 above, one can see that the participants classified as avid readers prior to the reading intervention gained on average more words than the participants in the other two categories. This is not surprising since they already had an established reading habit. Interestingly, the participants classified as reluctant readers learnt more words than the moderate readers (7 versus 2,5). This is a very encouraging trend, since it indicates that any language reader, regardless of prior reading habits, can benefit from participation in a reading programme.

Although seven of the 18 participants in the reading group were classified as reluctant readers prior to the reading intervention, they claimed that their reading habits changed as a result of the intervention. After the intervention they indicated that they would continue to read in French because they enjoyed the experience. Their answers to the questionnaire and our informal discussions lead me to the conclusion that they are perhaps not natural readers (i.e., someone who reads voluntarily), but that when they do read, they find it enjoyable. Their success in the reading programme as well as the reading strategies they mastered might have encouraged them to continue to read for pleasure.

Overall, the results seem to indicate that language learners do not need to be voluntary readers to benefit from a French extensive reading programme. However, an established reading habit does seem to be an indication of success in a reading programme. This small study seems to indicate that a reading

intervention during which participants are provided with appropriate reading materials and taught reading strategies can turn reluctant readers into readers of French.

We turn now to RQ2b: What were the learners' socio-affective responses to the reading intervention?

From responses on the questionnaire as well as the interviews it seems as if the intervention inspired the participants to continue exposing themselves to reading. Even those in the listening group indicated that they would like to continue listening to French stories. After completion of the reading programme, all the participants who complete the questionnaire indicated that they intended to continue reading for pleasure, giving reasons such as wanting "to broaden [their] knowledge and vocabulary", to "keep improving" their vocabulary, grammar, and French in general, they "enjoyed the reading programme".

Four weeks after the completion of the reading programme, after the participants wrote the second posttest, they were again asked if they were still reading. It should be pointed out that the Easter school holiday fell in this period. The participants thus had more free time to spend on leisure activities, but perhaps fewer opportunities to find books to read since they did not have access to the school library. One participant stated that he continued to read "a little, but not much". He read Instagram posts and comics in French. He also watched a French series, *Lupin*, on Netflix and French vloggers on YouTube. Another participant read French newspapers and blogs. He also said that he listened to French podcasts while doing his chores. A third participant reported that she did not continue to read but listened to audio books. She found audio books aimed at beginners and ordered "French fairy tales" which unfortunately turned out to be in English.

Although I encouraged the participants to answer all the questions on the questionnaire, not all of them did. Unfortunately, some participants did not complete the section on their reading habits. However, it seems as if participating in the reading programme gave them the confidence and skills to continue to

1 interact with various French media (newspapers, blogs, videos, audiobooks and

2 podcasts) in their free time. Since building vocabulary and improving their

3 pronunciation were the main reasons these participants joined the reading

4 programme, these activities should satisfy their needs and help them succeed in

5 their goals.

6

7 All the participants in the reading programme stated that they gained something

8 from the experience. Their perceived areas of improvement can be classified as

9 six main themes: vocabulary gains, confidence, improved reading skills, improved

10 comprehension, improved writing skills and improved pronunciation. Reading, as

11 any other skill, requires practice. If language learners can practice reading as a

12 fun activity, it would be of great benefit to their language skills.

13

14 Confidence is an important factor of success. If one feels confident at the outset

15 of a task, one is more likely to persevere and succeed than someone who doubts

16 him/herself. Almost half of the participants stated after the completion of the

17 reading and listening intervention that they felt more confident when reading

18 French, that they feel "like [they] can read, pronounce words right and at the same

19 time actually know what the story is about", "more relaxed", and "more

20 comfortable". Interestingly, these were participants from the reading group, who

21 did not hear the stories. It seems as though the confidence they gained in regard

22 to silent reading also translated to reading aloud.

23

24 One of the participants stated that "uncertainties and feelings of self-doubt" had

25 kept him from reading in the past. Another participant wrote that she went from

26 feeling "clueless and confused" before the reading intervention to feeling

27 "confident and content".

28

29 As mentioned before, the learners who participated in the extensive reading

30 programme were highly motivated Grade 10s with very full extra-mural

31 programmes. Adding another activity to their timetables for several weeks is a big

32 commitment. It is therefore important to determine whether they felt that it was a

33 waste of their time, or whether they experienced and noticed the benefits of

extensive reading for themselves, particularly if one wishes them to continue reading independently after the completion of the reading intervention.

It is interesting that many of the participants mentioned improved pronunciation as a benefit of reading story books. For example, one of the participants wrote on his questionnaire that after participating in the reading programme he "can read stories and understand what [he] is reading without stressing [his] whole body about the pronunciation". The fact that his whole body would be "stressed" when reading shows how difficult learners may find reading in French, and especially reading aloud in class. This could possibly be because they are more confident in their reading skills and are therefore more confident when reading aloud in class. These comments show the importance of teaching language learners reading strategies to grow in confidence in their reading skills.

When asked if they prefer reading material chosen for them (as was the case in the reading intervention and in their normal classwork) or if they prefer to choose their own reading material, the majority of the participants indicated that they prefer a combination of the two options. One participant explained that having "someone with experience" select books is "beneficial to learning" and that it gave them the confidence and the desire to find their own books to continue reading in French. One participant wrote the following statement:

> *I feel like learning a language should be something that you want*
> *to do, and only reading the prescribed books and only doing*
> *grammar will not get you to learn the language as a whole. Going*
> *[out] of your way and reading more books, listening to music of*
> *that language and even watching movies will definitely improve*
> *your chances of learning the language.*

Another participant wrote:

> *In order to really know a language, one has to know the grammar,*
> *read and pronounce the language and listen.*

These statements, and others very similar to it, clearly show that these learners feel that to be a successful language learner one has to use different "tools" to

improve in all the areas of language learning. These statements also underline the fact that they participated in the reading programme with the goal to improve their French – it was not a simple leisure activity for them. Fortunately, all the participants indicated that they gained something from participating in the reading programme.

Finally, I was interested to find out how the Grade 10 learners felt about reading storybooks intended for children. Afterall, they were adolescents and there was a possibility that they may have found picture books beneath them. The final research question thus addressed this issue:

RQ2c: What was the Grade 10 learners' perception of children's picture books?

Choosing to present teenagers with picture books aimed at young children learning to read is a risk since they may feel that the books are too childish. These are definitely not the type of books they would choose to read in a language more familiar to them and in which they are more confident, so it's possible that they might feel that children's stories in French are also not suitable for them. To overcome this possible bias, I made it clear at the start of the intervention that the selection of books was in no manner a reflection of their intelligence or maturity. Although the stories are simple and illustrated, the language is authentic and of a very high standard since the books are written for first language speakers.

When asked if they enjoyed the picture books, the response was very positive. The participants said that they quickly learnt to use the illustrations as a support to understand the story, thus reducing their reliance on dictionaries. One participant explained that it took him a while to feel confident enough to read without looking words up but that he learnt to trust the context and the pictures. Another added that he found it easier to understand the story when he "can associate the words with the pictures".

When asked about their favourite story the answers were varied and very enthusiastic. The reasons for their favourites varied from "very cute" to "good message" to "beautiful illustrations". One of the participants enjoyed *Du balai!* (a story about a horrible house guest causing trouble) and said that he sometimes

feels as if there is a tiny elf called *Désastre* running around in his life causing chaos.

Although the feedback about the picture books were mainly positive, the participants did complain about the cursive writing in some of the books. (French children first learn to write in cursive and therefore many children's books are printed with cursive writing. In South Africa it is common practice to teach learners to print before exposing them to cursive writing, and storybooks are not written in cursive.) One participant explained that he found it difficult to read cursive writing in English and that "it is a whole new world in French". (See Appendix 11 for an example of the text printed in cursive writing.)

Considering all the comments and feedback during the reading intervention regarding the picture books, I can conclude that the picture books were well received, and the stories and illustrations enjoyed. One of the participants told the group that he read the books before he fell asleep at night, that these "bedtime stories" were a treat at the end of the day.

Although the participants in the reading intervention enjoyed the picture books and reported that the books gave them the necessary courage to keep reading, these books are not adequate reading material for language learners with more advanced language skills. One of the participants in the control group with more advanced French knowledge and skills than his classmates, (he is Flemish speaking but grew up in Belgium and is highly motivated to improve his French) preferred not to participate in the reading intervention because the books were too simplistic for his language level and due to time constraints in his schedule. However, having his classmates do extra reading did motivate him to read more advanced books and newspapers. This is a reminder of Krashen's idea of $i + 1$: for more advanced language learners children's picture books is not the ideal input to stimulate their language growth.

Many of the participants stated that they appreciated having books selected for them. Finding appropriate and fun reading material in an additional language can be a daunting task for language learners. Part of the reading intervention was

therefore to expose the participants to preselected books but also to show them where and how to find more reading material once they are reading independently.

When choosing reading material for French language learners, one should carefully consider their language level. Albeit small, this study showed that the majority of participants in the intervention not only enjoyed but also benefitted from reading children's storybooks in French. This suggests that Grade 10 learners in South African schools can similarly benefit from exposure to children's picture books and that these books can serve as a starting point to motivate them to continue to read for pleasure in French.

4.5 Discussion

I will now discuss and interpret the results from the two strands of data gathered in this study. The reading group is foregrounded since this was the largest group and the main focus of the study was the reading intervention, with the listening and control group serving as counterfactuals.

The main issue addressed in this study is whether exposure to French children's storybooks affects vocabulary growth in French SAL Grade 10 learners. Although this was a small study, the results showed that the learners in the reading group improved their vocabulary knowledge by a mean of 19% (from an average score of 27% in the pretest to 46% in the first posttest). Although all three groups made vocabulary gains within the allotted timescale, the reading group outperformed the listening and control groups. This seems to be in line with Zhang and Grahams (2020) who also found that listening is not a very effective vehicle for vocabulary acquisition. Admittedly the listening group in this study was small so caution is advised in drawing firm conclusions, but as one of the participants who chose the listening intervention pointed out, hearing stories happens too fast to really focus on individual words as one might be able to do when reading a text. Zhang and Grahams refer to this phenomenon as the "fleeting nature of oral input" (2020, 6). Brett, Rothlein and Hurley (1996) concur and suggest that listening activities be scaffolded with explicit teaching of vocabulary or grammar.

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Although all the participants benefitted from the reading intervention, whose who started with greater vocabulary knowledge relative to their peers improved their scores the most. The sizable improvement in the top scores (46% to 83% and 77% to 89%) suggests that although all language learners can benefit from extensive reading, those with larger vocabularies benefit especially. This can be seen as support for the so-called Matthew effect, a phenomenon where strong students get stronger and weak students weaker. This is in reference to the biblical adage in the Book of Matthew of the rich getting richer and the poor poorer (Duff, Tomblin & Catts, 2015). A possible explanation is that since the strong readers understood more of what they read, reading and understanding the stories were easier for them. This effect was also observed, although not as noticeable as for the reading group, in the listening and control groups (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2).

Duff, Tomblin and Catts (2015) found in their longitudinal study of 485 learners that the vocabulary size of Grade 4 learners is a predictor of their vocabulary size in Grade 10. They found that there was not a significant difference between the vocabulary growth of the participants who were classed as poor readers and those in the midlevel group. However, they did notice a significant difference between the midlevel group and the high level group. Furthermore, the difference in vocabulary size between the poor readers and the competent readers increased over time. Similarly, Pretorius and Currin (2010) found in their three-year study of learners in a disadvantaged and multilingual school context that typically poor readers remain poor and better readers improved and made faster progress. Research tends to show that learners with poor proficiency tend to stay in that position (i.e., the lower end of the end of performance in relation to their peers) but they improve within that position. Similar to Pretorius and Currin, this study found that learners who start an intervention with low or poor proficiency tend to stay in the lower performance percentiles but can still improve and make better progress than their peers in a 'business as usual' classroom situation.

It is therefore important to encourage all learners, irrespective of the size of their vocabularies, to keep reading to build their vocabulary. It is possible that once a

reading habit has been established the learners would continue to read more challenging texts and continue to grow their vocabulary and language skills.

Unfortunately, the listening group's average score only improved by 4% (from 13% to 17%). This disappointing result echoes the findings of Brown, Waring and Donkaewbua (2008), who also found that listening only is the least effective manner (compared to reading and reading-and-listening) in which language learners can acquire vocabulary (the participants in their study acquired only 2% of the target words during a listening-only intervention). In a study with university students that was in many ways similar to this study, Vidal (2011) also found that the participants in the reading group made greater vocabulary gains than the participants in the listening group. She found that as the participants grew in reading and listening proficiency the difference between the groups decreased. Unfortunately, in my study the participants in the listening group scored low in vocabulary size at the onset of the intervention and made few gains in comparison to the reading group. It would be interesting to repeat the intervention with participants with high vocabulary proficiency in the listening group in order to investigate if Grade 10 learners would show the same trends as the students in Vidal's study.

The frequency with which vocabulary items are encountered also play a role in vocabulary acquisition. As could be expected items from the high occurrence group were acquired at a high rate. Interestingly, items from the mid occurrence group also showed a high rate of acquisition. This data could indicate that frequency of occurrence is not necessarily the main factor that plays a role in vocabulary acquisition. Items that play a significant role, being a key word or clearly illustrated, in a text can be acquired after as few as one to three occurrences.

A possible reason for this result can be that almost half (49%) of the high occurrence words were already known to the participants prior to the reading intervention and there was therefore less opportunity for growth. The high occurrence group was also quite small with only 4 items falling in this category.

1   This is an area that clearly merits more research, where the number of items in
2   each frequency category is more carefully controlled than in the present study.
3
4   It is interesting to note that the reading group's average scores continued to
5   improve from the first posttest, taken directly after the intervention, to the delayed
6   posttest, taken four weeks later. The participants in the reading group who wrote
7   the delayed posttest all stated that they continued to engage with supplementary
8   French input after the conclusion of the reading intervention. Some tried reading
9   French newspapers online, a few started following people who posted in French
10   on Instagram and Facebook, and a few started to watch French YouTube videos.
11   However, some caution is required when considering the results of the delayed
12   posttest as familiarity with the test might have contributed to the increase in
13   vocabulary growth from the fist posttest to the second. While writing the posstest
14   a few of the participants noted that they had written the same test before and
15   recognised some of the items tested. This familiarity with the test can possibly be
16   a reason why the participants increased their scores from posttest 1 to the second
17   posttest. However, unless they remembered the words and looked up the
18   definitions, this would not account for their knowledge of the items tested, only
19   their familiarity thereof.
20
21   When examining the how shifts in vocabulary knowledge developed across all
22   groups, two trends became clear:
23   1.   The participants recognised more vocabulary items from the pretest to
24   the first posttest. Both the reading and the listening groups (but not the
25   control group) showed the biggest change in words they had never
26   seen before to recognising them, even though the participants had not
27   yet acquired the meaning of the words (option a to b). This subtle
28   change can be interpreted as growth in vocabulary recognition. This is
29   in line with Schmidt's 'noticing hypothesis' first proposed in 1990,
30   where it is argued that second language learners only start advancing
31   their L2 knowledge when they consciously start noticing the input
32   (Schmidt, 2010).
33   In the delayed posttest this change from option a to b can be due to
34   the fact that it was the third time the participants wrote the vocabulary

test. They might therefore have recognised the words from the previous tests and not from the books they read.

2. The majority of d options (tentative correct guesses) changed to f (confident correct responses) across the groups. This could be an indication of growing confidence in their vocabulary knowledge – instead of guessing the meaning of an item in the test, the participants stated that they knew the meaning of these items in the posttest. These subtle changes in the answers on the posttest show that not only did the participants acquire a significant number of the test items during the reading intervention, their confidence in their vocabulary knowledge also improved.

These subtle changes in vocabulary recognition are very encouraging. It points to the fact that the participants became aware of unfamiliar words while engaging with the story books. This is in line with the noticing hypothesis according to which a language learner cannot acquire language (vocabulary in this case) they do not notice. As Schmidt (2010: 722) puts it "input does not become intake…unless it is noticed". Starting to notice and recognise new words in French is an important first step in figuring out what they mean.

The confidence the participants acquired during the intervention was also transferred to the classroom. Many of the reading participants stated in their post intervention interviews and questionnaires that they felt more confident when doing reading activities in class after having participated in the reading programme. One of the participants explained that he "feels more comfortable reading in French as [he] knows many more words".

4.5.1 Pedagogical Issues that emerged from the study

From analysing the data collected during this study, it seems that reading fun books, books that do not feel like homework or, worse, punishment, at an appropriate level for additional language learners needs to play a more prominent role in French SAL curriculum than is currently the case in South African schools in order to boost vocabulary development.

When analysing the participants' responses to the questionnaires and interviews it emerged that adolescent L2 learners need some guidance when embarking on an extensive reading programme to improve vocabulary knowledge. They need guidance in finding and selecting appropriate reading material. Many of participants in this study stated that they did not read in French prior to the intervention because they did not know where to find reading material. They would also not have selected children's picture books for themselves.

Not only do adolescents need guidance in the selection of reading material, but they also need explicit teaching of reading strategies. Teaching the participants in this study how to use their existing knowledge of vocabulary, cognates, and morphology as well as context and external clues such as pictures, diagrams, and their knowledge of the world, gave them the confidence to read and understand what they read without the support of dictionaries. A few of the participants stated that these skills not only gave them the confidence to read the books in the reading programme, but it also helped them with their normal classwork.

Although the participants in this reading intervention were supplied with the necessary tools to continue to read for pleasure in French one wonders if the enthusiasm for reading would wane a few weeks after the completion of the reading programme. Keeping in mind that during the first meeting almost the whole class indicated that they wanted to participate in the reading programme, and that only 18 learners completed the programme, it is not certain that they will continue to read in French if left to their own devices. Several factors could count against reading for pleasure in French becoming a real habit: Finding interesting and level appropriate reading material can be difficult. Many of the participants stated that they did not read French books prior to the reading intervention because they did not know where to find appropriate reading material. (They were supplied with ideas of where to find a variety of reading material; from online newspapers aimed at children to the open library of the Alliance Français.) Not being part of the group and accountability of regular meetings could lead to reading not becoming a regular activity.

Considering the results of this study one could conclude that spending more time doing pleasurable French activities (such as reading or listening to stories) has a positive effect on vocabulary acquisition. However, from this data it seems that reading picture books leads to faster and greater growth in vocabulary than just listening to the stories.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the analysis of the data from this small study and showed that Grade 10 French learners do benefit from reading children's picture books for pleasure. Although the participants in both the listening and the reading group acquired vocabulary items during the intervention, the participants in the reading group far outperformed those in the listening group, thus indicating that extensive reading is a better method to acquire vocabulary than just listening to stories.

The results from this study indicate that extensive reading does contribute to vocabulary acquisition of Grade 10 learners, much more so than just listening to stories. Furthermore, although learners in the control group did show some vocabulary growth over the same time period, exposure to French in the 'business as usual' Grade 10 curriculum did not promote as much vocabulary growth as in the reading group. The results also showed that the extensive reading programme promoted a positive attitude towards reading for pleasure in French since all the participants indicated that they want to continue reading in their spare time.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I give a brief summary and overview of the study and its findings. I also discuss the contribution of the study to the field of Applied Linguistics and the teaching of French as a second language, as well as its limitations and my recommendations for further research.

The main aim of this study was to investigate the impact of a reading intervention involving exposure to French storybooks via two modalities, listening and reading, on the French vocabulary of Grade 10 learners studying French as an additional language in South Africa. The second aim was to explore aspects of socio-affective factors in a reading intervention and to determine if children's picture books are appropriate reading material for teenagers learning French.

5.2 Summary of study

Participants from a high school in Gauteng participated in the intervention. Eighteen learners read 12 children's picture books over a period of six weeks. To serve as counterfactuals to the reading programme, there was a small group of six learners who listened to the stories being read, and seven learners were in the control group who did not read nor listen to the stories. The purpose of the control group was to control for the effect of the supplementary exposure to French and the purpose of the listening group was to control for the mode of exposure (reading).

The test instruments were piloted during 2019 and the main study was intended to be implemented in 2020 but the Covid-19 lockdown affected these plans and new arrangements needed to be made under challenging circumstances. In the end, the main study with the intervention was conducted in 2022 with 31 Grade 10 learners from a high school in Gauteng.

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After an initial meeting with the Grade 10 learners, during which the study was explained and consent letters distributed, I met weekly with the participants. They read, or listened to, two picture books per week. During the meetings the books and different reading strategies were discussed.

The participants completed a vocabulary test three times during the intervention comprising 35 items selected from the texts: before exposure to the books, directly after the six-week intervention and a delayed test four weeks later. The test scores were used to measure the vocabulary of the participants at these various points during the intervention.

Both quantitative and qualitative data was gathered via three means: the vocabulary tests, weekly discussions and a questionnaire. The participants completed the questionnaire when they wrote the last vocabulary test (posttest 2). The questionnaire was designed to obtain background information about the participants, their experience of the intervention and their reading habits after the intervention.

5.3 Summary of findings

My initial hypotheses were that extensive reading would have a positive effect on the vocabulary knowledge of the participating learners and that the participants would enjoy the children's books in French and continue to read for pleasure after the completion of the reading intervention.

RQ1 and its subquestions addressed issues related to various aspects of vocabulary acquisition, namely:

RQ1: How does exposure to children's picture books in French affect Grade 10 SAL learners' vocabulary acquisition, depending on the medium (extensive reading of stories versus listening to stories)?

It was found that exposure to book reading did have an effect on vocabulary growth. Learners participating in the reading group showed significant growth in their vocabulary after reading the 12 children's books. Their average test score improved overall by 19%, from 27% in the pretest to 46% in the first posttest.

Interestingly, their scores improved by a further 5% again when they wrote the delayed posttest (46% to 51%). In contrast, the participants in the listening group only improved their vocabulary by 4% over the course of the intervention, from 13% in the pretest to 17% in the first posttest, and their score fell to 12% in the delayed posttest. The participants in the control group, without the outliers, showed an overall increase of 6%, increasing by 3% from 21% (pretest) to 24% (first posttest) and a further 3% increase to 27% (delayed posttest).

The improvement in the control group's test scores reflects growth in vocabulary that Grade 10 learners should show over a 12-week period without supplementary input apart from the normal curriculum. Exposure to storybooks in the listening group had negligible effects on word growth in this study. In contrast, the reading group clearly outperformed both groups thus showing the positive impact of the reading programme on the participant's vocabulary knowledge. This finding thus confirms what has been found in several other studies such as Zhang and Grahams (2020) and Brett, Rothlein and Hurley (1996).

RQ1a: How does the learners' initial vocabulary level affect the vocabulary acquisition developed during the intervention in the reading and listening groups?

It is noteworthy that the participants who started the intervention with the highest score improved their vocabulary knowledge at a higher rate than the other participants. This is consistent with research in the field (Duff, Tomblin & Catts, 2015). However, one should not assume that learners with a small vocabulary cannot benefit from a reading intervention. In this study all the participants in the reading group improved their vocabulary, but learners with initial smaller vocabularies did so less readily.

RQ1b: What does performance on the delayed vocabulary test suggest about vocabulary attrition in the reading and listening groups?

The reading group' results after writing posttest 2 showed that the vocabulary acquired during the intervention was to a large extent retained, and even

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increased slightly. The listening group, on the other hand, showed some regression. One should, however, note that the listening group was much smaller than the reading group and the participants' pretest scores were also significantly lower than those of the participants in the reading group. More research is clearly required with larger and more equal groups in order to state with confidence that listening as input does not lead to significant vocabulary retention.

RQ1c: What is the influence of exposure to French via different media (reading and listening) on vocabulary recognition?

Both the reading and the listening groups showed improvement in vocabulary recognition. From the pretest to posttest 1, the reading group recognised 17,6% more words and the listening group 28,1% more words. Word recognition may seem a very slight improvement in language acquisition, however, it indicates 'noticing' and as Schmidt (2010) points out noticing words is the first step to acquiring new vocabulary.

RQ1d: How does the frequency of occurrence of words in the picture books affect vocabulary acquisition?

Generally, words that occurred more frequently were acquired more readily than words that only occurred 1-3 times in a story. However, words from the mid occurrence group were acquired as readily as those in the high occurrence group. The participants stated that words that were clearly illustrated were "easy to understand". This seems to be in line with Brown (2007) and Kweon and Kim (2008) who found that frequency is not the only factor contributing to vocabulary acquisition. Other factors such as clarity in context and supporting illustrations can contribute to vocabulary acquisition. However, caution is advised in interpreting these results since the vocabulary test comprised of only 35 items and there were only 4 words in the high occurrence group, half of which were mostly already familiar to the participants prior to the intervention.

Findings related to RQ2: What are some of the perceived socio-affective factors that could lead to successful completion of an extensive reading programme?

The participants in this study were all highly motivated learners with very full timetables. Although some participants dropped out during the course of the reading intervention, it is encouraging to note that those who persevered and completed the reading intervention, indicated that they made gains not only in their vocabulary (very few learners mentioned improved vocabulary), but also that they felt more confident when engaged in French activities, whether it is reading, writing or speaking.

RQ2a: How did the learners' reading habits in French change as a result of the intervention?

Looking at their reading habits prior to the intervention, many of the participants were not avid readers, in English or in any other language. I would therefore venture to speculate that these adolescents likely engage with the world and find their entertainment online in short bite-sized texts, such as blogs and posts on Facebook, and prefer visual media such as films and television series. Key factors to encourage perseverance and enjoyment of an extensive reading programme might be selecting short, fun texts at an appropriate level for the participants.

An interesting finding of this study is that reluctant readers participated as enthusiastically in the reading intervention as their peers who were avid readers before the intervention. Both avid and reluctant readers benefited from the reading programme with the avid readers gaining on average 11 words and the reluctant readers seven words.

During, and directly after, the intervention the majority of participants in the reading group indicated that they would continue to read in French for pleasure. Exposing the participants to short, understandable texts, 'easy wins', as well as teaching them reading strategies and the ensuing increase in confidence might have triggered the change in their attitude towards reading. However, despite their

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good intentions, four weeks later when they completed the questionnaires, very few had read more books. On the other hand, they continued to engage with French in their spare time: one girl listened to audio books, many read blog posts, posts on Facebook and Instagram or watched French series or videos. (As an anecdotal aside, some of the participants, who are now in Grade 11, asked for more books to read at the beginning of the school year.)

It is therefore encouraging that the confidence they gained from the reading intervention would motivate them to choose to engage in these leisure activities in French.

RQ2b: What were the learners' socio-affective responses to the reading intervention?

Many of the participants indicated that they did not read in French prior to the intervention because they found it a difficult and rather daunting task. Four weeks after the intervention they stated that they felt more confident and relaxed when reading French. Interestingly, this confidence also had an impact on their perception of their ability to read aloud in class. Many of the participants stated during the interviews that they found it easier to read out loud in French as a result of their exposure to reading French storybooks, albeit silently.

The participants stated that they enjoyed reading the storybooks and wanted to continue to read independently after the conclusion of the reading intervention.

RQ2c: What was the Grade 10 learners' perception of children's picture books?

The teenage participants in this study, both in the pilot intervention and the main intervention, had no reservations about reading French stories intended for younger children and stated that they enjoyed reading the children's picture books. They provided two main reasons:

a.   The illustrations: They enjoyed the illustrations that were often described as "cute". The participants stated that they used the

illustrations to help them understand the stories and decipher some of the words they did not know.

b. The stories: They enjoyed the stories. They could understand the humour, and some said that they like the messages of the stories. The stories were short and gave the participants a sense of accomplishment of having read 12 books in just six weeks.

One negative aspect to note when using authentic children's picture books is that South African learners find the cursive printing difficult to read. Many French books for children are printed in cursive writing since it is the first script French children learn to write.

The results from this study show that Grade 10 learners can enjoy and benefit from reading children's picture books. The simple stories and illustrations are a good way in which to introduce learners to independent reading. Not only does it improve their vocabulary, but it also builds their confidence.

5.4 Contribution of this study to the field of applied linguistics

Many studies have been conducted on extensive reading. However, most of these have been in English, and very few have focused on French as the target language. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first French study of its kind conducted in the South African school context.

Some extensive reading studies are conducted over very short periods of time and participants read as little as a few pages only (Depuy & Krashen, 1993) had the participants read 15 pages in a once-off 40-minute read). In contrast, the current study contributed to the field of applied linguistics in that the reading intervention was conducted as a true extensive reading programme: the participants read 12 books over a period of six weeks. They were encouraged to focus only on the content of the stories and not to engage with the books as "study material".

This study controlled for the type of French input by having a reading group who was the main focus of the study, and two counterfactuals by way of a group who

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listened to the stories being read and a control group where it was 'business as usual'. The listening group's data was used to control for the type of input the participants received. Both groups were exposed to the same 12 picture books with the only difference being that the reading group read the books and the listening group heard the stories while looking at the pictures. Although both groups, particularly the listening group, were small and the latter was not a very strong group, the noticeable difference in the average word growth of the two groups within the same time period shows the positive impact of reading on the vocabulary size of the participants in the reading group. The data collected from this intervention shows that although any French input can be beneficial to learners' vocabulary size, reading delivers more effective results.

Unlike some studies that focus only on the reading aspect, this study also sought to examine the participants' reading habits prior to the intervention, their attitude towards a reading intervention on French learning in general and vocabulary growth in particular, and their response to reading French children's books despite being adolescent L2 learners.

A major stumbling block that I encountered during the design of the intervention was the lack of standardised vocabulary tests in French. The vocabulary test I designed proved to be a useful tool in several ways:

1. The participants did not find it taxing to complete. They were able to answer 35 questions in a few minutes and were not tired afterwards.

2. The multiple choice options are clearly not for marks. This feature ensured that the participants answered honestly and did not guess random answers. This feature may have contributed to the reliability of the test scores.

3. The multiple choice options are not 'guessable'. The participants were asked to give the meaning or translation if they claimed to know a word. This allowed me to verify that they really knew the meaning of the word.

4. The multiple choice options enabled subtle changes in vocabulary knowledge and growth in confidence to be detected over time.

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Having a made-to-measure vocabulary test enabled me to analyse the participants' vocabulary growth in some detail. The first, and most obvious, manner in which I examined the participants' vocabulary was growth in terms of breadth. (This vocabulary test did not allow to test for depth of vocabulary knowledge.) As discussed in Chapter 4, the participants who started the intervention with a larger vocabulary gained more vocabulary items than their peers who started with a smaller vocabulary, however, the participant with a smaller vocabulary also improved in terms of words acquired and word recognition. This should be encouraging to both language teachers and learners to read in a foreign language and to continue reading to improve vocabulary. The second manner in which I examined the participants' vocabulary was in terms of confidence. This test enabled me to notice slight changes in confidence. Participants might still not know the meaning of a word (with no context provided) but they might recognise the item. These subtle changes are often not visible with standard multiple choice tests where a person chooses a correct answer from several options.

In this study the participants' vocabulary was tested at two intervals after the conclusion of the intervention, directly after they read, or listened, to the books and four weeks later. Assessment immediately after an intervention is standard in this kind of study. However, to measure real growth and vocabulary acquisition, later assessment is also needed. The delayed posttest showed some regression in some participants' knowledge of the vocabulary items tested which is a normal characteristic of learning after a targeted event. However, it is encouraging to note the number of items that were retained even after this period of time – and the 5% increase in the reading group's score in the delayed posttest suggests that some learners continued learning new words.

This study also looked at the influence of word frequency and found that the number of times a reader encounters a word is not the only contributing factor to word acquisition. If a word was clearly illustrated by an illustration or if it stood out in the text, the participants noticed it even if they encountered the word only a few times.

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This study made use of authentic texts. The picture books used in this study were written for French speaking children. The books used in this study were not specifically designed for language learners. In other words, the language and vocabulary were not simplified. This challenged the participants in many ways since they were confronted by many unfamiliar words and grammatical features that were out of their comfort zone. On the other hand, it gave them the confidence to continue to read "real" texts and "real" books. Using picture books compensated for the challenging language features. The pictures allowed the participants to follow the story, even if they did not fully understand the text itself. This proved to be a good strategy as the participants did not get discouraged and it gave them the confidence to continue reading or engaging with authentic French after the completion of the reading intervention.

As mentioned before, this study provided counterfactuals in the form of two control groups to isolate the act of reading as the factor contributing to vocabulary growth. Having a control group who did not engage with the books in any form and a listening group who saw the pictures and heard the stories enabled me to control for the extra exposure to French and the method of exposure.

5.5 Pedagogical implications

As mentioned before, it is often noted by language teachers, myself included, that learners tend to struggle with reading comprehension and writing tasks due to poor vocabulary. As shown in Chapter 2, vocabulary has an influence on all aspects of language learners' communications skills, talking to and understanding other people, their written skills and comprehension of aural and written input. Unfortunately, this often turns into a vicious cycle: these learners often lack the confidence to attempt to express themselves verbally and shy away from input they fear might be too difficult to understand, and as a result their language skills stagnate. This is often the case in group settings where there are also some learners with larger vocabularies and stronger communication skills who can unwittingly intimidate weaker learners. An extensive reading programme offers a solution to this problem. Since the learners read on their own and at their own pace, the element of peer judgement is removed.

This study has shown that all the participants benefited from the reading programme. Even though the learners who started with larger vocabularies gained more vocabulary items, the learners who started with smaller vocabularies also showed some vocabulary gains. An extensive reading programme allows all language learners, regardless of their competency level, to grow their language skills.

I believe that if additional language learners participate in an extensive reading programme, they will improve not only their vocabulary but also general language skills and gain confidence. However, to maximise the chances of success I think that an extensive reading programme should include the following features:

- The learners should be exposed to a large quantity of reading material over an extended period of time, at least four to six weeks. This recurrent exposure will allow the learners to reap the benefits of reading. From the literature in Chapter 2 it seems that the more learners read, the more they benefit from the activity, improving fluency, gaining vocabulary, grammatical knowledge and self-confidence.

- It is important that the learners find the reading material interesting and not too far beyond their proficiency level, otherwise they will not keep reading. Interesting, high quality reading material will keep the learners engaged and should encourage them to keep reading more challenging, and more interesting, texts as they develop their reading skills. Children's storybooks cover a wide variety of topics from which French vocabulary can be developed. As they discover the joy of reading for pleasure in their target language, they will continue to reap the rewards of reading: growth in vocabulary size, improved grammar, better comprehension, etc.

- The reading programme should be enjoyable. Learners who enjoy the reading programme will form a habit of reading and, hopefully, continue to read independently after the conclusion of the programme. Children's storybooks are typically humorous and whimsical - and sometimes even subversive, even for adolescent learners - thereby adding to their appeal and enjoyment.

- For learners who are not yet advanced French learners, the material should be carefully selected beforehand by a knowledgeable teacher/researcher. It is often argued that to prevent reading from feeling like homework, the learners should be allowed to select their own reading material, however, in developing country contexts where schools are faced with resource constraints, this might not always be possible, especially at the start of an extensive reading programme. The learners should at least have access to a selection of books that were selected for them on grounds of high-quality language usage, enjoyment, humour, and a variety of topics. Once a fairly sizeable collection of suitable texts have been collected, learners can then choose their reading material within this framework.

- The participants should, however, also be guided on how to source, evaluate and select their own reading material. This will not only create a feeling of independence it will also alleviate the burden of sourcing reading material on the teacher.

I would recommend that teachers of Grade 10 (or any advanced beginner group) French additional language learners try to incorporate an extensive reading programme into their syllabus. Grade 10 learners should have a large enough vocabulary and adequate grammar knowledge to read short children's picture books and benefit from the experience. The language skills and general confidence the learners would gain from a reading programme will be to their advantage as they continue their journey to learn French as an additional language. From a practical point of view, Grade 10 is the last year where time can be made in the teaching plan to incorporate a reading programme since Grades 11 and 12 are focused on preparing learners for their final Matric exams.

A reading programme need not be time-consuming nor costly. After an initial introduction lesson exploring different reading strategies, ten or 15 minutes per week is all that is needed to discuss the books the learners read in their own time and to encourage them to keep reading. Discussing the books as a group can be very encouraging and motivating to learners who might otherwise feel discouraged and tempted to give up. These discussions can be informal

conversations with the role of the teacher being that of a cheerleader: encouraging and inspiring their learners to keep reading. Although keeping records is not necessary, it can motivate some learners to keep track of what they read during a term or a year.

Regular discussions about the books and reading strategies will normalise reading and provide guidance to learners who are not confident readers. Reading for pleasure does not come naturally to all language learners. Some learners need to be taught how to read and to try different strategies until they find what suits them. Reading strategies that the participants in this study found useful were using contextual clues such as illustrations to support comprehension and recognising and deducing meaning from cognates.

Using books from free open sources on the internet makes participation in a reading programme attainable to learners from most schools in South Africa since the majority of schools have wi-fi access. Finding French storybooks in South Africa can be quite difficult and is often prohibitively expensive. Fortunately, there are numerous open libraries and book collections available on the internet. Using reading material from these sources not only prevent learners from being excluded from a reading programme due to financial implications, but it also teaches the participants where and how to find their own reading material.

Based on the experience gained during this study and the evidence that emerged from it, I would argue that additional language learners can indeed benefit from and enjoy participating in an extensive reading programme and that it does not have to take a lot of time out of the available teaching time, nor does it have to be expensive. The benefits to the learners far outweigh the initial effort required from the teacher to implement a reading programme.

5.6 Limitations of the study

This was a small-scale study that sought to investigate the benefits of extensive reading on the vocabulary size of Grade 10 learners studying French as an additional language. Disruptions to data collection and the smooth implementation of the intervention occurred during the height of the Covid pandemic, adding

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further complications to the study design. Although I tried to control for various factors, there are, unfortunately, a number of limitations to this study.

Although the results of the study are encouraging and support other findings from the field, the small number of participants in the study calls for some caution when extrapolating to the larger population. In the South African context, French as L2 is not a school subject that draws large numbers of learners, so sample size will always be a challenge in studies of this nature.

The voluntary nature of participation resulted in learners dropping out of the programme and thus reducing existing small sample sizes. Another limitation due to the participants being adolescent volunteers, reading in their own time, is that I could not be sure that every participant actually read all the books. This might have an impact on the average test scores and the results of this study.

The Covid-19 pandemic was an unforeseen stumbling block. It caused a delay in the implementation of the main study. Social distancing and the wearing of masks during the meetings with the participants during the main intervention made it difficult to build relationships with the participants during the relatively short time of the intervention.

Test familiarity over time could also have skewed the results sightly. The participants wrote the same test three times over the course of the intervention — 10 weeks in all. When writing the delayed posttest a few learners did mention that they remembered some of the items from the previous tests. (It should be pointed out the remembering a test item does not mean that they knew the meaning of the word.) Since the test had to be kept short so as not to overtax the learners a longer test with additional, random items could not be used. However, when repeating this intervention with older, more mature language learners, one could change the vocabulary test to include additional items that did not occur in the reading material that are not used to determine growth in vocabulary size, or one could expand the vocabulary test to include more items.

The study was conducted over six weeks which might be argued is not long enough to qualify as a truly *extensive* reading programme. However, it is often difficult to sustain an intervention over an extended period of time within a busy curriculum. The participants in this study were motivated, high-achieving high school learners with very full extra-mural programmes. One of the participants in the control group would have liked to participate in the reading programme but felt that he simply did not have the time to do so. The teachers felt that a supplementary activity (the reading intervention) of more than six weeks would not be sustainable. Even so, it should also be noted that the learners read 12 books during this time and that for the majority of the participants this was the first time they actually read 'real' books in French.

Although this study has some limitations and flaws, the results clearly indicate the positive impact an extensive reading programme can have on the vocabulary of learners of French as a foreign language.

5.7 Recommendations for further research

Many studies have been conducted in the field of extensive reading and vocabulary; however, little research have been done on the effect of extensive reading on French, especially in South Africa. More studies are needed in this field in order to fully understand and document the benefits of extensive reading on the vocabulary and language skills of French learners in South Africa.

This study was conducted over a period of six weeks and the participants read 12 books. A study over a longer period time with more books and longer texts might yield clearer results, especially when comparing the effects of reading versus listening to the texts. It would also be interesting to determine what the minimum exposure to storybooks is for learner to see improvement in their vocabulary.

Due to the nature of the vocabulary test, only breadth of vocabulary was measured. With a different test instrument, it would be helpful to also measure depth of vocabulary knowledge. Research of this nature would be easier if standardised, and easy to administer, vocabulary tests are developed and made available.

This study was conducted at two affluent, high performing high schools in the South African context. All the participants had the necessary devices with which to access online material. However, the books were from free open sources, and one should therefore, with a few adjustments, be able to repeat this intervention in lower socioeconomic schools.

In this study the focus was on vocabulary acquisition. It would be interesting to test the benefits of reading on other aspects of French language acquisition as well. The literature suggests that reading improves not only vocabulary but also language skills such as word order and grammar.

5.8 Conclusion

In a globalised world, learning an additional language such as French can only benefit learners. Finding ways to make learning a language easier and more pleasant is important if we want our learners to succeed in their language learning goals.

As language teachers we know the struggles of our learners. We know how full their timetables are, how much time they spend on social media, how packed the syllabus is. An extensive reading programme might be a way to teach learners how to read for pleasure. Guiding them to find books they enjoy will open new worlds to them, allow them to practice their concentration and imagination. It will give them quiet time to rest and take time out from their high-speed lives. And if, while they are occupied in a pleasurable activity, they also, without trying, improve their vocabulary and grammar skills, what is the harm in encouraging our language learners to read more?

The results of this study suggest that implementing an extensive reading programme for Grade 10 learners of French is a worthwhile endeavour for language teachers in South Africa. This study has shown that even over a relatively short period of time and at very little cost, learners can benefit from reading children's picture books for pleasure.

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An extensive reading programme has three main features: reading a large quantity of reading material over a long period of time in a manner that is pleasurable. An effective extensive reading programme should therefore expose the participants to large quantities of appropriate reading material. Ideally the participants should select their own reading material. In the case of immature readers, as in this study, it might be more beneficial to guide and teach the participants where to find reading material and how to select level appropriate material. If the reading programme is successful, the participants will become readers and will continue to read even after the conclusion of the intervention. To accomplish this, it is important that the participants enjoy the experience. Reading should not feel like homework or punishment, it should rather be a reward and something to look forward to.

As François Mauriac said, "*La lecture, une porte ouverte sur un monde enchanté*", reading is an open door to an enchanted world.

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2   L2 explanations, teacher codeswitching, contrastive focus-on form and
3   incidental learning. *Language Teaching Research* 24(6): 765-784.
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Zhang, P. & Graham, S. (2020). Vocabulary learning through listening: comparing

L2 explanations, teacher codeswitching, contrastive focus-on form and

incidental learning. *Language Teaching Research* 24(6): 765-784.

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1 APPENDICES

2 APPENDIX 1: Ethical clearance from UNISA

UNISA | university of south africa

DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS AND MODERN LANGUAGES RESEARCH ETHICS
REVIEW COMMITTEE

25July 2019

Dear Ms Bezuidenhout

NHREC Registration
#2019_MB_34536345_LING
CREC Reference: 2019-CHS-90235193-Dept
Name (s): Ms Magriet Bezuidenhout
Student # : 34536345

Decision: Ethics Approval from 25
July 2019 to 25 July 2022.

Principal Researcher: Ms Magriet Bezuidenhout
                        Magriet.bezuidenhout@gmail.com
                        0795230476

Internal co-researcher:

Research Title

The impact of an extensive reading programme on the French vocabulary of Grade 10 learners.

Qualification: MA in Applied Linguistics

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for 3 years.

The low risk application was reviewed by a subcommittee of URERC on 25 July 2019 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment..

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

Open Rubric

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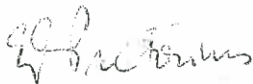
1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the ~~relevant~~ principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics

2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the CHS Research Ethics Committee

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

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

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

6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.

7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date (25 July 2022). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note: The reference number 2019-CHS- 90235193-Dept *should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,
Signature

Department Chair
Prof Elizabeth Pretorius
pretoei@unisa.ac.za
021 429 6028

CREC Chair
Dr Suryakanthie Chetty
Chetts@unisa.ac za
0124296267

APPENDIX 2: Approval from the Gauteng Department of Education (2019 and 2021)

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

	8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	25 June 2019
Validity of Research Approval:	04 February 2019 – 30 September 2019 2019/104
Name of Researcher:	Bezuidenhout M
Address of Researcher:	
Telephone Number:	
Email address:	
Research Topic:	The impact of an extensive reading programme on the French vocabulary of Grade 10 learners.
Type of qualification	Master's Degree
Number and type of schools:	One Secondary School
District/s/HO	Tshwane South

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

25/06/2019

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

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1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
4. A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
9. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
12. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

Mrs Faith Tshabalala
Acting Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
DATE: 25/06/2019
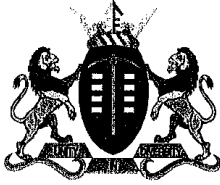
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Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

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GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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8/4/4/1/2

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GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	30 August 2021
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2021– 30 September 2021 2021/209
Name of Researcher:	Bezuidenhout, M
Address of Researcher:	
Telephone Number:	
Email address:	
Research Topic:	The impact of an extensive reading programme on the French vocabulary of Grade 10 learners.
Type of qualification	Master's Degree
Number and type of schools:	1 Secondary School
District/s/HO	Tshwane South

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1.   *Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*

1

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APPENDIX 3: Approval from schools to conduct research

Katrina Dodds <headmastersecretary@boyshigh.com>   Apr 26, 2019, 9:18 AM

to me

Dear Magriet

Mr Reeler doesn't have a problem with you conducting this research, however, he has advised that you are required to get permission from the GDE first.

Regards
Katrina

From: Magriet Bezuidenhout
Sent: 25 April 2019 11:19 PM
To: Katrina Dodds <headmastersecretary@boyshigh.com>
Subject: Permission to conduct research

Mrs. K Dodds
Pretoria Boys High School
Headmaster's Secretary
TEL
FAX
headmastersecretary@boyshigh.com

Crawford
International
Pretoria

29 April 2021
Pretoria

Dear Magriet,

You may conduct your research at Crawford International College Pretoria.
As we discussed you will be doing a reading intervention and vocabulary tests with the Grade 10 students.

Kind regards,

Cheryl Naidoo,
Principal

APPENDIX 4: Letters of assent and consent

UNISA university of south africa	UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

The impact of an extensive reading programme on the development of French vocabulary of additional language learner

RESEARCHER'S NAME AND CONTACT DETAILS:

Magriet Bezuidenhout

What is this research project all about?

The aim of this study is to see if reading for fun will have a positive impact on language skills such as comprehension and vocabulary.

What will I have to do in this study?

You are kindly invited to help with this research by reading or listening to story books in French, answering questions and doing French language activities.

What if I do not want to do this?

You do not have to take part in the research. If you do not want to you can just say so to me or to your teacher.

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Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?

| YES | | NO |

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

| YES | | NO |

Do you understand that you can stop taking part in the study at any time?

| YES | | NO |

I understand that I will participate in this survey for 10 sessions of 30 minutes each. I will face no risks by participating in this research and my participation is voluntary. I can change my mind at any time without any penalty. About 20 students will take part in this study and my name will not be revealed to anyone or appear in reports on this study.

_____ _____

Name/Signature of Child   Date

Ethics clearance reference number:

Research permission reference number (if applicable):

25 April 2019

Title: The impact of an extensive reading programme on the development of French vocabulary of additional language learners

Dear Parent of Prospective Participant

My name is Magriet Bezuidenhout and I am doing research with Prof E.J. Pretorius, a professor in the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages towards a Master's Degree at the University of South Africa. We are inviting your child to participate in a study aimed at examining the vocabulary development of learners of French as a foreign language.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

I am conducting this research to find out more about some of the factors that might affect vocabulary development and language proficiency of Grade 10 learners studying French as a foreign language.

WHY IS YOUR CHILD INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

They are invited to participate in this reading programme because I believe it will benefit their French language proficiency.

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

The study involves questionnaires and short tests as well as semi-structured interviews. The study will run over the course of a 12 week reading programme. They will be expected to attend one group meeting (30 minutes) per week and to spend some time reading in French on their own (30 - 40 minutes per week).

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

Participating in this study is voluntary and your child is under no obligation to consent to participation. They are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. If they do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. Your child will also be asked to sign an assent form.

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

Participating in this study might improve your child's French language ability.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES TO PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

Participation in this study will require a limited time commitment on your child's part. They will have to spend a few minutes reading in French each day.

WILL THE INFORMATION CONVEYED TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY CHILD'S IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

All personal information will be treated confidentially. Their name will not be used in any data published and nobody (other than the researcher) will be able to connect them to the answers they give.

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

Hard copies of their answers will be stored by the researcher for a minimum period of five years in a locked cupboard in her office at the University of Pretoria for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Hard copies of information pertaining to this study will be destroyed (shredded) and electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of my computer.

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

Neither you nor your child will not be compensated in any way for participation. However, no costs will be incurred by the participants.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.
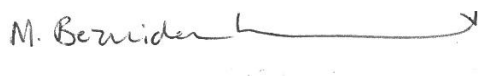
HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study or be informed of the final research findings, please contact Magriet Bezuidenhout ( ). The findings are accessible for a period of five years.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Prof E.J. Pretorius (or (012)). Please contact the research ethics chairperson of the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, Dr. Fiona Ferres ( ) if you have any ethical concerns.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.
Thank you.

M. Bezuidenhout

Magriet Bezuidenhout

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the data through tests, questionnaires and interviews.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname…………………………………… (please print)

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

Name of Parent/Guardian..(please print)

Signature of Parent/Guardian... Date.....................

Researcher's Name & Surname……………………………………(please print)

Researcher's signature…………………………………………..Date…………………

APPENDIX 5: Vocabulary test

Test your vocabulary knowledge

Name:_____

Please answer each question by putting an x in the appropriate circle. You may answer in French or in English.

1. Se salir

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

2. La colère

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

3. faufiler

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

4. un arbre

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

5. grimper

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

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O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

6. le paysage

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

7. s'ennuyer

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

8. une cabane

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

9. un invité

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

10. un arc-en-ciel

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

11. nettoyer

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

12. echapper

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

13. un désastre

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

14. un chef-d'oeuvre

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

15. un nid

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

16. une montre

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

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O I know this word, it means _____

17. mentir (je mens, tu mens, il ment…)

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

18. un mensonge

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

19. furieux

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

20. un loup

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

21. une piscine

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means _____

O I know this word, it means _____

22. les ongles

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means_____

O I know this word, it means _____

23. un copain

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means_____

O I know this word, it means _____

24. une glace

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means_____

O I know this word, it means _____

25. être fâché

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means_____

O I know this word, it means _____

26. un cadeau

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means_____

O I know this word, it means _____

27. une tortue

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means_____

O I know this word, it means _____

28. déménager

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means_____

O I know this word, it means _____

29. un jardin

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means_____

O I know this word, it means _____

30. vieux / vieille

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means_____

O I know this word, it means _____

31. enorme

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means_____

O I know this word, it means _____

32. un jeu

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means_____

O I know this word, it means _____

33. couper

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means_____

O I know this word, it means _____

34. tricher

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means_____

O I know this word, it means _____

35. la vérité

O I have never seen this word before.

O I think I have seen this word before, but I can't remember what it means.

O I have seen this word before, I think it means_____

O I know this word, it means _____

APPENDIX 6: Questionnaire

Questionnaire

1. Age: …………………………………………………………………..…

2. Gender: …………………………………………………………………..

3. Home language / mother tongue …………………………………………..

4. Other languages (please specify if you only speak and understand these languages or if you can read and/or write them as well): …………………………………………………………………….......
....

5. Do you read for pleasure?

   ☐ Not at all

   ☐ 1-2 hours per week

   ☐ 2-4 hours per week

   ☐ More than 4 hours per week

6. Mostly in which language? ....

7. How many books do you read a week? ....

8. What kind of books? Genre? ....

9. Do you read newspapers, social media, blogs…? Please specify. ………………………………………………………………………………… ………………………………………………………………………

10. Do you buy reading/story books? ....

11. Do you make use of a library for reading books? ....

12. If so, which library? School? Municipal? ....

13. Do you share books with friends/family? ....

14. What do you prefer, e-books or hard copy books? ....……

15. Are your parents readers? ....

16. Have you tried to read French outside of the classroom? (Not homework reading)…………………………………………………………..

17. If so, what did/do you read? ....……

18. Please describe in a few words how you feel when reading in French.

………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

19. Which of the following do you think is more beneficial for language learning?

☐ Grammar instruction and practice

☐ Reading material you choose yourself

☐ Reading prescribed material

☐ Reading a combination of prescribed and self-selected material

Please explain your answer.

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

20. Did you participate in the extensive reading programme? Y/N

21. If so, why? Or why not?

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

22. Do you think you have gained something from the reading programme? Explain briefly.

……

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

23. Do you still read for your own pleasure? Y/N

24. Why?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

25. What French reading do you do in your own time?

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

26. Is there anything you would have like to change during the reading programme?

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

27. Are you planning to continue studying French next year? Y/N

28. Do you prefer literature or grammar?…………………………………………………………

APPENDIX 7: Book report

Rapport de livre

Titre :…………………………………………………………………………...

Auteur :……………………………………………………………………...

Date lu :………………………………………………………………...

Nombre de pages :...

Quel est le thème de ce texte ?

Selon le titre ?...

Autres indices ?..

....

Lisez. Sans vous arrêter. Sans dictionnaire.

L'idée principale :..

....

Autres idées :……………………….…….…….….…………………

…………………………………………………………………………

L'essentiel :

Le lieu (où) :……………………………………………………………

L'époque (quand): ……………………………………………………..

Personnage principale (qui) :……………………………………………

Quelques mots à chercher dans un dictionnaire :

- …………………………Def. :…………………………………

- ……………………….Def. :…………………………………

- …………………………….Def. :…………………………………..

Est-ce que vous avez aimé de ce livre ? Est-ce que vous l'avez trouvé intéressant ? Pourquoi ?

…………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………

Je me sens :

…………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………

APPENDIX 8: Example of reading material

Quelle Porcherie by Hans Wilhelm

Franklin est toujours seul.
Il aimerait bien avoir des amis, mais
il n'invite jamais personne chez lui.

APPENDIX 9: Book list (main intervention)

Tu peux by Elize Gravel

(https://elisegravel.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/tupeuxfin2.pdf)

Petit Vénusien by Odysseus

(http://livres.abuledu.org/titles/24)

Foxy et le mystérieux invité by Sébastien Thorel

(http://livres.abuledu.org/titles/26)

Ne pleure pas Monsieur le loup by Odysseus

(http://livres.abuledu.org/titles/18)

Quelle porcherie by Hans Wilhelm

(https://childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/Quelle%20Porcherie.pdf)

Quel ennui mes amis by Hans Wilhelm

(https://childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/Quel%20Ennui%20mes%20amis.pdf)

Du balai ! by Hans Wilhelm

(http://www.childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/DU%20BALAI%20%20%20binder.pdf)

Sale menteur ! by Hans Wilhelm

(http://www.childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/Sale%20Menteur.pdf)

Tyranno, le terrible by Hans Wilhelm

(http://www.childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/Tyranno%20le%20terrible.pdf)

Tyranno, l'espèce de sale tricheur by Hans Wilhelm

(http://www.childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/Tyranno%20lespece%20de%20sale%20tricheur.pdf)

Restons bons copains ! by Hans Wilhelm

(https://childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/Restons%20bons%20copians.pdf)

Tom déménage by Hans Wilhelm

(https://childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/Tom%20Demenage.pdf)

APPENDIX 10: Booklist (pilot study)

Tu peux by Elize Gravel

(https://elisegravel.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/tupeuxfin2.pdf)

Petit Vénusien by Odysseus

(http://livres.abuledu.org/titles/24)

Foxy et le mystérieux invité by Sébastien Thorel

(http://livres.abuledu.org/titles/26)

La révolte des insectes volants by Cyrille Largillier

(http://livres.abuledu.org/titles/10)

Quel ennui mes amis by Hans Wilhelm

(www.childrensbooksforever.com)

Ne pleure pas Monsieur le loup **by Odysseus**

(http://livres.abuledu.org/titles/18)

Quelle porcherie by Hans Wilhelm

(http://www.childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/Quelle%20Porcherie.pdf)

Du balai ! by Hans Wilhelm

(http://www.childrensbooksforever.com/Childrenpics/DU%20BALAI%20%20%20binder.pdf)

APPENDIX 11: Example of cursive writing

Boris a joué avec tous ses jouets.
Il a lu tous ses livres.
Maintenant il ne sait plus
quoi faire, mais plus du tout.
Boris s'ennuie,
il s'ennuie à périr.

Appendix 12: Participants' individual data

Groups	Pretest	Posttest 1	Posttest 2
Read	9%	20%	
Read	9%	26%	26%
Read	11%	31%	
Read	11%	29%	
Read	14%	26%	
Read	17%	40%	34%
Read	20%	31%	37%
Read	23%	43%	
Read	26%	26%	26%
Read	29%	66%	69%
Read	31%	43%	
Read	31%	37%	
Read	31%	60%	63%
Read	31%	51%	60%
Read	34%	71%	69%
Read	34%	57%	54%
Read	46%	83%	77%
Read	77%	89%	
Listen	6%	9%	11%
Listen	9%	11%	
Listen	9%	11%	
Listen	9%	14%	9%
Listen	11%	17%	17%
Listen	34%	37%	
Control	14%	17%	20%
Control	14%	20%	20%
Control	20%	20%	26%
Control	23%	29%	37%
Control	34%	34%	34%
Control	46%	54%	80%
Control	51%	60%	77%